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POPULISM

AND

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

A Comparative and Theoretical Analysis

TAKIS S. PAPPAS

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To Giovanni Sartori and his generation
for the sparks, the flame, and the light.
And to Zina, Antigone, and Stefanos
for enlightenment, true love, and the real life.

Preface

Truth be told, I have lived most of my life under populist rule. In the late 1970s, as a young student of law in Greece, I experienced the irresistible ascent of the (deceivingly labeled) Panhellenic Socialist Movement, PASOK, which in 1981, under the leadership of maverick Andreas Papandreou, became postwar Europe's first populist party to win office by a landslide. I witnessed the mass rallies, the speeches from balconies, the enthusiasm of the crowds, the seductive slogans, the accumulated social resentment and the polarization it bred, the political slanders, the disrespect for institutional legality, the exuberance of promises, the irresistible promise of unfounded hope above all, which left me with an indelible impression of how liberal politics can go awry. When I first left my country in the early 1980s, populism was firmly established in power and already hard at work on producing the immense political and social changes that would later cause social misery, national political havoc, and lots of international drama.

Meanwhile, I found myself a graduate student at liberal Yale, studying party politics under the supervision of Juan Linz, but at the time also being fascinated by the work of such scholars as Gino Germani, Guillermo O'Donnell and Torcuato Di Tella on Latin American politics, especially Juan Perón's mobilizationist populism. Little did I know back then that postwar Argentina and post-authoritarian Greece would be the two cases best approximating the "ideal type" of populism when, several years later, populism became the major topic of my academic research. Nor could I have ever imagined during my earlier decades that I would happen to live and work in several countries where populism developed politically and electorally strong, including (besides of course Greece and the United States), Italy, France, and Hungary. It is perhaps because populism became such an unwelcome happenstance in my personal and professional life that I decided to summon the demon. This volume is my testimony to that effort.

I dealt with populism as a research topic for the first time in 2010 at an ECPR conference at Münster, Germany, organized by Ann-Cathrine Jungar and Kevin Deegan-Krausse. Already unhappy with the conceptual confusion surrounding the topic, I presented in that meeting a paper that re-conceptualized populism as "democratic illiberalism"* and proposed studying

* At the time, there were only two notable previous uses of the term "democratic illiberalism." The first was made by Collier and Levitsky (1997: 438) for describing a "diminished subtype of democracy" without civil liberties, for which the authors offered Guatemala as their sole example. The second use of the term belongs to Fareed Zakaria, who, rather than dealing with

it dynamically as "the flipside of [postwar] political liberalism." Alas, such heterodox novelties anything but satisfied the reviewers of the journals to which I subsequently submitted the paper, which, after a couple of rejections, eventually appeared, rather unceremoniously, in one of the Working Paper series of the European University Institute in Florence (Pappas 2012; the quotations above are from this work, p. 2). Next time around I was, however, luckier. A new paper I wrote comparing the growth of populism in post-authoritarian Greece and post-communist Hungary—in which I not only used my then novel definition but also floated the idea of populism causing party systemic contagion that could potentially lead to "populist democracy"—was published in a respectable journal (Pappas 2014b; first online publication in July 2013). Not long thereafter, in the summer of 2014, I was astonished to hear the since-famous speech by Hungary's populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in which he openly proclaimed his intention to turn his country into an "illiberal democracy." And then, as populism grew stronger in several nations and became more widespread geographically, the term "democratic illiberalism" gained rapid traction among academics, politicians and, of course, the press. But scholarship on the topic, albeit tremendously expansive, remained hopelessly stuck with old concepts and fuzzy case classifications. I believed then, and still believe today, that the problem has been our neglect of solid empirical research at country-level for producing book-length studies on particular populisms.

By reason of my country's continuing misfortunes, that could not be my case. Already by the early 2010s, what was soon to become known as the "Greek crisis" was in full and dramatic swing, and the reason for it was the inability of the old populist parties to make a transition to liberalism, especially as new populist parties grew in the meantime strong and power-hungry. For a second time in her post-authoritarian history, Greece had become a "crucial case" (in Harry Eckstein's (1975) sense) for studying old and new, left and right populisms hard at work. Fascinated by the evolving events in my country, I took a break from my more theoretical ruminations about populism in general, and wrote a relatively short monograph focused on the Greek case with the purpose of *empirically* testing my up-and-coming theory. For, as noted in that book's introductory pages, Greece "offers near laboratory conditions for studying all possible facets and successive phases of populist development, including initial emergence, subsequent development, ascent to power, and polity contamination" (Pappas 2014a: 6). There was something

or even specifically referring to populism, pointed to an assortment of regimes around the globe "that lie between confirmed dictatorship and consolidated democracy," those including Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Pakistan, Belarus, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Haiti among others (Zakaria 1997). None of those states falls within the scope of this book. For a further discussion of Zakaria's notion of illiberal democracy, see Pappas (2018b).

even more important to that. Post-authoritarian Greece offered itself as a clear case of a political system in which liberalism and populism clashed violently, with populism being the ultimate winner—with fateful consequences. But Greece was not the only case of rising populism and, when looking at such cases comparatively, a pattern began to emerge. It was early autumn of 2015 when I decided to take the challenge to write a theoretical book on comparative populism.

While working on the present volume, I often thought of it as the closest one can get to an academic startup. It has been a largely self-financed and externally unassisted enterprise, which set about to solve a major political problem developing contemporaneously with my research and writing, trying a solution that at times seemed off-beat and rather outlandish, and with success anything but guaranteed. As with any other startup, it has had its bad times and its good times. Thankfully, there were many more good times than bad ones, and they were immensely fulfilling. While working on this project, I enjoyed the pleasures of family life in Strasbourg, France, digressed for some time to write a book in Greek on a different topic, and held various teaching and research posts in a number of fantastic academic and research institutions across Europe. I had two great advantages. The first was time—plenty of time, my only difficulty being how to manage it cleverly. Often enough, I went through several periods of "slow hunch" (Johnson 2010) during which many early insights became clearer and clearer. In some of those periods, which coincided with long stays in Greece and Hungary, I had the opportunity once again to witness populist politics in real action, and experience its deleterious effects upon social life and political culture in both places. My second advantage was the great opportunities I have had in recent years to give lectures or participate in many a workshop in various places around the world thanks to excellent colleagues and precious friends who were generous enough to offer institutional hospitality and intellectual stimulation.

For the most part, I wrote standing on the shoulders of giants. I readily acknowledge the transformational inspiration on a number of key topics in this volume that, over years, I have received from the following books, cited in their authors' alphabetical order: Robert Dahl's *Polyarchy*; Albert Hirschman's *The Passions and the Interests*; Eric Hobsbawm's, *Primitive Rebels*; Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking Fast and Slow* (with his early articles co-authored with Amos Trevsky as an extra bonus); David Laitin's *Hegemony and Culture*; William H. Riker's *Liberalism Against Populism*; Giovanni Sartori's *Parties and Party Systems*; and Max Weber's *The Sociology of Religion*. At a critical turn during this work, John Rawls' notion of "overlapping consensus" became the golden key to open quite a few rusty doors. My understanding of liberal democracy is quite similar to Dahl's "polyarchy." From Weber, I took inspiration from his distinction between "communal" and "associative" social relationships, and—for a long time—grappled with the notion of charisma.

Another distinction that made an early impression on me was Michel Oakeshott's "politics of skepticism" against his "politics of faith." I found very useful Max Scheler's notion of *ressentiment*, which also fondly reminded me of a time long past at Yale, when Juan Linz had first brought this concept to my attention and insisted on its explanatory value. As usual, he was spot on! Richard Thaler's "endowment effect" was valuable for me in making better sense of theories of relative deprivation and thinking about mass mobilization thresholds. I took very seriously Bryan Caplan's recommendation to his fellow economists whose ideas are not quite in accord with conventional wisdom: write more books, he urged, otherwise "you seem confusing at best, and crazy at worst" (Caplan 2007: xii). It was a precious piece of advice, which I sincerely want to extend to my fellow political scientists. Only in a book do you have the time, space, and opportunity to explain your whole position lengthily, candidly and, if you are lucky enough, convincingly.

I profited enormously from a workshop on my early draft chapters that Paul Kenny was kind enough to organize for me in Canberra, Australia. Hanspeter Kriesi organized a similar workshop in Florence, Italy. Thanks to all participants in both workshops for precious comments and ideas. In January 2017, while at the Central European University in Budapest, I was lucky to attend a public talk by Michael Ignatieff entitled "Open Society and its New Enemies" and get great inspiration from the lively Q&A session that followed. I spent most of January and February 2018 at the University of Helsinki, Finland, as a visiting scholar, where I reworked most of the book chapters. It was a particularly cold winter, which made my appreciation for their hospitality and general support from Niilo Kauppi, Juri Mykkänen, and Emilia Palonen even warmer. *Kiitos*! Also, thanks go to Bruno de Paula Castanho e Silva, Will Freeman, Kostas Gemenis, Daphne Halikiopoulou, Bálint Madlovics, Andreas Schedler, and Aris Trantidis for comments and support at various stages of this work. I am indebted to Roberto Foa, Michael Freeden, and Ivan Krastev for their important insights and encouragement at the final stages. Paul Kenny read and graciously commented on several manuscript versions, while my good old friend Houchang Chehabi read and edited the entire manuscript during a sojourn in Turkey. I was both lucky and privileged to have the constant support and assistance of Dominic Byatt, my editor at Oxford University Press, and his team who looked after the typescript through to publication. Brian North took care of the final styling and copyediting. Thanks to all. There are, to be sure, several errors remaining. These are all mine.

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List of Political Parties

Argentina	
PJ	Justicialist Party
PL	Labor Party
Austria	
FPÖ	Freedom Party of Austria
ÖVP	Austrian People's Party
Belgium	
VB	Vlaams Blok (renamed Vlaams Belang)
Bolivia	
MAS	Movement for Socialism
Brazil	
PMDB	Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement
PSDB	Brazilian Social Democratic Party
PT	Workers' Party
Denmark	
DF	Danish People's Party
Ecuador	
AP	PAIS Alliance
PRE	Ecuadorian Roldosist Party
Finland	
PS	Finns (formerly True Finns)
France	
FDG	French Left Front
FN	National Front (renamed National Rally, NR)
UDCA	Union for the Defense of Traders and Artisans
Germany	
AfD	Alternative for Germany
CDU	Christian Democratic Party
Die Linke	The Left
NPD	National Democratic Party
SED	Socialist Unity Party
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany
Greece	
ANEL	Independent Greeks
DIMAR	Democratic Left
EP	National Front

GD	Golden Dawn
KKE	Communist Party of Greece
LAE	Popular Unity
LAOS	Popular Orthodox Rally
ND	New Democracy
PASOK	Panhellenic Socialist Movement
POTAMI	River
SYRIZA	Coalition of the Radical Left
Hungary	
Fidesz	Federation of Young Democrats/Hungarian Civic Party
FKGP	Independent Smallholders' Party
Jobbik	Hungarian Movement for a Better Hungary
KDNP	Christian Democratic People's Party
MDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum
MSzP	Hungarian Socialist Party
SzDSz	Alliance of Free Democrats
Italy	
AN	National Alliance
DC	Christian Democracy
FI	Forza Italia!
LN	Northern League (currently The League)
M5S	Five Star Movement
MSI	Italian Social Movement
PCI	Communist Party of Italy
PdL	People for Freedom
PDS	Democratic Party of the Left
UQ	Common Man's Front
Mexico	
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
The Netherlands	
LPF	Pim Fortuyn List
PVV	Party for Freedom
VVD	Conservative Liberals
Norway	
FrP	Norway's Progress Party
Peru	
AP	Popular Action
APRA	American Popular Revolutionary Alliance
Cambio 90	Change 90
FREDEMO	Democratic Front
Slovakia	
LSNS	People's Party Our Slovakia
SNS	Slovak National Party

Spain	
CiU	Catalan Convergence and Union
CPE	Communist Party of Spain
IU	United Left
PDC	Democratic Pact for Catalonia
PNV	Basque Nationalist Party
PODEMOS	We Can
PP	Popular Party
PSOE	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
UCD	Union of the Democratic Center
Sweden	
SD	Sweden Democrats
Switzerland	
SVP	Swiss People's Party
Turkey	
AKP	Justice and Development Party
United Kingdom	
BNP	British National Party
SNP	Scottish National Party
UKIP	UK Independence Party
Venezuela	
AD	Democratic Action
COPEI	Social Christian Party
MBR 200	Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement 200
MVR	Movement of the Fifth Republic
PSUV	United Socialist Party

Four other Oysters followed them,
And yet another four;
And thick and fast they came at last,
And more, and more, and more—
All hopping through the frothy waves,
And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Walked on a mile or so,
And then they rested on a rock
Conveniently low:
And all the little Oysters stood
And waited in a row.

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things:
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax—
Of cabbages—and kings—
And why the sea is boiling hot—
And whether pigs have wings."

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*

Introduction

Although "populism" has become the buzz word in almost any discussion about, or analysis of, contemporary politics, and was even announced as the Cambridge Dictionary 2017 Word of the Year, it is still, as one of its students has flatly put it, "far from obvious that we know what we are talking about. We simply do not have anything like a theory of populism, and we seem to lack coherent criteria for deciding when political actors turn populist in some meaningful sense" (Müller 2016a: 2). Faced with such a theoretical void, it is perhaps worth beginning by asking the obvious: Why, despite the massive growth in the field of studies on populism, is there still no general theory of populism? The reason, I submit, is simply that our research endeavors are defeated by conceptual muddiness and lack of comparative sophistication. The conceptual morass has helped create masses of empirical and pseudo-theoretical studies which add up to very little, if anything at all. Ideology, discourse, style, symbolic politics, inclusion, exclusion, mobilization, charisma, anti-politics, anti-liberalism, the people, the masses, the elites, political polarization, social resentment, symbolic framing, voters' irrationality—these are all concepts that are surely central to the study of populism. But unless we are able to clarify these concepts and incorporate them into a unified and internally consistent theoretical framework, we are bound to produce more wasteful research and perpetuate fuzziness and incomprehension.

Since the rest is still to come, I should briefly state here where I stand with respect to populism and its theory. At the simplest level of analysis, I see contemporary populism as an emerging historical phenomenon of late democratic modernity that opposes political liberalism. It seeks to institute a novel—indeed, innovative—form of modern democratic politics that is antagonistic towards established liberal democracy. Taking it for granted that each of these forms of democracy puts forward its own set of ideas, political programs, and policy agendas of how to constitute society, my analysis of populism—whether explicitly or, at times, less so—is in constant juxtaposition to the problems faced by contemporary liberal democracy and, conceivably, its present-day decay. Evidently, I assume populism and liberalism to be dependent variables, which already suggests my concern for exploring the factors that cause

populism to rise and, occasionally, solidify in power. I therefore intend a theory that specifies the causal factors—including context, agency, and micro-mechanisms—that may propel populism to power, as well as account for the impact of populism on contemporary, and future, democratic politics.

Without doubt, current interest in populism is driven, first and foremost, by growing disquiet about democracy and liberalism, their delicate interplays and possible failures. Therefore, and since these terms will be in constant use throughout the book, let me clarify their meaning and usage right from the outset. (A helpful glossary is provided at the end of the book, listing all key terms used in the text.)

"Democracy," first, will be used in a minimalist, empirical, and non-normative fashion as simply "a system in which incumbents lose elections and leave office when the rules so dictate" (Przeworski et al. 2000: 54). This conception is similar to Joseph Schumpeter's (1942) notion of democracy seen as a mechanism, or instrument, of selecting one's rulers in competitive elections, as well as Karl Popper's idea (1945) of democracy as the only system in which citizens can overthrow their rulers by peaceful electoral means (see, for further insights, Przeworski 1999). Moreover, since in this respect we dispense with normativity, we also grant that democracies may occasionally give rise to parties or governments that are "inefficient, corrupt, shortsighted, irresponsible, dominated by special interests, and incapable of adopting policies demanded by the public good" (Huntington 1991: 9). It is, however, important to underline, as Huntington goes on to explain, that although such negative qualities make those parties or governments "undesirable, they do not make them undemocratic." Poor-quality democracies are *still* democratic.

Despite its simplicity and straightforwardness, such an understanding of democracy still leaves unanswered the following question: What happens if elections fail to change governments? In other words: How democratic are "democracies" in which an elected government stays in power for lengthy periods as, for instance, is the case in contemporary Hungary in which the same party has enjoyed since 2010 three consecutive electoral victories? Here, obviously, we are dealing with so-called predominant-party systems (not to be confused with single-party nondemocratic systems), in which one party is able to command, alone and over time, the absolute majority of seats in parliament (Sartori 1976: 192–201). Barring the existence of violence and open voter intimidation, both subject to empirical investigation, those systems will still be considered to belong in the class of pluralist competitive democracy to the extent that they allow for an open party market with enough opportunities for dissent, as well as the option of having the predominant party toppled by ballot.

In contrast to the foregoing instrumental definition of democracy, I understand the second key analytical concept, "liberalism," in a distinctly normative fashion. It revolves around the idea of individual liberty being supreme, as well as the need to institutionally protect it within complex

political societies. Accordingly, when it comes to democratically run nations, a *liberal* democracy is the polity that acknowledges, and is built upon, the following principles: Society comprises a plurality of conflicting interests which, lest the polity regress to a Hobbesian nightmare of polarization and generalized social strife, must be subject to overarching commonly agreed institutions, the rule of law, and the protection of minority rights. Given the interdependency of such conditions, the polity ceases to qualify as a liberal democracy even if only one of them is violated.

Although a more detailed discussion of political liberalism along the foregoing lines will follow in a more appropriate place, we have already switched to what will be the sum and substance of the book, namely, populism qua democratic illiberalism. Its central proposition is that, while postwar political liberalism can only be conceived as democratic, the opposite is not true. That is to say, not all democracies are liberal; some of them, and increasingly so, are illiberal.[1] As summarized by one prominent populist leader, "just because something is not liberal, it still can be a democracy" (Orbán 2014). This, in turn, raises the very questions that this volume addresses and will try to answer: How can liberal democracies drift to illiberalism? What happens when illiberal democrats win state power? Can the populist wave be reversed?

To provide answers to these questions, we need to develop a general theory of populism couched in what is broadly known as "democratic studies" and guided by a simple insight, namely, that modern populism—whether seen as a set of ideas, a political leader acting on such ideas, a particular party championing them, or even an entire political system in which significant parties promote its essence—is fundamentally democratic but in opposition to the liberal canon. Hence, *democratic illiberalism* becomes a synonym for *populism* and as such it will be treated in the chapters to follow. The implication for democratic studies is now quite straightforward. No matter what the level or unit of analysis one may want to examine it at, populism as a modern historical phenomenon pertains to a type of democracy that stands midway between liberalism and autocracy. It is important that we become aware of this fundamental contradiction, for, since populism can never find a point of political equilibrium and stability, it tends to tilt at either side of the spectrum, at times towards repairing liberalism, at other times towards experimenting with autocracy. This should serve as a clear warning for politicians and policymakers alike: Remove its democratic ethos and populism will turn into authoritarianism, but reverse its illiberal disposition and whims, and

[1] The distinction between democraticness and liberalism is encapsulated eloquently, albeit slightly paraphrased, in this quotation: "A democracy is democratic insofar as it involves government by popular, competitive election, thereby providing legitimation to the polity. . . . A democracy is liberal in that it limits governmental authority and protects individual rights, constructing dikes, as it were, against the supposedly sovereign people" (Peeler 2009: 1).

liberal democratic order is likely to be reinstituted. We shall return to these points later on in the book.

For the time being, as is the case with all theory-guided research, it is necessary that we set the scope conditions that specify the temporal, geographical, and political contexts within which causal processes play out, thus making the theory relevant (Cohen 1989: 83). Scope conditions not only define the circumstances under which theoretical claims may become applicable; they also recommend the empirical cases to be selected and used for comparative analysis.

Given that this volume is not about populism in general but about *modern* populism more particularly, it excludes from its scope three groups of parties or other political forces. First, it excludes any pre-modern (that is to say, pre-capitalist and pre-democratic) "organizations, movements and ideologies of all kinds in which the notion of 'the will of the people' . . . [is] stressed" (Worsley 1969: 219–20), all of which rightfully belong in the realm of historians. It also leaves out parties in democratic states where geography, age-old social stratification patterns, and ancient political traditions have thwarted the development of political liberalism. In such places, including most prominently India, the Philippines, Indonesia, and several African states, political liberalism never put down roots. At best, as has been put succinctly, liberalism in those cases may be characterized by just three words—"pseudo, exclusive, and misinterpreted" (Manchanda 2016: 124). As shown by many others (e.g., Laitin 1986, Kenny 2017, Mietzner 2018), party politics in those states are mostly determined by traditional political patronage, personalized leadership, and ethnic and religious tribalism in their many and various combinations. The concept of populism as used in this book does not fit such cases; but neither, I believe, can the woolly "populism" that is often used as a generic political explanation grapple with the historical and political complexity of those states. Finally, on account of modern populism's democratic nature, the book is not concerned in depth with autocracies and other non-democratic states, including, for instance, Vladimir Putin's Russia (Sakwa 2004, Rose et al. 2006), Turkey, especially under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Karaveli 2018), or Iran (Abrahamian 1993), which, although often classified as populist states, do not meet our criteria of either democracy or liberalism.

Since the book centers specifically on populism viewed as a neoteric political phenomenon that opposes, and seeks to supersede, modern political liberalism, our focus of analysis will be on postwar Europe and the Americas. Under this lens, the conditions of geography, historical period, and political significance that must be satisfied for selecting our cases in such a way that will make theory relevant become quite specific and fairly unproblematic.

First, *spatiotemporally*, the countries examined in this book are postwar or, in the case of Eastern Europe, post-communist democracies with a common legal and constitutional liberal tradition of some consequence. Even within

this context, since it is practically impossible, let alone theoretically impractical, to include all instances of modern populism, how are we to choose our cases avoiding selection bias?

To this purpose, I introduce a second criterion: *political significance*. By this, I bring into comparative analysis any postwar democracy with a liberal tradition that has experienced populism in office for at least two consecutive elections. This criterion helps exclude a host of countries (such as Australia, New Zealand, or Japan) where liberalism is strong while populism is quite feeble. It also warns against the temptation to study populism globally, with no respect to the relative significance of individual cases.

What do the aforementioned criteria of inclusion into the populist category leave us with? Actually, with quite a lot. The countries with important populist parties and a long-lasting practice of populist politics, which will provide the empirical heart and matter of the book, are (in chronological order of populist rise to power) the following: Argentina, 1946; Greece, 1981; Peru, 1990; Italy, 1994; Venezuela, 1998; Ecuador, 2007; Hungary, 2010; Greece, 2015. To these I have added for reasons of country importance and political magnitude the United States of America, 2016, which, being the most recent case of populist emergence, is the only exception to our "two-consecutive-elections" criterion.

It can be confidently asserted, then, that, with the possible exception of the recent (since 2015 and 2018 respectively) Polish and Mexican populisms, our sample includes *all* significant episodes of populist rule in the postwar liberal democratic world. Their significance apart, our universe of cases offers maximum variation in terms of geographical and politico-cultural dispersion (Western and Eastern Europe, North and South America), time of occurrence (the entire postwar era from the mid-1940s to the late 2010s), and ideological variance (since it includes a mix of left and right populisms—which, moreover, in one of the cases, Greece, have ruled in tandem while in another case, Argentina, the same populist party has shifted from right to left and vice versa). Finally, to achieve contrast with successful populism, we are also going to examine the negative cases of Brazil and Spain in which populism was either of relatively minor importance or, when emergent, became frustrated.

Evidently, this volume is of an explicitly comparative nature. It aims at a study of populism that will be nomothetic, i.e., one that creatively combines theory and case studies in order to reveal causal explanations and arrive at general propositions (Lichbach and Zuckerman 1997: ix). The analysis to follow draws from three major traditions in comparative politics, each with its own ontological concerns: macro-institutionalism, micro-structuralism, and individual choice—be that of political leaders or voters.

Macro-institutionalism begins with acknowledging the existence of long-standing formal political organizations and institutional norms that both regulate and constrain political developments and social change. *Micro-structuralism* engages with the study of the particular mechanisms—the

"cogs and wheels"—that set political systems in motion and make them tick. *Individual choice* theory brings political agency into the picture at both top decision-making levels, as well as the level of electorates at the bottom, and is especially concerned about the reasons—or their lack thereof—that various political actors employ in their political actions. I build a model of populist emergence that draws on all three traditions. It begins with pre-existing institutions functioning as both constraints and opportunities; individual actors then enter the model bringing in new symbolic narratives and political culture frames, and providing focal points of action; to succeed, they have to trigger certain micro-mechanisms, which, however, depend on the original institutional framework.

Methodologically, I rely particularly on path dependence and analytic narratives. *Path dependence*, firstly, begins with an understanding of the institutional and organizational structures that existed around the time of initial populist emergence, and the ways in which they either provided opportunities, posed constraints, or both, in unfolding developments. The sequencing in which such developments unfold (Beach and Pedersen 2013), as well as the specific mechanisms that facilitate the unfolding (Hedström and Swedberg 1998), are also important for understanding causation. Having acquired a detailed knowledge of a case, *analytic narratives* (Bates et al. 1998), secondly, require that we "clearly identify the key actors, their strategic considerations, and the relevant technological, political, or economic constraints" (Levi 1997: 31). Analytic narratives thus become the best means available to tell a "compelling tale" (Przeworski and Sprague 1986: 181)—one, that is, which includes a plausible causal mechanism. If such plausibility may be generalized to other comparable cases, then we may claim to have a general theory.

Turning to contents, this volume comprises two parts. Part I deals with the fundamental conceptual, methodological, and classificatory issues that, together with systematizing a semantic vocabulary, are necessary before attempting any empirical science of populism. Part II concerns large comparisons and long processes, seeking to provide an empirical panorama of modern populism with strong explanatory and predictive power. Both parts are divided into chapters, each of them specifically addressing a major question about populism.

Chapter 1 asks: *What is populism?* It starts with a concise overview of the ways earlier scholars have examined populism during consecutive waves of research on the topic (1.1). It then goes on to expose common conceptual and methodological errors—such as obscuring the genus, overemphasizing essentialism while overlooking ontology, conceptual stretching, the incertitude about negative poles, and the difficulties with concept operationalization (1.2)—before setting out to elaborate a truly minimal definition that can sufficiently account for the comparative study of modern populism (1.3). The chapter ends with a presentation of the book's overall framework of analysis, which condenses

the main methodological tools—such as indicators, variables, and concept properties—to be used later on during theory-building (1.4).

Chapter 2 tackles the question: *How to distinguish populists from non-populists?* It starts with contrasting modern populism specifically with the variant of liberalism that developed in postwar Europe and the Americas (2.1), then going on to offer a rationalization of the need to study populism as one of only three alternatives that we have available for organizing polity—the other two being liberalism and autocracy (2.2). Deriving from our minimal definition of populism, the following two sections offer comprehensive classifications of the parties that *are* populist (2.3) and those that are *not*—the latter then promptly being relegated to the distinct categories of anti-democratic, nativist, or regionalist and secessionist parties (2.4).

Chapter 3 undertakes to answer: *What causes populism?* It is largely about the essentials of populism—its nuts-and-bolts, so to speak, that are absolutely necessary to facilitate its emergence—including the notion of the people, political leadership, and symbolic discourse. Going beyond easy generalizations about the alleged uniformity of "the people," I introduce a fine distinction of three different subtypes of the term, each with its own characteristics and political mindset (3.1). There follows a comparative analysis of populist leaders which, based on an original reconceptualization of political charisma, demonstrates a startlingly high correlation between extraordinary leadership and populist success (3.2). Ordinary people and extraordinary populist leaders forge their relationship through specific narratives that are largely based on individual fears and deeply held social resentment (3.3). The last section in this chapter models the causality of populism (3.4).

Chapter 4, by exemplifying empirically what has already been established conceptually and theoretically, answers the question: *How, and where, does populism thrive?* It begins with an elaborate analysis of the most important cases of populist emergence in postwar Europe and Latin America (4.1) and continues, in counterfactual fashion, with two nation cases, Brazil and Spain, in which populism could have grown strong, but didn't (4.2). This is followed by an analysis of modern U.S. populism in comparative perspective (4.3). Populism's emergence, and rise to power, in the United States was phenomenal. It all happened within a few months from late 2015 until the presidential elections of late 2016—a time at which I was hard at work on the subject. Given the developing situation, I felt obliged to take a break from my other cases and reflect on the challenges posed by the rise of Donald Trump on my overall theoretical framework. How did that real-life case fit into it? American populism offered me several fresh insights, especially concerning the role of extraordinary radical leadership and the complexities of handling the "people" as an ostensibly homogeneous social unit. I hope that those insights give extra strength to the theory presented herein while, at the same time, also demonstrate the non-exceptional character of American populism.

Chapter 5 deals with populists in office: *How do populists govern?* Once again based on comparative empirical analysis, it explores how populist parties consolidate power by means of grabbing top state administrative positions and depriving key liberal institutions of autonomy, especially the judiciary, state-independent authorities, and the media. Another common characteristic of all populist parties in office is their systematization of patronage politics under the logic of excluding the opposition from state-related benefits and other resources (5.1). Finally, the pieces of the illiberal and populist project are put together in an effort to think about it all in a systematic and rationalizing way (5.2).

Chapter 6 is concerned with the question: *Who is the populist voter?* Because of its essentially exploratory nature, analysis in this chapter leaves quite a few doors wide open for further research. It begins with a delineation of the populist voter's worldview, key beliefs, and voting attributes, which, to a very large extent, are characterized by irrationality, biased judgment, and political irresponsibility (6.1). It then uses the six consecutive electoral contests, including five general elections and one plebiscite, which took place in Greece from 2009 to 2015, to empirically exemplify contemporary populist voting in action (6.2).

Chapter 7 is about populist legacies and asks: *How does populism endanger democracy?* It includes two sections, each of them addressing a set of specific questions. The first set of questions examines the lessons that we can learn from our comparative study of populism (7.1). What has happened to the countries that experienced populist rule? Which are the particular paths each of them has followed after populist rule? And, do we find any evidence to support the claim that so often makes the rounds in academic and public debate that populism may serve as a "corrective" to democracy? The second set of questions concerns the future of liberal democracy in the face of growing populism (7.2). Can liberal democracy survive the populist surge? How?

This book contributes to the comparative study of populism conceptually, methodologically, empirically, analytically, and theoretically: (1) It brings into topical focus specifically the type of populism that develops in modern and contemporary liberal democracies, also providing a minimal definition of the phenomenon under study that is free of common methodological errors. (2) It puts forward a consistent classification system that clearly distinguishes populist from non-populist parties, and which is portable enough to be used in any liberal democratic state. (3) It introduces a wholly new set of empirical referents that effectively captures the historical development and political dynamics of modern populism from initial emergence to subsequent growth to rise to power and its aftermath. (4) It advances a causal model for the emergence of modern populism based on the interplay of structural, agentic, and conjunctural factors. (5) It reveals the importance of leadership for populism to become successful, or fail; to this purpose, the book is supplemented

by a novel re-conceptualization of political charisma. (6) It demonstrates that, when in power, populist governments use a quite similar ruling template, or "populist blueprint," whether in the United States, Latin America, or Europe. (7) It provides specific answers about how to resist populism, based on wisdom derived from meticulous comparative analysis rather than unfounded hope or compassionate wishful thinking.

Before we begin, a note about the overall political stance of this book and the normative implications of its analysis is necessary. To put it succinctly, this work has been undertaken and carried out from an—admittedly, disenchanted—liberal perspective, and with deep concern on the part of the author for the future of liberal democracy. Regarding normativity, in general there are two aspects to be considered: The first, let us call it *declarative* normativity, is simply contingent upon one's—in this case, the author's—declared political preferences. The second aspect, which we may term *evaluative* normativity, is based on more complex reasoning, which derives from the comparative study of the very outcomes of populism in the countries in which it has occurred.

Accordingly, and since in this book postwar liberal democracy is declared to be *the* current political norm, or canon, but also a system worth preserving, populism is regarded as a deviation from it and, as will be shown by the cases to be empirically analyzed in later chapters, an effort towards establishing an alternative to liberalism as a specific democratic type. Under this light, the comparative study of the development and spread of populism in various liberal democratic states around the world, will offer a large-scale exploration of how hitherto globally dominant norms may be progressively corrupted, and occasionally replaced by new ones. For, as we are going to see, populism not only causes corrosion of the liberal democratic context; it is also highly contagious for other parties in the party system and, in point of fact, it often succeeds in transforming erstwhile liberal polities into populist democracies. In such cases, populism becomes the new democratic canon.

This brings me to the issue of normatively evaluating populism based on its concrete political outcomes. Since it is not politically neutral, populism leaves behind a trail of consequences that can be evaluated and contrasted with the original situation. And since the original situation in this book is postwar liberal democracy, modern populism, the book's subject matter, will be constantly contrasted with and evaluated against the liberal democratic norm. Our analysis, therefore, will remain sensitive to how exactly, and to what effect, populism transforms liberal democracy. It will be shown that populism is a menace to liberal democracy. For, to use the words of Ivan Krastev, what we see in places where populism has gained in strength, "is not a crisis of democratization but a genuine crisis of liberal democracy . . . [which] is not fundamentally different from the crisis of liberal democracy that we see in Western Europe and even in the United States" (Krastev 2016: 36). As already stated, and subsequent analysis will abundantly make clear, on the broad

spectrum of possible political positions, populism stands midway between liberalism and autocracy. From such a position, populism offers an alternative conception to liberal democracy that is both plausible and, under certain circumstances, quite compelling to broad electoral publics. The problem is that, torn between liberalism and autocracy, populism cannot achieve a stable position. Faced with such a predicament, quite often populism's impulse is to turn towards autocracy rather than return to the initially liberal democratic condition. This is reason enough to warrant concern.

Part I

Populism in Theory

1

What is Populism?

The study of populism is evocative of the story of the blind men and the elephant. This story, in which some blind men are asked to touch an elephant to determine what that thing *is*, has been told numerous times and in many versions, but never to its very end. The known part of the story is about each blind man feeling only one bit of the animal so that, on comparing their thoughts, they may decide on the object. In typical versions of the story, the blind man who feels the tusk says it is like a big tree branch; the one who touches a leg says it is like a big pillar; he who feels the belly says it is like a big wall; the one who touches the ear says it is like a big hand fan; and he who feels the trunk says it is like a big pipe. In this part of the story, the blind men cannot reach agreement about the thing examined.

But our men are blind, not deaf. Therefore, they know that what they touch is a living animal that breathes, moves, and emits sounds. Here comes the untold part of the story. In it, there exists another blind man who sits in a corner without touching the animal, only listening attentively to what the others have to say. He finally asserts: From what you are saying, this thing must be *the biggest animal on earth*! With that declaration, our man offers an ontological definition of the thing under examination based on size as its core characteristic ("the biggest animal") while also contextualizing it ("among all fauna"). And, as none could argue against that conclusion, this is how since then the blind men identify their animal—"the biggest one on earth"—and tell it apart from all other fauna. End of story.

Now, the moral: As with the fabled elephant, and all its other features notwithstanding, populism is the major historical phenomenon of our times, currently posing an elephantine threat to many of the liberal democracies that became dominant after the end of World War Two. In this opening chapter it is therefore worth beginning our exploration into populism with an examination of the existing scholarship on the subject and then trying to contextualize it within modern-day democratic liberal politics. We are going to point out some of the major deficiencies in the study of populism, mostly due to limitations of theoretical perspective or methodological fallacies and other shortcomings. Like the attentive blind man in his corner, we may then be able

to arrive at a minimal definition that, hopefully, will tell us what the political animal we call "populism" really is. And, from there, we will also be better equipped to construct an overall theoretical framework to act as a guiding light in our explorations into modern populism.

1.1. THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF POPULISM

Since our first objective is to reconceptualize populism, let us commence with sage advice: "The rebuilding of a concept," Sartori counsels (1984: 46), "begins with looking into its literature" and extracting its characteristics. Interestingly enough, when one looks into that literature, the first thing to observe is that it is relatively recent. The systematic study of populism in academia began only in the late 1960s and, to this date, has gone through three distinct waves, or "generations," of scholarship, each corresponding to a particular time period and characterized by its own intent, agenda, and research design. In this chapter, I provide a concise overview of existing scholarly efforts to seize populism in analytic epistemological terms. Yet, rather than merely trying to catalog those efforts (for such a listing, see among others Moffitt 2016: 12–25), I am going to distinguish between cohorts of scholars who, in different periods and places, examined phenomena that they labeled "populist." For each cohort of scholars and corresponding wave of scholarship, I will place emphasis particularly on three aspects: First, the concept's intension, i.e., the collection of characteristics, or properties, which determines the empirical things to which populism applies and answers the question "What is populism?" Second, the concept's extension, i.e., the empirical class of things to which populism refers while the point at issue becomes "Who are the populists?" And, third, the scholarly gains, but also particular difficulties, encountered in each of those endeavors, which raise questions of the type "Why is populism so important in contemporary politics?" For convenience, I will refer to the three groups of scholars roughly belonging to each of the three waves as the *pioneers*, the *classics*, and the *contemporaries*.

The Pioneers

The earliest wave of studies on populism originated in a conference held in 1967 at the London School of Economics, during which a multidisciplinary cohort of scholars explicitly set out to define the phenomenon.[1] The

[1] For the true aficionados, a summary of the conference proceedings appeared under the title "To Define Populism," in *Government and Opposition* 3 no. 2 (1968), 137–79, while a complete

publication of the conference proceedings, which appeared in book form under the title *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics* (Ionescu and Gellner 1969), effectively marks the beginning of the first wave of scholarship on populism, which then expanded into the 1970s and early 1980s.

The focus for those early scholars of populism was not their contemporary European societies or any other democratic and capitalist states. This is not surprising, of course, given that, by the time of the conference, postwar Europe's only two political groups deserving the populist label had been the Italian Common Man's Front[2] and the French *Poujadisme*, initially a small shopkeepers' movement against taxation.[3] Both had proved stillborn.

What those early scholars on populism perceived instead was the rise of a "global populism" in pre-modern states located in the world periphery, including Africa, Asia, and the then communist Eastern Europe. Even so, lacking a clear concept of populism, the early research on the phenomenon looked, indeed, like a "fishing expedition without adequate nets" (Sartori 1970: 1039). The catch was impressive, as it included revolutionary movements seeking the end of feudalism, such as the Narodniki in imperial Russia; nondemocratic regimes, such as Latin America's numerous autocracies; interwar peasant movements in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans; anti-capitalist and anti-colonial crusaders in Africa and Southeast Asia. And when it came to more developed nations, like the United States or Canada, the point was not missed by the pioneering scholars that populism had only developed in the economically most backward and politically more underdeveloped rural areas of these countries. Such, for instance, were the cases of American populism, which flourished during the late nineteenth century in the agrarian southern and midwestern states among the "declining 'liberal'

transcript of the proceedings is to be found in the library of the LSE under the title "London School of Economics Conference on Populism, May 20–21, 1967: Verbatim Report," shelf mark HN 17 C74.

[2] The Fronte dell' Uomo Qualunque was an ultra-conservative and monarchist movement with no confirmed leadership appealing predominantly to Italy's southern peasants (see e.g., Tarchi 2003). It participated in the 1946 legislative elections (winning 5.3 percent of the national vote) only to be absorbed soon thereafter by the rising Christian Democrats.

[3] In 1953, Pierre Poujade, a small bookstore owner, created the Union for the Defense of Traders and Artisans (UDCA) to express the economic interests and social resentment of shopkeepers and other low- and middle-class sectors in French society facing rapid economic and social change (Hoffman 1956, Bouclier 2006, Souillac, 2007). Besides its opposition to state centralism, industrialism, urbanization, and political liberalism, UDCA stood against French decolonization in Africa, while, in internal politics, it presented a xenophobic and anti-Semitic platform. In the 1956 general elections, it won 12.6 percent of the total vote and fifty-two seats in the French parliament. The youngest of its deputies was Jean-Marie Le Pen. By 1958, when Charles de Gaulle inaugurated the French Fifth Republic, and to a large extent because of Poujade's own "uncharismatic" leadership, Poujadisme had practically disappeared. Still, several of its ideas persisted in French society. Jean-Marie Le Pen also survived politically. Some years later he was to reappear in the French political scene as the founder and leader of the National Front.

classes living in declining areas" or of the Progressive Party of Saskatchewan, a political movement that developed in the prairies of Alberta in Canada from the 1920s to the mid-1930s (Lipset 1960: 173, 194). With reference to Western Europe, the only instances of populism mentioned by one conference participant were "a kind of proto-populism in the English Peasants' Revolt and the Jacqueries of the fourteenth century, or in the Bundschuh and the peasant wars of the Reformation" (MacRae 1969: 154).

All in all, then, the pioneers in the study of populism were particularly keen to draw comparisons between disparate cases of "populism," which they attributed to the lack of socio-political modernity and market economy. Since, during the 1960s and early 1970s, most societies around the world were pre-(socially)modern, non-(liberal)democratic, and pre-(advanced) capitalist, populism was seen to "bob up everywhere, but in many and contradictory shapes" (Ionescu and Gellner 1969: 1), its manifestations including, among many others,

> the droolings of Tolstoy over muzhiks, the rationalizations of Eastern European resentments against alien traders, and the slogans in terms of which rulers of new nations legitimate themselves and subvert liberal institutions.
>
> (Ionescu and Gellner 1969: 1)

On this realization, the question certainly arose about whether populism had any underlying unity or if one label covered disparate phenomena. Unfortunately, that early cohort of scholars was unable to reach a unanimous verdict on this matter—which is probably why their volume lacks a final chapter that would sum up findings and extract conclusions.

What prevented those pioneering scholars from defining populism and, eventually, explaining the phenomenon? The obvious reason is their stretching of the extension of the concept without a prior organization of its intension. The early-day scholars saw populism everywhere but had no time to reflect on its ontology; nor did they bother to distinguish between the many different historical and political contexts within which populism seemed capable of emerging. In reality, however, all this happened because *modern* populism had not yet emerged. Even by the early 1980s, when Margaret Canovan wrote her first book on the subject, populism was understood as a reactionary political occurrence, consisting of "a bewildering variety of phenomena" (Canovan 1981: 3) mostly related to various agrarian movements or associated with autarchic leaders, such as Argentina's Juan Perón.

The earliest wave of scholarship on populism, in sum, failed to provide a commonly agreed definition of populism, causing instead conceptual stretching and empirical confusion. Concept ambiguity thus settled in. But there were gains, too. It sensitized the broader scholarly community to the importance of populism as a distinct—and certainly curious—phenomenon and put its study firmly into the agenda of historical analysis and comparative politics.

The Classics

If the first wave of scholarship on populism was prompted mostly by European scholars out of academic curiosity, the second wave was occasioned by natives of Latin America (and, later, their students and disciples in North American universities) who were both highly politicized and endowed with first-hand knowledge of the countries whose tumultuous politics they set out to examine. It was this group of scholars who, even more than either their predecessors or their immediate successors, and by virtue of the pure quality of the cases they studied, reached conclusions of lasting worth—hence my labeling them as classics.

This group of scholars may be divided into two subgroups: the first of them focused attention on Latin American populism in the early postwar decades, which were characterized by the so-called policy of "import substitution industrialization" (ISI) (classically treated in Hirschman 1968 and Baer 1972); the second group became more preoccupied with explaining the unexpected compatibility of populist politics and neoliberal economics in Latin America in more recent decades. An abbreviated overview of both groups follows.

In the aftermath of World War Two, as Latin America entered a period of sustained economic growth, populism grew strong in the region. Almost the entire continent turned toward ISI aiming to create self-sufficient economies based on large industrial sectors and the expansive middle classes. Within that context, populism became the chief means of markedly autocratic leaders who, seeing the opportunity for extracting political gains, advocated free elections, the enfranchisement of women and the illiterate, and the entry of the masses (*el pueblo*) into politics (Germani 1978).[4] So consequential was the role of individual leaders such as Getúlio Vargas in Brazil, Juan Perón in Argentina, or José María Velasco Ibarra in Ecuador that the populist systems they helped create are still remembered by their names: Varguismo, Peronismo, Velasquismo (and, in Peru, Aprismo, from the initials of Haya de la Torre's party name).[5]

In such an historical and political context, and unlike the European pioneers who aimed at definitions, Latin American scholars saw populism as a phenomenon primarily related to the socioeconomic determinants of mass political movements that developed contemporaneously in their respective countries. As put by one of the most important representatives of the group, the chief concern of Latin American scholarship was to explain "the

[4] Brazil was the first country in Latin America to give women the ballot in 1932. Argentina introduced women's suffrage in 1947, Chile in 1949, Colombia in 1954, Peru in 1955, and Bolivia in 1956. Illiterates were enfranchised in 1979 in Peru and only as late as 1988 in Brazil.

[5] Only in Colombia was the rise of populism thwarted with the assassination in 1948 of leftist populist presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, an event that provoked an almost decade-long, and particularly violent, civil war between the supporters of Colombia's two major political forces, the Liberals and the Conservatives (Braun 1985).

conditions under which the political participation of the lower classes is channeled through a populist movement" (Germani 1978: 95). It was under this view, too, that many in this group of scholars considered populism as beneficial to Latin America's democracies—in the words of Carlos de la Torre (2000: xiii), it was "a fundamental democratizing force that marked the entrance of common people into the political community."

Progressively, there developed within this group of populism specialists two distinct approaches, one associated with the so-called "modernization theory" and another with structural Marxism. For the adherents of modernization theory, populism served as the means to incorporate into politics the newly mobilized urban working and middle classes that had emerged after the postwar breakdown of oligarchic regimes and the transition to capitalism and modernity (Germani et al. 1973, Malloy 1977, Collier 1979, Drake 1982). For the adherents of Marxism and the so-called Dependency School, populism was a multiclass political movement corresponding to the objective of import substitution (cf., O'Donnell 1973, Cardoso and Faletto 1979). It was precisely the statist and nationalist policies of ISI, according to this interpretation, that "allowed populist leaders to build cross-class alliances between urban labor, the middle sectors, and domestic industrialists" (Roberts 1995: 85). Notwithstanding their differences, both approaches saw populism as specific to the historical and political circumstances of development in the world semi-periphery. And both "agreed on the importance of defining it in social terms, rooted in relations of production and market conditions" (Jansen 2011: 79).

Thus having organized their research intension (i.e., populism as a means for mobilization in specific historical circumstances), the present group of scholars had no problem selecting their cases, which mostly included countries in Latin America but, occasionally, other countries in the semi-periphery, such as Greece (Mouzelis 1985). The high-profile cases were, of course, those of Argentina (Germani 1978, James 1988, Di Tella 1990, Horowitz 1999), Brazil (Conniff 1981, French 1989, Wolfe 1994, Conniff 1999), and Mexico under Lázaro Cárdenas (Knight 1990, Knight 1994, Basurto 1999). There were also several less well-known but still important cases (including, for instance, Haya de la Torre in Peru, Villaroel in Bolivia, Guzmán in Guatemala, or Gaitán in Colombia) that "may have been shorter-lived or less consequential than those of Perón, Vargas, and Cárdenas, but a theory of populist mobilization suggest[ed] that they share many meaningful similarities with [the] high-profile cases" (Jansen 2011: 88–9).

Despite its relatively good match between concept intension and research extension, however, the problem with this subgroup of classical scholarship on populism was its lack of comparability potential. In other words, it could only be used to explain *authoritarian* populist movements falling within the specific socioeconomic context of Latin America during ISI and, perhaps, a few other countries in the world semi-periphery. Therefore, this perception of

populism had little traveling capacity beyond Latin America or similarly conditioned world regions. As openly admitted by one of its proponents, this type of populism may materialize into "a mass movement only in societies where typical Western European leftist ideologies of the working class fail to develop into mass parties" (Germani 1978: 88). Even so, this specific literature yielded significant gains as it sensitized scholars to at least two important features of populism during its emergence phase: first, its mass movement character and, second, the role of individual agency and, specifically, the importance of charismatic leadership (see e.g., Dix 1978, de la Torre 2000). As will be shown later on, these two features are always present in any and all significant cases of modern populism analyzed in this book.

The eventual exhaustion of import substitution strategies in Latin America eroded the material foundations of state-based populism and led to the temporary demobilization of those actors "whose economic interests had defined traditional populist agendas" (Roberts 1995: 82, Conniff 1999). Yet, despite the fact that both modernization and dependency theories of populism gradually fell into disrepute, populism hardly disappeared. The spectacular emergence of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela was a reminder that old-style quasi-democratic populist politics in the region was far from dead. But that was not all. During the 1980s and 1990s, a new type of populism flourished in Latin America in a radically different socioeconomic and political environment than that of the earlier postwar decades.

Already by the late 1980s, younger Latin American scholars were astonished to find out that a new breed of populist politicians in the region were able to implement neoliberal policies while also enjoying remarkably high levels of popular support—a phenomenon termed *neo-populism*. The most prominent such cases were those of Peruvian Alan García and, subsequently, Alberto Fujimori, also in Peru; Carlos Menem in Argentina; Fernando Collor de Mello in Brazil; and Carlos Salinas de Gortari in Mexico. In all these countries, populism enjoyed a second political epiphany, which distinguished it from classical populism in two respects: The first was its social bases, which now consisted of members of the urban informal sector and the rural poor, as opposed to the organized working class that was the mainstay of earlier Latin American populism; the second difference was, of course, the implementation of neoliberal policies instead of import substitution and state corporatism (Roberts 1995, Weyland 1999).

What therefore became the central puzzle in this new scholarship was the antinomy between populism and neoliberalism, and, in particular, "the rise of personalist leaders with broad-based support, who follow neoliberal prescriptions for economic austerity and market-oriented structural adjustments" (Roberts 1995: 82). According to mainstream theory, the endeavor of most Latin American countries for a neoliberal adjustment of their economies presented upcoming political entrepreneurs with new opportunities for

> the transformation and revival of populism under a new guise, one that is shaped by the breakdown of more institutionalized forms of political representation and the fiscal constraints that inhere in a context of public indebtedness and a diminished state apparatus. (Roberts 1995: 114)

There have been several gains from this particular scholarship on populism. First, there was a renewed interest in charismatic leadership emerging in politically pluralist, rather than oligarchic, systems (Weyland 2001: 14, Hawkins 2003: 1138)—a subject to which we are going to return later in Chapter 3.2. Second, Latin America's neoliberal populism exhibited much better comparability with other countries experimenting with similar solutions, such as those of Eastern Europe in the aftermath of communism (Weyland 1999, Gurov and Zankina 2014). Third, and perhaps most important of all, it offered extra proof that populism should rather be studied in a politically instrumental fashion—which, accordingly, would make its successes highly contingent on strategic political leadership and symbolic politics—rather than in a deterministic relationship to the state of the economy and the specific characteristics of the market.

The Contemporaries

In more recent years, the study of populism has grown—and is still growing—exponentially. In the field of comparative politics, in particular, populism has turned into a kind of "cottage industry" that, in coordination with often sentimentalist journalism and partisan punditry, has helped make it a modern buzzword. Largely based on the idea that a powerful populist zeitgeist, evident already by the early 1990s, has overwhelmed Western democracies (e.g., Mudde 2004), a global army of scholars has undertaken to analyze every nook and cranny of whatever one may term "populism." All in all, contemporary research has made headway in four moves: searching for ever-innovative definitions with general applicability; expanding its comparative scope to include more and more country or political party cases; increasingly banking on quantitative methods, also displaying a certain obsession to "measure" populism; and, even more recently, trying to link the findings of empirical analysis with a normative discussion about liberalism's decay and even democratic deconsolidation.

The search for definitions, first, is inexorably linked to how modern-day scholars approach populism by focusing on one or more of its essential characteristics. In a way strikingly similar to the blind men we met earlier, each of them touching just a part of the elephant's mass, populist scholars choose to focus attention on one or more specific features of populism while neglecting others that are also essential. Those features include strategic

leadership, ideology, discourse and symbolic patterns, mass mobilization capacity, style, and many more. But as long as attempts for a universal definition privilege some of those features to the expense of others, such attempts are bound to fall short and fail their initial purpose.

The second move is to swell the field in order to include more and more cases for analysis. Initially conducted by close-knit communities of scholars located mostly in Europe and Latin America (Weyland 1999, Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012, Hawkins and Silva 2015), the study of populism has suddenly gone global (Judis 2016, Moffitt 2016, Müller 2016a). The appearance of Donald Trump, in particular, has propelled a fresh wave of US scholarship on populism. New research communities have emerged in various other places in Southeast Asia, Australia, and Africa, dedicating themselves to the study of populist phenomena. But, given the lack of a common conceptual understanding of populism, let alone a causal theory of its emergence, the situation today looks paradoxically like it was during the first wave of scholarship back in the 1960s and 1970s: "populism" is everywhere and everything is "populist."

The third move of recent scholarship of populism is the emphasis on numbers and measurements. Perhaps because of the inability to settle the "what is" question, several students of populism took it upon themselves to assess degrees of populism utilizing either content analysis of populist discourse (e.g., Jagers and Walgrave 2007, Hawkins 2009) or textual analysis of manifestos and other party literature (e.g., Pauwels 2011, Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011, Aslanidis 2017). An even more recent area of growing interest is measuring populist attitudes at the mass social level (Akkerman et al. 2014, Rooduijn 2018). For all their sophistication, however, those efforts remain problematic as long as there is no agreement about what constitutes populism and what does not.

The fourth and more recent move of various scholars dealing with populism is to alert us about the growing threat of populism to liberal democracy and even to representative parliamentary politics (Urbinati 2014, Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018, Mounk 2018). In this particular perspective, populists represent—and, indeed, lead—insurgent anti-establishment forces that deny the legitimacy of mainstream parties and attack them as corrupt and elitist, detached from the ordinary voter. This may well be so, but it simply emphasizes the urgent need for a prior comparative empirical study of how populist parties behave, and succeed in their purposes, when they rise to power.

With so much water having flowed during past decades, does the bridge we stand on today still have firm foundations? Alas, they are far from solid. Despite the breathtaking expansion of output on populism, the basic problems encountered by the pioneers remain almost the same. Think of the concept's many intensions that, in the face of ostentatious claims to the opposite, still prevent agreement about what populism *is*. No wonder, then, that the extension of the concept has become so overstretched as to allow in the populist

universe disparate countries, political parties, or individual leaders without sufficient discrimination. This is why, lacking a theory about populism, we are still unable to understand its causes and micro-mechanisms, which would enable the application of countermeasures to combat it and, hopefully, rescue liberal democracy.

Inevitably, our indeterminacy about populism leads to awkward outcomes, particularly as long as insurgent parties become increasingly successful and, sometimes, even rise to power. Labeling all those insurgents "populist" simply shows that the conceptual and theoretical mileage that we can achieve is still small—and, in fact, some of it has been afforded in reverse gear. For, not only do we try to compare different—which is to say, non-comparable—cases to no obvious theoretical avail, but, more disturbingly, we sometimes are not even able to recognize populism when we see it. Let me illuminate these points by using three examples from a single year, 2016, which was precisely the year in which "populism" became a phenomenon.

The first quite remarkable event of the year was the so-called Brexit, that is, the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union (EU) after a referendum held on June 23, 2016, in which 52 percent of voters voted in favor of leaving the EU. That outcome was the result of increasing Euroskepticism in the UK, blended with growing anti-immigration sentiments, which were effectively expressed by the official campaign group for leaving the EU, aptly called Vote Leave. Without a doubt, the most important spokesman of the leave campaign was Nigel Farage, a former commodities trader and leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), who, repeatedly, had failed to win election to the British parliament. And yet, Farage, declaring himself the leader of the fight for "the people's 'revolution,'" was successful in carrying that out and, at the end, claimed Brexit to be "a victory for the real people."

The second momentous event was prompted by a rather amateurish coup d'état that was attempted in Turkey on July 15, 2016 against the increasingly autocratic government of Recep Erdoğan. When the coup failed, mass arrests of soldiers and civilians followed, accompanied by an extensive purge of judges, university professors, school teachers, and public officials that some characterized as a "countercoup" (*The Economist*, July 23, 2016). When pro-government protesters demanded the reinstitution of the death penalty, Erdoğan retorted that he was ready to endorse it "because the people will get what they want," to which he added, "sovereignty belongs to the people."[6] This, however, did not prevent the Turkish leader from declaring a state of emergency on July 20, that is, the suspension of parliamentary democracy and the introduction of rule by decree. When human and other social and individual rights were also suspended, Turkey ceased being an actual democracy.

[6] http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/en/originals/2016/11/turkey-how-erdogan-serious-about-death-penalty.html.

The third historic event of 2016 was the presidential election in the United States and Donald Trump's unexpected victory. He was voted into office having promised to punish the domestic political establishment, to clean up unsavory aspects of government practice disliked by many American voters, and to reinstitute the American dream. In short, he was elected in order to "Make America great again," a popular campaign slogan. As Trump further stated during his electoral campaign,

> Our movement is about replacing the failed and corrupt political establishment by a new government controlled by you, the American people. . . . The political establishment that is trying to stop us is the same group responsible for our disastrous trade deals, massive illegal immigration, and economic and foreign policies that have bled our country dry.[7]

As should be clear by the brief precis of the three cases, which occurred in quick succession during one single year, all of them were effected in the name of the people. It is no less clear, though, that those cases speak about quite different phenomena leading to dissimilar outcomes: A Euroskeptic nativist campaigned successfully for his country's departure from the EU; an autocratic leader suspended pluralist democracy by countercoup; and an egocentric candidate using pure populist discourse rallied against the political establishment to win a presidential election. Such obvious differences notwithstanding, many people—academics no less than journalists and pundits—still found it pertinent to label all three leaders populist. For instance, immediately after the conventional warning that "we should stop the inflationary use of the term 'populism,'" Jan-Werner Müller advised putting Farage, Erdoğan, and Trump into the same populist basket because their "group claims exclusively to represent the one authentic people" (Müller 2016b).

What does this analytical muddle and theoretical bewilderment tell us about the present state of research on populism? They indicate that, for all our apparent progress, the original problems remain. This is why, as populism seems to grow stronger, we still don't know how to deal with it. But to deal with it, we need to know what causes it in the first place. But to establish causality, we need to do meticulous empirical research on several significant cases of populist occurrence. But to do such empirical work, we need first to select our cases carefully and, if possible, universally. But to be able to select the cases, we must first proceed with a decent classificatory scheme that tells populists apart from non-populists. But to construct such a scheme, we need to have a clear and unambiguous definition of the object under consideration. It is only when we succeed with all the foregoing tasks that we may hope to end up with a sound theoretical framework for the comparative analysis of populism.

[7] Team Trump: "Donald Trump's Argument for America": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vST61W4bGm8.

1.2. DEALING WITH DEFICIENT PREMISES

In June 2016, *The Economist* published the following letter to the editor by one of its dismayed readers, closing with a valuable suggestion:

> *The Economist*'s addiction to the epithet 'populist' has spun out of control. You put that label on pitches and policies as different as hard-wired xenophobes, plutocrato-phobes [*sic*], economic chancers, thoughtful progressives, trade protectionists and political opportunists. Your recent list includes (among many others) Pat Buchanan, Marine Le Pen, the Kirchners, Jeremy Corbyn, assorted middle-European cryptofascists, the [UK newspaper] *Sun*, a long-established centrist Irish political party, [and] Latin American presidents who cap the pay of senior civil servants. . . . What do the members of this vast, ever-growing universe actually have in common? First, they seek to appeal to the people (find me the politician that doesn't). And second, *The Economist* doesn't approve of them. I suggest restraint. (*The Economist*, June 18, 2016)

Restraint, yes! But how is it achieved? This chapter continues with a brief discussion about the ways we have become accustomed to think about populism in general before it embarks on exposing specific conceptual and methodological deficiencies that must be overcome before arriving at what will be our major trophy in this part of the book—a minimal definition of modern populism.

Most of our thinking about populism stems from deductive reasoning. That is to say, it is based on general statements, or premises, which are thereafter used to reach a conclusion about whether some specific referent belongs in the populist class or not. By this logic, if the initial premise is true and its terms are clear, the conclusions reached are necessarily true. Yet, in practice, the premises set at the beginning are commonly intended to provide the sort of justification whereby, granting that the premises are true, the conclusion will be true as well.

Typically, in most of the literature about modern populism the argument is presented in the following form: Conditional on the premise that "Populism is *something* (e.g., a certain type of ideology, discourse, style, strategy, mobilization, economic policy, political logic, or whatever else one may choose as long as it seeks to appeal to 'the people') with characteristic(s) *x*," it is claimed that when a certain leader, political party or, indeed, an entire political system displays that something, the conclusion is reached that that specific leader, party, or polity is in fact populist. The argument takes the form:

Populism is *x*;
Y features *x*;
therefore, Y is populist.

In this logic (known as *modus ponens*, or affirming the antecedent), if the antecedent condition ("populism is *x*") is declared true, the consequent is also

true. The argument seems valid, but is it a sound argument as well? And how impervious is it to fallacy?

Deductive arguments are evaluated in terms of their validity and soundness. An argument is valid if and only if it is presented in a form that makes it impossible for the conclusion to be false if the premises are true. An argument is sound if it is both valid and its premises are actually true. Here is an example of an argument that is both valid and sound: On the premises that (a) all men are mortal and (b) John is a man, it is deduced that John is mortal. The problem with populism, however, is that, unlike "mortality" for which there can be no uncertainty, confusion reigns supreme when it comes to populism's antecedent conditions. In the relevant literature there are too many requisites for populism to obtain, none of which is thought of as superior to all others. Under these conditions, a perfectly valid argument may turn unsound, either because its premises are challenged or, more commonly, because they are not specified in clear and unambiguous terms, as shown by the following example:

All birds have beaks;
this creature has a beak;
therefore, this creature is a bird.

Such a good argument, only to be instantly falsified once it is revealed that the creature under consideration is in fact an octopus—an animal also equipped by nature with a beak. For presenting the previous argument in a way that is both valid and sound, therefore, one must clearly define "beak" as the external anatomical feature birds use for eating, preening, or feeding their young, which is characterized by two bony projections—the upper and lower mandibles—covered by a thin epidermis. This kind of clarity is necessary for distinguishing birds from octopuses by dint of having different beaks.

The lesson learned with regard to the study of populism is this: in deductive reasoning about populism, the antecedent premises can be judged true only if stated in a clear and unambiguous way, which will then suggest those operations that are necessary to determine or prove it. Simply granting the premises to be true does not suffice for reaching an *actually* true conclusion.

The difficulty of specifying the antecedent conditions of populism often leads scholarship to the opposite direction of reasoning, that is, to affirm the consequent. In this common fallacy, the consequent is held to be a necessary and sufficient condition for the antecedent, as shown here:

If *x*, then populism;
Y is populist;
therefore, Y features *x*.

The argument here unfolds in the following way: On the premise that something *x* (be it some ideology, discourse, style, strategy, mobilization, etc.) is declared to indicate populism, and having already classified unit Y as populist,

research simply demonstrates that Y features the populist *x*. Only that, in the lack of real empirical and methodologically sound analysis, this often opens the door to erroneous conclusions. But, once the door has been opened, conceptual and methodological deficiencies abound, and further thwart our efforts to understand the populist phenomenon.

In this chapter, I am going to call attention to what I consider the five major such methodological drawbacks that have plagued the study of populism: (i) lack of genus specification; (ii) essentialism; (iii) conceptual stretching; (iv) unclear negative pole(s); and (v) poor concept operationalization.

The Genus Problem

One should naturally begin by asking: In our preoccupation with populism, what is actually being compared at the highest level of generality? Classical (i.e., Aristotelian) logic dictates that "every definition must be stated in terms of *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*" (Hempel 1952: 5). The implication is, of course, that we must be comparing items that belong to the same genus, species, and subspecies—"in short, to the same class . . . [that] provides the 'similarity element' of comparability, while the 'differences' enter as the species of a genus, or the sub-species of a species" (Sartori 1970: 1036). Since in our analysis of populism we are bound to eventually engage with classifications *per genus et differentiam*, it is important that we are able to specify right from the beginning the general empirical universe to which this term applies.

Regrettably, at this point we are still far from a common agreement about which genus populism belongs to. As our previous glance at the literature has already shown, our empirical analysis of populism refers to several, most often diverse, types of phenomena (i.e., various genera) including political parties and social movements (Di Tella 1965: 47, Dix 1978, Germani 1978, Jansen 2011: 82); ideologies or "creeds" (Wiles 1969: 166, Laclau 1977: 172–3, Mudde 2004: 543, Stanley 2008); specific discursive patterns (Laclau 2005, Hawkins 2009: 1042, Pauwels 2011, Aslanidis 2016, Mouffe 2018); political strategies (Weyland 2001: 14, Betz 2002: 198, Ware 2002); representation "modes" (Roberts 2013: 39); or specific political styles (Kazin 1995, Knight 1998: 227, Moffitt and Tormey 2014, Moffitt 2016), some of which are particularly related to "communication techniques" (Jagers and Walgrave 2007, Urbinati 2013: 137), and many more.

The problem with this richness is that we are not certain about the family and genus of phenomena populism belongs to. A convenient method to deal with this problem is to minimize its importance and gloss over the maze. For example, after acknowledging that "there is some debate about what exactly populism is a type of: a discourse, a thin-centered ideology, or something else," scholars may simply decide to consider "these differences as minor [and]

use the terms 'discourse,' 'ideology,' 'outlook,' and 'worldview' somewhat interchangeably" (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 514). This is a self-defeating and eventually futile strategy. As will be shown shortly, a better way out of the genus maze is to envisage a high-level conceptualization of populism that would serve as the general analytical framework for our research purposes, within which all populist occurrences (the species and subspecies) can be conveniently classified.

Essentialism

Based on the view that populism is characterized by a set of attributes, properties, or other characteristics that are necessary to pin down the phenomenon, most conceptualizations of populism are essentialist rather than ontological—in other words, they try to capture its external characteristics (the form) while overlooking the actual stuff populism is made of, that is to say, its matter. This is, however, frustrating given that, although "attempts to capture the essence of populism have sprung up at different times and in different places, . . . it is very difficult to see a consistent pattern" (Taggart 2000: 10).

To give just one example, by canvassing the relatively recent literature on populism, Rooduijn (2014: 578) recorded no less than twelve characteristics mentioned in it: people-centrism; anti-elitism; homogeneity of the people; direct democracy; exclusionism; proclamation of a crisis; simplistic language; direct communication style; polarization; image of outsider; centralization of leader; and a loosely mediated relationship between leader and followers. This, clearly, is a far from complete list as further perusal of the literature reveals additional characteristics such as a strong moral element, charismatic leadership, and much more. In this view, populism ends up being treated as a family resemblance category—one, that is, whose members share a set of commonalities or defining attributes, not all of which are to be found in every instance (Collier and Mahon 1993).

This is a broadly used approach, one, however, that is beset with problems. First, as Hempel (1952: 6) warned, the notion of essential nature of some entity is so vague "as to render this characterization useless for the purposes of rigorous inquiry." Second, the situation is made worse with the accumulation of several such features and other properties lacking theoretical elaboration. What is "ideology"? What constitutes "morality" (and how do we perceive *immoral* in contemporary politics)? When does charismatic leadership obtain? Third, and perhaps most crucially, the same features that are recognized as essential in the various definitions of populism are often identical with properties declared necessary in other mass phenomena that are quite distinct from populism such as, for instance, millenarian and—whether ancient or modern—religious movements, charismatically led political communities,

regional or separatist parties, militant republicanism, contemporary right-wing or left-wing extremisms, nativism, nationalism, and even fascism. Take, for instance, "people-centrism" and its corollary notion of the supremacy of the "will of the people" which is central in several definitions of populism. Granted! But is there a single political system, whether democratic or not, that is not people-centered? "Even the most inhumane and authoritarian regimes in modern times," notes Worsley (1969: 245), "have, at least verbally, rationalized their authority in terms of some reference to the will of the people." The implication is clear: our analytical focus should shift from the concept's various "essential" properties to populism's general ontology; from the parts of the elephant to the animal itself.

Conceptual Stretching

The most visible result of augmenting the number of essential attributes that a phenomenon must possess in order to classify as "populism" is stretching the boundaries of the concept so that it may accommodate an ever-increasing number of empirical referents, albeit at the loss of connotative precision. Conceptual stretching causes indefiniteness and is conducive to undelimited conceptualizations. As astute Canovan (1981: 6) remarks, "[t]he more flexible the word has become, the more tempted political scientists have been to label 'populist' any movement or outlook that does not fit into any established category."

Indeed, as we have seen in our concise review of previous waves in the study of populism, conceptual stretching has been the ancestral sin. Witness the plethora of different collective and individual units lumped together under the rubric "populism" by one of the pioneering scholars:

> The Levellers; the Diggers; the Chartists; the Narodniki; the US populists; the Socialist-Revolutionaries; Gandhi; Sinn Fein; the Iron Guard; Social Credit in Alberta; Cárdenas; Haya de la Torre; the CCF in Saskatchewan; Poujade; Belaunde; Nyerere. (Wiles 1969: 178)

The situation has hardly improved since, leading many, like the reader of *The Economist* earlier in this chapter, to exasperation. Not only has "populism" been used to describe such qualitatively disparate phenomena as "Maoism, Nazism, Peronism, Nasserism" (Laclau 1977: 143–4), but, as the following example shows, the list of populists may expand at whim and in quite surprising ways:

> The two most successful populist leaders in late-twentieth and early twenty-first century Britain were Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair. There was a touch of populism in Gladstone and a stronger one in Lloyd George. . . . In continental

> Europe, Hitler was the most evil populist leader of our time, and perhaps of all time . . . In the United States, Franklin Roosevelt . . . thought he had a special relationship with the American people. In an earlier generation, William Jennings Bryan . . . [also] was a populist. (Marquand 2014)

Evidently, to lump together under the same conceptual roof dissimilar political parties across the globe—medieval or pre-capitalist movements, totalitarian systems, and nationalist ideologies—is certainly no help in our attempts to make sense of modern populism. We must avoid stretching the concept of populism to a point of meaninglessness and get instead a *general* concept with global applicability. To this purpose, we need to reduce the number of our concept's necessary, or defining, properties. It should not be forgotten that, assigned as we are with the task of constructing a mousetrap, it is mice after all that we want trapped and not other small mammals, reptiles, or unlucky birds of the field.

Negative Pole

Given that any definition serves to convey the meaning (*what is?*) of a concept, it "must embrace the whole of what it defines, but no more" (Sartori 1987: 182). Whatever remains outside the boundaries of the concept as delimited by the definition, forms an ontological contrary—what the concept is *not*. Therefore, when addressing the question "What is populism?" one should be able to also clearly posit its opposite: What is populism not? Only then will it become possible to decide whether a given entity is—ontologically speaking—populist or not.

As things stand, two opposites of populism have been suggested, elitism and pluralism, (cf., among others, Worsley 1993, Hayward 1996, Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013, Müller 2015), but both are problematic.

What is elitism? The term may refer to either "elite parties" or elitist ideas. The first option should be rejected for the mere lack of suitable empirical referents in contemporary politics. Elite parties, first described by Edmund Burke in the early 1770s, and best conceived as parliamentary assemblies of notables pursuing their political goals unsupported by the people (Gunther and Diamond 2003: 175–7), gradually evolved into so-called cadre parties, until they too became eclipsed by the modern mass (Duverger 1954) and later the catch-all party type (Kirchheimer 1966). Since the elite party is historically obsolete, a relic of the past, we run out of cases and the term in this sense must be dropped. The second option, elitist ideas, alludes to the interwar elitist school of thought and, in particular, Mosca's disdain for majorities, Pareto's circulation-of-elites theory, and Michels' famous "iron law of oligarchy." But, in modern liberal democracy, there are hardly any significant parties openly espousing such ideas.

Still, "elitism" may be salvaged as a mirror of populism if (and only if) one considers political liberalism as an elitist project. In this view, as nicely put by Hochschild (1984), "elitism is perfectly compatible with liberal democracy" as liberalism "has always relied on elites to save it from itself" (cited in Lasch 1991: 567). This critique is not a new one. It originates in early debates about Joseph Schumpeter's very notion of democracy[8] and continued with Bachrach's (1980) assessment of political liberalism as "democratic elitism." It logically leads, though, to juxtaposing populism not with elitism but with liberal democracy qua elite-devised project—a point to which I am going to return later on.

Besides being anti-elitists, populists are also considered to be "always anti-pluralist" on account of their "claim that they, and they alone, represent the people" (Müller 2016a: 3, 20). This of course goes as far as it may as a claim but cannot undo the fact that modern populism always develops in pluralist political systems, where a plurality of political ideas clash, and the number of parties is always in the plural (i.e., at least two parties).[9] When we say "pluralism," what we have in mind is *manyness*. And when pluralism is negated or otherwise discontinued, what we end up is *monism* (just one sole unit), which is the real opposite of pluralism. Plainly, then, if we insist on considering pluralism as an opposite to populism, we assign it the same conceptual meaning with monism and thus end up with a false synonymy.

Operationalization

Although not all concepts can be made operational (think, for instance, of beauty, love, virtue, or morality), clear conceptualization should ideally be accompanied by some kind of operationalization, that is, stating "the conditions, indeed the operations, by means of which a concept can be verified and, ultimately, measured" (Sartori 1970: 1045). Such operations necessitate the use of clear indicators or, in Hempel's own words (1952: 41), "criteria of application couched in terms of observational or experimental procedure." Concept operationalization should take the form: let x be what can be defined (and verified or falsified) via the indicators a, b, and c (Sartori 2009: 89). The problem is that the feasibility, let alone validity, of operationalization is

[8] As famously put in a nutshell: "[t]he democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individual [leaders] acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Shumpeter 1942: xxx).

[9] Note, in passing, the markedly anti-elitist element in pluralism. The *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia* defines "pluralism" as follows: "In political science, the view that in liberal democracies power is (or should be) dispersed among a variety of economic and ideological pressure groups and is not (or should not be) held by a single elite or group of elites" (cited in Plattner 2010: 89).

inversely proportional to the number of characteristics, or properties (i.e. the intension), inherent in our concept definition.

This alerts us further in two respects. First, the more its properties, the larger the number of operations we must undergo to verify the concept. Second, we must perform our operations with *all*, not only some, properties. It is probably because of such difficulties that operationalizing populism is still underdeveloped. Most efforts towards operationalization concern specific variables of the concept (the nature of its ideology, its discursive style, the characteristics of its leadership) rather than the concept itself. Such efforts include, among others, the distinction between "thin" and "thick" ideology (Freeden 1996, Stanley 2008), the content analysis of various populist manifestations, whether verbal or textual (Jagers and Walgrave 2007, Hawkins 2009, Pauwels 2011), and the status of populist leaders on the basis of various indicators (Levitsky and Loxton 2013).

A final note in this section is in order. Since modern populism, like any other political concept, is anchored in specific historical contexts and bound by distinct political and cultural modalities, it is important that our efforts to operationalize it must be attentive to precisely those contexts and modalities as they, and they alone, may provide the conditions and facilitate the necessary micro-mechanisms of populism to emerge and develop.

1.3. THE MINIMAL DEFINITION

The search for an apt definition of populism is not new and, sure enough, the difficulties associated with this enterprise are not small in number. As early as the very first conference on comparative populism held in 1967 at the LSE, Isaiah Berlin, serving as chairman of the concluding section, spoke to the rest of participants with these words:

> Now we must address ourselves to the biting of the sour apple, a difficult part of our proceedings, which is the attempt to formulate some kind of model or definition or formula into which we can fit all the various types and nuances of populism which have been discussed; or, if we think that we cannot do it, to give reasons for our failure to do so, which might be equally fruitful. (Berlin 1967: 114)

As shown in the previous sections, the failure to agree on a common understanding of modern populism is related to our mixing up, and studying together, different kinds of populism, which in turn has caused several methodological pitfalls. As we are now confronted with the steady increase of populism in the liberal democratic world and with an ever-increasing production of studies on populism in the academic world, we simply cannot afford, as Taguieff (1995: 25) implicitly suggests, to abandon attempts at a

rigorous definition. Now more than ever, we need a minimal (i.e., *per genus et differentiam*) definition of populism in the hope that, ultimately, we will be able to both classify our empirical cases and compare them in theoretically meaningful ways. This section undertakes the task to offer such a minimal definition of populism, which, by addressing the previous conceptual and methodological shortcomings, will make our concept theoretically more "general" and at the same time better able to cover greater empirical mileage.

A minimal definition is one that includes only the core, or constant, properties of the concept's referents while excluding the variable (or accompanying, or contingent) ones (Sartori 1984: 79). Since the core properties should alone be able to bound the concept extensionally, any variable properties are to be "treated as the focus of empirical investigation rather than as a matter of definition" (Collier and Gerring 2009: 5). Ideally, as Gerring (2001: 78) remarks, a minimal definition should be "perfectly substitutable"—which is to say that one ought to be able to replace "populism" in any sentence with the minimal definition with no loss of intended meaning.

That minimal definitions as just described are difficult to achieve hardly needs stressing. As Kurt Weyland (2001: 4) concedes, "[i]t is often difficult to identify characteristics that are necessary and jointly sufficient in classifying a case as an instance of a phenomenon and to distinguish those definitional attributes from background conditions, causes, functional requirements, and consequences, as Sartori demands. . . . The particularly confusing concept of populism provides a best case for this skeptical position." Keeping such difficulties in mind, here is another piece of expert advice to follow while engaging in reconceptualization:

> Make sure that the definiens of a concept is adequate and parsimonious: adequate in that it contains enough characteristics to identify the referents and their boundaries; parsimonious in that no accompanying property is included among the necessary, defining properties. (Sartori 1984: 56)

But this would hardly be the end of our difficulties. "Concepts," writes Goertz (2006: 27), "are about ontology. To develop a concept is more than providing a definition; it is deciding what is important about an entity." A concept's ontology is intimately related to causality. Good concepts have causal theories and hypotheses embedded in them, which is to say that they "must also possess theoretical, or systematic, import; i.e., they must permit the establishment of explanatory and predictive principles in the form of general laws and theories" (Hempel 1952: 46). It is from those theories and hypotheses that we set out to understand how a concept presents in the real world, interacts with its environment and, through various mechanisms, which vie for our explanation, causes change.

So, what is populism in the context of our contemporary liberal democratic world? Under this innocuous formulation we are compelled to treat populism

as an object concept (Sartori 1984: 84), that is, a concept used to identify distinct, albeit quite diverse, referents. On that account, and stripped to its essentials, populism could well be defined as the idea that political sovereignty belongs to and should be exercised by "the people" without regard to institutions. Obviously, the key term in the foregoing definition is "the people"—the meaning of which may differ from one place to another, and thus can only become clear after empirical and comparative research. Whatever the case, the foregoing conceptualization of populism entails four essential attributes of "the people": (a) its potential to form a political majority; (b) its allegedly homogeneous, oversoul nature; (c) its subservience to impersonal institutions; and (d) its belief of holding the moral right. All these attributes draw from early republicanism and, while not extraneous to the democratic principle, are fundamentally inimical to basic precepts of postwar liberal democracy, which demand (aa) preventing the tyranny of majority; (bb) promoting social plurality; (cc) protecting checks and balances by elevating them above individual interest; and (dd) advocating the rationality of ends rather than the morality of means.

That being so, and by taking our reconceptualizing effort only one little but brave step further, we may eventually achieve a truly minimal, as well as perfectly substitutable, definition as follows (where $=_{Df}$ stands for *equivalently defined as*):

Populism $=_{Df}$ Democratic illiberalism

This definition characterizes a whole class of political phenomena that develop in liberal democratic systems (including but not limited to individual leaders; movements and parties, whether in opposition or in government; party systems; political systems; ideologies or simpler sets of ideas; political discourses, rhetorical forms, and symbolic actions; and political strategies and policy packages) whose members combine just two characteristics: democraticness and illiberalism. Accordingly, the terms "populism" and "democratic illiberalism" will be used in this book interchangeably in our efforts to study modern populism—they carry exactly the same meaning and denote exactly the same thing.

Such a novel conceptualization of modern populism qua democratic illiberalism offers major methodological advantages since it adequately sorts out each and every of the shortcomings identified in the literature about populism.

More specifically, first, at the highest level of generality our minimal definition points to two different genera, democracy and illiberalism, which, however, may be combined perfectly well, as shown in Figure 1.1. Since parliamentary democracy can be differentiated into liberal (say, the Netherlands) and illiberal (say, Hungary), while illiberalism can be differentiated into democratic (say, Hungary) and nondemocratic (say, Francoist Spain),

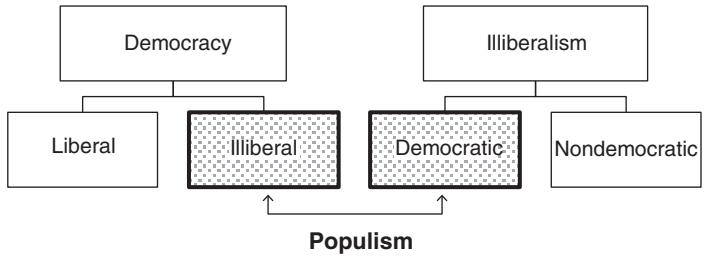


Figure 1.1. Populism per genus et differentiam

Table 1.1. Populism's necessary-and-sufficient-conditions concept structure

"Democratic"	"Illiberal"	Referent
1	1	1 *populist*
1	0	0 *liberal*
0	1	0 *nondemocratic*
0	0	0 *absurdum*

populism is the integrated result of "illiberal democracy" and "democratic illiberalism."[10]

Second, by reducing the concept's properties to bare bones, we both avoid the essentialist trap and achieve a clear grasp of what constitutes the ontology of populism. A concept's ontology rests on its core characteristics, or properties, which alone constitute what the phenomenon actually *is*. In this sense, our definition is indeed a minimal one in that it contains only two necessary properties—democraticness and illiberalism—which, when combined, yield the constitutive—i.e., necessary and sufficient—dimensions of modern populism, that is to say, the concept's very intension.

Third, precisely as a result of having established its intension, our concept is also well bounded extensionally with regard to the ensemble of referents to which it applies. In operational terms (shown in Table 1.1), only phenomena that score positively in *both* democraticness and illiberalism (1,1) may be classified as populist (e.g., Hungary). In contrast, the absence of illiberalism

[10] Accordingly, if we stick with Orbán's Hungary as our example, both of the following definitions refer to the same definiendum: (a) Hungarian populism is a democratic phenomenon which is illiberal or (b) Hungarian populism is an illiberal phenomenon also presenting the attributes of parliamentary democracy.

(1,0) makes for a referent that is liberal (e.g., the Netherlands) while the absence of democracy (0,1) signifies a nondemocratic referent (e.g., Francoist Spain). Regarding the absence of both dimensions (0,0), this is simply a contradiction in terms, a theoretical absurdity.[11]

Fourth, perhaps even more crucially, our minimal definition of modern populism points directly to its two negative poles, that is, political liberalism and nondemocratic autocracy. These distinctions establish what modern populism is not, at the same time providing us with a clear dichotomous view of our object: Populism is always democratic but never liberal. Such a conception points to two clear cleavage lines that may open up in modern politics and which are essential for further understanding the populist phenomenon: One cleavage dividing democratic from nondemocratic forces (which effectively pits liberals and populists jointly against autocratic nondemocrats), and another dividing liberal from broadly illiberal forces (which pits liberals against populists and nondemocrats jointly). I will return shortly to these distinctions (see Chapter 2.3) and use them to provide a novel, robust classification of parties, party systems, and regimes in which populism is present.

Fifth, the two core attributes of newly conceptualized populism bear a very traceable relation to sets of specific indicators, and therefore lend themselves to operationalization and empirical testing. Democraticness has two indicator variables—electoral contestation and constitutional legality; illiberalism involves three such variables—singular cleavage, adversarial politics, and majoritarianism (in contrast to liberalism's acceptance of plural cleavages, the pursuit of political moderation, and the protection of minority rights). When it comes to empirical analysis, then, if any of the indicator-level variables has value zero then its core dimension is also zero. For the latter to take a positive value, then, it is required that all indicators score positively.

So far, having established what populism is (democratic illiberalism) and what it is not (either political liberalism or autocracy), our concept has already become specific enough to attempt its empirical measurement and to try to comparatively assess its degrees in time and space. We are also fit at this point to code our populism-related variables in contradistinction to the variables related to either liberalism or democraticness, and make them the basis for quantitative analysis.

[11] Interestingly, and by some stretching of "liberalism," one could claim that there is at least one country case that falls within this category: Singapore. It recognizes multiple cleavages in society, pursues moderate and consensual politics, and respects the rule of law (Cherian 2000). But since it provides no full protection of political liberties, Singapore is hardly democratic. In a sense, Singapore resembles what one author has dubbed "undemocratic liberalism," or rights without democracy (Mounk 2018: 14).

1.4. THE OVERALL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

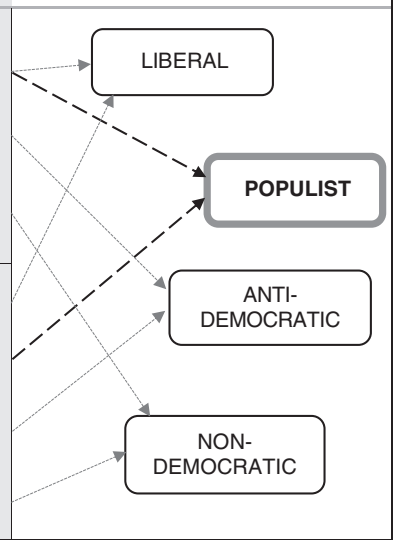
We need an overall classificatory and typological scheme that will allow us to seize the bewildering complexity and fluidity of contemporary liberal world politics, and place populist parties, or movements, which are the subject matter of this book, squarely into that maze. Such a scheme, besides of course its methodological firmness and analytical parsimony, should satisfy two research aims: First, to serve a mapping purpose, in a way that will convey useful and theoretically relevant information about populism in contemporary politics; and, second, to serve an explanatory purpose, so as to provide us with causally relevant insights for a more detailed empirical and comparative science. The framework presented in Table 1.2 intends to satisfy these aims and will be used as a comprehensive guide for analysis in the rest of the volume.

The table is based on, and begins causally with two **variables** (column A), *democraticness* and *liberalism*, which, depending on how they amalgamate, may constitute either liberal democracy or modern populism. Democraticness is herein treated in a binary way: A political party is democratic if and as long as it meets certain criteria, and it is nondemocratic if it fails to meet them. Therefore, unless a party is examined during a transitory state of its development, there can be no halfway situation (i.e., democratic hybrids).[12] When it comes to liberalism, the distinction is binary, too, but it also allows significant gradation for the illiberal parties since they may range from pro-democratic to antidemocratic and even to nondemocratic (in which latter case we have already entered the realm of autocratic politics).

From variables, our next causally logical step brings us to the **indicators** (column B in Table 1.2) that determine whether democraticness and illiberalism obtain so that a populist party may classify as such. Each indicator is broad enough but still easily operationalized and empirically observed in a number of meaningful ways. With respect to democraticness, it obtains when a party decides to contest non-violent or non-voter-intimidating elections *and* is able to—vocally or otherwise—demonstrate its allegiance to parliamentary democracy. In contrast, democraticness does not exist in systems with no electoral contestation. At single party level, it is declared null and void when the party

[12] To be sure, parties may often switch from one category, or party type, to another. For instance, several modern-day democratic nativist parties, like the Austrian FPÖ, the French National Front, the Italian National Alliance (dissolved in 2009) or, more recently, the Hungarian Jobbik, have nondemocratic roots. The FPÖ originates in Austrian Nazism (its first party leader, Anton Reinthaller, was a former Nazi Minister of Agriculture and SS officer), the Action Française was monarchist, the National Alliance sprang out of Italian fascism, while Jobbik was initially distinguished by Hungarian anti-Semitism and a spirit reminiscent of interwar authoritarianism. For the opposite outcome, i.e., a formerly democratic party switching to the nondemocratic camp, both Venezuela's United Socialist Party (PSUV) under President Maduro and Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) after the 2016 counter-coup of President Erdoğan are perfect examples of the trend.

Table 1.2. The overall framework of analysis for populist parties and their (core and variable) properties

A. Variables	B. Indicators	C. Classification	D. Typology of parties	E. Core properties of populist parties	F. Variable properties of populist parties
↑ Democratic ↓	DEMOCRATICNESS 1. Electoral contestation 2. Allegiance to democracy	i. Contestant, loyal ii. Contestant, disloyal iii. Non-contestant		Democratic	Mobilization Polarization Discourse Communication style
↑ Liberal ↓	(IL)LIBERALISM 3. Acceptance of plurality in society 4. Moderation *vs.* polarization 5. Rule of law *vs.* majority principle	iv. Liberal v. Illiberal; pro-democratic vi. Illiberal; antidemocratic vii. Illiberal repressive		Illiberal	Patronage politics Charismatic leadership Political moralism Contagiousness Other(. . .)

openly declares its opposition to parliamentarism. With respect to liberalism, it obtains when a party observes all the indicators that amount to it, namely, the acknowledgment of a plurality of divisions, and hence interests, in society; a clear preference for political moderation and consensual politics; and adherence to the rule of law, including the protection of minority rights. Inversely, we are in the domain of illiberalism when a party presents society as an antagonistic duel between "the people" and the "elites"; opts for polarization while shunning political compromise; and is willing to curb the law and violate minority rights to serve majoritarianism.

Evidently, in close interaction with the indicators, our two principle variables take different values along which individual political parties may now be located according to their democraticness (or its lack) *in combination with* their liberalism (or illiberalism). From variables and indicators, we can now move on to **classification** proper (column C in Table 1.2), that is, in our case, the ordering of political parties, or movements, in classes that, at least in ideal-typical form, can be said to be mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive.

In this way, the ordering that results from the democraticness criterion, first, yields three broad classes of parties:

1. Parties that contest competitive elections and are loyal to the democratic rules of game.
2. Parties that contest competitive elections but are disloyal to democratic politics, openly declaring their opposition to it.
3. Parties in nondemocratic systems that preclude contestation.

The ordering that results from the liberalism-to-illiberalism criterion, produces four additional classes of parties:

4. Liberal parties, those meeting all the criteria set for liberalism.
5. Illiberal parties that contest competitive elections and are loyal to democracy.
6. Illiberal parties that contest competitive elections but are disloyal to democracy.
7. Illiberal parties in nondemocratic systems; most often these have a monopoly on state violence and use political repression.

From classification we can then move to **typology** (column D in Table 1.2), which is a rather more complicated matter since, unlike classification, it "is an ordering of 'attributive compounds,' i.e., an ordering resulting from more than one criterion" (Sartori 1976: 125). By combining the core attributes of democraticness and liberalism, we come up with a simple but exhaustive fourfold typology of political parties for modern-day politics. Two of these types, liberal and populist, contain democratic parties, which are, however,

distinguished by their different stances towards political liberalism. The other two types, antidemocratic and nondemocratic, contain illiberal parties that are also inimical to parliamentary democracy. Their difference is that, while antidemocratic parties still contest democratic elections in the hope of overthrowing parliamentarism, nondemocratic ones belong to autocracies. Populist parties are clearly distinguished in our typology from both antidemocratic illiberal and nondemocratic parties, but also from democratic liberal ones. Notice, in passing, that the requirement of variable operationalization holds as one proceeds across the columns of the chart and examines the typology resulting from the classification.

From this point on, our analysis of populist parties parts ways with other party types, and their empirical referents, and becomes specific enough and specifically focused on modern populism, which, according to our minimal definition, is the result of only two **constant properties**—democraticness and illiberalism (column E in Table 1.2). Just put them together and you get populism.

A host of other secondary or **variable properties** (column F in Table 1.2) that also characterize populist parties—such as their distinct mobilization patterns; the strategic use of polarization, populist discourse, and particular communication styles; their susceptibility to patronage politics; the importance of charismatic leadership; the contagious effects they may have especially on liberal parties, and many others—also emerge in variable form and must be fruitfully analyzed at the empirical level for a better understanding of the populist phenomenon.

To recapitulate and conclude this short but crucial section, we have constructed a solid analytical framework that recommends itself on the grounds of being readily intelligible, theoretically parsimonious, and resting on variables that are easy to operationalize. The objection may be raised, perhaps, that, since the classes and types seem to occupy fixed locations, our framework is rather static and lacks process dynamics. This is, however, true only if one considers the individual party cases as static rather than dynamic political entities—which is anything but true. As noted earlier, parties are opportunistic organizations that develop in ever-shifting political contexts and for this reason are required to constantly adjust their strategic priorities and modify their political (and policy) positions. In short, they are expected to change positions along the two variable axes of democraticness and liberalism, and so move from one party-type box to another. This realization is particularly important for populist parties since they sit midway between liberalism and autocracy. The idea I want to convey is that, if a populist party loosens up its democratic component, it approaches autocracy; and that, vice versa, if it plays down its illiberal component, it approaches the liberal party ideal. This realization is of the utmost importance for politicians and policymakers alike. But more about that later in Chapter 7.

2

How to Distinguish Populists from Non-Populists?

Back in the early 1980s, in one of America's great universities, there was a political science professor who taught a class on research methodology. Already by his time, research in political science had begun to disregard qualitative methods and embrace quantitative ones instead, despite that same professor's warning that words and concepts always trump numbers alone—but let us not drift from the original story. One day, our professor went to teach his students how to do comparative research and his effort was to show that comparability is established only after asking the question: Comparable with respect to which characteristic or characteristics of the units under analysis? Failure to ask this question, he asserted, results in errors of classification, which, almost unfailingly, cause research shipwrecks. To impress the dangers of faulty comparison upon his students, the professor related the amusing story of Mr. Doe that I will now try to relay as accurately as I first heard it.

Mr. Doe prepares for his dissertation thesis and is at present thinking hard about a research hypothesis that will satisfy his adviser's demand for originality, the academic market's requirement for distinctiveness, and, of course, his own ambitions for an academic job. He decides to study the cat-dog on the hypothesis that all cat-dogs emit the distinct sound *bow-wow*. The advisor gives his go-ahead and a foundation offers him an over-generous research grant for worldwide comparative research. After one year of research, Mr. Doe returns to the advisor and admits that his hypothesis is disconfirmed for lack of universal applicability: Several cat-dogs, he explains, do emit the sound *bow-wow* but many do not. But here's my new hypothesis, he adds in earnest: All cat-dogs emit the sound *wah-wah*. With a new, no less generous grant at hand, the student goes back to the field for one more year but, once again, his hypothesis is not sustained: Many cat-dogs emit the noise *wah-wah* but many do not. Led by despair, Mr. Doe decides to visit the oracle in Delphi, who, perhaps out of sympathy for his frustrations, gives him an unusually straightforward answer. My friend, said the oracle, I will speak the simple truth to you: The cat-dog does not exist. What only exist are dogs and cats!

The sections in this chapter are about liberalism as the opposite of populism and the reasons why the proper study of populism is of such urgency at a time of apparent liberal democratic decay. What follows is meant to serve as a warning against the continuing misclassification of cases, which often leads to wasteful research. Based on our overall framework of analysis, a novel classificatory scheme will be introduced, complete with indicators amenable to operationalization, as well as a novel typology of political parties, including populist ones. The conclusion is that as "dogs" are safely separated from "cats," the search for the cat-dog will be confirmed to be ill-advised and imprudent at the very least.

2.1. UNDERSTANDING LIBERALISM

At about the same time that Berlin was unknowingly passing its last summer as a city divided in two by a wall, Francis Fukuyama appeared to be certain about the "unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism," especially when considering "the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism." History, he went on to proclaim, had reached "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy [was] the final form of human government" (Fukuyama 1989: 3, 4).

It was a premature conclusion. For, as it happened, especially after post-communist Russia's turn under Vladimir Putin's leadership into a political system with no resemblance to Western liberalism and China's entry into an impressive growth spiral under its distinctly illiberal and nondemocratic system, liberal democracy, almost imperceptibly, entered into a phase of growing malaise: Mainstream political and party structures across Europe and the Americas proved unable to face up to growing complexity, both at national and international levels, a new crop of populists came forward, and—whether because of deregulation, inefficiency, or both—the markets fell victim to calamitous economic and financial crises. Promptly, an ever-increasing number of academics and other intellectuals started to lament the shortcomings of liberalism, while others ventured to predict its demise (among the most recent crop of this "liberalism doom" literature, see, in particular, Brennan 2016, Krastev 2016, Krastev 2017, Lilla 2017, Luce 2017, Galston 2018, Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018, Mounk 2018, Runciman 2018). French novelist Michel Houellebecq, in his best-selling *Soumission* (2015), even envisioned the collapse of reason and Enlightenment ideas in France in a quest for irrational beliefs amidst social decay.

But, irrespective of how realistic or less so such fears may be about its future, what do we really mean by "liberalism"? Given the centrality of the concept in this book as the mirror image of modern populism, the question cannot be

evaded. In actual fact, it is necessary that we use this term in a way that is both conceptually precise and subject to empirical operationalization. Let us, then, begin with a common fallacy as stated by historian Alan Ryan. He notes that anyone trying to account for liberalism,

> is immediately faced with an embarrassing question: are we dealing with liberalism or with liberalisms? It is easy to list famous liberals; it is harder to say what they have in common. John Locke, Adam Smith, Montesquieu, Thomas Jefferson, John Stuart Mill, Lord Acton, T. H. Green, John Dewey, and contemporaries such as Isaiah Berlin and John Rawls are certainly liberals—but they do not agree about . . . central political issues. (Ryan 2012: 21)

This, too, is a facile conclusion. For, unless we declare the concept of liberalism devoid of specific meaning, there must be solid agreement on certain characteristics that constitute its core and which should be recognizable as a minimum requirement by all theorists of liberalism. Based on a necessarily selective review of the relevant literature, let me try in the brief account that follows to, first, contextualize liberalism within modern political history and, second, identify its *core* characteristics in order to stress the contrast between liberalism and it's chief contemporary foe, populism. Thereby hangs a tale.

> [Liberalism] has no foundation myth or year of birth. Although its intellectual sources go back as far as energy or curiosity will take you, it arose as a practice of politics in the years after 1815 across the Euro-Atlantic world, but nowhere significantly before. [It] responded to a novel condition of society energized by capitalism and shaken by revolution in which for better or worse material and ethical change now seemed ceaseless. Fawcett (2015: xii)[1]

Along the way, liberalism has been utilized within many a scholarly discourse in manifold ways, such as, for instance,

> an embattled vanguard project and constitutive of modernity itself, a fine-grained normative philosophy and a hegemonic mode of governability, the justificatory ideology of unrestrained capitalism and the richest ideological resource for its limitation. (Bell 2014: 683)

With all due respect to the foregoing approaches, the present book takes a somewhat different pathway. Following a historically sensitive and contextualist approach, it places liberalism firmly within the postwar period of Western politics. Rather than trying to trace the development of liberalism in earlier periods—and therefore unravel the plethora of "liberal languages" (Freeden 2005) that have developed at least since John Locke or explore the myriad of characteristics associated with it—our focus will stay on the specific

[1] On North American political thought, John Gunnell (1993) has argued that liberalism only became acknowledged as a distinct ideological current in the aftermath of World War One, and it became part of the academic mainstream just after the World War Two.

liberal *political* arrangement that grew in the postwar Western political world and which, by and large, is still prevalent. Accordingly, the present conception of liberalism will draw more from the thoughts of John Rawls, Michael Oakeshott, and William Riker rather than from such classical liberals as Locke, Kant, or Mill.

With the previous proviso in mind, and following Ian Buruma (2013), who stipulates 1945 as the Year Zero of present-day politics (similarly Judt 2010), our analysis will be concerned with the travails of liberalism in the postwar democratic world. Having emerged victorious over totalitarianism in large swaths of the world, which thereafter enjoyed unprecedented peace and seemingly continuous economic prosperity, liberal ideas became "a commonplace" and most citizens turned into "conscripts of liberalism" (Bell 2014: 689, 703). With liberal democracy now the canon, laymen, politicians, and various other pundits began to utilize the concept in innumerable, but hardly precise, ways.

At the same time, in academia, attempts to extract the constitutive elements of liberalism became a highly contested terrain. John Dunn (1979: 33) once lamented the "dismaying number of categories" that various authors have claimed as central to liberal ideology, "including political rationalism, hostility to autocracy, cultural distaste for conservatism and tradition, tolerance, and individualism" (Bell 2014: 684). Look closer, however, and it seems that, ever since its earlier beginnings but especially in postwar decades, liberalism has rested on three broad, distinct, and yet intertwined core ideas, or constitutive elements, which, to all intents and purposes, may account for all that is contained in the phrases "political liberalism" and "liberal democracy." These three core elements—the inevitable acceptance of plurality of divisions in society, the quest for political moderation and overlapping consensus, and respect for the rule of law and the rights of minorities—provide, I submit, a perfectly clear boundary between what *is* liberal from what is *not*.[2]

The differences between modern-day liberalism and populism are outlined in Table 2.1. In the brief sketch that follows, I flesh out the constitutive ideas of contemporary liberalism and contrast them with their exact opposite, democratic illiberalism, which, as already explained, I use synonymously with modern populism.

Table 2.1. Postwar liberalism contrasted with populism (Yes/No)

Core criteria	liberalism	populism
A plurality of social divisions	Y	N
Political moderation & consensus	Y	N
Rule of law & minority rights	Y	N

[2] In quite similar fashion, John Gray (2000) has identified liberalism's three core principles as follows: Plural values, liberal toleration, and rival freedoms.

Based on the core criteria of liberalism given in Table 2.1, an individual leader, political party, party system, or entire political system will be classified as liberal when they:

1. Acknowledge the reality of multiple, crosscutting cleavages in society.

Liberalism is based on the realization of social and political pluralism, that is to say, the acknowledgment of a plurality of social and political forces that are both independent from each other and non-exclusive. For the liberal mind, conflict of interests, let alone of beliefs, are a natural consequence of modernity and, hence, an inescapable social reality. Already by the late eighteenth century, liberals like Adam Smith had become fully aware that the pre-modern "thick moral consensus and social homogeneity [had] been eliminated by the large-scale social and symbolic transformations of [their] time" (Kalyvas and Katznelson 2008: 21).

Conceding conflict to be a matter of fact in modern society, liberals thus became concerned principally about how to tame it, transform it into fair competition, and ultimately channel it in a way that might serve socially useful ends. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the progression of such views met with opposition from both conservative and socialist parties, and was temporarily halted in the early twentieth century by fascism and communism. For conservatives, society was thought of as being at its root harmonious and divinely unified, which, consequently, necessitated that the polity is ruled by strict legal order and with no allowances for minority rights. For socialists, in contrast, society was seen as riven by two groups of unequal material wealth and status, rich capitalists and poor workers. Modern populism carries both conservative and socialist elements of the prewar illiberal era; it evokes traditional conservatism in that it advocates an inherently homogeneous and potentially harmonious majority of virtuous and hard-working people, and resembles socialism in its emphasis on the existence of only one major conflict line in society effectively separating a privileged minority from a disadvantaged majority. In both respects populism contrasts sharply with liberalism, which is premised on social diversity and the heterogeneity of interests.

2. Actively seek political moderation and the creation of overlapping consensus.

Having come to realize that conflict is never to be entirely overcome, but may instead become nasty and intense, and that lasting social accord is a rather foolish pursuit, liberals still trust that there are man-made ways to moderate—and contain—social discord. After all, as Gray has put it, "the liberal state originated in a search for modus vivendi . . . [and] the task we inherit [from early liberal thinkers] is refashioning liberal toleration so that it can guide the pursuit of modus vivendi in a more plural world" (Gray 2000: 1). Given that conflict is ubiquitous and unceasing in democratic societies, liberals are intent on moderating it. Conflict must be tamed and transformed into gainful competition; it has to be made productive in society, market, and

politics. As Rawls (2005: xxxix) has argued, the problem of political liberalism is how to establish, and preserve, a stable and just constitutional democratic society whose citizens are deeply divided by many conflicting, incommensurable and yet reasonable doctrines, whether liberal or not.

To explain how this may become possible, Rawls introduces the idea of "overlapping consensus" under which, once achieved, all conflicting doctrines will endorse the liberal political arrangement, each from its own point of view. Mutual toleration thus becomes a central idea in political liberalism with a very specific content, i.e., accepting one's political rivals as legitimate. It also suggests the need for forbearance, which is necessary to restrain the powerful in exercising legal rights and, on a broader polity level, to forego the possibility of "constitutional hardball" (see on this point Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018: 106–11 with reference to Tushnet 2004). To this end, liberals strive to produce man-made legal and other institutional frames with the aim of containing, and even normalizing, conflict. In contrast, populists, in a way quite similar to classical socialists, consider political adversity as an intrinsic characteristic of politics, which thus makes them more appreciative of polarizing confrontation than consensus-seeking and political compromise within the constitutional framework.

3. Defend constitutionalism, reinforce the rule of law, and protect minority rights.

The third idea that runs deep in liberal thinking is the emphasis on constitutional legality, the centrality of impartial rule of law, and the protection of minority rights lest the majority principle turn from a mere decision-making technique into a tyranny of the numerical majority represented, as it always is, by the people. Perhaps the best theoretical formulation of such ideas is in James Madison's belief in popular sovereignty through political representation. Contrary to Rousseau's enthusiasm for direct democracy and unconstrained majoritarianism, Madison advocated a government centered on representation lest it become self-subverted by citizenry-turning-into-mass, driven by passion rather than reason, the good over the right, and collectivist rather than general interests. "Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates," Madison wrote, "every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob."[3]

Decades later, these ideas would reflect on Isaiah Berlin's idea of "negative freedom," which was meant to ward off outside interference in citizens' freedom and prevent the tyranny of majority. For, as Berlin argued, "freedom for the pike is death for the minnows."[4] Modern populism is highly

[3] *The Federalist Papers*, No. 55: From the collection of papers by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, promoting ratification of the U.S. constitution, published 1788.

[4] In the same vein, as felicitously put by Leszek Kolakowski (quoted in Plattner 2010: 84), "[t]he principle of majority rule does not by itself constitute democracy; we know of tyrannical regimes that enjoyed the support of a majority including Nazi Germany and the Iranian theocracy. We do not call democratic a regime in which 51 percent of the population may slaughter the remaining 49 percent with impunity."

majoritarian in that it speaks in the name of the people—i.e., the natural majority in society. In doing so, it not only disrespects social minorities and their rights; it above all sacrifices constitutional legality and is ready to violate the rule of law to serve the amorphous, and certainly erratic, "general will." For populism, law equates with *vox populi*, the voice of the people, even if that voice is contrary to individual rationality, the general public good and, above all, the lawful institutions of the polity.

What should be emphasized at this point of analysis is the internal consistency of liberalism's three core features. For, not only are those intimately bound together to form a complete ideological system (cf., Gerring 1997), but they are also inescapably interdependent in making the system work. Political moderation and active consensus-seeking are necessary corollaries of the need to reconcile social differences and bridge political and ideological cleavages in the polity. And, rule of law and safeguarding minority rights are absolutely necessary for the institutional organization of socially diverse and yet politically moderate societies. Therefore, to produce a liberal democratic outcome, none of the foregoing core elements should be missing. Or, reversely, if at least one of those characteristics ceases to exist, political liberalism is doomed to fail.

After this overview, let us recapitulate by once again focusing on the distinction between postwar liberalism and modern-day populism with regard to their different theoretical tenets and political goals.

From a theoretical perspective, a modern liberal democratic polity is a finely institutionalized place where rational and progress-oriented individuals create pluralist societies under the ancillary authority of a limited and accountable state.[5] In such a polity, the principal component is the private individual set free from unnecessary state controls and enjoying inalienable rights (for a review, see Siedentop 2014). Each and every individual in society has the freedom to express themselves and to act without fear of oppression. But individuality[6] is also a restricted freedom, "because for each individual to have such freedom acknowledged requires that others be accorded it as well" (Freeden 2015b: 40). On the other hand, the liberal state is conceived strictly as a constitution-based *Rechtsstaat* that safeguards and monitors the rule of

[5] Empirically speaking, as Fawcett (2015: 308) suggests, if you want "a national model of twentieth-century liberal-democratic aims and ideals cast into realizable shape, it is hard to find a clearer statement than Germany's 1949 Basic Law."

[6] Individuality should not be confused with *individualism*. The latter draws attention to the role of self-interested and self-indulging (and often amoral) individuals claiming precedence over the social group in which they belong, or even the state; the word is sometimes also used as a synonym for social libertinism—an attitude that is rather apposite to radical neoliberalism. In contrast, individuality refers to the free development of one's own character within a certain community while acknowledging moral principles and the attainment of the common good.

law. Unless individual action endangers the public good, the state not only steers clear of interfering with individual development, but also remains neutral with regard to the clash of particular interests in society. At best, it is responsible for organizing the institutional and material environment that is most appropriate for the free development of its citizens' individual potential. Finally, within the liberal polity nexus, society is composed of disparate interest groups who, although divided by multiple social and other divisions, still act with rationality and reasonableness in search for progress and the common good. This is described in Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, in which individual vice produces public benefit, and of course depending on the quality of existing institutions and the states' ability to maintain and observe them, freely developing and rationally acting human beings in society have the means to bridge their differences and live in peace and relative prosperity.

But there is a catch. For all its emphasis on individual liberty, postwar liberalism has by and large been an *elitist* project. Not only was it generated in a distinctly top-down rather than bottom-up fashion, but its whys and wherefores are more apposite to societies' top-end sectors rather than to the masses of ordinary, middle-class people. Since it is this genetic characteristic of liberalism that makes it so vulnerable to emergent populism, it is worth probing it a bit further.

Postwar liberalism was firstly born in the minds of cosmopolitan thinkers in elite universities who, having learned bitter lessons from interwar failings and the war experience, thought of liberalism as the antidote to history's repeating itself. Urbane men and women like Karl Popper, Hannah Arendt, and Isaiah Berlin, originating from Vienna, Hanover, and Riga, respectively, subsequently dispersed to places like New Zealand, New York, and Oxford to work on what would become the theoretical and normative foundations of the postwar liberal order. Meanwhile, other worldly activist politicians, like Robert Schuman, a German-speaking French–Luxembourger from Lorraine who served twice as prime minister of France, and Jean Monnet, also an upper-class cultured Frenchman with an impressive network of worldwide connections that served him well during his career as a diplomat, applied the liberal principles to politics and thus the European Union was born. Everywhere in the Western world, socially suave and widely cultivated public intellectuals did their best to spread the liberal credo to their own societies and beyond. Think of Mexico's Octavio Paz, a poet and diplomat; Václav Havel, writer, philosopher, political dissident, and first president of the Czech Republic; Peru's Mario Vargas Llosa, a novelist and politician (about whom more will be said later in our analysis of Peruvian populism); Canada's Michael Ignatieff, an academic and politician—the list is long. Others, like Hungarian–American magnate George Soros tried energetically through international donations to support civil society initiatives around the world with a stated aim of advancing political liberalism.

These thinkers and politicians became fervent advocates of ideas that were profoundly elitist. Take, for instance, the idea of individual freedom (and free will) that lies at the heart of postwar political liberalism and which grossly overestimates human rationality, as well as the capacity of civil society to organize itself on the basis of free individual action within man-made institutions. However, in real-life liberal democratic states, the ordinary citizen must constantly toil against the frailty of human nature, confront deep-held fears and insecurities, fight against the innate adversity to risks, tame a natural penchant for evading the law and for free-riding, and demonstrate a steady preference for moral individualism over amoral collectivism, while at the same time enduring the straitjacket of "political correctness." Consider then the multiplicity of tasks that average citizens are charged with in liberal democracy: They must respect and, if necessary, defend the constitution (which elites have drafted and voted in); tolerate each other, as well as respect minorities and minority rights despite the differences among such groups and in spite of widespread social inequality; decide on freedom over equality; acknowledge the risks of the free market and snub over-reliance on the state; comply with general law and avoid sidestepping or otherwise violating it; believe in experimental social trial-and-error rather than in certainties, canonical truths, or post-truths; and accept a world and international order in which large and powerful nations may at times subordinate smaller and weaker ones. Well, that is perhaps too much for the average Joe to accept in order to satisfy an elitist project, its liberalism notwithstanding.

It is here that populism enters the picture as an alternative to contemporary political liberalism. It represents the political clash between those who make the world run and those who actually run it. In a very real sense, therefore, it is precisely the liberal elites' failure to attain their liberal democratic promise that is currently prompting disillusioned voters to turn against liberalism—massively, resentfully, and with a vengeance.

2.2. WHY POPULISM MATTERS

In *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945), a passionate defense of democracy written during the gloom of World War Two, Karl Popper offered a sound vindication of liberal democracy over totalitarianism, whether of its left or its right variant. Liberal democracy, he asserted, is the only form of government allowing the well-being of society without bloodshed. After the war, sealed with the defeat of Nazism on the battlefields, and with communism banished behind the Iron Curtain that was raised to divide Western from Eastern Europe, liberal democracy emerged triumphant, and opened a period of growth, prosperity, and enduring peace. Popper was certainly right.

During the postwar decades, in what became summarily known as "the Western democratic world" and during a succession of waves of democratization, the number of democracies around the world increased from just a handful in 1945 to nearly 120 by 2010, or some 60 percent of all states in an increasingly globalized world (Huntington 1991: 849–50).[7] Most impressive of all was the so-called "Third Wave" of democratization, which started with the democratic transitions in Portugal (1974), Greece (1974), and Spain (1975), expanded to Latin America to transform Peru (1979), Bolivia (1982), Argentina (1983), Brazil (1985), and Chile (1989) into pluralist states, then swept over several countries in Southeast Asia until, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, it broke with a force onto Eastern Europe and some of the successor states of the former Soviet Union. With the possible exceptions of the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan (none of them examined herein), all other Third Wave democracies in both Europe and Latin America (several of which will figure prominently in subsequent chapters) tried to emulate the distinctly *liberal* characteristics of the more mature Western democracies.

The earlier postwar decades became marked by two major developments: The seemingly incessant global economic expansion, which helped the growth of increasingly prosperous societies, and the mass participation of organized social interests in politics. Spurred on by spectacular economic progress and animated by progressive liberal visions—such as, for instance, T. H. Marshall's idea of "social citizenship" (1950)—almost everywhere in the brave new democratic world disposable incomes rose in tandem with the development of welfare state reforms in pensions, healthcare, and public education. In the long run, and as the secondary sector of the economy shrank while the service sector expanded, there emerged a broad—to a large extent, property-owning—middle class with faith in liberal democracy (Ravaillon 2010, Castellani et al. 2014). By the second half of the twentieth century, "the middle class constituted the vast majority of the population of most [Western] societies . . . [and this] increased the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a political system" (Fukuyama 2014: 439). Regarding political participation, initially aided by the catch-all nature of mass political parties (Kirchheimer 1966) and the strengthening of civic society, Western liberal democracies witnessed the massive entry of societies into active politics in a myriad of ways, including strikes and street demonstrations. In more recent years, the increasingly widespread use of social media, like Facebook or Twitter, has proved an effective medium for the promotion of particularistic demands. Eventually,

[7] In total, according to Huntington, there have been three distinct waves of democratization. The first—and longest—of them began in the 1820s and continued through the end of the nineteenth century. It was followed by a second brief wave that began in the immediate aftermath of World War Two, which then gave way to a much longer one that lasted from 1974 to about 2010.

the middle classes became much more than the "driving force" for economic development of young, postwar democracies (Lipset 1959, Adelman and Morris 1967, Barro 1999); their very existence also generated what William Easterly (2001) has termed a "middle class consensus" to further democratization—and hence a sustained economic growth with an ever-improved provision of public goods.

To be sure, liberal democracy goes hand in hand with a market economy, thus producing winners, but it also produces losers. Such an outcome is not necessarily a bad thing, as long as it occurs within established institutional norms and under conditions of equal (or, better, equitable) access to economic opportunity. It becomes problematic, however, when such opportunity is not universally accessible, and especially when wealth is obtained by violating the general institutional norm.[8] In such cases, not only do societies become more economically unequal, but they also suffer from the erosion of the democratic system's political legitimacy, which is exactly what happened after the 1980s in several liberal democracies around the world.

Since the early 1980s, income inequality has increased massively in most countries in Europe, Latin America, and the United States (Thurow 1987). By 1980, the top decile income share in Europe fell sharply to about 30 percent, after which it rose again to reach 35 percent in the 2010s (Piketty and Saez 2014: 838). In Latin America, income inequality increased and only began to decline in the 2000s due to a more progressive allocation of public spending (Gasparini and Lustig 2011). In the United States, income inequality simply exploded. The share of the top decile in society increased from 30–35 percent of national income in the late 1970s to 45–50 percent in the 2010s—an increase of fifteen points of national income (Piketty 2014: 294).

In addition to increased income inequality, liberal democracy has also suffered in recent decades from a growing deficit of political legitimation, which has two main aspects. The first concerns the diminishing capacity of governments for sustained production of goods and services that can satisfy societies' increased expectations and, therefore, their political support (Manin et al. 1999). The second is the decline of social trust, citizens' disengagement from mainstream politics, and the fast erosion of social capital in many democratic societies, both in Europe and the Americas (Putnam 1993, Putnam 2000), this eventually leading to what Mair (2013) once called the

[8] This may happen for a variety of reasons. One is, for instance, the race among an ever-increasing number of interest groups in society to use the political system for extracting particular benefits for themselves at the expense of the public good (Olson 1982). Or it may be the case that extractive economic institutions predominate over inclusive ones, which thus keeps the poor people poor and "prevent[s] them from embarking on a path to economic growth" (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012). In either of the above situations, non- (or not sufficiently) accountable political elites may, through their actions or omissions, undermine public trust in liberal democracy and produce social resentment.

"hollowing" of Western democracy. That being the case, contemporary liberal societies often get stuck in a social and political trap under a logic that Bo Rothstein explains in the following way: "Social trust will not increase because massive social inequality prevails, but the public policies that could remedy this situation cannot be established because there is a lack of trust" (Rothstein 2011: 162).

When economic inequality becomes strong and political legitimacy proves scarce, liberal democracy is in trouble. A central thesis in this book is that the contemporary surge of populism in various parts of the liberal democratic world—first imperceptibly, later on with astonishing force—is associated with the growing fear of the middle classes that the benefits they were able to win during the earlier postwar decades are being lost. This may, of course, be happening for many different reasons, including—but not limited to—market stagnation and rising economic inequality, demographic changes, globalization, technological innovation, political mismanagement at national or supranational level (think, for instance, of the recent Eurozone crisis), the rise of China (which offers an authoritarian alternative to embattled liberal democracy), or even the social anger of people who feel "alienated" because of the failures of Western modernity (see e.g., Mishra 2017).

Whatever the case, the bottom line is that the middle classes feel increasingly betrayed by their respective national political elites, resulting in a loss of trust in political liberalism and attempts to give vent to accumulated resentment. This may cause decay of the institutions of liberal democracy and, via a "revolution of rising frustrations" (Huntington 1965: 406), the rise of populism. Here comes another key premise in this book. When large segments in society lose their faith in liberal democracy (and reason is substituted with resentment, long-term interest with contentious passion), it is likely that opportunistic leaders—authentic demagogues in the classical Greek sense of the word—may emerge and produce a populist outcome. How exactly it may happen is explained in more appropriate chapters below.

At present, we have already arrived at the first major reason why modern populism matters such a great deal, formulated in the following proposition:

When liberalism goes into crisis, populism stands as an alternative type of democracy.

This realization rests on an elementary conception of representative democracy as having two antithetical facets, one liberal the other populist, each with its own empirical and normative presuppositions.[9] As democratic theorist

[9] It has been suggested that another type of representative democracy exists in contrast to populism, *technocracy*, which is defined as "a form of representation stressing the prominence of expertise in the identification and implementation of objective solutions to societal problems" (Caramani 2017: 55). This is an impractical and purely theoretical distinction, however, for at

William Riker has simply put it, "populism and liberalism exhaust all the possibilities of democratic theory" (Riker 1982: 241).[10] Contemporary democracies, therefore, resemble seesaws in playgrounds that, depending on the forces dynamically developing on each side of the beam and the relative position of the fulcrum, may swing toward a liberal or toward a populist direction.

When is it more likely that the seesaw will swing decisively towards populism? Given that each of the two antagonists conceives of democracy in sharply opposing ways, they also propose contrasting ways of how to practically arrange the major constituent units making up the democratic polity and organize their interrelations. There are three such units: The free-willed individual citizen; the civic society, conceived organically, and the state. Each of these units prioritizes different means for constituting a good polity: For the individual citizen, emphasis is placed on impersonal and fair institutions; for organic society the focus is on social values and ethical principles; as for the state, it puts first its coercive power, whether legitimate or not. Thus, to continue with our seesaw analogy, let us say that each of the proposed basic polity configurations corresponds to a different fulcrum which, depending on its substance and relative position, will eventually determine the seesaw's movement. The possible polity configurations are depicted by the triangular plane illustrations in Figures 2.1–2.3.[11]

In the liberal democratic polity, the pivotal role belongs to the private individual (Figure 2.1), acting however under constraints of impersonal institutions and the rule of law. In contrast, in the populist democratic order, primacy is given to an imaginary "people" allegedly consisting of an organic, majoritarian, and righteous social whole (Figure 2.2, p. 56). Because of such different polity arrangements, liberalism and populism, each representing a

least two reasons. Firstly, even the most minimalist (i.e., Shumpeterian) conception of modern representative democracy presupposes a certain amount of expertise and technical competence by elected officials, i.e., technocracy. Secondly, democratic technocracy, as defined above, lacks real empirical referents and, therefore, is reduced to theoretical abstraction. It is therefore hardly surprising that, in Caramani's book, the only case of a technocratic party mentioned is Italy's "Monti cabinet of 2011–12" (p. 65). Observe the case: In November 2011, upon the resignation of Silvio Berlusconi, Mario Monti, a respected professor of economics, was invited by Italy's president to form a new technocratic government, which he promptly did. In December 2012, and with new general elections forthcoming, Monti resigned from his position and, determined to contest the election, he created Civic Choice, a new centrist coalition party. At the polls, his party came fourth with a poor 10.5 percent of the general vote, after which Monti departed from the leadership and the party split. The short conclusion is that purely technocratic parties cannot thrive—not even endure—in a modern democracy. In contrast, technocracy is a rather common feature in various military or other nondemocratic regimes around the world, particularly in several Asian nations, most prominently China, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia.

[10] Other notable attempts similar to Riker's for distinguishing between alternative ideal types of representative democracy are to be found in Dahl 1956, O'Donnell 1994, Oakeshott 1996, Urbinati 1998, Canovan 1999, Levitsky and Way 2010.

[11] Note that, in each figure, the strongest polity unit is presented in bold characters and the weakest in pale gray color.

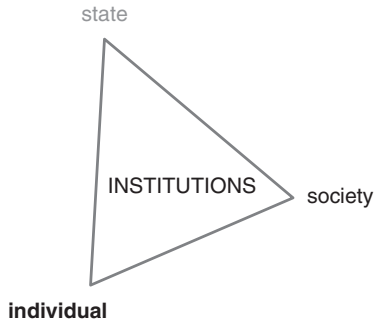


Figure 2.1. Liberalism's policy nexus

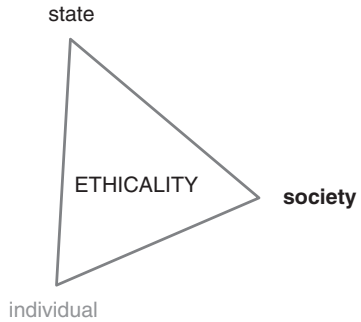


Figure 2.2. Populism's policy nexus

distinct democratic type, are also characterized by distinct patterns of political participation and produce different logics of voting. Yet, when considered together as democratic siblings, liberalism *and* populism should be distinguished from nondemocratic polities, those prioritizing the state over both private individuals and social majorities, as will be explained shortly. All these points require further elaboration.

Postwar liberal democracy, having fully acknowledged individual and civil rights for every man or woman in society, places most emphasis on the individual citizen. Liberalism, in fact, is generally defined as "the belief that it is the aim of politics to preserve individual rights and to maximize freedom of choice" (see relevant entry in McLean and McMillan 2009). This belief, consequently, gives ammunition to the primacy of individual values against the pressures of social collectivism (Gray 2000: 13). Society is therefore seen as a maze of socio-culturally differentiated, mostly voluntary associations, which, their crosscutting interests notwithstanding, eventually produce the consensus that is necessary for promotion of the common good. In the liberal democratic design, the state is the necessary evil. It is secular, with clear separation of its powers, and, when it becomes interventionist, it is only to use legitimate force

or contribute positively towards the common good. The liberal idea is about a limited constitutional government that operates under the related values of pluralism, toleration, autonomy, and consent.

The interplay of the three polity units as described above rests on a thick nexus of institutions whose working is guided by the following principles: First, in any democratic society (i.e., the commons), there exists an aggregate interest of the community of citizens, commonly referred to as "the public good" or "the common good." Second, no public good attainment is possible when there is a "tyranny of the majority" at the expense of minorities, whose interests are poorly or not at all protected. Third, the only way to attain the public good is by establishing external checks and balances to restrain individuals, groups of individuals, or the state itself from tyrannizing others. Fourth, established institutions should enjoy autonomy, lest some of them dominate others, and impartiality, lest favoritism outdo meritocracy. And, fifth, no majority is allowed to act adversely to the rights and interests of the rest of society or to the aggregate interest of the community.

Of the foregoing principles, the most difficult to attain is the last one. It clearly echoes the argument of *The Federalist Papers*, No. 10, which defines a majority as "a number of citizens . . . who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." How, and by whom, is that majority to be controlled lest it impose its tyranny over minorities? Madison has no real answer to offer other than his counsel about extending the electorate and making it more diverse in terms of interests—a rather impractical and often unrealistic suggestion. We are thus left with plain wishful thinking for checking the majority tyranny as expressed by, among others, Robert Dahl: "[B]ecause majorities are likely to be unstable and transitory in a large and pluralistic society, they are likely to be politically ineffective; and herein lies the basic protection against the exploitation of minorities" (Dahl 1956: 30).

No such a problem arises in the alternative type of democracy, populism, since in it the existence of a popular majority at society's level is seen as a welcome development. This view of democracy rests on Rousseau's idea of a "general will" residing in the majority of society, which should rightfully become politically sovereign. Democracy, in the populist view, gives priority to collective life and is a function of the will of majority. "The principle of majority rule prescribes that in choosing among alternatives, the alternative preferred by the greater number [of people] is selected" (Dahl 1956: 37–8). Anything that fails to express the majority principle is less than democratic.

As most scholars on the topic seem to agree, populism is basically about the right of "the people" as a compact and quasi-homogeneous social majority to set the rules of the democratic game according to both their interests and moral standards. In this conception of democracy, the state becomes the best

means available to the people to attain their goals while the private individual qua citizen loses its prevalence as the most important unit in the polity (Figure 2.2). Finally, and most crucially, the populist view of democracy rests, not on impartial institutions, but on the moral and ethical principles derived from belief in the sovereign people's natural righteousness and moral superiority over minorities, including society's elites.

Effectively, then, the model of populist democracy is based on one single principle: given a full range of policy and political preferences, rulers should always select and enforce those most preferred by the people. As put nicely by Edward Shils in his *Torment of Secrecy*:

> Populism proclaims that the will of the people as such is supreme over every other standard, over the standards of traditional institutions, over the autonomy of institutions and over the will of other strata. (Quoted in Canovan 1981: 183)

To sum up what has been said so far, in each of the two types of democracy described above political participation and voting take different forms, and follow different logics. In the liberal view of democracy, the purpose of voting is to avoid tyrannical majorities through institutional checks and balances: "The function of voting is to control officials, *and no more*" (Riker 1982: 9; emphasis in original). Elections may be decided on the basis of issues, proposed policy solutions, ideological predisposition, longstanding voters' party identification, leaders' personalities, or even the whimsicality of protest vote, but, in all cases, there are two assumptions—that the outcome of the vote is morally neutral and that the choice of the electorate may not be the right one, in which case the institutions in the polity will take care to prevent the establishment of a tyrannical majority until the next election produces a better government. For, as Madison believed, through periodic electoral tests democratic "representation elevates reason and checks passion" (Kalyvas and Katznelson 2008: 102).

The logic of voting in the populist view of democracy is quite different. Here, the morally sanctified will of the sovereign people is embodied in the action of elected officials who, consequently, are *meant to* serve it regardless of formal institutions or other legalistic constraints. In such a political arrangement, voting is a method for the righteous people to participate directly in the making of law, the latter considered to express the general will. And, since the outcome of the vote is always right, populist leaders can justify the tyranny of majority over social minorities on simple moral grounds. Moreover, the sovereign majority should not be restrained by external institutions, but only by constraints internalized in the majority's collective behavior system and ethical principles.

Notwithstanding many differences in polity organization, social mobilization, and electoral competition patterns, liberal and populist types of democracy should both be distinguished from autocracies. The latter include a whole gamut of

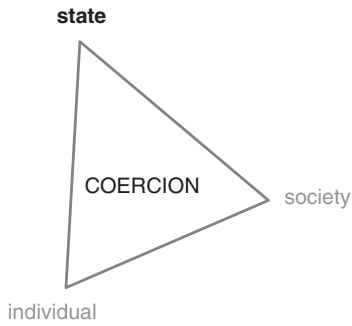


Figure 2.3. Autocracy's policy nexus

nondemocratic systems that appear in different guises in world politics ranging from authoritarianism (whether civilian or military, ideological or technocratic, right or left) to so-called "sultanistic" regimes and totalitarian systems (in either their left or right guises). Despite their several particularities, all autocracies display a basic polity arrangement, which, as shown in Figure 2.3, is characterized by high concentration and centralization of power at the top (where one finds a host of dictators, including the occasional Führer, Chairman, or Shah) and held together by political repression and the exclusion of potential challengers. Even if political parties are allowed at all, they remain state-controlled organizations serving the regimes' mass mobilization and corporatist purposes.

To be sure, an examination of autocracies falls outside the scope of this book save in one crucial respect, which is the second major reason why populism qua democratic illiberalism matters:

> **Standing uneasily between liberal democracy and autocracy, populism, especially when in power, may incline toward the latter rather than toward the former.**

This possibility is not without precedent as clearly demonstrated by several cases in Latin America (think of the Alberto Fujimori *autogolpe* in 1992 Peru or Venezuela's ongoing slide into authoritarianism under Nicolás Maduro), in Europe (where Hungary's Viktor Orbán explicitly wants to fashion a state modeled on authoritarian China, Russia, and Turkey), or even the United States, which has been demoted from a full democracy to a "flawed" version after the election of Donald Trump, according to The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index.[12] We are going to return to this "populist dilemma" later on, after we have examined in some empirical detail the country cases that best exemplify it.

[12] See https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index.

2.3. SPOTTING THE POPULISTS

So far, we have settled the issue of what is modern and contemporary populism (democratic illiberalism), what it stands in opposition to (liberal democracy), and why it is important to study it in comparative detail and theoretical depth (it is politically contagious and autocracy-prone). It is now time to explore the extension, or denotation, of the concept, that is, the concrete referents to which the term applies. The issue is particularly urgent as, with the recent explosion of populism, we are still unable to tell who the populists are, let alone tell populists apart from non-populists.

To impress the point, take for instance the 2016 rise of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency. Theorists, politicians, and other baffled pundits trying to understand his electoral victory labeled him "authoritarian" (cf., for one of the earliest reviews, Taub 2016), "authoritarian populist" (Norris 2016), "incipient fascist" (Douthat 2015), and even a downright "fascist" leader (Cooper 2015), while still others, rather curiously, saw in him "a textbook example of an ideological moderate" (Ahler and Broockman 2015). Former president Barack Obama, in a self-described rant at the end of the North American leaders' summit, argued that Trump's rhetoric and style do not constitute populism. "That's nativism," he held, "or xenophobia. Or worse. Or it's just cynicism."[13] Similarly, when asked whether Trump might be a pure populist, Michael Kazin, an authority on American populism, appeared perplexed because, as he said, he didn't "really get much of a sense of who the people are" in Trump's discourse (Chotiner 2016). Another authority on populism is confident that "while Occupy and Tea Party were essentially populist movements, . . . Trump is [not] a populist," to which he added for extra emphasis: "Yes, you read that right, . . . Trump is [not] a populist" (Mudde 2016).

The question, then, is: Which parties (their leaders included) can be categorized as populist? To provide an answer, we need to establish clear criteria for distinguishing populists from non-populists and, ideally, also develop a meaningful classification scheme able to locate the positions of populist parties in any national party system. Bearing in mind that "classification is a matter of 'either–or'" (Kalleberg 1966: 81), in the present chapter I am going to put forward a simple method of operationalization on our minimal definition of modern populism before engaging in a classification of party types in democracy, including populist ones.

As already seen in Chapter 1.4, modern populism qua democratic illiberalism effectively points to two core variables—democraticness and illiberalism—that sufficiently describe our concept (Figure 2.4).

[13] Obama's "epic rant" can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUMje1X2pKA.

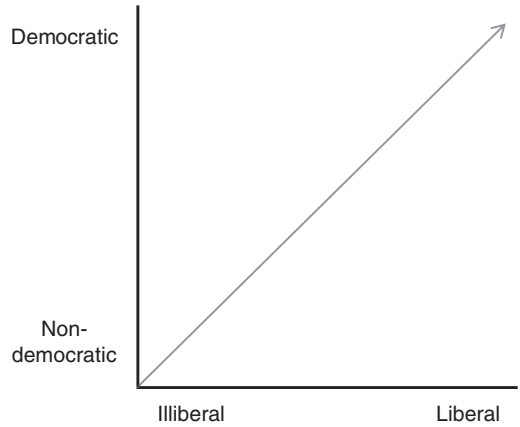


Figure 2.4. The core classificatory scheme

Following our terminological and conceptual disambiguation rules (see also the Glossary for terms used in this and following paragraphs), "democraticness" is fairly simple to determine empirically as it rests on two largely uncomplicated indicators: Electoral contestation and allegiance to parliamentarism. The first criterion is met whenever a party chooses to participate in competitive elections. Although electoral contestation effectively eliminates the possibility of one-party rule, it does not also mean allegiance to democracy. There are parties hostile to pluralism, which, however, choose to participate in competitive politics in an effort to overthrow democracy by democratic means. This, for instance, is the case in orthodox communist parties proclaiming the establishment of a "proletarian dictatorship" or in fascist parties calling for autocratic solutions. In such cases, the variable "allegiance to democracy" should be evaluated on the basis of the parties' ideological manifestos, official proclamations, leaders' speeches, or other public statements. If such parties actually aim at abolishing parliamentary democracy, they should classify as nondemocratic and, consequently, be dropped from the category of populist parties.

As of "illiberalism," it is herein the opposite of liberalism as analyzed in Chapter 2.1 (also see Glossary). It is conceptualized as the reverse side of liberalism's three core characteristics, namely, the acknowledgment that modern societies are divided by multiple, crosscutting cleavages; the endeavor to bridge such cleavages through moderate politics and consensus building; and respect for the rule of law and the protection of minority rights. In contrast, illiberal politics is motivated by a monochromatic rather than pluralist view of a world, in which the body politic in societies can belong to one of only two camps—one composed of "the people" and another comprising some "establishment," that is, the people's foes. In such a political environment where

dissent is not tolerated and overlapping consensus seems improbable, politics takes a distinctly antagonistic outlook revolving around incessant conflict. Inevitably, then, the *limited* majority principle—based on the idea that those in the majority should respect the rule of law and minority rights—becomes violated in favor of the rule of (numerical as well as moral) majority, which consists of "the people."

By combining the core properties of modern populism, we are now in a position to operationalize populism and, conceivably, even measure its intensity along a gradational scale. A party is, then, populist when it

1. Participates in competitive elections;
2. Holds allegiance to the rules and procedures of parliamentary democracy;
3. Posits that society is split along only one line, effectively dividing "the people" from some elite;
4. Promotes political polarization at the expense of consensus and moderation;
5. Exalts majoritarianism at the expense of the rule of law.

Accordingly, and using an empirically backed scoring system based on yes/no answers, parties will be classified as populist when they score "yes" in all five of the foregoing indicators. Conversely, even a single "no" answer will suffice to disqualify a party from membership in the populist universe. With this kind of operationalization, any doubt about Donald Trump being a quintessential populist should be eliminated.

But we can go even further. Having identified populism empirically along both democratic–nondemocratic and illiberal–liberal axes, it is now possible to introduce a neat and innovative classification of all modern party types, including populist ones. A classification, writes Sartori (2009: 135, echoing Hempel 1952: 51 and Kalleberg 1966), is "an ordering whose objects are assigned to mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive classes," thus making it possible to organize the ensemble of observables into distinct classes. Figures 2.5 through 2.7 show how we can advance from our basic classificatory scheme of two core variables (Figure 2.4) to a more elaborate one in which the empirical observables and referents of those variables are properly "unpacked" and reordered into more specific categories.

Beginning with Figure 2.5, there are already two novelties in our initial two-dimensional mapping of party positions. First, the vertical democracy-to-non-democracy axis is broken down into two specific variables: Electoral contestation and democratic allegiance. In this way, while the parliamentary democratic lump remains unaltered (i.e., all contesting parties are loyal to parliamentarism), we achieve a breakdown of the anti-parliamentary lump into two distinct classes of parties: (a) those that contest elections but are disloyal to democratic rule and, in fact, aim to topple parliamentarism (these I term *antidemocratic*) and (b) those that do not contest elections, whether

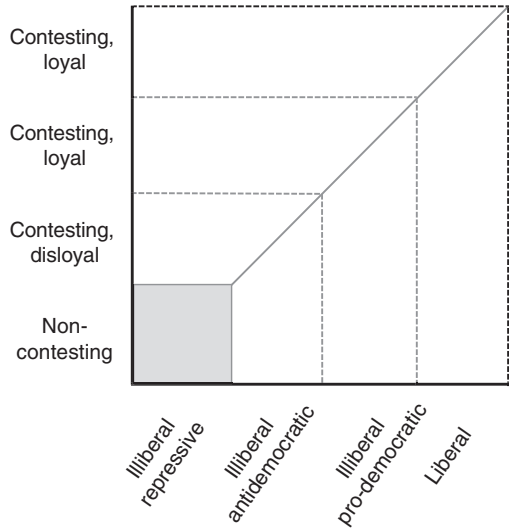


Figure 2.5. Unpacking the core variables

because they operate outside the grid of electoral politics as extra-parliamentary forces or, more simply, they are in charge of nondemocratic systems (these I term *nondemocratic*).[14]

The second novelty in my analysis is that I also break down the horizontal illiberalism-to-liberalism axis into three distinct categories based on whether illiberalism is (a) repressive or not, and (b) whether it represents a pro-democratic or antidemocratic political force. Obviously, given that repressive illiberalism is not tolerated in democracy, the class of "repressive illiberalism" accords with ruling parties in nondemocratic regimes (think, for instance, of the Workers' Party in North Korea but also of less extreme autocratic systems). Even more important, however, is the distinction between antidemocratic illiberalism, which corresponds to contesting but disloyal parties (say, Greece's Golden Dawn), and pro-democracy illiberalism, which is the domain par excellence of modern populism.

All in all, then, the combination of our two core criteria yields the following four classes of political parties and corresponding party systems: One-party nondemocratic; antidemocratic; populist; and liberal. These categories, I submit, exhaust all possible party types in modern and contemporary politics.

The one-party notion applies to monistic, noncompetitive, single-party systems in which political participation is either nonexistent or, at best, highly

[14] Note that my classification effectively eliminates the gray zones of "competitive authoritarianism" (Levitsky and Way 2010) or, in slightly different language, "electoral authoritarianism" (Schedler 2006). Ruling parties in such systems are considered to be nondemocratic as long as they preclude government turnout.

restrained, regimented, and monitored. The clearest manifestation of one-party polities is, of course, the repressive party–state system serving the purposes of the state rather than society's. Although we will not deal with such systems further in this book, it is worth noting that they should not be confused with hegemonic party systems (Sartori 1976: 230–8). The latter are pluralist but one-party-centered systems, which denotes a democratic arrangement in which only one party is the protagonist albeit that it coexists with other secondary parties.

Empirically and conceptually different from one-party nondemocratic is the notion of a competitive antidemocratic party—a combination of disloyal contestation and illiberal ideological stance. The difference lies in the fact that these parties do take part in competitive elections. The antidemocratic class, therefore, includes parties that operate within and under the rules of representative electoral democracy but stand explicitly against it and strive for its overthrow. In the world of real democratic politics, such parties are neither numerous nor sizeable; in fact, they are absent from the party systems of several democracies. But there are also a few party systems that display more than one such party as in, for instance, contemporary Greece featuring the Communist Party (KKE) and the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn (GD).

Finally, liberal and populist parties both contest democratic elections. Although all of them are committed to the idea of representative parliamentary democracy, their key difference is that, while the former class of parties—which, let it be stressed, still forms the vast majority of all political parties in modern representative democracies—abides by the principles of political liberalism, the class of populist parties—a minority, albeit a growing one—is animated by such illiberal ideas as those that have already been explained.

We may at this point dispense altogether with analysis of the one-party nondemocratic class since it lies outside the scope and beyond the purposes of this book. According to the core criteria already established and confirmed in Figure 2.6, this leaves us with only three classes of electorally democratic party types: Liberal (L); populist (P); and antidemocratic (A).

Figure 2.7 reveals quite clearly the location of populist parties in the party (and party systems) universe. It also indicates that, like all other party types, the populists are dispersed in both left and right, but this is hardly their most important distinction. For, as we have established, populism is at minimum the political expression of democratic illiberalism, whether it develops on the left, on the right, or on both left and right.

We have accomplished two goals: First, we have established unabiguous criteria for identifying populist parties and, second, we have produced a neat typology of all possible party types in representative democracy, which will in later sections help us make sense of electoral and party competition patterns in various countries. Before leaving this chapter, however, it is worth adding to our overall classificatory and typological scheme one more variable that

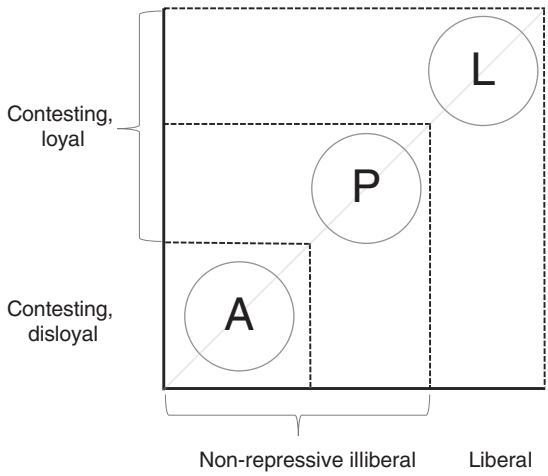


Figure 2.6. Classifying parties contesting democratic elections

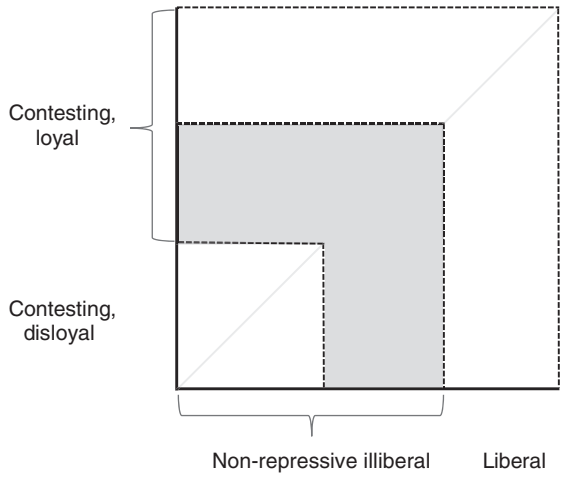


Figure 2.7. Spot the populists

usually inteacts with both democraticness and (il)iberalism: the left–right ideological continuum. As shown in Figure 2.8, this addition produces a multi-dimensional space that develops along three distinct cleavage lines that often coexist in contemporary democratic politics infected by populism: Democratic (contesting loyal) vs. antidemocratic (contesting disloyal); liberal vs. (non-repressive) illiberal; and left vs. right.

For impressioninstic reasons, I have used the example of the post-2012 Greek party system to exemplify all possible divisions that may exist in modern electoral politics. Since, to the best of my knowledge, Greece's party system is the only one that includes all possible types of parties with

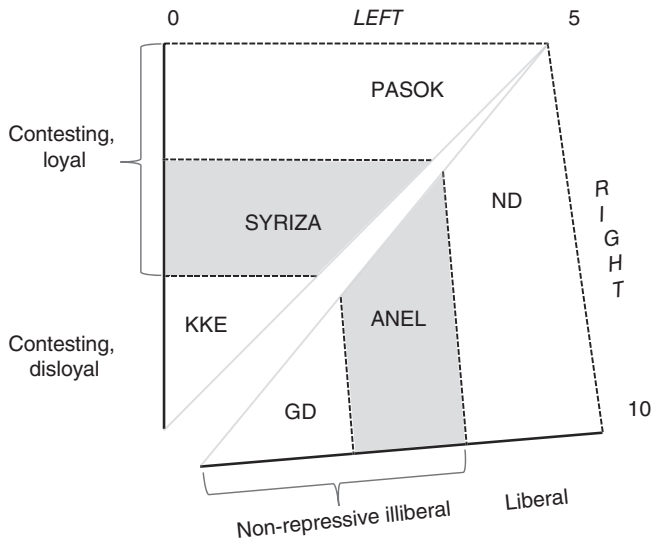


Figure 2.8. Classifying Greece's main parties after the 2012 party system restructuring

correspondence to all three cleavages listed above, it not only provides a perfect empirical elaboration of the theoretical points already made but also offers valuable intuitions about how populist parties may behave in the arena of democratic electoral competition, the kind of strategic alliances they may seek, and the political tensions they are likely to feel as they find themselves squeezed between democratic and antidemocratic forces. We are going to return to these issues in subsequent chapters.

2.4. TELLING NON-POPULISTS APART

Perhaps the biggest problem in the comparative analysis of populism is *misclassification*: the grouping together of entities that are not really comparable. Consider, for instance, the cases of the Dutch Freedom Party led by Geert Wilders, the Turkish Justice and Development Party led by Recep Erdoğan, and Venezuela's United Socialist Party during its continuous transformations since its foundation in 1998 under the successive presidencies of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro. Under what definition are all three of them, at all times of their development, populist, as they are often presented in both academic and popular presses? Since such a definition does not exist, and unless of course one is willing to stretch any of the existing definitions to breaking point, we end up with the Sartorian (for he was the Columbia

professor in our earlier parable) cat-dogs or, worse, cat-dog-bats, that is, pseudo-classes of incomparable items (Sartori 1991: 247). An apposite example of such a fictitious menagerie is the so-called "populist radical right" (PRR) party type, a large quasi-class that conflates an impressive variety of cases.

The term PRR was coined by Cas Mudde in his effort to produce a "maximum definition" to accommodate all members of the extreme and radical right family displaying at once three "core ideological features": nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde 2007: 22). Now, if you ask me what the utility of a maximum definition is, other than that it can serve precisely as a basket for disposing of disparate cases, I honestly have no answer, especially given the several methodological inconsistencies this method entails. The PRR category, first of all, seeks to combine three characteristics of unequal weight: Two of those are considered to be "ideologies" (nativism and populism), while the third, authoritarianism, is described as just "the belief in a strictly ordered society," which, demonstrating perfect prevarication, "does not necessarily mean an antidemocratic attitude, but neither does it preclude one" (Mudde 2007: 23). It is further held that, from the three constituent characteristics of the PRR class of parties, "the key ideological feature . . . is nativism," which further consists of "a combination of nationalism and xenophobia" (p. 22; also pp. 26 and 138), thus raising the total number of characteristics for this class to no fewer than five. However, at the end, and despite the declared prominence of nativism over populism (and authoritarianism), Mudde chooses to adopt as best for describing his PRR family of parties the terms "'radical right populism' or 'populist radical right'" (p. 24). But as, rather inexplicably, populism has now far outgrown the other core features of the PRR group, left populism disappears altogether and populism becomes synonymous with the "radical right." Meanwhile, as populism has been transformed from definiendum (what is to be defined) to simple definiens (what serves to define) of the radical right, we have ended up with a perfect cat-dog-bat, and worse.[15]

In this section, holding firmly to the *genus et differentiam* mode of analysis that we have used so far, the aim is to disaggregate a large number of parties that are misleadingly labeled "populist" and classify them into theoretical categories that are mutually exclusive, jointly exhaustive, and empirically useful. To paraphrase Tolstoy, all populist parties are alike; each non-populist party is different in its own way. Three types of parties are misclassified as

[15] Other authors add more criteria. Van der Brug et al. (2014: 67), for instance, focus heavily on the anti-immigration stance of PRR parties: "The most important ideological feature shared by [radical right parties] . . . is their resentment against immigrants and the immigration policies enacted by European governments." Others concentrate on Euroskepticism more generally and opposition to further European unification more specifically (e.g., Arzheimer 2015), while still others center on nationalism (e.g., Halikiopoulou et al. 2012).

populist and each of them represents a specific challenge to liberal democracy, but none of those challenges is similar to the one posed by modern populism.

The first of the three categories, already discussed in Section 2.3, comprises *antidemocratic* forces, i.e., parties that, although participating in competitive elections, do not really abide by the principles and goals of pluralist parliamentary democracy. Instead, these parties are eager to scrap such principles and goals if only given the chance. In this class belong, quite obviously, both far right and far left parties advocating a communist or a fascist state respectively.

A second category of political forces that are commonly, but erroneously, lumped together with populist ones consists of specifically *nativist* parties, i.e., those pursuing a "policy of protecting the interests of native-born or established inhabitants against those of immigrants."[16] Such parties will be shown to thrive on typically liberal, albeit often ultra-conservative, agendas for native populations to the exclusion of alien ones.

The third category of parties that is distinct from the populist class concerns *regionalist*, *separatist*, or *secessionist* parties or movements. They also may utilize rhetorical and other symbolic tropes that are common to populism, but this does not make them populist. Their political existence rather depends on taking sides along the standard center–periphery (or nation–region) cleavage, and their target groups are regional or specific ethnic and cultural subgroups rather than entire national electorates. What follows is a more detailed analysis of the party types that should be kept analytically distinct from populism.

Antidemocrats

Ask yourself: Was Hitler (or Mussolini, if you so prefer) a populist? If you apply most definitions of populism currently in vogue, you are compelled to give a positive answer. For instance, to take just one definition with some currency in the literature on populism, Hitler certainly relied on "an ideology [that] pits a virtuous and homogenous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice" (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008: 3). On that definition, Hitler is a perfect populist since, by attacking the Treaty of Versailles, allegedly used by "outsiders" in order to destroy Germany, he promoted the ideology of pan-Germanism and created a *volkisch* movement which set the "virtuous" and "undivided" German people against communism and international capitalism, in addition of course to a global Jewish conspiracy. As Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek would concur, Nazism "definitely is a kind of populism" since it sets the community of

[16] *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of "nativism" at https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/nativism.

[German] nationals against the Jew, who is "selected as the enemy, the singular agent behind all threats to the people" (Žižek 2006: 556).

The problem in this case, and the major reason for our recklessness in labeling disparate phenomena as "populist," is ambivalence about the overall genus, i.e., the highest level of generality at which comparisons are attempted. Since one should begin from the higher level of generality, the first issue to be addressed is whether Hitler was a democrat or a non-democrat. The answer to this depends on whether our interest in Hitler and his party concerns the period before January 1933, when he was appointed chancellor, or the period after it, in which he established totalitarianism. Pre-1933, Hitler should best be classified as an antidemocrat since his party participated in competitive elections, albeit with the clear purpose of overthrowing the Weimar Republic and replacing it with a nondemocratic system, Nazism. Post-1933, Hitler classifies as a nondemocratic, and indeed totalitarian, leader since he established a one-party repressive regime. The important point to note, therefore, is that at the crucial genus level it is quite unimportant whether Hitler was a populist or not. This is because the criterion at the higher level is whether he was a democrat (which he never was), an anti-democrat (which he was until 1933), or a non-democrat (which he became after 1933), and this trumps the lower-level criterion of whether he was a liberal or an illiberal politician. In other words, lack of democracy (in this case, Hitler's Nazism) is the "overarching" phenomenon (Collier and Levitsky 1997) that effectively subsumes illiberalism to the point of making it nearly irrelevant. Accordingly, since Hitler, or Mussolini, or their political brethren, are classified adequately enough as non-democrats, it becomes a trifling matter whether some of them (like Hitler and Mussolini *before* coming to power) also displayed traits of populism. As Worsley nicely drives it home, when our interest is with nondemocratic or antidemocratic parties,

> [p]opulism is only an *element*, not the dominant feature . . . Nazism had many other crucial sources of social support. . . . And the demobilization of opposition and the inducement of conformity by the use of systematic violence—the SA, the SS and the Gestapo—were quite as important as any appeals of a populist kind.
> (Worsley 1969: 242, emphasis in original)

By a similar logic, we should distinguish populism from contemporary parties that contest elections but openly espouse such antidemocratic ideas as fascism, neo-Nazism, or communism. Let us try to somehow solidify this point by looking at the profiles of three of Europe's most prominent antidemocratic parties: Greece's Golden Dawn, Hungary's Jobbik, and the early National Front in France.[17]

[17] Other parties that belong in this group include the neo-fascist British National Party (BNP), which, after its former leader Nick Griffin stepped down in 2014, has practically

Perhaps the most typical party in this category is the Greek Golden Dawn (GD), a neo-Nazi party that entered Greece's parliament after the 2012 national elections.[18] It stands firmly against competitive representative democracy and fights against what it calls "liberalism–universalism." It considers the Greek political system a "pseudo-democracy" and a "parliamentary dictatorship," rejects the politics of "the parties of the constitutional spectrum," and demands "direct democracy" in the form of referenda on all major political issues (Ellinas 2014: 4, Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015, Dinas et al. 2016). In perfect terminological confusion, but still using typical symbolic themes from the populist toolkit, GD holds that "[d]emocracy means the state of the demos, that is of the People, made up of individuals' common descent" (Ellinas 2013: 550). In its official manifesto, it embraces nationalism, which it considers "the third major ideology in history," and aims to establish "a state grounded and built on this ideology that nurtures and guides individual and collective life" (quoted in Ellinas 2013: 549). To achieve its political aims, GD, empowered by a military-like organization structure and inspired by the triptych of "blood, struggle, and sacrifice," often engages in organized street violence, which, besides numerous physical attacks against immigrants, politicians, and other political opponents, has also occasioned several deaths. The anti-system character of this party became particularly evident after the criminal prosecution and imprisonment of its leader and several of its MPs in 2013, when, from their prison cells, they intensified virulent anti-parliamentary discourse, also making a practice of mocking democracy and its institutions, such as the judiciary, the police, and the press.

Another initially antidemocratic right-wing party is the Hungarian Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), which was founded in 2003 but emerged as a significant political force only in 2009 (see Pirro 2015). Animated by anti-immigration (especially anti-Roma), anti-capitalist, and anti-EU spirits, it became ideologically and politically located to the right of the populist Federation of Young Democrats (Fidesz), with which it shares "a number of ideological positions, most relevantly [negative] attitudes towards leftist and liberal elites" (Enyedi 2015b: 9). But, unlike Fidesz, Jobbik initially opposed both political liberalism and electoral parliamentary democracy; and because

disappeared (Goodwin 2011); the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD), which occasionally won seats in regional assemblies but not in the Bundestag; the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI), which had some electoral successes in the 1960s before it was eventually transformed in 1995 under the leadership of Gianfranco Fini into the ultra-conservative National Alliance (AN); and, in Slovakia, the Slovak National Party (SNS) and, more recently, the People's Party Our Slovakia (LSNS) led by Marian Kotleba.

[18] A progenitor of this party was the National Front (EP), which entered the Greek parliament in the elections of 1977, later to be absorbed by the right-of-center New Democracy (ND) (see Pappas 2001).

of its exaltation of violence, many classified this party as neo-Nazi and hence in the same league as the Greek GD. For Gábor Vona, Jobbik party leader from 2006 to 2018, liberal democracy was "the refuse imported from abroad" as he attacked liberals who "govern the country even if their party has no public support" (Enyedi 2015a: 241, 242). The party also supported a system of direct democracy in which the people would elect the president and be able to recall MPs. There is also a noteworthy streak of elitism, rather than populism, in Jobbik, mostly expressed in the form of nostalgia for bygone (pre-Trianon) days, dominated by elite political parties and politicians. There is, finally, a strong longing for the lost Habsburg values of "faith, strength and will," which Jobbik has undertaken to restore, if necessary by violence. To this purpose, Jobbik founded in 2007 a uniformed paramilitary organization, the Hungarian Guard, which became active in frequent episodes of street violence.

Particular mention should be made about the French National Front (FN, now renamed National Rally) during the earliest stage of its development in the 1970s. Drawing its lineage from the proto-fascist and nationalist Action Française, this party was founded in 1972 through the initiative of the Ordre Nouveau, France's principal postwar fascist organization and Vichy nostalgic. Led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, a veteran of the Algerian War and a deputy of Pierre Poujade's populist movement (from which he resigned after his failure to fashion it into an extreme right mass party for defending the continuation of French rule in Algeria), the FN was initially modeled after the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI). The first decade of the FN's life was spent in the political wilderness of antidemocratic—and racist—politics but with meager political results. During that time, and while FN took increasingly sole ownership of the immigration issue, the party remained faithful to parliamentary democracy but was internally torn between moderates, mostly converts from the parties of the traditional right, and hardliners. Le Pen himself, although fully conscious of the need to moderate his political discourse and ideas if FN were to make electoral gains, proclaimed in September 1987 that the Holocaust was but a mere "detail" of World War Two, thus prompting the public departure from the party of several prominent moderates. As Le Pen reinforced a personality cult within the party, politicized immigration, and called for the deportation of immigrants (and even promised multiple votes to the [French] parents of large families), many even classified FN as a "fascist" party (Fysh and Wolfreys 1992: 325).

In sum, according to the criteria we have set to produce our party classification system as presented in Chapter 1, the foregoing parties belong to the class of far-right antidemocratic political forces since they contest democratic elections but remain disloyal to parliamentary democracy. In a quite similar fashion, if we move to the opposite side of the political spectrum, we find far-left antidemocratic parties, similarly intent on overthrowing parliamentary democracy via electoral contestation.

By making deductions from deficient concepts, several parties of the radical and communist left are often classified as "intrinsically populist" simply for " juxtaposing 'the moral people' against the 'corrupt elite'" (March and Mudde 2005: 35). Here is the rationale behind this idea:

> Because a Marxist sees the interests of the proletariat as universal, it is a small step to elide the distinction between proletariat and people and to struggle for all-national interests in the national-liberation struggle. [Therefore, t]he Communist Party of the Soviet Union's declaration in the 1960s that it was a "party of the Soviet people" appeared to indicate that populism had become mainstream.
>
> (March 2007: 65)

Yet, the step from "proletariat" to "the people" is not a small one; it is an enormous leap, at least as big as the distance separating concreteness from ambiguity and meaningful classification from conceptual chaos. It leads to labeling other left antidemocratic parties "populist" in carefree ways, examples being the German Die Linke and a variety of orthodox communist parties that still dot quite a few party systems, mostly in Southern and Eastern Europe.

Die Linke (The Left; founded 2007) is a successor party of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), the ruling party in the former German Democratic Republic. To this date, that party is under partial surveillance by the federal bureau for the protection of the German constitution (*Verfassungsschutz*) for its alleged leftist extremism and suspected activities that might threaten the "basic democratic order" in the country. Interestingly enough, half of German voters are unable to place this party on the left–right scale (see André Blais quoted in Achen and Bartels 2016: 35). In reality, Die Linke is an anti-capitalist party aiming at "democratic socialism" and promoting "a critique of neoliberalism and strong denunciation of economic elites and big business" (Doerschler 2015: 382). Ideologically and politically, it takes the position of "the most leftist party" in Germany (Coffé and Plassa 2010: 731) and, therefore, is in direct competition with the left flank of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) (Hough et al. 2007).

Other leftist or outright communist parties in Europe that are also falsely classified as populist include, just to take the most important cases, the French Left Front (FDG), a conglomerate of radical leftist factions grouped around the French Communist Party; Spain's United Left (IU), which, similarly, forms an electoral coalition of several leftist political organizations around the Communist Party of Spain; the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), which is also misclassified as national-populist (Kalyvas and Marantzidis 2002: 680) rather than what it actually is—a staunchly "orthodox" communist party; and, in the Czech Republic, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia. These parties' political appeal is based, not on the divide between ordinary people and political elites, but rather on their strong opposition to capitalism, economic globalization and, above all, representative and parliamentary

democracy—they are ideologically and politically antidemocratic parties. As Havlík (2012: 102) clearly puts it with reference to modern-day Czech politics, "the communists' prevailing political view [has] centered on the dichotomy between left and right, not that between common people and the elites."

Nativists

Another group of political parties, even more sizable than the anti-democrats, often misclassified as populist are the nativist parties (see e.g., van Heerden et al. 2013). Most important in this group of parties, with a strong presence particularly in northern and western Europe, are the following: France's National Rally (NR, formerly National Front), especially under the leadership of Marine Le Pen; the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ); the Pim Fortuyn List (LPF, dissolved in 2008) and the Party for Freedom (PVV), both in the Netherlands; the Danish People's Party (DF); Norway's Progress Party (FrP); the Sweden Democrats (SD); the Finns (PS, formerly known as the True Finns); the Swiss People's Party (SVP); the UK Independence Party (UKIP), and the more recently emergent Alternative for Germany (AfD, founded in 2013). According to several authors, all these parties should be classified as populist because they presumably use the populist lexicon. Then, almost as inevitably, they fall into the PRR menagerie since, according to Mudde (2007: 138), nativism is "the key concept of the populist radical right." As I have shown in previous works (Pappas 2016b, Pappas 2018b), this is a typical case of misclassification, which in turn leads to misgathered data and the drawing of false comparisons between dissimilar things. This justifies further analysis.

To begin with, given our laxity with terms, it is little wonder that classification remains elusive even to experts. Witness, for instance, Elisabeth Ivarsflaten's (an authority on anti-immigration parties in Europe) puzzlement over how to correctly label Norway's Progress Party and whether it belongs in the same class of "populist right" parties together with the Danish People's Party and the Sweden Democrats. She eventually resolves that "it is ok to label the Norwegian People's Party a populist right party," not without observing, however, that this label is "so broad that it would be bizarre to object to it on more commonsensical grounds" (Ivarsflaten 2014: 14). Yet, if common sense were enough for counteracting the chaos of different cases, we should by now have been able to agree on a sound classification system able to ward off data misinformation. But we have not!

Now, given my preoccupation with a classificatory system consistent with our understanding of modern populism as democratic illiberalism, and granting that the foregoing nativist parties are in full compliance with the rules of liberal parliamentary democracy, the question is: Are nativist parties illiberal?

The answer is *hardly*, and this is because any other answer will indicate our (liberally biased) inability to distinguish between the *policies* proposed by radical right parties and the *politics* they engage in for achieving such policies. For, as it should be clear, while rightist nativist parties may as well propose illiberal policies, they never dispute—and, indeed, they try to preserve—the rules of liberal democratic politics at least as much as the undisputedly liberal parties.[19] To put it straightforwardly, nativists are not against liberal democracy; they only want a liberal democracy *for the natives*. As Ivan Krastev felicitously puts it, their "dream is for what one might call Nativia—a distant island to which unwanted foreigners can be sent" (Krastev 2017: 14).

Let me try to further clarify the foregoing points by example. Say that one is personally—and even vocally—against homosexuality. But since she does not happen to be a homophobe, she also readily acknowledges the right of homosexuals to raise their own voice, organize politically, and push forward their particular demands. Is that person a liberal or not? Well, it all depends on whether you judge her on the basis of her personal beliefs and everyday attitudes, or upon her public political stance. In the first instance you may, if you so wish, condemn that person's "illiberal" attitude, but, in the second instance, you will certainly have to admit her impeccable commitment to liberalism and the institutions designed to serve it, such as freedom of speech, the right of association, and protection for minority rights. Now, transpose this metaphor to the level of parties. Is anti-immigration party *x* or anti-EU party *y* anti-liberal, and why? Evidently, the answer hinges on whether one decides to infer from the (arguably illiberal) policies of the party under question or the (evidently liberal) politics it may follow in the arena of political and party competition. For, as argued by Dutch political scientist Paul Lucardie, the emphasis of nativists on authority, law, and order "need not be inconsistent with liberal democracy, the rule of law and parliamentarism"; nativist leaders "are really liberals [whose] ideas about democracy are not necessarily at odds with liberal democracy as we know it" (Lucardie 2009: 321).[20]

[19] A point not to be missed in this context is the implicitly elitist character of the nativist parties, based on the assumption that inferior aliens (the word is derived from the Greek ἄλλος that passed into Latin as *alius*, both meaning "other") possess a proclivity to contaminate their ethnic culture, thus undermining their superior levels of socio-economic welfare and ways of life.

[20] Incidentally, a quite similar point is made by Bell when he distinguishes between theoretical argument and practical politics. He uses the example of American nativism to explain: "It may well be part of the self-understanding of an American Tea Party devotee that they are fundamentally opposed to liberalism, but this identity claim does not entail that they reject arguments central to the liberal tradition. In other words, despite espousing virulent anti-liberalism they are nevertheless committed to paradigmatic liberal positions insofar as they defend (say) neoclassical economics, libertarian social policy, and the superiority of 'liberal democratic' institutions. Within political theory, the same can be said for many self-proclaimed critics of liberalism, whether post-structural, critical-theoretical, republican, communitarian, or conservative" (Bell 2014: 691).

To illustrate the above points by example, no case is perhaps better than the Netherlands—a country broadly considered as an exemplar of democratic liberalism. The question is: Do the so-considered "populist" (but, according to this analysis, nativist) forces in this country pose a threat to Dutch liberal institutions and, if yes, what kind of threat? The answer in short is that, notwithstanding the similarities of their discourse and style to populism, nativist parties abide by the rules and principles of political liberalism. Their "populism" creates noise but is never inimical to liberal democracy. Let us have a closer look.

For most of the postwar era, the Netherlands has been a politically liberal and socially tolerant multicultural society (see Lijphart 1999). Its system of *verzuiling* (segmentation, or pillarization) allowed for different religious and ideological groups to coexist, thus achieving the full representation of a large variety of particular interests in society. Since the 1970s, in particular, and with no significant opposition,[21] Dutch society was intent on integrating its immigrant populations by allowing the preservation of their own languages and culture. It was only during the 1990s that the debate about minorities became publicly open, to a large extent thanks to Frits Bolkestein, leader of the Conservative Liberals (VVD), the first party to widely question the hitherto dominant policy of immigrant integration. Bolkestein observed that "below the surface a widespread informal national debate, which was not held in public, was already going on" and that "the issue of minorities is a problem incessantly discussed in the pub and in the church" (cited in Prins 2002: 368). Then, in 2000, Paul Scheffer, an author and university professor, wrote an essay in which he urged the strengthening of Dutch national identity and halting multiculturalism. The essay created a national sensation, especially because of an incident that occurred contemporaneously to its publication. In 2001, Khalil el Moumni, an imam in Rotterdam, went on public TV to declare that homosexuality is a contagious disease that was spreading fast among the Dutch youth. His opinions fueled public outrage among secular and liberal sectors in society, including liberal political elites. In 2002, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center, the baton of anti-Islamist indignation was picked up by Pim Fortuyn, founder in the same year of LPF, which he used as his strongest political weapon. Immediately, the party gathered significant ground and, by early May, pollsters predicted that it could

[21] The only exception was Hans Janmaat, leader during the 1980s of a small far-right party (known by the misnomer Center Party), seeking to represent the indigenous Dutch middle class and thus turning vocal against immigrants' integration. Under the slogan "Holland is not a country for immigration," he called for the assimilation of immigrants and the end of multicultural society. Janmaat's party never gathered speed, and eventually disappeared, because the other parties effectively built a solid cordon sanitaire around it and refused to bring immigration, then a taboo issue, into public discourse.

become the largest party in forthcoming elections. On May 6, 2002, Fortuyn was murdered in Amsterdam, but the genie was well out of the bottle. The LPF declined, but was soon succeeded by the PVV, founded in 2006 by Geert Wilders. Since then, aided by constant media attention, the politics of immigration and multiculturalism has dominated Dutch politics and helped produce a highly "politicized democracy" (Pellikaan et al. 2003). What has remained beyond dispute, however, is the liberal character of Dutch democratic politics.

So, what type of a party is the PVV and what kind of a leader is Geert Wilders? In the Netherlands, "the attempts to put Wilders in an ideological category have become something of a national debate, in which journalists, politicians, intellectuals and even television celebrities readily engage" (Vossen 2011: 180). International scholarship has followed the trend and considers both the party and its leader as populist, nationalist, and even fascist. Fundamentally, however, Wilders and his party represent nativism in its purest form. As a former member of the VVD and a disciple of Bolkestein, Wilders became an early fierce critic of multiculturalism and passionate defender of Dutch communal and national values. Rather than disputing political liberalism, he instead considered Islam a "totalitarian ideology" posing a real threat to traditional and liberal Dutch values and, more generally, to Western liberal democracy. He even called for a "liberal Jihad," based on the principles of the Enlightenment, against Muslim fanaticism and religious fundamentalism. Evidently, then, the populist label does not fit PVV and Wilders, and it seems more meaningful to put them in the nativism class.

However, there's more to it than that. For Bolkestein, Scheffer, Fortuyn, and Wilders, the social constituencies to which they made their appeals did not resemble "the people" in populism, that is to say, men and women in the Dutch streets characterized by inferior social status and romanticized ordinariness. Instead, they addressed the assembly of decent and respectful middle-class Dutch citizens who, well-versed as they are in both national traditions and ecumenical liberal values, felt anxious about seeing them destroyed. Those leaders, accordingly, sought to protect the Dutch liberal way of life against foreign cultural influences that clashed with Dutch or, more broadly, Western liberal Enlightenment values (Akkerman 2005). For simply, in their own social perception, to use Fortuyn's words, "even the poor are not at all the pitiful people the left church wants them to be. More of them are just like us: emancipated, individualized, independent citizens" (cited in Prins 2002: 376). For those citizens, Islam represented a mortal threat to their shared Dutch "identity"—an amalgam of Judeo-Christian values and liberal political traditions. Anti-Islam and anti-immigration calls, therefore, aimed at shielding long-established cultural liberal practices from being eroded, adulterated, or even entirely erased. As an astute Dutch scholar put it,

> Fortuyn's criticism of integration policy was utopian rather than being inspired . . . by emotion. His vision was in keeping with an Enlightenment tradition. [. . .] Liberal principles, in his view, are not universal, but part of a Dutch national culture that is embedded in the Western traditions of Judeo-Christianity and the Enlightenment. (Akkerman 2005: 346)[22]

As another expert concludes, Fortuyn and his political epigones' ideology was simply "at odds with the idea of a diverse multicultural society in which liberal principles came under pressure" (van Kessel 2011: 74).

The same could be said for all other parties that have already been referred to in the beginning of this section, and which present another common characteristic—their significant potential for coalescing with liberal conservative parties within their respective country's party systems. So, in Denmark, DF lent its support to the liberal conservative governments continuously from 2001 to 2011. Norway's FrP, a small and marginal force until 1989, entered into coalition with the Conservative Party, the winner of the 2013 parliamentary elections; it is hence considered a well-institutionalized party, which, in fact, proclaims "conservative liberalism" to be its chief ideology. A similar story can be said for the Finns, who, after winning 17.7 percent of the votes in Finland's 2015 national elections, joined the center-right coalition government. In the Netherlands, Wilders' PVV won 15.5 percent of the national vote in the 2010 elections, which made his party the third largest in the Dutch parliament. Thereafter, Wilders participated in political negotiations and, eventually, agreed to support a liberal center-right minority coalition government in exchange for some (illiberal) policies. In Austria, too, the *cordon sanitaire* that had been formed in previous years by the major ruling parties to check the rise of political extremism was broken in the aftermath of the 1999 legislative elections. With 26.9 percent of the national vote, the FPÖ entered into government in 2000, an act that provoked the introduction of sanctions by other EU countries against Austria and the partial freezing of diplomatic relations (see Luther 2011). Since then, especially under the leadership of Heinz-Christian Strache, the FPÖ has turned into a classic nativist party and occasionally served in government as a junior coalition partner of the center-right Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). Finally, since the 2000s, the SVP has been the strongest party in Switzerland and has participated in most—though not all—governments in that country. The only examples of northern and western European nativist parties that so far have not been able to achieve integration into liberal party politics are the Swedish SD, which to this date remains isolated in the Riksdag, the German AfD, presumably because the

[22] As Akkerman (2005) also notes, nativist parties sometimes even outshine mainstream liberal parties in their support of liberal values. The paradox is explained when one considers that, for nativists, the defense of liberalism hinges exclusively on the application of anti-immigration policies and the construction of barriers against the Islamization of Western culture.

political center-right in that country remains sufficiently strong and has no need to engage in potentially unsafe partnerships, and, for quite similar reasons, the French NR.

A final note in this section concerns Latin American nativism. Perhaps the most interesting case of nativist politics on that continent is Bolivia, a country commonly classified by scholars as populist since Evo Morales, an indigenous politician heading the leftist Movement for Socialism (MAS), swept to victory in 2005 with 53.7 percent of the national vote. He subsequently went on to win the presidential elections of 2009 and 2014 with 63.9 percent and 61 percent respectively. But to consider Bolivia as "populist" neither does justice to this country's unique ethnic composition nor does it help in comparing Bolivia with other populist cases, such as Argentina or Venezuela (of which more later). The difference lies in the very particular role of ethnicity in Bolivia's national politics since "an estimated 62.5% of Bolivia's 8 million people are indigenous, and the government recognized 37 distinct ethnic groups" (Yashar 2005: 19–21, Van Cott 2008: 23. In Ecuador, by comparison, only 6.6 percent of the national population identified themselves as Indians in the 2001 census; cf. Zamosc 2007: 8). Therefore, unlike the mass followings for Perón or Chávez, consisting predominantly of poor people of mixed races, "the people for Morales is . . . defined in racial terms (indigenous coca farmers)" (Hawkins 2010: 78). Bolivia, in fact, saw the development of a strong indigenous movement in the early 1990s, which was later transformed into the first party of ethnic origins under the name Pachakutik Plurinational Unity Movement—New Country to represent the interests of indigenous peoples. In 1996, the young party even contested the presidential elections in Bolivia and was placed third with nearly 20 percent of the vote. What the brief resumé above indicates is that Bolivia's indigenous population already constitutes a *natural* electoral majority eager to support any candidate promising to advance its own interests. This fact alone, rather than generic populism, may in itself sufficiently explain the rise to power of Morales—the first indigenous president of Bolivia.

Regionalists and Secessionists

Another category of parties that is often, but erroneously, classified as populist contains those promoting region-based interests or pursuing their secession from a state. This category includes, among others, the Italian Northern League (LN) during its earliest phase of development; Belgium's Vlaams Blok (VB, later renamed Vlaams Belang); the Catalan Convergence and Union (CiU); and the Scottish National Party (SNP). All these parties have, at one point or another, been labeled as populist *together with something else*: Populist regionalist or populist nationalist. But, although they certainly

employ—like most other parties—populist themes, they should be classified in the well-defined category of regionalist and secessionist parties. Why? Simply because the center–periphery cleavage, and the territorial–cultural conflict thereby produced, is in all these cases their most enduring and salient characteristic. It is along this objective cleavage, therefore, and not on the basis of ideational or other secondary features of populism, that the foregoing parties primarily construct their political identities and policy agendas, on the basis of which they subsequently seek to mobilize their respective electoral constituencies.

From this perspective, regionalist and secessionist parties are those representing "strictly local oppositions to encroachments of the aspiring or the dominant national elites and their bureaucracies: the typical reactions of peripheral regions, linguistic minorities, and culturally threatened populations to the pressures of the centralizing, standardizing, and 'rationalizing' machinery of the nation-state" (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 10). When such parties exist, "the decisive criterion of [electoral] alignment is commitment to the locality and its dominant culture: you vote for your community and its leaders" (p. 13). To illustrate these points, let us briefly review the cases of Italy's LN and, to a lesser extent, the Belgian VB.

The Italian Lega, whose original complete name was North League for the Independence of Padania,[23] was founded in 1991 by Umberto Bossi as a federation of several smaller parties of northern Italy—mostly in Piedmont, Veneto, and Emilia Romagna—advocating the transformation of Italy into a federal state with greater regional and fiscal autonomy from Rome. At times of growing electoral fortunes, for example in the aftermath of the 1996 elections when it received over 10 percent of the vote, LN even propagated the idea of secession from Italy and the creation of an independent state. Progressively, it also took a negative stance towards immigration, which prompted several authors to also include LN in the "extreme right" party family.

Meanwhile, as populism came into vogue, other scholars classified LN as a "populist" or "regionalist populist" party (e.g., Tarchi 2002, Albertazzi and McDonnell 2005, McDonnell 2006). This, as we have seen several times already, is another typical example of conceptual stretching that occurs when quite different concepts are brought together to produce a new artificial category—an authentic cat-dog. We can also in this instance even observe *how* stretching occurs: "Simply put, it is impossible to understand and explain the Lega . . . without explicitly highlighting the party's 'regionalist' character" (McDonnell 2006: 126). But, as if such simplicity is not good enough, McDonnell goes on to explain what makes LN a populist party *in addition*

[23] Etymologically derived from Padus, the Latin name of the Po river, Padania is the geographical area that largely overlaps with the Po Valley in the north of Italy. LN proposed "Padania" as a possible name for the independent state it wanted to establish after secession from Italy.

to being a regionalist one: "The party frames the problems of the north as a centre–periphery question within a 'people' v. 'the elite' populist discourse" (p. 126). Hence, "regionalist populism," another cat-dog, is born.

None of this would really be necessary if one considered LN as what it actually was at the time: A regionalist and secessionist party. It articulated the demands and grievances of the artisans and small business people of northern Italy who had in the past supported the Christian Democrats but gradually realized that that party could not protect them from economic liberalization and the dysfunctional state bureaucracy in Rome (Woods 2014: 35). Like any other regional party, LN became particularly concerned with the redistribution of northern resources to Italy's other regions, especially in the south.[24]

Ontologically speaking, then, the real issue for LN was not a putative "populist" cleavage between the "virtuous people" and some "corrupt elite." Simply and straightforwardly, the issue was over the division between periphery and center, and that concerned specific economic and political differences. At the level of symbolic discourse, LN claimed to represent the entrepreneurial, modern, and hardworking northern Italians who epitomized liberal values against the lazy, traditional, and selfish southerners who thrived through unproductive patronage networks and bureaucratic inertia. As Bossi put it when addressing his followers, "It does not matter how old are you, what your job is and what your political tendency; what matters is that you and we are all Lombards" (Parenzo 2009: 19). With its claims firmly based on the center–periphery cleavage, LN was in a perfect position to appeal to an entire voting public irrespective of socio-economic or ideological differences, thus attracting both ordinary folks and elites in Lombardy across the left to right spectrum (Ignazi 2008: 87–8). Unlike most populist parties, too, LN opposed statism, favored an open market economy, and demanded the creation of liberal institutions at regional level such as a judiciary and Constitutional Court.

Another party that is commonly, but erroneously, classified as populist is the Belgian Vlaams Blok (VB), a party with deep roots in the nineteenth-century Flemish nationalist movement and the latter's disgraceful collaboration with Nazism in the twentieth century. Founded in 1978, VB called for the independence of Flanders but, progressively, now campaigning under the motto "Own people first!" (*Eigen volk eerst!*), it focuses more on immigration and the restoration of law and order in society. In 2004, the Court of Appeal of Ghent condemned it for racism, after which the party was declared illegal. VB was, however, resurrected under a new name, Vlaams Belang, and was transformed into a typical nativist party. Separatism was forgotten while anti-immigration became the staple in the party's political discourse and sloganeering. The new slogan became "People, become state!" (*Volk, word*

[24] One of LN's most successful slogans was about *Roma Ladrona*, big thief Rome, which allegedly took for herself the riches produced in Padania.

staat!), which clearly describes the new party ideology and hints at the electorate it sought to attract. Repeated election surveys have shown that Flemish nationalism is the most significant predictor for a VB vote. "Ethnopluralism," therefore, "makes up an important part of the VB ideology, referring to the permanent differences between groups of peoples and arguing that people should live in their own group" (Pauwels 2014: 102–3). What, then, makes VB a populist party? For Pauwels the answer seems obvious: "Combined with its ethnic nationalism, xenophobia and law & order, the VB qualifies as a copybook example of a *national* populist party" since it represents the "pure people, [that is,] the equivalent of the common Fleming, who is honest, works hard and pays taxes" (pp. 42, 203; see also Jagers and Walgrave 2007). And so the proliferation of cat-dogs continues. But it is quite unnecessary. For, as simply put by another couple of experts on Belgian politics, VB is a party that you cannot understand under the rubric of populism. This misses its nationalist essence (de Cleen and van Aelst 2017).

Before closing this chapter, a caveat is necessary. Political parties fall into categories and types, but they are not always permanent. As living organisms, whether motivated by sheer political opportunism, political blackmail, or other types of pressure to transform, they often change their ideas, rhetoric, or policies, and, consequently, the type of party grouping to which they belong. Our comparative analysis of populism, therefore, should be sensitive to such changes that may happen in the course of party development and make necessary the revision of old typologies and the introduction of new ones. As the empirical evidence provided in subsequent chapters will amply show, any kind of party-type transformation is possible. Formerly liberal parties may turn into populist parties (e.g., Fidesz in the early 1990s, Greece's ND after 1993, the Republican Party under Trump's presidency) equally as well as formerly populist parties may transform into liberal ones (e.g., the Greek PASOK after 2010, or Ecuador's PAIS Alliance (AP) after the end of Rafael Correa's presidency). Antidemocratic parties may turn into nativist parties (best exemplified by the Belgian VB, the French FN under the leadership of Marine Le Pen and, even more recently, the Hungarian Jobbik), and populist parties may turn into political autocrats (as demonstrated amply by the case of the Venezuelan PSUV). Other parties may tilt irresolutely between populism and liberalism (e.g., the Italian Five Star Movement (M5S)), while still others may abandon their previous regional and secessionist character and, in their attempt to attract a nationwide audience, turn nativist or even populist (e.g., the Italian NL, which in 2018 dropped its geographical designation and rebranded itself simply as League). Whatever the case, the lesson is simple: for our research to be credible, it must be sensitive to party-type changes and constantly adapt to them instead of treating existing party typologies as theoretical straightjackets into which real parties have to permanently fit.

3

What Causes Populism?

Modern populism's causal patterns are a kaleidoscope of history, geography, sociology, politics, economics, cognitive psychology, and more. The threads, to be sure, are tangled and knotty, but they can still be pulled apart. The trick is to construct an appropriate framework consisting of all those factors that are necessary and sufficient for suggesting a credible causal chain that may eventually produce the populist outcome. The chain rings should no doubt include conditioning structures; agency, which encompasses both ostensibly strategic leaders and barely rational voters; major psychological and cultural motifs that serve as the background against which all political action takes place; and, of course, the symbolic and actual dimensions of political competition between liberal forces and populist insurgents.

Unlike liberal democratic parties, which, their particular ideology or political positioning notwithstanding, typically address specific socio-economic or politico-cultural groups of voters, populist parties appeal to, and potentially unify, unspecified social categories, which, now tagged as "the people," acquire new collective identities, group solidarities, and political commitments. When this happens, typically in the absence of either ideology or clear policy positions, politics is organized in terms of a single, all-pervasive conflict between the people and their foes—the people's enemies. It is when the people become an electoral majority that populism may emerge victorious.

This part of the book deals with the causes of modern and contemporary populism and proposes a concise and portable model of populist emergence. But before we arrive there, we have first to make sense of the constituent parts of such causality, that is, the nuts and bolts without which populism cannot materialize. There are three key components: first, the "ordinary" people, or principals, who as a group constitute the electoral base of populist parties, its grassroots; second, political leaders, who, assuming the role of agents of the people, bring in the ideas, organization, strategy, style, and whatever else it takes to mobilize the masses; and, third, symbolic politics, which, couched in political discourse and leaders' narratives, serves as the means for both linking principals to agents and providing the weaponry for waging electoral battles.

It is worth bearing in mind that populist emergence is always a top-down rather than a bottom-up phenomenon. Therefore, it is only possible to make sense of populism's collective action problem if leadership is brought center stage. As we are going to see, the intricate plays between voters, leaders, and symbolic production work better in some structural conditions than in others. Such plays involve specific micro-level mechanisms without which the populist outcome would not be possible. The chapters that follow will help untangle some of the knots that persist in the study of populism.

3.1. THE "ORDINARY" PEOPLE

When canvassing the ensemble of existing definitions of populism, one cannot fail to realize that their single common denominator is the reference to the people. Indeed, in Margaret Canovan's words,

> What all populisms have in common is an appeal to the notion of "the people" as ultimate source of legitimacy, and it is this appeal that makes [populism] both potent and problematic. (Canovan 2005: 80)

To mention a few more prominent examples from different research standpoints, populism is commonly seen as an appeal to the masses, whether it takes the form of a "language whose speakers conceive of ordinary people as a noble assemblage" (Kazin 1995: 1), an ideology "which advocates the sovereign rule of the people as a homogenous body" (Abts and Rummens 2007: 409) that takes a stand in unison against the "corrupt elite" (Mudde 2004: 543) or, more simply, a communication style that "refers to the people" (Jagers and Walgrave 2007: 322).

However, despite its centrality in the comparative study of populism, the notion of "the people" is often used in theoretically unconscious ways, almost entirely lacking detailed empirical elaboration and, therefore, evidence-based backing. This chapter has three aims: First, it seeks to differentiate between diverse types of people, each of them featuring distinct socio-economic and cognitive characteristics, life goals, and means of political action. Second, it shows that not any type of people may be apposite to the discussion of populism; some types are more relevant to the study of nativism, nationalism, or other phenomena that fall outside this book's scope. Third, and more importantly, this chapter exposes the characteristics of precisely that type of people that is most congruous with the theory of populism.

Let us begin by reminding ourselves that, when politics is democratic, each and every party has to appeal to the people—i.e., the general public—for their votes and political support. For instance, socialist parties appeal to the *working people*, Christian Democratic ones appeal to the *people of the*

Church, and what are termed "catch-all" parties appeal to the *common people* in society—each of these categories is presented as having open borders that may include anyone who, in our examples, is a worker, a religious person or, quite simply, an ordinary citizen. Even authoritarian or dictatorial regimes "pretend to govern in the name of the people . . . [and, indeed,] governments that make no attempt to invoke popular legitimacy are rare" (Mény and Surel 2002: 5). Since all parties make free use of it, the very notion of "the people" is fundamentally ambiguous and, eventually, trivialized. The question then is: In our concern with populism, what exactly are we talking about when we refer to the people?

At the moment, the term remains "one of the least precise and most promiscuous of concepts . . . [especially since] its lack of spatial definition is compounded by discontinuity over time" (Canovan 2005: 140).[1] Witness, for example, how a fairly standard survey codebook instructs researchers carrying out content analysis on how to classify party public appeals [by "the authors"] on the notion of "the people":

> The authors can refer to "the people" directly by means of terms such as "the people", "the citizens", "the British", "Britain", "the community", "the society", etc. They can also refer to "the people" more indirectly. This is the case if they use terms such as "our nation", "public opinion", "the electorate", "our culture", "we", etc. . . . [On the contrary, t]he authors of a text do NOT refer to the people if they only talk about specific subgroups *within* the people, such as children, elderly, migrants, etc. . . . What the authors mean by "the people" can also differ from case to case. It could refer to the sovereignty or power of the people, their identity (national feelings, values, ideas, religion, language, ethnicity, etc.), their prosperity, their rights, their wisdom, etc. (cited in Pauwels 2014: 196)

In effect, "the people" is conflated with other broadly conceived notions such as those of citizenship, ethnicity, nationality, class, or any other social identity—to the detriment of conceptual clarity. It is time, then, and before delving further into populism, that we turn from unconscious to conscious thinkers about what the people is. As Hanspeter Kriesi wisely counsels, "[f]or populists, the people are paramount. But, given the diverse interpretations of 'the people', it is impossible to arrive at a clear-cut definition of the phenomenon without giving 'the people' a more specific meaning" (Kriesi 2014: 362).

In assuming this task, it is worth noting first that the notion of "the people" refers simultaneously to some part (e.g., the lower class in society) and a whole (i.e., the entire society). It is also worth remembering that the very idea of democracy refers primarily to the second of the above senses, that is,

[1] This is, obviously, why scholars often use this term in indeterminate ways or, which amounts to the same outcome, simply substitute it with nebulous images, such as Paul Taggart's "hinterland," broadly meant to denote the "idealized conception of the community [that populists seek to] serve" (2002: 17).

the people seen as an organic body transcending its individual members. Democracy, etymologically speaking, is the rule of the demos, the entire community of citizens, who gather in the *ekklesía*, the people's assembly, to deliberate and decide how best to run public affairs. From there, one can trace a line of political thought and practice leading all the way to a post-universal suffrage modern "sovereign democratic citizen," who is the essence of today's liberal democracy.

Quite different is the idea of the people in the populist mind, in which the people is always a part of society in constant conflict with other parts of society. This idea has its historical origins in the *populus*, which consisted of the inferior crowd of plebeian people in the Roman forum.[2] Being a distinct, as well as majoritarian, part of the republic, the populus was not only despised by the patrician minority; it was also feared for its revolutionary zeal, as well as numerical potential (Raaflaub 2005). In contrast to the Athenian idea of a deliberative sovereign demos motivated by the pursuit of common good, the Roman populus remained associated with specific, especially plebeian, interests that sought satisfaction under the doctrine of "popular sovereignty."

Keeping in mind this dual sense of the people, as both a whole and as part-of-a-whole, and also the fact that our current interest is with populism in modern electoral democratic politics, there is one more thing that we have to remain conscious of: "the people" is a *potential* electoral majority without which no populist party can win elections and come to power. Two questions immediately emerge: What are the characteristics and attributes of such populist electoral majorities? And, how do populist parties really construct those majorities and win power?

A first answer is hinted at in Isaiah Berlin's following syllogism: "If populists were asked who the people are, I think that they would produce a definite answer. They would say that the people is the majority of their society, natural men who have been robbed of their proper post in life . . . If the victims are not the large majority, populism falls" (Berlin 1968). The problem is, however, that the people seldom forms a *natural* majority of individuals sharing objective and inalienable characteristics like class, religion, race, language, or geography, on the basis of which one can tell apart poor from rich, Catholics from Protestants, whites from colored people, southerners from northerners, etc. It follows, then, that it falls upon populist leaders and other political entrepreneurs to *artificially* construct, and subsequently forge, the category of "the people" within specific historical circumstances. As Ernesto Laclau was

[2] Known as the Conflict of the Orders, the struggle between plebeians and patricians in the Roman Republic lasted for over two centuries (from 494 BC to 287 BC) and concerned plebeians' demands for political equality with the patricians, which they eventually achieved. It is possible, therefore, to place the origins of populism in ancient Rome and, from there, trace its historical development, via the medieval doctrine of *omnis potestas a populo* (all power derives from the people) and Rousseau's *volonté générale*, all the way up to contemporary populism.

certainly correct to assert, the people is just an "empty signifier" (Laclau 2005). The trouble, therefore, is to determine how many different meanings may fit in the empty space and who may assume the job of filling in the blanks.

In its currently simplified—and, indeed, trivialized—conception, the populists' people is seen as an amorphous and yet "pure" social whole that can only be defined by its putative antithesis to elites—themselves never really defined and yet constantly considered as corrupt. However, especially given that "there is never a discontinuous break . . . between 'people' and 'elite'" (Piketty 2014: 252), no modern society is simply composed of just two categories of people. Instead, by disentangling the concept of the people, it will be possible to see how this may point to the existence of triadic relations and horizontal arrangements of conflicting social groups.

In the sections that follow, I identify three notions of "the people," each corresponding to socio-politically and culturally distinct geographical regions. First, the *little people*, which is more characteristic of southern European, eastern European and Latin American politics, and is conceived as a vertically arranged dyadic relation (i.e., elites on top versus the people at the bottom). Second, the *common people*, which is more characteristic of politics in the United States and takes the form of a vertical but triadic relation that consists of the elites, the average people, and the subaltern strata in society. And, third, the *equitable native people*, which is characteristic of the nativist parties that have developed especially in Nordic countries, but is also recognized in most parts of northern and western Europe; this relation is best conceived horizontally as a relation between the native versus the non-native populations in society.[3]

The Little People

To understand this perhaps most elemental of all notions of "the people," I propose we begin with Eric Hobsbawm's magisterial study of the proto-political, or "archaic," forms of social movements, which, as will be evident, are strongly reminiscent of the ancient Roman plebeians. Hobsbawm focuses on men and women in several societies, particularly in pre-industrial southern Europe, who, since the French Revolution (Rudé 1967), have formed "the large majority in many, perhaps in most, countries" in the region, a situation that endures even today (Hobsbawm 1959: 2; unless noted otherwise, following quotations are from this text). Those "little people" (the Italian *popolo*, the French *peuple*, or the Spanish *pueblo*), composed mainly of "wage-earners,

[3] A fourth notion of the people-as-nation (which is to say, a community of co-nationals) is rejected from the scope of the present analysis, as it is more appropriate for the study of nationalism—under its many guises—rather than of populism and nativism.

small property-owners and the unclassifiable urban poor" (p. 113), shared fairly common goals: Their political program was republican, anti-authoritarian and distinctly moralistic, while their economic program aimed essentially at the redistribution of wealth, if necessary by direct violent means, usually riot or rebellion.[4] They "envisaged a world in which the self-governing *pueblo* was the sovereign unit, and from which outside forces such as kings and aristocracies, policemen, tax-collectors and other agents of the supra-local State, being essentially agents of the exploitation of man by man, were eliminated" (pp. 81–2). They justifiably believed that it was

> the business of the ruler and his aristocracy to provide a livelihood for his people, either by giving employment himself, for instance by patronizing local tradesmen and general free spending and tipping as befits the status of a prince or gentleman, or by attracting employment, as for instance the tourist and pilgrim traffic. (p. 115)

As long as the ruler dutifully obliged, the people respected his rule. But when he failed in his "obligations," they rioted until he capitulated. Quite often, the little people were able to recruit the sympathy, and sometimes the backing, of more "respectable" sections of society, as in the 1773 Palermo riots or the Bolognese riots of the 1790s, in which "persons of low and vile extraction, but also those of artisan profession took part" (p. 114). By joining forces, those social groups directed their activities against two other distinct categories: on the one hand, the rich and powerful among their fellow townsmen and, on the other hand, the foreigner non-townsmen.

Quite similar to such a notion of the "little people" in southern Europe is the notion of the Latin American *pueblo*, an undifferentiated social category most often seen "more as plebs than as populace" (Braun 1985: 28) and which is often internalized as a morally unified social category

> of both rupture and struggle, a moment of combat in which those oppressed within the prevailing political order and those excluded from it intervene to transform the system, in which a victimized part of the community speaks for and attempts to radically change the whole. (Ciccariello-Maher 2013: 8)

The pueblo includes such groups as Argentina's *descamisados* (literally, the shirtless or dispossessed), the indigenous populations in the Andes, the urban poor, socially marginalized and politically excluded everywhere in that continent. It is

[4] These ideas developed during the last episodes of the French Revolution and are well exemplified in the case of agitator François-Noël Babeuf (revealingly nicknamed Gracchus Babeuf for the likeness of his political activity to that of the Gracchus brothers, the ancient Roman tribunes of the people), creator of the Societé des Égaux (Conspiracy of the Equals) and leader of a revolt against the Directorate inspired by the egalitarian ideology of the revolution (for more information on Babeuf, see Rose 1978).

> positively defined as all that is not oligarquía [the oligarchy]. Given their suffering, el pueblo is the incarnation of the authentic, the good, the just, and the moral. It confronts the *antipueblo*, or oligarquía, representing the unauthentic, the foreign, the evil, the unjust, and the immoral. (de la Torre 2000: 15)

Significantly, as de la Torre has also noticed, "the little people" rise and act politically in places where citizenship is not strong and civil rights are weaker than political or social ones. In such cases, the poor and socially marginalized do not have the power to exercise their rights. Instead, they

> rely on protectors who can help them to take advantage of their rights and who can defend them from the arbitrariness of . . . the powerful. [. . .] Populist politicians have been successful in incarnating the demands of those at the bottom of society for symbolic and material dignity. (de la Torre 2000: xi–xii)

At this point it is worth pondering over the main assumptions of this "ancient" low-class populism, for similar beliefs are widely held among their contemporary descendants, that is, today's middle and middling classes who, considering their large numbers, are the main target group of modern-day populists. If we were to assign labels, those assumptions are about injustice, morality, adversity, and radicalism.[5] Here, in a nutshell, is the populist rationale from a contemporary little people's perspective:

1. Life is fundamentally unjust, and the little people, life's real underdogs, are the greatest victims of such an unfortunate state of affairs. In turn, injustice breeds moral indignation and becomes the source of a "righteous anger that puts fire in the belly and iron in the soul" of people (Gamson 1992: 32). Consequently, as Gamson further remarks (pp. 7, 32), injustice is neither a solidly cognitive nor an abstract intellectual judgment about what is equitable in society, but rather a "*hot cognition*—one that is laden with emotion."

2. Because of their vulnerability in life, the little people advance a moral claim to privileged protection by the ruler (or the state). This is so because (a) justice is considered to rest in the hands of the ruler, who (b) has a duty to administer it in favor of the people. The ruler-patron should provide

[5] Sometimes insight comes from unlikely places. In February 2016, the British Labour Party signed up journalist Paul Mason and ex Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, both self-proclaimed radical Marxists, as advisors on economic matters—a decision that was mocked by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne with these words: "Presumably they [Labour] chose those two because Chairman Mao was dead and Mickey Mouse was busy." It was, of course, one of those rather typical, albeit cruel, political jibes that are hardly remembered for long, but in this case Mason decided to hit back, thereby proffering a precious clarification of the notion of "the people" in the populist mind, complete with unreserved moral justification. In his own words (emphases mine), "Mickey Mouse . . . is a universal 20th century icon representing the triumph of the *little guy* against the bully, the *innocent* against the corrupt, the *weak* against the strong. I am happy to be identified with those ideals." See "Mickeygate—the truth": https://medium.com/mosquito-ridge/mickeygate-the-truth-8145cf278b7a#.n1otxof1h.

employment, preferably secure life employment in his bureaucratic and administrative apparatus, and other resources or benefits that would keep people afloat in relation to the cost of living.

3. In achieving the foregoing aims, the little people have two adversaries, on the one hand the rich and powerful and, on the other hand, the alien outsider (including immigrant populations). Hostility to the former group is expressed through radical, and often violent, action from below while the fear of the alien leads to the development of instinctive nativism, which may also cause social polarization and political adversity.

4. If protection by the ruler of the state is denied to them, the little people are ready to protest, and even riot, with no respect for institutional order. Yet, although such collective action occurs always in the name of just causes, it is hardly related to providing better institutions that would potentially remedy systemic injustice. Rather, it is aimed at securing the immediate satisfaction by the ruler of the interests of, as well as granting further concessions to, the little people.

In their sum, as already implied above, the foregoing assumptions are relevant to specific politico-cultural and socio-economic systems, such as those that have developed in the European south and east, in most of Latin America, and, to a considerable extent, in the United States heartland—Middle America. These assumptions can be further said to constitute a particular mindset that, in modern-day politics, is prone to populist seduction. We are going to return to these points in Chapter 6. For the time being, let us turn our attention to the notion of the "average people," which resonates particularly in American politics and, as will be shown presently, is also susceptible to populist seduction.

The Average People

By and large, the literature on populism is obsessed with the idea that populism conceives of society as a vertical corrupt elite/pure people dyad (with elites on top and the people at the bottom) that is somehow divided in a sharp, so-to-speak "Manichaean" way. This image, however befitting some cases in Europe and many more in Latin America, is not appropriate when it comes to populism in the United States, which addresses specifically the "average," or "common," or "middle" people. Even the terms already used denote an image of a social category located in the middle of the vertical social scale, that is, between some elites on top and some underclass at the bottom. The classical populist dyad is thus replaced by a *triad*, in which the middle component—the common people—is antagonistic to both the social elites and the subaltern classes in society. The case merits more discussion.

In his classic work on American political thought since the late nineteenth century, Richard Hofstadter saw populism as "a kind of popular impulse that

is endemic in American political culture" and resonant with the notion of "the American people" (Hofstadter 1955: 4). Progressively, this notion of people came to indicate the vast middling classes—all those who, inspired by idealized American*ism* enshrining the liberty of the individual and hard work, became the bedrock and cement of the nation. Those particular people valued hard work (McClosky and Zaller 1984: esp. ch. 4, Lamont 2000) and were animated by a strong producer ethic holding that "only those who created wealth in tangible, material ways . . . could be trusted to guard the nation's piety and liberties" (Kazin 1995: 13).

The idea of "the people" as the middling and wealth-producing majority has persisted in American politics from the birth of democracy in that country to the present day, "partly as an undercurrent of provisional resentments, popular and 'democratic' rebelliousness and suspiciousness, and nativism" (Hofstadter 1955: 4, 5). In this long tradition of populism, the people have been presented in remarkably similar ways emphasizing their social authenticity, economic significance, and supreme morality. Here belong, most notably, the "plain people" of the 1892 Omaha Platform; the "average man" or the ubiquitous "grassroots" of the 1930s; Huey Long's "every man [a king]"; George Wallace's "average Joe"; Pat Buchanan's and Richard Nixon's "silent majority" of decent white middle-class voters, the "forgotten Americans" or aggrieved "Middle Americans"; the "moral community" of the Christian Right; the "middle class" of both Ross Perot and the Clintons; and the "makers," who stand against "the takers," in the terminology once used by Republican politician Mitt Romney.[6] Even more recently, the people are those "authentic patriots" who feel "that the United States as they have known it is spilling away [and are ready to cry] 'I want my country back!'" (Skocpol and Williamson 2012: 7)—as Donald Trump's 2016 voters surely did.

Crucially for the study of populism, however, America's ordinary, hard-working, tax-paying, patriotic middle-class people do not only distinguish themselves from the elites; they also feel distinct from the poorer, non-producing underclasses in society. This latter category includes a host of groups—including blacks, Hispanics and other naturalized ethnic minorities, undocumented immigrants, single mothers and other poor people on social welfare—who are commonly described as "social parasites," "leeches," or "sponges," and are therefore excluded from the category of "average and ordinary people."

Such a tripartite division of American society is, of course, nothing new. In his 1837 Farewell Address, Andrew Jackson called the average people "the bone and sinew of the country," who stood between the moneyed classes above and the African slaves and American Indians below. A few decades

[6] See https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/09/secret-video-romney-private-fundraiser/#.

later, Jerry Simpson, an old-style populist from Kansas, described American politics as "a struggle between the robbers and the robbed" (cited in Hofstadter 1955: 64), further distinguishing the "robbers" into two non-producing categories—rich elites and low-class social parasites.

The first category comprised anyone believed to belong in Thornstein Veblen's late nineteenth-century "leisure class," Catholic preacher Charles Coughlin's "money changers" during the New Deal era, or C. Wright Mills' postwar "power elite."[7] Within those categories, one finds the monopolies, plutocrats, bankers, big lawyers, urban sophisticates, and liberal intellectuals—in short, "fat cats." From the Nixon years onward, the foes of the people are usually conceived as "the liberal establishment"—composed as it were of

> federal bureaucrats, the mass media, arrogant academics, and other amoral "special interests." This nexus of power supplant[s] big business and its political cronies as the main threat to the beliefs and pocketbooks of the hardworking white majority. (Kazin 1995: 266)

The second social category that antagonizes ordinary American people is the non-productive members of society, or those whose work ethic is poor. To take an example, in his study of Canarsie, a beleaguered ethnic community in Brooklyn, Jonathan Rieder showed that, in addition to corporate wealth, the residents showed their hostility to people on welfare, by contrasting "parasites" with "producers." As plainly put by a spokesman for one civil group in its newspaper, "For years, we have witnessed the appeasement of not-productive and counter-productive 'leeches' at the expense of New York's working force" (cited in Rieder 1987: 565).

In sum, the middle people in America may dislike the elites, for whom they feel indignation, but, even more than that, they abhor the subaltern classes for their parasitic nature in society. Middle America, writes Kazin (1995: 253), evokes "a widespread feeling of being squeezed between penthouse and ghetto—between a condescending elite above and scruffy demonstrators and welfare recipients below." What do those ordinary American people stand for? Typically, they are determined to preserve a democracy that serves the small home owners and tax payers with steady jobs instead of facilitating dealings with the liberal and plutocratic establishment. What they are most afraid of is downward mobility and this is why they have always insisted that the federal government has responsibility for the common weal. Interestingly, none of the two major parties in American politics can claim a monopoly of the average people. Rather, as Republican strategist Lee Atwater once put it, "there is constantly a war going on between the two parties for the populist vote" (cited in Lee 2006: 356). In a later chapter, we are going to see how most of that vote has currently come under Republican populist control.

[7] See Veblen (1899) and Mills (1956).

The Equitable Nativist People

In sharp contrast with the two previous types, the notion of "equitable nativist people" developed as early as the nineteenth century in several non-Catholic parts of Europe, most particularly in Scandinavia, and is based on the idea of, and quest for, social equity (*rettferd*). This notion, far from being the child of twentieth-century social democratic ideals, has rather been the outcome of early rural radicalism and is associated with core values of the region's agrarian culture. Its historical origins are to be found in the (certainly romanticized memory of) organic cohesion of the Swedish yeomanry, the traditional, close to nature and freedom-loving peasant communities in Norway, and the strong sense of cultural identity and national pride in Denmark. It is based on, and recalls the idea of, "a proud but pious peasant, tilling his own modest soil with a stubborn sense of justice and a natural propensity towards democracy" (Dahl 1984: 100), who also represents the community of the people (*folket* or *folk*) in Nordic countries. And yet, given the predominantly agrarian and collectivist character of Nordic societies during the nineteenth century, this notion of the people also refers to a sovereign whole, united under a common culture, traditions, and social ethos. In this way, any differences that may arise within society are to be fought over and resolved in institutionally described ways but without jeopardizing social homogeneity and political peace.

The point to drive home here is that the idea of the people that has developed historically in the Nordic region is different from the notion of "the people" as it is routinely employed in the literature on populism. As already explained with reference to the "little people" and the "common people," the latter idea is associated with a certain *part* of society sensing its social inferiority, political impotency, and low economic status; "the people" in populism is therefore predisposed to adversity and conflict, and relishes moralizing rhetoric. Not so with the Nordic folk, which, in a way that somehow evokes the Athenian demos of free citizens, includes the *entire* society and is characterized by its belief in collective national endeavor for achieving equity, social cohesion, and pragmatic politics.

In modern times, perhaps the best metaphor for the Nordic folk is the vision of the Swedish society as "the People's Home" (*folkhemmet*), first put forward in the early twentieth century by conservative scholar Rudolf Kjellén (1864–1922) and then embraced by all significant political forces in Sweden into the twenty-first century (for more detail, see Hellström 2016, Norocel 2016, Bergmann 2017). The heyday of this vision was, of course, the postwar years of Social Democratic dominance in Swedish politics and the expansion during that time of universal welfare reforms within the context of liberal democratic politics. Today, that vision has been adapted to resonate with the Sweden Democrats' calls for preserving national homogeneity, the anti-state

libertarianism of Norway's Progress Party, and the harsh anti-immigration stance of Denmark's Danish People's Party—all, as we have seen, representing political nativism. For all those parties, the people is the community of equitable natives (including native low and middle classes, as well as native elites) who constitute the real nucleus in their respective societies, and must be protected, not against (native) elites, but against the dangers of immigration and multiculturalism. Hence their commonly shared motto: "Our own people first."[8]

This notion of social equity has, therefore, two distinct components—one distributive and another equalizing: The former component signals a propensity in the system towards a fair and even distribution of economic goods and social resources; the latter component indicates a tendency to support the balance of incomes and social status gained in the *rettferd* system. "The Nordic equity ethos appears to apply both to the political action of leveling out—making the rich pay, taxing the top—and, in a jealous comparison, of making sure that nobody overtakes and passes you in position or possessions" (Dahl 1984: 95). The equity ethos is both socially radical and culturally conservative. It democratically promotes the equitable social mobility of all in society while at the same time fostering national identity via explicit inclusion/exclusion mechanisms.

The chief assumptions of the Nordic folk are quite different from the Italian popolo, the French peuple, or the Latin American pueblo. Because Nordic societies are, to a large extent, ethnically and culturally homogeneous, in the sense that each country has been able to develop a completely dominant national culture, "the people" here is understood as a native community of ordinary men and women—the elderly, the disabled, the working class, the pensioners—all of whom belong as equals in the same community, a *kulturnation*. In other words, if equity is the primary facet of the Nordic folk, national and cultural identity is the second one. Here emerges a *cold* cognition matter: Given limited resources, distributive equality can only succeed within the national boundary and only among the native population.

Nordic and other western European "populisms" are therefore of a purely nativist type—one that sets native citizens and their homogeneous culture against immigrants or other foreigners and their alien cultures. This is best explained in the following:

> The primary conceptualization of the people is the nation, and is in line with the [SD] party's historical nativist origin: The people is then conceptualized as the national community: "The Sweden Democrats consider the nation to be the most important, oldest and natural community after the family" (Sverigedemokraterna

[8] Emphasis on equity for natives together with appeals to restore traditional values, on the one hand, and a strong resentment for the extension of welfare provision to migrants, on the other hand, constitute what has been labeled "welfare chauvinism" (Andersen and Bjørklund 1990).

> principprogram 2011). The Swedish nation is defined as "loyalty, a common identity, a common language and culture."
>
> (Jungar, cited in Kriesi and Pappas 2015)

> Denmark is not an immigrant-country and never has been. . . . Denmark belongs to the Danes and its citizens must be able to live in a secure community founded on the rule of law, which develops along the lines of Danish culture.
>
> (Quoted from the 2002 Party Program of the Danish People's Party)[9]

A cautionary note is perhaps necessary at the close of this section: The Nordic folk is significantly different, in both the associations it conveys internally and the ensemble of units it applies to, from the Germanic concept of the people as *das volk*, a cultural and organic community of co-nationals.[10] At the basis of this concept, deeply rooted in nineteenth-century romanticism and upheld by political conservatives of various hues (including the Nazi party), is the perception of fundamental differences between one's own culture and other cultures that are not only alien, but potentially threatening as well.

To sum up and conclude this section in a somewhat comparative and more systematic way, the accompanying illustrations represent in simplified form the three types of people that we have examined.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 depict the vertical arrangement of the people/elite dyad that is characteristic of populist politics in Europe, Latin America, and the United States. In all these cases, the "little" or "middle" people comprise lower *and* middle classes with a strong sense of economic inequality, lack of social privilege, and political powerlessness. In terms of intellectual cognition, they feel morally indignant, socially angry, mistrustful of institutions, and strongly

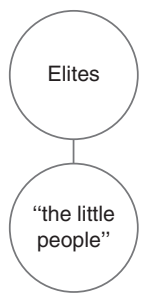


Figure 3.1. The "little people" in populism (Europe and Latin America)

[9] See https://danskfolkeparti.dk/politik/in-another-languages-politics/1757-2/.

[10] In this maze of notions, one should also be able to distinguish the *volk* that refers to the people broadly understood as middle strata, or the new middle class that emerged in early twentieth-century Germany and became the target group of mass political parties. As noted by Przeworski (1985: 26), "It was [Eduard] Bernstein after all who introduced the notion of Volkspartei"—the people's party.

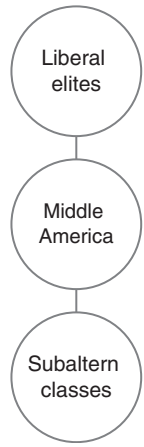


Figure 3.2. The "average people" in populism (United States)

resentful of the rich and powerful, collectively termed "the liberal elites," whom they hold responsible for their predicament. In their quest for social justice, economic redistribution, and moral recompense, they are often ready to mobilize politically and their preferred means of political action are grass-roots activism, street protest and, occasionally, mass rioting. However, since the people are unable to organize on their own at the bottom level, they are often susceptible to the influence of individual leaders who appear to them to possess extraordinary qualities and are, therefore, perceived as saviors of the people and their values.

The case of the "average people" in the United States, alerts us to the idea that populism is not necessarily about a bipolar division in society between *one* people and the elite, and that, in reality, "the people" may be broken up into more than one subgroup which, moreover, are antagonistic toward other subgroups. So, the "average people" may indeed feel threatened by, and strongly resentful toward, both elites and underclasses in society, the more so when those subaltern or otherwise disadvantaged strata in society (e.g., blacks, Hispanics, LGBT communities) give their political allegiance to main-stream "elitist" parties.

Finally, we have singled out the category of "equitable native people" (Figure 3.3), which constitutes the greater part of the ordinary citizenry in most relatively affluent northern and western European nations with a solid democratic tradition. To recall our earlier analogy between the holistic Athenian demos and the fragmentary Roman populus, they clearly resemble the former. This is why, despite the many divisions in both their social fabric and body politic, these native populations form *natural* majorities vis-à-vis non-natives. And when they appear resentful, theirs is a very particular kind of resentment that is directed against those politicians who are forgiving toward spendthrift

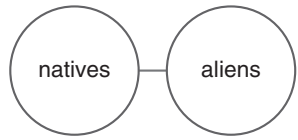


Figure 3.3. The "native people" in nativism

nations regarding overseas aid, lenient in matters of foreign immigration, or inclined to accept further EU integration at the expense of the national state. The opposition of the Finns Party during the 2015 elections to back yet another bailout package for Greece, the growth of the German AfD in 2016 when Chancellor Merkel admitted almost one million refugees into Germany, and the impressive 2017 electoral performance of the French FN based on that party's opposition to immigration and European federalism, attest to the fact that resentment in all three cases was directed against external threats that jeopardized the status quo of the respective native populations.

Overall, the people in this sense displays a strong sense and concern for individual liberty; accepts capitalism and the market mechanism; and its political behavior is anchored in, and regulated by, their respective country's liberal democratic institutions. Theirs is a democracy that works toward maintaining the institutional status quo, aims at preserving social and cultural homogeneity of the population, respects minority rights, and restrains majority rule—it is, in other words, a liberal democracy based on *limited* majority rule. From this perspective, and discounting other differences, equitable nativist people remain sovereign simply through parliamentary representation, that is, the act of delegating their power to elected representatives. However, and here's the rub, they are often intolerant toward alien minorities, such as immigrants, refugees, or economic drifters from poorer countries.

It is only "little people" and "average people," therefore, that are most appropriate in the study of populism, as only these groups may form the core of populist electoral constituencies. In both cases, the individuals entering these classes occupy embattled social and economic positions in their societies, have a sense of moral righteousness and, consequently, display radical potential. However, as they lack homogeneity and are fragmented, populist leaders must assume the task of turning them into artificial majorities. The next two sections are dedicated to showing how this may become possible.

3.2. EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP

If, as this book argues, democracy has two facets, liberal and populist, each of them should then correspond to a different type of leadership. On this logic,

the present chapter assumes the task of exemplifying populist leadership, especially by bringing it into sharp contrast with "ordinary" leadership in liberal democracy. It will be shown that populist leaders do in fact belong to that particular group of *extraordinary* leaders who, whether for lack of a better term or simple linguistic convention, are often referred to as "charismatic"—thereby elevating political charisma as an essential characteristic of populism (see e.g., Germani 1978, Betz 1998: 9, Canovan 1999: 6, Taggart 2000: 102, Eatwell 2002, Pedahzur and Brichta 2002, Hawkins 2003: 1138, Zaslove 2008: 324, McDonnell 2015).

From a selective reading in the relevant literature, Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008: 7) consider that "the charismatic bond between leader and follower is absolutely central to populist parties." Mény and Surel (2002: 17) assert that populism "advocates the power of the people, yet relies on seduction by a charismatic leader" while, similarly, Mazzoleni (2003: 4) asserts that modern "populist movements characteristically organize themselves around charismatic and strongly personalized leaderships." Kurt Weyland (1999: 381, 2001: 14) places charisma at the center of his definition of populism, which he sees as "a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power." Still others view populism as a mere outcome of the action of charismatic leaders since "in order for populism to emerge . . . there is one element above all others that must exist, i.e. the presence of a leader willing and able to exploit existing social conditions of anxiety and availability" (Pasquino 2008: 27). In a similar vein, lack of charismatic leadership has been proposed to explain why populist parties are unable to gain ground in some countries (Smith 2010: 1490), while others have shown empirically that political charisma is an important predictor of the relative success of extreme right-wing populism (Lubbers et al. 2002).

And yet, while most students of populism stress the relationship between populism and charismatic leadership, others remain unconvinced, and with good reason. As Mudde (2007: 262) correctly puts it, "[t]he key problem with the variable 'charismatic leader' is the vagueness of the term." Consequently, "as long as the notion of charisma is not explicitly defined, this explanation of support of populist parties is not open to empirical falsification, which in turn means that it is not useful for scientific explanation" (van der Brug and Mughan 2007: 44). No wonder, then, that several authors choose to dismiss the usefulness of the concept, as its "reasoning becomes circular, unless we define very strictly what is (and what is not) meant by charisma" (van der Brug et al. 2005: 542).

That being the case, in this chapter I am going to put forward a novel conceptualization of political charisma *as a particular type of extraordinary leadership that is pertinent to the study of populism*. For such a conceptualization to be useful, there are two requirements: First, it must be specific enough to provide us with reasonably clear indicators for distinguishing extraordinary

from ordinary leaders, but also for rendering our object amenable to empirical falsification. And, second, our reconceptualization should point via the causal hypotheses embedded in it (Goertz 2006: 65–6) to the ways that extraordinary leadership may determine key facets of the populist phenomenon, such as its emergence, development, and relative success—all of which will be analyzed in detail in subsequent chapters. I therefore propose to begin with a general analytical scheme, which effectively distinguishes between ordinary and extraordinary leadership in liberal democratic contexts.

In a modern liberal democracy, political leadership is predominantly of the ordinary (i.e., legal-rational) type, but, occasionally, it can take on an extraordinary (i.e., charismatic) form. In the latter case, leadership extraordinariness typically entails two characteristics that are absent in ordinary leadership (see Table 3.1): The carrying out of *radical* politics and the leader's *personal* sway over a party or movement. By the same token, as shown in Figure 3.4, such extraordinary leadership can flourish in either a liberal democratic context or in a populist one. In the first case, a leader uses his/her party or movement as the means for achieving the radical replacement of an old

Table 3.1. Types of democratic leadership according to nature of rule and rule aims

Key authority aspects	Ordinary	Extraordinary
Rulership	Impersonal	Personal
Rule aims	Moderation	Radicalism

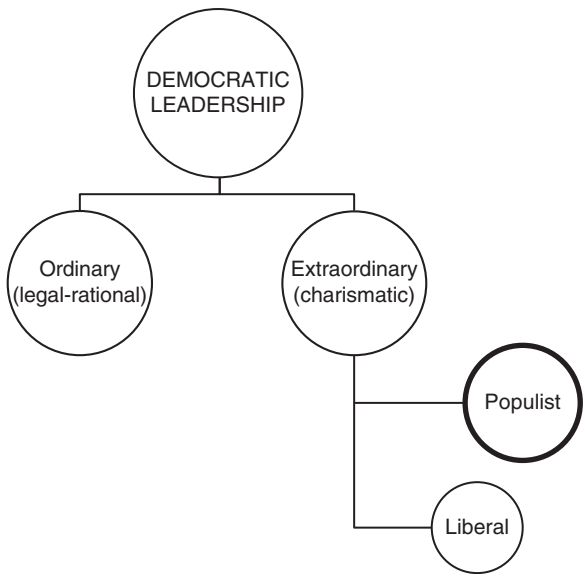


Figure 3.4. Types of democratic leadership

liberal institutional order with a new—and presumably better—one. But in the case of extraordinary leadership in liberal democracy, the leader's intent is how to replace a politically liberal system with an illiberal one while at the same time maintaining the appearances of democracy. This *is* a truly radical project by any definition of the term.

When is Leadership "Charismatic"?

Based on the foregoing scheme, and leaving aside for the moment "bad leadership" (Kellerman 2004), let us first try to underpin the notion of proper ordinary leadership in contemporary liberal democratic systems. As the closest approximation to Max Weber's ideal type of "legal-rational" authority, liberal democracies are highly institutionalized, rule-bound political systems of bureaucratic domination in which formal procedure and the rule of law hold sway over adversarial politics and radical ruptures. In such systems, voters (i.e., principals) are expected to select their leaders (i.e., agents), who, in turn, are expected to exercise their rule in a *systemic* way—that is to say, "engage in everyday, normal politics that neither question nor threaten the instituted society but instead accept it and reproduce it" (Kalyvas 2002: 79).

Metaphorically speaking, an ordinary leader is like a "trimmer" in the nautical sense: he or she constantly trims the sails of the vessel of state against changes in the wind and weather, and "disposes his weight so as to keep the ship upon an even keel" on rough seas (Oakeshott 1996: 123). To be radical or extreme, by contrast, would not be simply trimming the sails but turning the rudder hard this way or another in order to change course abruptly and dramatically. Ordinary leadership, then, entails the following ontological characteristics: The impersonality of rule, together with an emphasis on procedural moderation and continuity (Table 3.1). It typically involves a hierarchical organization of offices regulated by common rules, norms, and procedures in a "spirit of formalistic impersonality [operating] *sine ira et studio*" (Weber 1978: 225); it also has continuity "as one of its most important characteristics" (Weber 1978: 1111). It is in these respects—the impersonal nature of the relationship between leader and followers, on the one hand, and the emphasis on continuity through moderate, rather than radical, political change, on the other—that ordinary leadership is expected to differ from extraordinary leadership.

To illustrate ordinary liberal democratic leadership by example, take the case of Angela Merkel, Germany's Chancellor since 2005 and a true bastion of Western-type liberalism. She did not create her own party but succeeded the long-serving Helmut Kohl and Wolfgang Schäuble (who held a brief tenure) as the leader of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU). Typically described as a hard worker, prudent thinker, pragmatic politician, and clever strategist, she

managed to keep the party under control and lead it to four consecutive electoral victories. During her leadership, she worked for her country's prosperity, keeping unemployment low, the budget balanced, and economic growth steady; achieved a strengthened Germany in a united Europe; played a crucial role in managing the 2008 financial crisis at European and international levels; and, when it became necessary after the war in Syria, she bravely granted asylum to over one million migrants who entered Germany. Notwithstanding the size of all her achievements, though, Merkel's leadership is not outside the range of institution-bounded ordinary democratic leadership. In other words, what is remarkable in this case is the magnitude of success not the way of achieving it. Merkel has been, indeed, the ultimate moderate politician—a political "trimmer." As *New York Times* journalist Roger Cohen (2013) has nicely put it, she is "a study in predictability . . . and orchestrated ordinariness," which is to say the expected norm of political leadership in liberal democracy.

That being the case with ordinary moderate leadership, how are we to distinguish it from extraordinary democratic leadership? Following the above rationalization, we already have two criteria as a basis on which to proceed: The very nature of rulership and the leader's political aims in the exercise of such rule. According to the simple distinction of leadership characteristics presented in Table 3.1, extraordinary leaders are distinguished from ordinary ones by, first, their exercise of personal authority over the internal life of the political organizations they control and, second, their ability to act in ways that cause a radical break with an established political and institutional order. Extraordinary leadership thus "transforms all values and breaks all traditional and rational norms" (Weber 1978: 1115, 1117) seeking to cause a "radical alternation of the central attitudes and directions of action with a completely new orientation of all attitudes toward the different problems of the 'world'" (Weber 1978: 245). Or, to use Oakeshott's metaphor again, unlike the trimmers, extraordinary leaders are the ones who turn the ship from port to starboard in spectacular changes of course.

Having identified its core elements, we may now minimally define "extraordinary" (aka charismatic) leadership as:

> **A distinct type of legitimate leadership that is personal and aims at the radical transformation of an established institutional order.**

But having a definition is hardly good enough if it is not made fully amenable to empirical observation and falsification. This requires the fine operationalization of our definition's two core criteria, personalism and radicalism, to which I now briefly turn.

1. In the case of **personalism**, what distinguishes extraordinary from ordinary leadership are (a) the leader's full personal authority over a party,

or movement, and (b) the direct and unmediated relationship that develops between the leader and the led.

Regarding personal authority, whereas ordinary democratic leadership involves established hierarchies, institutional checks and balances, decentralized decision-making, and collective responsibility, extraordinary leadership exhibits highly centralized authority structures, an absence of clear bureaucratic characteristics, and the leader's untrammeled control over subordinates—in short, what Eatwell (2006) and others (McDonnell 2015) refer to as "coterie charisma." Most typically, the leader is the one who has founded (or co-founded) the party. In many cases, winning full control requires fierce intra-party conflicts ending with the unconditional defeat (and often expulsion from the party) of the leader's internal opposition. After the consolidation of the leader's single-handed authority, "the division of labor [in the party] is constantly redefined at the leader's discretion, career uncertainties are considerable, no accepted procedures exist, and improvisation is the only real organizational 'rule'" (Panebianco 1988: 146).

The second indicator of personalism obtains from the particular relationship that develops between leader and followers. Under ordinary leadership, this relationship is expected to be indirect and mediated through impersonal institutions, reliant upon non-passionate and undramatic narratives. Extraordinary leadership, in contrast, has a quasi-missionary nature and is characterized by the unmediated and direct—and often quite intimate—relationship between followers and leader. Quite typically, such relationships are marked by their uncompromising loyalty and emotional passion, a moral high ground stance, and are self-righteous in that the leader's program is presented as heralding a bright new world (Madsen and Snow 1991, Goodwin et al. 2001, Zúquete 2007). The most classic manifestation of such a relationship are mass political rallies, for which extraordinary charismatic leaders have a strong penchant for both the collective mobilization and the social effervescence they tend to generate.

2. In the case of **radicalism**, and owing to the fact that radicalism always has a subversive function, we also have two indicators that can be empirically assessed with sufficient clarity so as to distinguish extraordinary from ordinary leaders: The legal (normally non-violent) subversion of the status quo through systematic delegitimation, and the constitution in its place of an entirely novel system of authority.

In systematic delegitimation, extraordinary leadership is characterized by its methodical attacks on an established authority structure in order to delegitimize it. Such leaders are radical precisely because they "challenge the existing widespread beliefs and meanings that sustain the legitimacy of a political and juridical order. They seek first to disrupt and subvert the motivational and normative grounds of an established institutional and legal structure before replacing it with a new [and allegedly better] one" (Kalyvas 2008: 27).

Such attacks on the programmatic injustice or the moral and ethical deficit of the existing order abound in the political discourse of charismatic leaders and are easily traceable through the use of the various techniques of discourse analysis.

The final indicator of extraordinary leadership is complementary to the previous one. It consists in the introduction in politics of some novel worldview, from which fresh legitimacy is derived by seeking to constitute anew the political community. During this process and mostly through their discourse, extraordinary leaders present themselves as creative artists who "objectify new relationships" and provide new symbolic and normative foundations for a fresh cycle of politics to commence. Such leaders, therefore, by winning both symbolic and real political battles, always seek to create new legal and institutional structures. Quite interestingly, once in power, extraordinary leaders are often keen to provide new constitutions (or radically modify existing ones), reflecting the higher moral values and normative principles of their own worldview. The four indicators pointing to the core properties of extraordinary leadership are summarized in checklist form in Table 3.2.

As previously explained, extraordinary leadership may be styled by either liberal or populist politicians. In either case, and in sharp contrast to an ordinary legal-bureaucratic type of leadership, which refers to widely accepted and firmly institutionalized forms of authority, extraordinary leadership is characterized by a distinctly personal style *and* aims at the radical transformation of some established institutional order. The difference between liberal and populist leadership extraordinariness is as follows: While the former seeks to radically replace an outmoded liberal political system with a modern but no less liberal one, the latter sees the replacement of a liberal system with one that is fundamentally illiberal.[11] The examples of France's President Charles de Gaulle, who in 1958 terminated the Fourth Republic and drew up a radically

Table 3.2. Index of "extraordinary" leadership

PERSONALISM
a. Supreme control over party/movement; power centralization
b. Leader-led relationship; unmediated and emotional, often divisive
RADICALISM
c. Subverting by delegitimation an established authority structure
d. Constituting a novel authority structure

[11] The difference is subtly captured in the following remark by presidential candidate Hillary Clinton (2017: 76): "I was running a traditional presidential campaign with carefully thought-out policies and painstakingly built coalitions," she reports, "while Trump was running a reality TV show that expertly and relentlessly stoked Americans' anger and resentment" with no specific policy content and without respect to established institutional order.

new constitution proclaiming the Fifth French Republic, and Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who rejected the postwar consensus over Keynesianism and radically introduced in the 1970s a system of economic deregulation, flexible labor markets, and company privatization, suffice, I think, to demonstrate extraordinary charismatic leadership in typically liberal settings.

We have come a long theoretical way and it is time to check theory against observed fact. As we have now come up with a notion of extraordinary, or charismatic, leadership that is explicitly defined and amenable to empirical falsification, what results would we get if we applied actual cases of populist party leaders to our index of extraordinary leadership? Who, and how many of them, would meet all the criteria set? And, importantly, how, and to what degree, does extraordinary leadership correlate with the success of populist parties?

The Extraordinariness of Populist Leaders

As Max Weber affirmed, "entirely pure charismatic authority . . . is rare" (Weber 1978: 263). No less rare, however, is *successful* populism without a leader who very closely approximates the charismatic ideal of leadership, i.e., meeting both of its requirements: personalist authority and political radicalism.

To begin with the latter requirement, radicalism is already taken for granted in our very definition of populism as democratic illiberalism. This is so because, following our earlier discussion, populism aims at subverting an existing political order, postwar liberal democracy, through delegitimizing it and replacing it with a supposedly better—and morally superior—one: Illiberal democracy. This is why populist leaders, as we are going to see shortly, invariably seek upon assuming office to write new constitutions. And yet, however much a necessary component of populist leadership, radicalism alone does not suffice to produce what we have described as extraordinary leadership. To do so, it also needs to combine with the leaders' personal authority over a party or movement, which will serve as a vehicle for implementing the radical populist agenda.

As we are getting ready to delve in subsequent chapters into the empirical analysis of populism in Europe and the Americas, the remainder of the present chapter will focus specifically on the personalist element of populist leadership. Based on the comparison of our universe of cases, it will show that *all* successful populist leaders share the following three characteristics: (a) They are political, and often social, outsiders who entered politics by either founding their own political party or, less frequently, taking over already existing parties; in either case they (b) kept their parties tightly under their full personal control, while at the same time (c) they built and thereafter sustained

a direct, unmediated, and highly emotional relationship with their political supporters. When one of those characteristics withers away, or disappears altogether, charisma evaporates. In order of chronological appearance in competitive party politics (with respective dates of first election victory in parentheses), the leaders to be accounted for are: Juan Perón (1946), Andreas Papandreou (1981), Alberto Fujimori (1990), Silvio Berlusconi (1994), Viktor Orbán (1998/2010), Hugo Chávez (1998), Rafael Correa (2007), Alexis Tsipras (2015), and Donald Trump (2016). By any criterion, all these leaders are classified as populist and, with the sole exception of Trump who at the time of this writing is still relatively young in office, each of them has won at least two consecutive elections in his respective country. In a very real sense, then, this group of leaders represents the totality of the most successful populist rulers in postwar Europe and the Americas.

When studying the biographies of the leaders who have led important populist parties, an almost instantaneous finding is that they have come overwhelmingly from outside the political mainstream. In most cases, they have had no previous relation to well-established mainstream political parties in their respective countries. But even if they had such relations, they either severed them or took it upon themselves to transform their parties and lead them in more radical directions. Hence, populist leaders can rightly "describe themselves and . . . are perceived by their contenders as well as by the general public as acting outside the party system" (Schedler 1996: 298). But when do politicians count as "outsiders"?

According to an earlier study by Juan Linz on presidential politics, outsiders enter the political arena "sometimes without any governmental or even political experience, [but only] on the basis of a populist appeal often based on hostility to [existing] parties and politicians" (Linz 1994: 26). Similarly, for Charles Kenney, outsider status depends on two conditions: First, whether some politician rises to political prominence from outside rather than from within the established party system and, second, whether that politician's discourse and overall politics reject rather than tolerate existing parties (Kenney 1998). Typically, such politicians have very limited political experience, and often none at all (Corrales 2008: 5, Carreras 2014: 6). Outsiders, in short, emerge in the foregoing views from outside the confines of already established party systems and thrive by rebuffing them; insiders, by contrast, are those politicians who emerge within established party systems and aim at their preservation.

This conceptualization seems straightforward save for the not so uncommon occurrence of political entrepreneurs who, having risen to prominence within established parties in time-honored party systems, splinter from them by also attacking their foundations. What should we do with this category of leaders who, like Mexico's Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas, the son of a revered former president and once a perennial political insider of the long-ruling Institutional

Revolutionary Party (PRI), break away to head parties of their own?[12] Following Barr (2009: 34), we should admit them into the outsiders' category since "they can likewise credibly claim to be fighting the establishment." There is, finally, an additional aspect to a politician's status as an outsider that is not political but social. Authors like Anthony King (2002: 438) have thus focused on "the *social* or even the *demographic* outsider" in the sense that such leaders do not belong to the predominant (ethnic, religious) groups in their respective societies nor to the dominant (social, economic) classes within them. King's focus was of course on Margaret Thatcher, a grocer's daughter, but, as will shortly be shown, the great majority of populist leaders examined herein display many of the characteristics of social or demographic outsiders.

With regard to their professional backgrounds, nearly all of our populist leaders originate from non-political family and professional milieus. As shown in Table 3.3, before entering politics, two of them had been prominent businessmen (Berlusconi and Trump), two were military men (Perón and Chávez), three served in academic and other academically related technocratic positions (Papandreou, Fujimori, and Correa), and two emerged as student leaders within opposition movement-like parties in times of political tumult (Orbán and Tsipras). Among those in our group, only Andreas Papandreou was a scion of one of Greece's most prominent political families. His father had served twice as prime minister and he himself also had previous political experience as a minister in one of his father's earlier governments. What is more, Andreas was a technocrat who, before entering politics, had served as chairman of the Department of Economics at the University of California, Berkeley, and also as general director of the Athens Economic Research Center

Table 3.3. Populist party leaders, with year of rise to power and previous profession

Populist leader	Political party	Election year	Professional area
Juan Perón	PJ	1946	Military
Andreas Papandreou	PASOK	1981	Academia
Alberto Fujimori	Cambio 90	1990	Academia
Silvio Berlusconi	FI/PdL	1994	Business
Viktor Orbán	FIDESZ	1998	Student/movement
Hugo Chávez	MVR	1998	Military
Rafael Correa	Alianza PAIS	2006	Academia
Alexis Tsipras	SYRIZA	2015	Student/movement
Donald Trump	Republican Party	2016	Business

[12] Or think about Álvaro Uribe, a Colombian president between 2002 and 2010, who was a well-known figure in the Partido Liberal, and decided to run in the 2002 presidential elections as an independent.

and advisor to the Bank of Greece.[13] Even so, in a way similar to Cárdenas, he was quick to abandon his father's mainstream party and its liberal legacy, and initiate instead his own radical populist movement.

What is even more noteworthy about our group of populist leaders is that, in most cases, they rose to political prominence leading parties they themselves had founded. In Argentina, first, Perón came to power in 1946 as head of a party that had been founded only the previous year by union activists to contest the forthcoming elections. Immediately after his victory, Perón promptly dissolved that party and, together with his wife Evita, founded the Justicialist Party (PJ), which thereafter became the main vehicle of populism in Argentina. In the aftermath of Greece's 1974 return to democracy, Papandreou turned down an offer to assume the leadership of the liberal centrist party founded by his father in the 1960s, preferring instead to create his own populist PASOK. In Hungary, Orbán was one of several students who, in 1988, co-founded Fidesz as an independent liberal youth organization. Not long after, however, he was able to take full control of the party during its congress held in 1993 in Debrecen. After that, Orbán "organized Fidesz from a rather anarchic, horizontally organized youth organization into a centrally organized party controlled from the top" (Körösényi and Patkós 2017: 618). In Italy, Berlusconi created the party Forza Italia! (FI) shortly before the 1994 general elections as his "electoral machine," which he moreover kept from the outset under his political and financial control (Hopkin and Paolucci 1999). Similarly in Venezuela, Chávez founded clandestinely his own movement, which later evolved into the Movement of the Fifth Republic (MVR) to support Chávez's candidacy in the 1998 presidential election. Populist leaders Alberto Fujimori in Peru and Rafael Correa in Ecuador also created their own movement-like political parties.

But even when they did not found their own party machines, populists rose as maverick politicians within already established parties, i.e., against ordinary intraparty procedure and often bypassing time-honored practices of those parties' officials, rank and file, or both. In such cases of party seizure, as indicated by the next two cases, populist leaders are able to transform erstwhile liberal parties into populist ones. Donald Trump, initially not the preferred candidate of the wealthy donors and top party officials of the Republican Party, was able to stage what became effectively a coup by the party rank and file, which thus became split over its identity, core beliefs, and fundamental principles. The case of Alexis Tsipras in Greece has similarities—after assuming leadership of the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), Tsipras steered it decisively in a radical populist direction, which prompted the exodus from

[13] In this respect, Papandreou's case resembles that of another technocrat populist, Rafael Correa, who, before announcing his candidacy for Ecuador's presidency, had served in 2005 as Economy and Finance minister for a short period of four months under Alfredo Palacio.

the party of all its liberal constituents, at both party official and grassroots levels.

Regardless of whether they found a new party or take over an already established one, populist leaders tend to acquire full control over their respective party organizations, eliminate all internal opposition, and lead them in a highly centralized fashion. Perón, like most military men, had neither respect nor much time for intraparty democracy and collective decision-making, which he considered at best inefficient and at worst anarchic. In their place, he envisaged a personalist style of leadership and a party "organized on paramilitary lines in which the centrifugal tendencies of the mass would be effectively checked by a unity of conception and action imposed from above" (Little 1973: 654). In Greece, PASOK became synonymous with its leader as "the leader's authority radiated through all the components and forces of the party, endowing them simultaneously with cohesion and homogeneity" (Elephantis 1981: 107, Pappas 2009). Berlusconi's two parties (FI and, after 2007, the People for Freedom (PdL)) also became highly centralized as the leader, advised by an inner circle of collaborators and friends held together by loyalty to his person, has been fully responsible for all the decision-making and elaboration of party strategy (Hopkin and Paolucci 1999, Paolucci 2008: 472, McDonnell 2013). Chávez, also a military man, allowed no internal democracy in the party he founded, choosing instead to make all important decisions personally (Hawkins 2003: 1151). He remained undisputed leader to the end of his life. In Hungary, Orbán was able to "transform the original grass-roots movement of young revolutionaries step by step . . . into a charismatic 'Führer' party" (Lendvai 2012: 86). The situation remained unaltered after he came to power, since he continued to control his ministers through under-secretaries belonging to the hard core of the party (Bozóki 2008: 199). Finally, also of interest is the case of Peru's Fujimori, who chose not to promote his party's organization (Change 90 (Cambio 90)), preferring instead to let it decay after his election to Peru's presidency. The cases of Trump and Tsipras are both recent and, at the time of this writing, ongoing. What is clear in both cases, however, is that these leaders have striven to cleanse their parties of most, if not all, internal opposition and obtain full control over them.

The detailed analysis of the above samples also reveals that, in many cases of extraordinary populist leadership, a prior intraparty conflict between the party leader and some internal opposition resisting the concentration of all power in the leader's hands has occurred. Without exception, in all such cases the leaders proved able to maintain and centralize their power by expelling party members, demoting internal opponents, or eliminating party fractions. Thus, Papandreou, to impose full personal control over his party, had to engage in a fierce internal struggle against party cadres demanding collective leadership, internal democratic procedures, and accountability to the party

base (Spourdalakis 1988). In Hungary, Orbán's once-close friend Gábor Fodor, leader of the more liberal wing of Fidesz, was forced to leave the party to form the stillborn Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz). In Italy, Berlusconi forced Gianfranco Fini, then president of the Chamber of Deputies, to leave the PdL and create a breakaway group, having become excessively critical of the government and Berlusconi himself. There is, of course, also the case of the 2016 presidential primaries of the Republican Party in the U.S., in which Trump entered a field of seventeen major candidates vying for the nomination. Although broadly considered the "dark horse" in the race, and despite all internal opposition to his candidacy from the party bigwigs and large donors, Trump was able to win the race by breaking the all-time record in the history of the GOP for winning the most primary votes;[14] he also set the record for the largest number of votes cast against the front runner, Senator Ted Cruz (Bump 2016).

Besides their full control over their parties' rank and file, all of the foregoing populist leaders enjoyed the adulation of their party followers, with whom they built direct and unmediated relationships. Perhaps the most exemplary case of this is the mass rallies of support for Juan Perón that were held in the plaza below the presidential balcony of the Casa Rosada in Buenos Aires. His wife, Eva Duarte, widely known as Evita "the saint of the poor," became a popular icon who inspired adoration among the nation (and beyond it judging from the famous musical that commemorates her life). Similarly in Greece, when Andreas Papandreou addressed his followers in public spaces, so immense was the emotion that one witness once described it as "a boiling ocean of exuberant humanity" (Hitchens 1992: 1). Inside PASOK, too, there developed "an unmistakable sense of mission and genuine ideological commitment in the manner [Papandreou] and his lieutenants approached their tasks" (Iatrides 1992: 130). Hugo Chávez, with his flamboyant style, affable nature, and ease with words, was also able to maintain a direct relationship with the masses, not least through *Aló Presidente*, his Sunday talk show during which he went into conversation with anonymous Venezuelans. Silvio Berlusconi not only enjoyed the adulation of crowds during his rule; he also succeeded in amplifying it across the country through the immense power of his communications media. The expert judges used by Lubbers et al. in their study of right-wing populism in a number of European countries gave him the second highest score for charisma (Lubbers et al. 2002: 361).

In concluding this section, we are left with one important empirical finding and two lessons learned that we should keep firmly in mind. The finding is that no populist rise to power has ever occurred in postwar liberal democracies without the presence of charismatic leadership. Or, in Finchelstein's (2017: 255) felicitous phrasing, populism without such leadership remains

[14] "Grand Old Party."

"historically . . . an incomplete form." Evidently, then, such leadership is an important causal factor for the *success* of populism: The stronger the charisma of the leadership, the higher the likelihood that populist parties will prosper politically and electorally. Extraordinary leadership thus emerges as the most important predictor for populism's overall successful performance. And here come the two extra lessons.

First, as Weber knew well, charisma is difficult to achieve, and hence rare. Notwithstanding their radical ideas, rhetoric, or style, populist leaders remain devoid of charisma as long as their radicalism is not accompanied by full control over a political party or movement, in the ways described above. Think, for example, of Italy's Beppe Grillo, co-founder (with Gianroberto Casaleggio) in 2010 of the Five Star Movement (M5S), who invited his followers to organize themselves independently through his own blog platform. Soon thereafter, dozens of groups of "friends of Grillo" formed, mostly engaging in local activities. But none of this activity could be said to be under the direct control of the leader of the movement. Instead, the M5S resembled "a meta-organization, that is, a web-like structure consisting of micro organizations conducting a heterogenous range of activities" and enjoying their own autonomous lives (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013: 438).[15] By the criteria used herein, therefore, Grillo cannot classify as a charismatic leader.

Second, if charisma is one of the causal factors of populism, logically it also suggests the means for fighting against it. For, charisma is never a permanent characteristic of leadership; it is one that is both temporary and precarious. And, to the extent that leaders have to achieve it, they may as well suffer the loss of it. In Weber's own words again, charisma exists only "as long as it is proved; that is, as long as it receives recognition" by the community of followers and believers (Weber 1978: 244). In Section 7.1, I am going to present the following evidence: While all populist leaders possessed charisma at the time they rose to power, not all of them were able to sustain it for the full length of their rule. This difference, as will be shown towards the end of the book, is the safest predictor for populist longevity in office. It also points to productive ways of facing the populist threat.

3.3. SYMBOLIC POLITICS

Evidently, populist parties succeed politically to the extent that they are capable of building an electoral majority consisting of "the people." This, to

[15] Another revealing case of a contemporary populist leader who was unable to present "extraordinary leadership" is that of Pablo Iglesias, the leader of the Spanish PODEMOS. This case will be analyzed in more detail in Chapter 4.

be sure, is easier said than done. Since initially "the people" is an amorphous social melange—visibly distinguished by differences of sex, age, education, religion, language, geography, income, or class, each of its constituent parts with dissimilar dispositions and interests—turning it into an electoral majority requires no small political potential. It requires, above all, forging new collective identities, using particular discourses to impose a novel legitimate worldview, assuming group representation, and mobilizing group solidarity and political commitment to future projects. To only slightly paraphrase Pierre Bourdieu (1985: 741), populist politics "is the site par excellence of symbolic efficacy, the action that is performed through signs capable of producing social things, and, in particular, ['the people']."

Of course, the process of forging an imaginary social group out of disparate components is nothing new. In a very essential sense, ancestral communities (Laitin 1986), entire nations (Anderson 1991), political movements (Fox Piven and Cloward 1977), and even social classes, such as the proletariat (Thompson 1963, Bourdieu 1987), are political artifacts. They are never found ready-made in reality. Instead, they are the products of a complex work of construction by political entrepreneurs acting within specific historical circumstances (Pappas 2008). Ditto with the construct of "the people"—an almost sacred entity in populism, as already seen in Section 3.1. This chapter is about how all of this may happen.

Recall once again that modern democracy has two facets. One facet is oriented towards a liberal constitution of politics that is grounded on institutions of a contractual nature; its second facet manifests itself as a highly symbolic drama with its own distinctive narrative forms and rhetorical techniques, which is played *beyond* and *above* existing liberal institutions. In this populist facet, encapsulated succinctly by Andreas Papandreou during a widely televised party rally: "There are no institutions—there's only the people" (cited in Pappas 2014a: 28).[16] More specifically, liberal democracy is embedded in time-honored institutions that, when working properly, provide the guidelines for social action in an otherwise complex world. Such institutions are impersonal, universally applicable, and characterized by continuity. In a way, they can be said to be for politics what the "invisible hand" is for markets. Political populism, in sharp contrast, overlooks institutions when they do not align with the general will. Furthermore, graced as it is with high morality, populist politics revolves to a large extent around upstanding principles rather than institutions, emotions rather than reason, and ethical rather than pragmatic issues. It is within such "realms of symbolic politics"

[16] Or, as another populist leader, Manuel López Obrador, put it after his defeat in Mexico's 2006 election, "Al diablo con vuestras instituciones!" ("To hell with your institutions!") (Przeworski 2016).

that political entrepreneurs endeavor to distinguish themselves by the strategic manipulation of symbols in their pursuit of power.

Populist leaders are symbolists. "Symbols," explains social anthropologist Abner Cohen, "are objects, acts, relationships or linguistic formations that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of meanings, evoke emotions, and impel men to action. . . . [They] tend to be grouped together within the framework of dynamic ideologies, or world-views, that are developed and carried by specific groupings" (Cohen 1976: 23, 24). Quite predictably, new symbolic production tends to become more intense in situations where rapid political change is underway, such as, for instance, during early phases of democratization or after party system collapse in mature democracies. In such cases, societies go through stress and, as old symbols become obsolete and fall into disuse, a market for new symbols more appropriate for dealing with new realities naturally emerges. The point, however, is that these symbols are not the spontaneous reaction of societies experiencing distress. They are, rather, crafted and then introduced by creative political entrepreneurs who are

> more articulate than others, and their formulations may appeal more than those of others to a wide collectivity of people who are in the throes of the same problem. These are the charismatic leaders [already examined in Section 3.2] who objectify new relationships and give definite symbolic forms to vaguely experienced *subjective* ideas and images. (Cohen 1976: 57, my emphasis)

What kind of subjective ideas may become the basis for populist politics? In the contemporary conditions of liberal democracy and capitalist economy, where individual opportunities to gain are finite and socio-economic imbalances are common, competition for resources (e.g., jobs, social status, proximity to power) becomes fierce, which thus sets the stage for social and political conflict. Three types of adversity are particularly important: economic *inequality*, social *injustice*, and political *exclusion*. When people perceive themselves as falling into one—or, usually, more—of these situations, feelings of resentment tend to develop, which may in turn set social and political radicalism in motion. Note that all these situations are relational rather than categorical.

Still, even when resentment grows strong in society, political institutions that are firmly in place and properly working are in general sufficient to provide ways of conflict resolution, social peace, and political progress. The problem arises when such institutions are either malfunctioning or altogether absent, as more typically happens in young and unstable democracies or in more mature ones undergoing massive cultural and political shifts. In such cases, political entrepreneurs find it more convenient (let alone cheaper due to the low organizational costs it involves), to attract followers on the basis of accumulated resentment rather than on the basis of other objective identities, such as, for instance, those of class, religion, language, or region. Political

leaders find it politically expedient to creatively utilize social resentment as their "symbolic core" for articulating a new identity of an oversoul "people." Thus, to paraphrase David Laitin (1986: 100), populism is the macro-political outcome of rationally pursued symbolic strategies of individual political entrepreneurs in their pursuit of power.

Once produced, circulated in society, and endowed with adequate political resonance, symbolic discourses, or narratives, are used as compelling general *frames*, that is to say, simplified interpretative schemata that enable people to "locate, perceive, identify, and label" complex realities within their proximate and broader world (Goffman 1974: 21). In short, symbolic frames are powerful devices, or mechanisms (Elster 1993: 5; Ross 1997: 42), that are necessary for radical social change to occur. "By rendering events of occurrences meaningful," as is further explained by Snow et al. (1986: 464), such "frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective." This way, exactly as it happens with other objective identities such as ethnicity or religion, a populist frame provides "an ideal 'blue-print' for the articulation of informal organization for interest groups. It mobilizes powerful emotions and sentiments that are associated with the basic problems of human existence and gives legitimacy and stability to political arrangements by representing these as a natural part of the system of the universe" (Cohen 1976: 106).

Social mobilization requires one's self-perception as the victim of unequal, unjust, or exclusivist treatment. "For a protest movement to arise," write two of the early pioneers in social movement theory, "people have to perceive the deprivation . . . they experience as both wrong and subject to redress"—that is to say, as "unjust and mutable" (Fox Piven and Cloward 1977: 12, see also-Gamson 1992). During such a process of "cognitive liberation" (McAdam 1982: 51), people decide to take action precisely because they now "redefine as unjust and immoral what was previously seen as unfortunate but perhaps tolerable" (Snow et al. 1986: 474). In similar fashion, any movement is "inconceivable apart from a vital sense that some established practice or mode of thought is wrong and ought to be replaced" (Turner and Killian 1987: 242). It is for this reason, too, that movements against injustice and other adverse conditions have to offer new diagnoses and remedies for existing forms of inequality, injustice, or exclusion.

Through the action of creative political entrepreneurs, symbols deposited in language and other forms of non-verbal communication become powerful mechanisms for forging new social identities, which in effect may produce groups with formidable symbolic ammunition for waging political struggles. Thus the class of "the people" may only exist when "there are agents capable of imposing themselves, as authorized to speak and to act officially in its place and its name, upon those who . . . recognize themselves as members of [the group of 'the people'], and in doing so, confer upon it the only form of existence a group can possess" (Bourdieu 1987: 15).

Frames, in short, require their framers. Rather than being produced at the anonymous mass level of society, frames are in reality constructed by eponymous political leaders who engage in creative symbolic action for recruiting adherents, building political organizations, and, ultimately, bringing about political change. It is through the manipulation of certain aspects of a society's culture that such political entrepreneurs forge a connection between symbols and collective action (Cohen 1976). This is the one end of the equation; its other end is a sense of victimhood and social resentment—to which we now turn for a more detailed analysis.

Resentment: A Coda

In modern Western political philosophy at least, there are two major traditions in the study of resentment. In the first of them, which derives from the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers, and more particularly Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (2002 [1790]), resentment grows in response to harmful acts and the loss of one's respect. More than a mere expression of grievance, this kind of resentment "is a moral feeling," which is "aroused by what we regard as wrongs done to ourselves" (Rawls 1971: 533, 484) and rests on the emotional "expectation of, and demand for, the manifestation of a certain degree of good will or regard on the part of other[s] . . . toward ourselves" (Strawson 2008 [1974]: 15). In short, resentment in this case is both moral (i.e., the offender has violated the fundamentals of established morality) and normative (i.e., it seeks the vindication of the victim and the restoration of the normative and moral order). It is moreover contingent on established institutions. Liberal democracy typically seeks to overcome this kind of resentment by empowering citizens with a strong institutional armor that secures justice, public responsibility, and the commitment to universal rights and equal respect—in short, what Rawls has termed a "morality of principles." Thus, once accepted and established, "moral attitudes are no longer connected solely with the well-being and approval of particular individuals and groups, but are shaped by a conception of right chosen irrespective of these contingencies" (Rawls 1971: 475). In liberal democracy, therefore, and to the extent that "our resentment targets only intentional harms or improprieties and embraces such democratic norms as the equal dignity of all individuals, it can function to protect and bind democratic communities"; indeed, resentment becomes "the raw material of justice" (Ure 2015: 2, 3).

It is, however, the second tradition in the study of resentment that is more apposite for the study of populist emergence, which originates in Friedrich Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1997 [1887]) and was later exemplified by Max Scheler (2010 [1915]). Under this view, resentment, or, as

deployed by Nietzsche, *ressentiment*,[17] is a pathological and persistent feeling of powerlessness along with a pervasive—and often paranoid—sense of victimhood to forces beyond one's control.

Nietzsche's prototypical case was the Jews' slave revolt against pagan nobility. Organized by men possessing "an unparalleled genius for popular morality", the revolt eventually led to an extraordinary transformation of judgment values about good and evil. Under the new value and ethical system,

> only those who suffer are good; the poor, the powerless, the low are the only good people . . . By contrast, you privileged and powerful people, you are for all eternity the evil, the cruel, the lecherous, the insatiable, the godless.
>
> (Nietzsche 1997 [1887]: 22)[18]

In a similar way in our more modern world, as we are going to see later on, civic *ressentiment*, when replete with repressed envy, and unable to find a vent through existing liberal democratic institutions, may lead to false moral judgments and justify acts of vengeance or revenge of these who make the world run (i.e., the little and average people) against those who actually run it (i.e., the established elites), the latter held responsible for all wrongdoings.[19] It is worth noting at this point the ontological and teleological affinities between the Nietzschean *ressentiment* and the modern theory of so-called "relative deprivation," which has been used by social movement scholars as a causal mechanism of mass action and political contention. Based on a "perceived discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities" (Gurr 1970: 37), this theory holds that, when expectations grow while capabilities for meeting one's expectations remain inadequate, people feel frustration, which may spur

[17] This resembles the ancient Greek word thymōs (*θυμός*) that signifies righteous rage. Nietzsche used the French word because the German language does not have a word similar to either the Greek thymōs or his *ressentiment*. Interestingly enough, none of the Germanic languages has a word carrying a meaning of resentment similar to Nietzsche's, especially the sense of deep-seated indignation stemming from a situation of powerlessness and impotency. The Danish *misundelse* (envy), often used by Søren Kirkergaard, is definitely free of associations with impotency or victimhood.

[18] This idea is beautifully elucidated by Max Weber who, following Nietzsche's lead, also relates *ressentiment* to ancient Judaism. As a politically and socially underprivileged ("slave" or "pariah") people, the Jews believed in a messianic kingdom to redeem their inferior position and offer compensation by reinstating them to a position of mastery. "Resentment," therefore, "is a concomitant of that particular religious ethic of the dispriviledged which, in the sense expounded by Nietzsche and in direct inversion of the ancient belief, teaches that the unequal distribution of mundane goods is caused by the sinfulness and the illegality of the privileged, and that sooner or later God's wrath will overtake them" (Weber 1933 [1922]: 110). According to Weber, this idea of *ressentiment* is not found among other religions, such as the Hindus and Buddhists, precisely because those religions lack the salvationist element of Judaism.

[19] As Walker has noted, in creating the image of *ressentiment*, Nietzsche "coins a novel term of art to advance an imaginative scenario in which morality itself emerges as a kind of brilliant trick of the weak . . . propelled by what we could more usually describe as envy of the superiority of the strong" (Walker 2006: 120).

collective political mobilization. But when, and under which circumstances, do the resentful people decide to mobilize?

To be sure, the most common reaction to repressed envy is passivity, that is, the acknowledgment of one's inferior situation, "a mental shrug of the shoulders," but no more (Elster 2007: 158). To the extent, however, that impotent envy often gives rise to painful feelings, such as self-shame and guilt, another common reaction may be the so-called "sour-grapes syndrome." It involves an adaptive transformation of values in accordance with the means available for achieving one's ends (Elster 1983). Like the fox who found the grapes sour because he could not reach them, people suffering *ressentiment* may choose to devalue the envied object—say, a sports car, a noble culture, an old-established rank order or, indeed, the ideals of political liberalism—as well as those deriving advantages from it, and try to destroy it. In Ure's (2014: 7) words again, "[r]ather than continuing to suffer from the impossible dream of becoming noble, this value reversal enables slaves to find some relief from their painful envy by condemning noble types as morally depraved."

None of the foregoing reactions, however, explains *how* repressed envy, especially when it is widespread in society, may become mobilized. For this to occur, there must be first a clear demand for *moral repair*, that is to say, the restoration of a decent moral order able to "address offense, harm, and anguish caused to those who suffer wrong"—to set things right for the victims (Walker 2006: 7).[20] This realization forces us again to think about political agency and the specific mechanisms it possesses for transforming inaction into action. One of those mechanisms is value falsification, or value delusion, concisely described as follows:

> To relieve the tension [caused by his inferior status], the common man seeks a feeling of superiority or equality, and he attains his purpose by an illusory *devaluation* of the other man's qualities . . . [and also by the falsification of] the *values themselves* which could bestow [superiority] on any possible objects of comparison. (Scheler 2010 [1915]: 35, emphases in original)

Most of the time, this happens by means of specific frames, that is to say, "a suitable rewriting of the script: I can tell myself a story in which the other obtained the envied object by illegitimate and immoral means, and perhaps at my expense, thus transmuting the envy into [righteous] indignation or anger" (Elster 2007: 159).

In sum, then, *ressentiment* is a response of the weak to wrongdoing by the powerful and is mobilized in the expectation of moral (and material) repair.

[20] As Walker further explains, moral repair "is the process of moving from [a] situation of loss and damage to a situation where some degree of stability in moral relations is regained" and involves "the task of restoring or stabilizing—and in some cases creating—the basic elements that sustain human beings in a recognizably moral relationship" (Walker 2006: 6, 23).

As we are going to see shortly, liberal democracies beset with a crisis of democratic representation are fertile grounds for such resentment when the core value expectations of social justice, economic equality, and political inclusion are either in jeopardy or altogether thwarted. In such hot-button cases, as happens with shared cultural symbols (see Laitin 1986), accumulated *ressentiment* may become a political resource of political entrepreneurs who realize that promising to redress the injustices inherent to it is a sure way of attracting mass followings. Large-scale *ressentiment* provides cohesion to people who are otherwise divided; addresses key moral issues and creates normative expectations; offers simple meaning to an otherwise complex world; and, above all, becomes a perfect basis for collective action.

The Populist Narrative

As has been nicely explained by Rogers Smith (2003), building "the people" hinges on narratives that promise citizens a better and more prosperous future while also seeking to define their identities and worth. In examining the creation, maintenance, and transformations of such community building, Smith further argues that "political leaders engage in their 'people-forming' or 'people-building' endeavors to a greater or lesser degree all the time" (Smith 2003: 4) but, of course, few of them succeed. Let us see, in this section, which are the main ingredients of such processes, beginning with a recent political incident.

Shortly after the foundation of Spanish populist We Can party (PODEMOS) in early 2014, a party meeting was held in the town of Valladolid at which general party secretary Pablo Iglesias cautioned the party cadres about how they could win power: "When you study successful transformational movements," he began, "you see that the key to success is to establish a certain identity between your analysis [of the objective political situation] and what the majority feels. And this is very hard. It implies riding out contradictions."[21] To elaborate his point, Iglesias offered the example of Lenin:

> He understood the concrete analysis of a concrete situation. In a time of war, in 1917, when the regime had crashed in Russia, he said a very simple thing to the Russians, whether they were soldiers, peasants, or workers. He said: "bread and peace." And when he said "bread and peace," which is what everyone wanted—for the war to be over and to have enough to eat—many Russians who had no idea whether they were "left" or "right" but did know that they were hungry, they said: "The bald guy is right." And the bald guy did very well. He didn't talk to the

[21] A transcript of the speech can be found at *Jacobin*: https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/12/pablo-iglesias-podemos-left-speech.

> Russians about "dialectical materialism," he talked to them about "bread and peace." And that is one of the main lessons of the twentieth century.[22]

Not unlike founders of religious creeds, great revolutionaries, or nationalist instigators, populist leaders use their specific narrative in "worldmaking" ways (Goodman 1987). The populist narrative, therefore, when compellingly projected by a political agent and effectively adopted by a social group, becomes a key mechanism for the emergence of the populism phenomenon. This is because, as Alison Brysk describes in a most concise way,

> We think about politics in stories, and our consciousness is changed when new stories persuade us to adopt a new paradigm. Collective action itself then involves a kind of storytelling or political theater, performing the new paradigm to persuade others. Stories that work rewrite history because they contain the elements of successful communication—legitimate speakers, compelling messages, and satisfying plots—and can compensate for the lack of other resources. The successful exercise of symbolic politics then leads to social change through shifting priorities, building collective identities, shaping social agendas, or challenging state legitimacy. (Brysk 1995: 561–2)

Or, as more recently and most tellingly put by a Venezuelan citizen reflecting on his personal experience of populism in his own country:

> The recipe for populism is universal. Find a wound common to many, find someone to blame for it, and make up a good story to tell. Mix it all together. Tell the wounded you know how they feel. That you found the bad guys. Label them: the minorities, the politicians, the businessmen. Caricature them. As vermin, evil masterminds, haters and losers, you name it. Then paint yourself as a savior. Capture the people's imagination. Forget about policies and plans, just enrapture them with a tale. One that starts with anger and ends in vengeance. A vengeance they can participate in. That's how it becomes a movement. There's something soothing in all that anger. (Rondón 2017)

Taking my cues from the foregoing extracts, let me begin by stating the matter in a most straightforward fashion: No populist narrative, I submit, can exist without invoking deep feelings of *victimhood*, stirring up accumulated *resentment*, and, ultimately, promising *redemption*. A similar statement would, of course, be valid if it referred more specifically to narratives of, say, communist, social democratic, or even Christian democratic parties, since each of them addresses the dissatisfaction of proletarians, wage-earners, and common people of inferior social status enviously looking upon the satiated interests of other, more privileged classes. The difference in the populist narrative, however, is its comprehensiveness of victimhood, which is presented in a way that refers to all social and economic categories (the fictitious "people")

[22] Ibid.

while encompassing all possible types of resentments—social, economic, and political. This also explains why the populist narrative, besides its inevitable moralism, is built on the promise of some metaphysical redemption—one, in other words, that is short of a concrete political program and devoid of policy agenda.

Table 3.4 presents in the first column the core features of populism qua democratic illiberalism, each of them corresponding to deeply ingrained attributes and beliefs in the populist voters' mindsets (second column), as well as the key elements of the typical populist narrative (last column). What follows is a concise explanation of what each of those mental attributes consists of, appropriately exemplified by some classical cases of populism.

Victimhood, to be sure, "is a political construction [that] acquires materiality through contestation and technologies of self and population" (Ronsbo and Jensen 2014: 1–2). It may furthermore be said that, in democracies, there always exist certain groups that—for various reasons, most common of which being their minority status—feel victimized. It is true, as Michael Freeden writes, that "Populist ideology feeds on a sense of beleaguerment" (Freeden 2017: 6). What is unique to populism, however, is that, by presenting "the people" as a homogeneous and undifferentiated category, populist leaders are able to blend bad feelings from disparate injustices, and amalgamate them into a comprehensive victimhood. It is precisely by evoking such a broad-ranging sense of victimhood that populist leaders construct, and further propagate, a dichotomous world populated by victimizers ("them," the powerful elites, the imperialists) and victims ("us," the powerless people, the "salt of the Earth"), and where victims form the majority. Victimization may spring from a host of sources, including the market (e.g., the imposition of austerity and other "neoliberal" measures, banking systems and, of course, "globalization"), the

Table 3.4. Core populism features and their corresponding populist narrative themes

Core features of populism qua democratic illiberalism	Populist voters' core attributes & beliefs	Populist leaders' key narrative elements
Perception of one single cleavage dividing society	Victimhood	*Against:* ▸ Markets ▸ Political elites ▸ Imperialist nations
Social polarization and adversarial politics	Resentment	*About:* ▸ Socioeconomic inequality ▸ Political exclusion ▸ National dependence
Majoritarianism and disrespect for rule of law	Redemption	*Pro:* ▸ Social justice ▸ People's sovereignty ▸ National independence

political elites (most typically old-established parties and their leaders), as well as foreign nations with leverage in international politics to take advantage of weaker nations' inferior positions and internal troubles.

The division of society between victims and victimizers, especially when used by populists to create stockpiles of social resentment, naturally generates political polarization. This has many sources, all of which relate to feelings of victimhood. Social and economic inequalities are the most obvious of them, as is well documented in a long social science tradition dating at least since Karl Marx and his epigones. Political exclusion, in the different forms it may take, is also a strong cause of resentment, and has also been used extensively to explain contentious politics, including populism. There is, finally, the particular resentment caused by historical injustices inflicted on one's own country, which often occasion "narratives of victimization and of threat, linking the present with the past and projecting onto the future" (Denich 1993: 57) and in which the victims always present themselves as righteous citizens of weak nations deserving the restoration of a just normative international order.[23]

What the combination of individual or collective victimhood and resentment brings forth most forcefully is a quest for final redemption. Unlike the discourse of political leaders in liberal democracies, which emphasizes complexity and seeks to advance the respective societies through moderate political competition and on the basis of concrete policy agendas, populist leaders seek instead to redress long-held social grievances, give vent to resentful envy, and rectify past historical injustices. Redemption is, however, to be brought about only by radical change. As one of the most paradigmatic populists, Hugo Chávez, has explained, "Insofar as the existing system is the product of a conspiracy against the people, one that has its roots hundreds of years ago in Spain's colonization of Venezuela, that system must be destroyed and rebuilt. 'We have said it repeatedly,' he goes on, 'this cannot be solved in a piecemeal fashion' [. . .]. Only a full-blown revolution can liberate the people" (cited in Hawkins 2010: 63).

[23] This feeling is resonant of the older idea of the "proletarian nation," originally floated by Italian nationalist novelist Enrico Corradini (1865–1931) only to be adopted by Mussolini's fascist government. According to that idea, the world is divided between imperialist "plutocratic" and "proletarian" nations, the latter being subordinated to the former. Thus, in the manifesto published in December 1910 by the newly founded Nationalist Association of Florence under the leadership of Corradini and others, one reads: "We [the Italians] are the proletarian people in respect to the rest of the world . . . [as] Italy is morally and materially a proletarian nation": cited in Talmon (1991: 484). A contemporary expression of the same idea, which is quite widespread in the discourse of all populist parties, revolves around the existence of an international conspiracy of foreign predators, including large liberal states and international capital (notably the United States, Germany, international banks, the European Central Bank, and the EU), for the subjugation of weaker nations and their people through political and financial means. A perfect expression of this idea in Latin American politics is to be found in Galeano (1997).

The Standard Script

Let us now try to apply the foregoing general and theoretical remarks to a more detailed empirical analysis of the standard populist narrative. To this purpose, I am going to concentrate on the nearly ideal-typical cases of Andreas Papandreou of Greece, Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, and Viktor Orbán of Hungary (to be supplemented, in Chapter 4, by the narrative of Donald Trump). However small, this is quite a typical sample as it includes populists spanning almost half a century, from the mid-1970s to the late-2010s, coming from both left and right political spectrums, and representing both Europe and the Americas. Their differences notwithstanding, what emerges as the most striking finding in this comparison is the similarity of their populist narratives, as well as the common ways in which those narratives are put to use for polarizing society, instigating deeply felt human resentments, and promising a sort of final redemption. I will structure my discussion around the voters' three main mental and psychological attributes as described in Table 3.4—victimhood, resentment, and redemption.

On September 3, 1974, Andreas Papandreou founded the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) under this quintessentially populist declaration: "Today, we announce the beginning of a new political Movement that we believe expresses the aspirations and needs of ordinary Greeks." Beginning from the assertion that "the root of calamity is in the foreign dependence of our country," during which time Greece "was transformed into a free-for-all place and its economy became eroded by the multinational corporations of the US, always in cooperation with the national comprador capitalists," Papandreou promised to redeem Greeks from servitude, thus creating what was soon to become Europe's most successful populist party. In order to leave no doubt about the new party's nature and political aims, that founding document further read:

> [PASOK] is a political Movement that strives for the following objectives: National Independence, People's Sovereignty, Social Liberation . . . [Accordingly,] the chief and commanding aim of the Movement is to establish a polity free of foreign control or interventions, a polity free of control or influence of the financial oligarchy, a polity dedicated to protect the Nation and serve the People.
> (PASOK 1974)

To emphasize his new radicalism, Papandreou introduced into Greece's political discourse the notion of "the establishment" (*το κατεστημένο*), which promptly became a catchword. Who belonged in that establishment? Even a cursory reading of Papandreou's numerous statements and other public declarations during the 1970s suffices to show that it consisted of three distinct groups: The Greek economic oligarchy, the established political elites, and the United States of America. Thus, in Papandreou's own words, "the main cause

of misfortune in our country is the concentration of means of production in a small [economic elite] group that decides the fate of our people according to its own interests" (Papandreou 1974b).[24] More specifically, "the bourgeoisie, the top industrialists and entrepreneurs . . . depend increasingly on foreign monopoly capital which thus dictates their overall economic activity" (Papandreou 1979: 50), while the traditional political parties are the voice of "the domestic and foreign oligarchy. They moreover demonstrate our country's subservience to America and America-dominated Europe" (Papandreou 1974a). The full picture of Greece's situation of victimhood, as depicted in Papandreou's populist narrative, is nicely condensed in the following extract from one of his many speeches:

> Entrapped within NATO . . . the government follows a policy driven by foreign centers of decision-making and, inevitably, serving foreign interests. [In addition,] expecting the "paradise" of the EEC, it stumbles in trying to configure its own domestic and foreign agendas. Without compass, without strategy, it thus leads the country into her complete foreign dependence, a national adventure [against Turkey] in the Aegean, an economy given over to speculation by foreign and domestic monopolies, and increasingly and more intensely characterized by . . . the intolerable exploitation of the many by the few. (Papandreou 1977)

Hugo Chávez, also a leftist populist, used a narrative remarkably similar to that of Papandreou. As in Greece, Venezuelan populism was based on portraying the people of Venezuela as the victims of markets, established political elites, and imperialist powers, specifically the United States. "Chavismo," writes Hawkins (2010: 53), "has a strong leftist, anti-globalization flavor and has increasingly rejected market-oriented policies," promising instead to build a new system "that is the alternative to the nightmare of world capitalism, the nightmare of neoliberalism" (cited in Hawkins 2010: 55). The same goes with respect to the established political parties and old political class:

> In the first place, until February 2, 1999, [i.e., the date of Chávez's own inauguration as president of Venezuela], we had a government here that was obedient to orders from Washington; the government here was not Venezuelan. Lackeys held power here for a long time. (Chávez Frías 2005: 43)

Chávez used a particularly rich vocabulary to describe the old establishment as enemies of the people, which embraced "the exploiters of the people" (*los explotadores del pueblo*), "the oligarchy" (*la oligarquía*), "the bourgeoisie" (*la burguesía*), "the squalid" (*los escuálidos*), "the traitors of homeland" (*los traidores de la patria*), "the sold-out" (*los vendidos*), the United States of

[24] Or, in similar vein, "the main cause of misfortune in our country is the concentration of means of production in a small [elite] group that decides the fate of our people according to its own interests" (Papandreou 1974b [Electoral speech in Athens, November 14, 1974]).

America, or "the empire" (*el imperio*), and many others. He painted a picture of oppression and servitude that was simple and easily understood:

> What has been called the democratic system in Venezuela has not differed much in recent years from what came before: the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez; the three years of government [of Acción Democrática] between 1945 and 1948; the governments of Isaías Medina and López Contreras; and even the government of Juan Vicente Gómez, which takes us back to 1908. Everything has basically remained the same; it's been the same system of domination, with a different face—whether it's that of General Gómez or Rafael Caldera. Behind this figure, this caudillo, with a military beret or without it, on horseback or in a Cadillac or a Mercedes Benz, it's been the same system—in economics and in politics—and the same denial of . . . the right of the people to determine their own destiny. (Cited in Gott 2000: 40–1)

Throughout the 1990s, much of Chávez's rhetoric turned specifically against the U.S. and the programs of economic reform it had imposed (together with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) on a number of Latin American states. According to his narrative:

> The first great obstacle [to regional unity] that comes to my mind, and I believe it is one of the most powerful, is the hegemonic power that up until now the United States oligarchy has exercised in all of America. . . . During three hundred or more years we were a colony of colonial Spain [*sic*], and during the last two hundred years we were a North American colony. Venezuela began to liberate itself from the North American empire eight years ago on 6 December 1998, and in these eight years we have complete[ly] freed ourselves. (Cited in Hawkins 2010: 62, 63)

In Viktor Orbán's rightist populist discourse, "the people" is presented as the fusion of the average, hard-working Hungarian citizens and the entire Hungarian nation, both forming a civic community (*emberek*) distinguished by its Christian and conservative principles and with its own distinct interests. The people are all those who "work hard, raise children, take care of each other, try to survive with dignity, get less and less, while even more goes to loafers, the lying millionaire swindlers, conmen protected by the state" (cited in Enyedi 2015a: 239). For, as Orbán explicitly claims,

> the people's personal work and interests . . . are closely linked to the life of the community and the nation, and that this relationship is preserved and reinforced. In other words, the Hungarian nation is not simply a group of individuals but a community that must be organized, reinforced and in fact *constructed*.
>
> (Emphasis added)[25]

[25] Speech of July 26, 2014, Tusnádfürdö, Romania: http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-25th-balvanyos-summer-free-university-and-student-camp.

Still, in Orbán's own words, the "hardworking people" are those who "have been called all sorts of things: the losers from the fall of communism, wage-earners, or simply workers."[26] It is the people themselves, however, that, in the words of María Schmidt, a historian and loyalist of Orbán's regime, "should decide about power and not some [external] authority [including] Brussels, Berlin, Washington or the IMF."[27] And for Gyula Tellér, one of the most influential ideologues behind Orbán, the people form "an organic structure that serves to determine public interest, to carry out the common tasks that stem from it, to provide solutions based on common culture, common institutions, common language, as well as the knowledge of a common past."[28]

Who fails the people, then? Well, in typical populist fashion, the liberal domestic elites and their foreign liberal and cosmopolitan patrons. As early as 1997, Orbán deplored liberalism in these words:

> At the end of this road one finds an "open society," weakened, bled, shaken in its morals, confused in its self-awareness, tormented by guilt feeling, and deprived of self-confidence. An "open society" where there is no country any more, only habitat, there is no homeland anymore, only an investment site. Where no nation, only population exists. Where progress equals assimilation into worldwide processes. Where progress does not serve the interests of the nation but simply satisfies the ambition of the narrow power elite to become world citizens.
>
> (Cited in Enyedi 2015a: 237)

Given the situation of victimhood and exploitation, as vividly presented by populist leaders, it is natural for popular resentment to surface. It is interesting to note how populist leaders themselves become aware of their narrative's potency and political potential. At this point, recall Pablo Iglesias' earlier account of Lenin as symbolist and compare his symbolic politics with that of Andreas Papandreou. In a telling anecdote told by Papandreou himself, he explains how he became conscious of social resentfulness, which he then exploited symbolically in politically profitable ways. He speaks about himself touring the Greek countryside in the mid-1960s in his capacity at the time as Minister of Coordination:

> I was knowledgeable about economic issues and spoke to them about tomatoes and ochra and such like. But let me note the following: All hell broke loose, irrespective of age and city, when I stated "Greece belongs to the Greeks." Such a

[26] Viktor Orbán's State of the Nation Address, February 27, 2015, Budapest: http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/the-next-years-will-be-about-hardworking-people.

[27] Mária Schmidt, "A Múlt Fogságában" ["In the Captivity of the Past"], in *Nyugaton a Helyzet Változóban* (Budapest: Közép- és Kelet-európai Történelem és Társadalom Kutatásáért Közalapítvány, 2013), 143–7.

[28] Gyula Tellér, "Szüleettt-e 'Orbán-rendszer' 2010–2014 között," *Nagyvilág* 59:3, 346–67 (translated by Bálint Madlovics).

> response to this simple slogan was something I had not expected. [But why was that so? He further asks, and goes on to explain.] Because when Greeks are moved to the point of tears around the theme "Greece belongs to the Greeks," it is because it awakens something within them that goes back to at least a century, if not five centuries, it reminds the Greek of centuries of occupation, slavery [*sic*] and struggle. This slogan symbolized the tomatoes and the oranges and the house in rubble, the child who is unable to attend university and goes abroad to work—everything, the whole system of power, of [police] security files, every aspect of oppression. All of that was condensed in this slogan. This became the national consciousness. (Cited in Papandreou 2014: 16–17)

Papandreou also realized that resentment was quite widespread in society, and shared by most segments of what he termed "the non-privileged" (*οι μη προνομιούχοι*). That was the term he coined to symbolically construct the populist people and pit them against "the establishment." "The people" was thus presented in Papandreou's narrative as a collective and yet unitary social subject, which was broad enough to include anyone considering themselves victims of the domestic establishment and its foreign patrons. Papandreou's political discourse is full of references to specific social and economic categories that, despite the enormous heterogeneity of their interests and antagonistic social relations, were identified as the "non-privileged people" and real victims of the establishment. Here is a typical example of such discourse:

> To repeat it once again, we [in PASOK] give voice to [and] represent the interests of the underprivileged sectors of the Greek people. In that category we include the farmers, the manual workers, the employees, the professionals, the scientists, the youth, the middle classes. Our party intends to express the interests of all disadvantaged people who, in one way or another, are being exploited by big capital. (Papandreou 1976: 96)

It was such a motley collection of social categories—which, in their entirety, represented the overwhelming majority of the voting public—that were homogenized in Papandreou's symbolic discourse and formed the core of his electoral constituency in his short march to power. Through the symbolic articulation of diverse social categories, Andreas Papandreou was able to forge a single political entity, "the people."

Individual dignity and social justice, together with political inclusiveness and national independence, were also powerful elements in Chávez's political discourse. He justified his failed 1992 coup a "rebellion of dignity" and his political mission as a "battle for our freedom, our dignity, our independence" (quoted in Zúquete 2008: 104). He says:

> For a long time, the Venezuelan people did not have a consciousness, they were divided, they did not have a common project; they were a people without hope, without direction. More than being a people, we were a collection of human beings, but then, as a result of the historical process that our country has

> undergone over the last few decades, a people has been formed. We are talking about awakening a giant. (Cited in Hawkins 2010: 59)

Which brings him to a privileged position to ask for the [*his*] people's political sovereignty and his country's national independence:

> What we do is believe in the strength of the people, believe in the rebellious man of Albert Camus, that solidarity that brings the people to unity.
>
> (Munoz, cited in Hawkins 2003: 1154)

Orbán, in turn, castigated faith in liberal institutions on the grounds that such a stance gives "rise to a politics in which the power of principles and institutions needs to be achieved, and not the power of the people." Alas, he went on, the idea that nations "should not be governed by people but by impersonal principles and institutions leads to crisis. To condemn decisions made by people and stemming from personal will as dangerous is a dead-end for . . . politics" (Orbán's speech at the XXII Tusnádfürdõ camp, 2007; quoted in Enyedi 2015a: 248).

He then calls for "the people's" resistance. And in a 2012 public speech in Budapest's Kossuth Lajos Square, he declares:

> We who stand here, as well as the millions of Hungarians the world over, are the political and spiritual heirs of the [Hungarian Revolution of] 1848. The political and spiritual program of 1848 was this: We will not be a colony [of the Austrian Empire]! The program and wish of the Hungarians in 2012 sounds similarly: We will not be a colony! . . . We need no [external] guidelines and none of the unasked help of foreigners [that comes] not dressed up in a uniform with epaulettes but in a well-cut suit.[29]

Before closing this section, a final note is in order. The symbolic construction of "the people" as an electorally majoritarian political unit that has the moral high ground, even above liberal state institutions, and demands that politicians exist solely to serve their interests, may well be able to absorb the differences of class, region, race, or ethnicity that, in actual fact, divide that people into many subunits. Perfect examples of how this may occur are provided by most of the cases of populist emergence in the multiclass, multiracial, and multiethnic societies in the Americas, in both its northern and the southern parts. One of the best available cases is that of Peru during the 1990s, which will be examined in more detail in Chapter 4.

[29] Viktor Orbán, "Nem Leszünk Gyarmat!" ["We Will Not Be a Colony!"], Kossuth Lajos Square, Budapest, March 15, 2012): http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-miniszterelnok-unnepi-beszede-a-kossuth-lajos-teren.

3.4. THE CAUSAL MODEL

What causes the emergence of populism in modern Western democracies? Now, precisely because our view of modern populism qua democratic illiberalism explicitly advocates that we study populism as an historical process, we may also posit this question in an alternative way: What causes the decline of liberalism in contemporary democracies? Pronto, and we are off on the quest for credible causal explanations. To begin, as usual, with some sensible pointers, such causality should

> focus on interesting, puzzling, socially significant outcome patterns. Explanation [would] take the form of positing some underlying mechanism[s] that generate the outcome, which will consist of propositions about how structural resources and agent's reasoning have constituted the regularity. The workings of such mechanisms are always contingent and conditional, and hypotheses will also be constructed in respect of which local, institutional and historical contexts are conducive to the action of the mechanism[s]. (Pawson 2000: 298)

This section presents a causal theoretical model for a deductive understanding of populist emergence in comparative perspective. It proposes an explanation that is both parsimonious and credible (Falleti and Lynch 2009). It is parsimonious because it explains the entirety of populist cases in modern democracy irrespective of differences in geography, ideological predisposition, and political outcome. And it is credible because it is based on the interaction between "portable" agency-related causal mechanisms and the specific contexts in which they are embedded and become operational. Figure 3.5 presents graphically the causal argument to be made. In following chapters, the validity and consistency of this model will be tested against the most important cases of populist emergence in postwar Europe and the Americas.

I begin my causal argument from a situation of "nature," or "original position" (cf., Rawls 1971), that is, an initially stable setting of analytic equivalence of cases. As already explained in Chapter 2.1, I consider the liberal democracy that emerged after the end of World War Two and became the dominant paradigm of how best to run pluralist societies and accomplish the goals of peace, prosperity, and rule of law as just such a setting. When still in nature, all cases examined in this chapter are considered contextually homogeneous and analytically equivalent, which allows for their comparative treatment in complementary fashion.[30] But how do we move causally from liberal nature to illiberal outcomes?

[30] Latecomers to democracy, such as countries belonging to the so-called "third" (Greece, Spain, Peru) or "fourth" (eastern Europe) waves of democratization, enter the state of "nature" once they have abolished authoritarianism and achieved liberal democratic consolidation (see, for details, Linz and Stepan 1996).

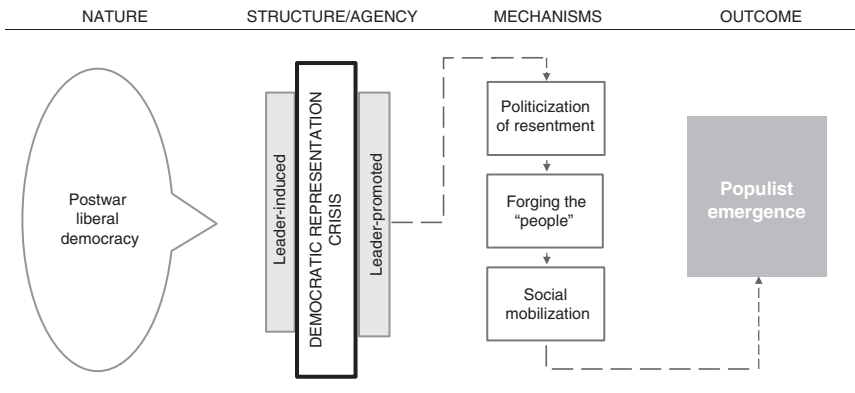


Figure 3.5. Modeling the causal logic of populist emergence

The difficult task is first to discover, then open, and finally work the black box that lies midway between the original equilibrium and populism. What is in that box, and how does it affect causality? Existing political *structures* are there, for sure. And political *agents*, such as the extraordinary leaders we have already examined, and the electoral constituencies they succeed in assembling and mobilizing for electoral battles. Another cluster of items we should expect to find in the black box of causality is *mechanisms*, which, depending on the interplay of structures and agencies, either drive our cases in the predicted direction or divert them from it. Such mechanisms constitute "a pathway or process by which [the final] effect is produced" (Gerring 2007: 178). Mechanisms tell us how and under which conditions things happen. They have the following four characteristics:

1. They are agency-based and, in most cases, involve interaction between individual (i.e., political leaders) and collective actors (e.g., voting publics, party organizations, civil society associations). Political leadership action, in particular, is necessary for setting in motion the chain of mechanisms that are necessary for producing populism and which include the politicization of social resentment, the manipulation of "the people" as an identity, the construction of novel social categories and the creation of new cleavages, and the strategic use of polarization under certain conditions and not others.

2. The consequences of mechanisms are indeterminate (for an opposite view, see Mahoney 2001). This has two further implications: (a) any mechanism may not work as expected in producing populism, even if set off within a suitable context and (b) mechanisms may produce different results, even in analytically equivalent contexts. These implications must alert us to the fact that the very same pathway of mechanisms that is necessary to produce a populist outcome may, under other contextual circumstances, lead to other

political pathologies of failing political systems such as, for instance, nativism, nationalism, authoritarianism, and even totalitarianism.

3. Mechanisms interact with the structural context in which they operate and, in fact, lead to expected results the more intense their interaction with context and agency. Ray Pawson (2000: 296) nicely illustrates the first type of interaction by the example of gunpowder, which, due to its chemical composition, may potentially explode when there is a spark in appropriate contextual conditions (e.g., low humidity, sufficient amount of gunpowder). Well, yes, but this is not all. For, in the same example, agency is also necessary for producing the appropriate context, and even providing the spark for gunpowder to explode.

4. This brings us to structural context, broadly understood as an initially stable setting (temporal, spatial, or institutional) in which certain observable developments may lead probabilistically to an expected outcome via a pathway of causal mechanisms. The context in which mechanisms get underway should not, however, be confused with the original state of nature. It is full of political tension, social turmoil, and the degeneration of institutional equilibria. As will become apparent in subsequent analysis, what signifies the passage from "nature" to new context is a crisis of democratic legitimation. The preamble of such contexts coincides with break points in a polity such as critical elections, the appearance of new political entrepreneurs, or party system collapse, but, in any case, it is what we ultimately want to explain that "provides the criteria for choosing the beginning and the end of the narrative" (Büthe 2002: 488).

Based on the foregoing introductory remarks, Figure 3.5 presents graphically the causal logic of the argument I am going to test empirically in subsequent chapters about the rise, and success, of modern populism. "Nature" refers to the establishment in the postwar Western world of liberal democracies as the most preferable system for running states, markets, and societies. More waves of democratization followed (Huntington 1991), after which the states involved also decided to adopt the liberal paradigm. All this has already been explained in previous chapters. Subsequent chapters will provide coherent empirical evidence from the cases selected which, when brought together, will tell a theoretically robust "compelling tale" (Przeworski and Sprague 1986: 181) about the emergence of modern populism and its impact on our contemporary liberal democracies.

How the Model Works

The assumption that populism emerges in times of severe economic crisis may have been commonplace in earlier theoretical accounts of this phenomenon (e.g., Betz 1993, Haggard and Kaufman 1995, Kitschelt 1995, Taggart 2000),

but is strongly refuted by more recent scholarship based on the empirical analysis of cases (e.g., Mayorga 2006, Tanaka 2006: 51, Ivarsflaten 2008, Doyle 2011, Remmer 2011, Levitsky and Loxton 2013: 109, Elchardus and Spruyt 2014, Pappas and Kriesi 2015, Galston 2018, Houle and Kenny 2018). In general, economic crisis-based theories of populism tend to exogenize politics, especially such critical aspects of it as the role played by institutions, conflict, and competition, the waging of ideological battles, the tensions between personal authority and collective organizations, social radicalism, and mass mobilization. As will emerge from the comparative analysis of our cases in Chapter 4, a far better predictor of populism seems to be *political* crises of democratic representation, which, when they occur, "shift or loosen the social moorings of party systems" (Roberts 2006: 133) and offer populist leaders a chance to "transcend traditional forms of ideological affiliations, allegiances, and partisanship" (Tismaneanu 2000: 11).

The trouble is that the notion of "crisis of democratic representation" remains unclear. Most scholars use it to indicate some political situation afflicted with chronic instability and which, in turn, may cause extensive social unrest, high electoral volatility, or both together (Pitkin 1967, Manin et al. 1999, Kitschelt 2000). The focus in these cases is, therefore, on the relationship between voters qua principals and their elected representatives qua authorized agents. As has been argued, voter satisfaction with their elected representatives varies widely and this variance is expressed by numerous behavioral indicators. More specifically, the voters

> continue to vote for establishment parties or search for anti-system candidates because of their dissatisfaction with the existing party options. [A] "crisis of democratic representation" [then occurs in] contexts in which, at the subjective level, citizens do not trust or confer legitimacy to agents of democratic representation. At the behavioral level, they are more likely to support anti-system candidates and parties, to turn to new parties, to switch electoral preferences with frequency, and to withdraw from electoral participation.
>
> (Mainwaring et al. 2006: 5)

Logically, for a relationship like the foregoing to be stable, agents must be responsible as well as responsive to principals' demands. While both types of agent may be technically competent, it is the responsible ones who, in the liberal democratic view, serve the public good and pass tests of accountability while merely responsive leaders tend to yield to particularistic demands, no matter how broad they may be (Sartori 1987, Mair 2009). At any rate, because principal–agent relationships are characterized by great information asymmetries between the parties involved, two further interrelated problems may emerge (Persson and Sjöstedt 2012). The first problem is the poor, or deficient, monitoring of agents by principals, which thus acts as an incentive for the former group to adopt an increasingly autonomous and control-free stance.

The second problem is a classical moral hazard, whereby the actions of agents may prioritize their own particularistic interests, thus eventually betraying the interests of their principals or, more generally, of the entire society. The problem with democratic representation, therefore, is how to keep politicians accountable by also enforcing them to deliver outcomes serving both the public good *and* the majority of legitimate individual interests.

Following the foregoing rationale, a crisis of democratic representation occurs whenever agents cease to enjoy principals' trust (Hetherington 1998). Typically, the decline of trust spreads into key representative political institutions, such as government, political parties, or even democracy itself (Stokes 1962, Power and Jamison 2005). When this happens, citizens do not feel adequately represented, which may well result in political protest. The inefficiency of, and erosion of trust in, liberal democracy's representative institutions undermines the faith of people in political liberalism and thus opens up space for new political entrepreneurs who, tapping into illiberal sentiments, portray themselves as "crusading outsiders" (Doyle 2011) challenging established politics. This often causes high levels of electoral volatility, which is another "prime indicator of a crisis of political representation" (Roberts 2014: 20).

While most of the preceding analyses are basically correct in their causal argument, they are still empirically indefinite and theoretically unrefined.[31] Through detailed examination of the major cases available to comparative research, it is possible to distinguish three types of democratic representation crisis that may eventually—through a series of mechanisms that are explained in subsequent chapters—lead to populist outcomes. The first type entails the near-complete denial of political representation rights to entire social categories by excluding them from the democratic process. A second type emerges in cases of collapse of entire party systems. A third more specific type relates to crises induced directly by individual populist leaders. Let us briefly examine each of these types of democratic representation crisis before moving on to the empirical examination of cases.

1. Exclusion from democratic representation is quite straightforward and it means either that democracy is not in place or that it is an imperfect democracy that strips specific members of the political community from their right to be represented whether formally (through their vote) or informally (by their voice). "Such exclusion," writes Guillermo O'Donnell, "means consistent governmental refusal to meet the political demands made by [some social] sector. It also means denying to this sector and its leaders access to

[31] For such an instance, see Doyle's conclusion that support for populism is best explained "as a consequence of the gradual erosion of trust in the institutions of liberal democracy" (Doyle 2011: 1451).

positions of political power from where they can have direct influence on national policy decisions" (O'Donnell 1973: 51). Perhaps the most typical example of such situations is post-oligarchic or post-authoritarian states during transitions to fresh democratic institutional and competitive politics. For our present purposes, populism may emerge when some extraordinary leader succeeds in mobilizing disenfranchised groups, demanding their swift incorporation into the political system. Such has been the case of Argentina's Juan Domingo Perón who successfully mobilized workers and other marginalized strata in society during the mid-1940s in support of his populist party that was to reshape Argentine politics.

2. Party system collapse often follows a period of high electoral volatility as a result of the weakening of traditional party and political allegiances among voters, leading in several instances to anti-establishment voting. Electoral volatility is the share of aggregate vote that shifts between parties from one election to another. High electoral volatility indicates voters without strong party anchorages and, therefore, weak party loyalty. When it persists over two or more elections, such volatility is a fair indicator of a system suffering from a crisis of democratic representation (Mainwaring et al. 2006: 20).

What is party system collapse and when does it occur? For Jason Seawright (2012: 48), it denotes "a situation in which all the parties that constitute the traditional party system [in a polity] simultaneously become electorally irrelevant," which happens "whenever a party fails to achieve either the first or the second place in a presidential election." This, however, makes party system collapse operationalization easier for presidential rather than parliamentary systems, since in the latter case smaller but still significant parties are likely to survive electoral big bangs. Hence, for the purposes of the present study, party system collapse will simply mean the sudden transition of a polity from having a long-established party system to a non-established one. Empirically, party system collapse typically involves the breakup of formerly moderate pluralist, and even two-party, politics into extreme multiparty systems. I will therefore operationalize party system collapse as a situation in which new parties emerge with parliamentary representation, winning at least as much as half of the electoral strength of old parties in the previous election.

From the country cases examined in this book, such party system collapse occurred in Peru (1990), Venezuela (1993), Italy (1994), Ecuador (2006), and Greece (2012). This is an exceptionally interesting mix of cases since it includes two countries from Europe and three from Latin America, which produced populist regimes of either a right-wing variant (in Peru and Italy) or a left-wing one (in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Greece).

3. Finally, the very specific but theoretically significant type of crisis of democratic representation is induced by leaders with extraordinary charismatic qualities. This is the case in radical political entrepreneurs who, acting against a background affected by social strain and political flux, seek to obtain

power by deliberately subverting an existing liberal institutional framework and replacing it with a populist one. Throughout this process, as we have seen, such leaders develop compelling symbolic frames that resonate with underlying emotions, obscured collective memories, and ostentatious social aspirations. As will be shown in Chapter 4, such are the cases of Greece's Andreas Papandreou, Hungary's Viktor Orbán and, more recently, Donald Trump in the United States.

Regardless of their particular types, all crises of democratic representation provide the necessary (or, at least, facilitating) conditions for the rise of populism. However, those conditions will not be sufficient unless appropriate political leadership exists to mediate between them and society. Leadership therefore matters and no understanding of populist emergence may be complete without it. As a long-time student of populism has nicely put the matter with reference to Ecuador's Rafael Correa,

> our [analytical] narratives would be woefully incomplete without an appreciation of how individual leaders conceptualize their projects, seize the particular opportunities opened up by structural conditions, and make critical choices in the course of governing. (Conaghan 2011: 261)

To understand how it may happen, our attention must also shift to intervening micro-mechanisms. As identified in Figure 3.5, for populism to emerge out of poorly legitimized political systems and through the mediating action of individual leaders, there are three basic mechanisms that have to be successfully activated at the political level: The politicization of social resentment, the actual forging of the community of "the people," and the political mobilization of the people for winning an electoral battle.

More analytically, the first of these micro-mechanisms is the politicization of resentment, without which, if we were to follow Nietzsche, the Jews' slave revolt against the immoral pagan nobility could not have happened. No such revolt can ever occur, Nietzsche writes, without certain "external stimuli" to energize the oppressed masses. Even so, it was Jewish political leaders who mobilized resentment as a political response to social mistreatment, wrongful harm, and existential anguish. Resentment mobilization, furthermore, could only become successful after having attributed fault to others and demanded from them an appropriate response. At the very minimum, such response includes a kind of "moral repair" and an attempt to set things right for the victim.

How do populist leaders move from politicizing resentment to building mass support, and thus creating the category of "the people" as a distinct social group? This necessarily involves symbolic politics, including the promise of uplifting the sources of popular resentment. Accordingly, symbolic politics is about opposing sets of ideas, both their making and their consumption. It is only through such ideas that people acquire frameworks "for organizing the

world, for locating the self and others in it, for making sense of the actions and interpreting motives of others, for grounding an analysis of interests, for linking collective identities to political action, and for motivating people and groups toward some actions and away from others" (Ross 1997: 42). Pierre Bourdieu explains the process concisely:

> Symbolic power, whose form *par excellence* is the power to make groups and to consecrate or institute them, consists in the power to make something exist in the objectified, public, formal state which only previously existed in an implicit state . . . When it is applied to a social collective, even one which is potentially defined in the manner of the cloud, the performative power of the naming, which always comes with the power of *representation*, brings into existence in an instituted form, i.e., as a corporate body, what hitherto existed only as a serial collection of juxtaposed individuals. Here one would need to pursue more fully the implications of the fact that the symbolic struggle between agents is for the most part carried out through the mediation of professionals of representation who, acting as spokespersons for the groups at whose service they place their specific competence, confront each other within a closed, relatively autonomous field, namely, the field of politics. (Bourdieu 1987: 14)

The symbolic forging of "the people" is, however, hardly enough for creating electoral majorities. It is also necessary to mobilize it and bring it to the political arena precisely based on the idea that there exists in society a deep, unbridgeable division between "the people" and some "elite." Populist mobilization has, therefore, three key features: First, a broad, cross-society appeal, disguised as an appeal to "the people"; second, the systematization in the electorate of the biased belief about a single division tearing society apart; and, third, an emphasis on selective state-related incentives rather than a coherent policy plan or concrete ideological preferences. Although individual populist parties may differ from each other in several respects, they all tend to share these three key features of mobilization.

Part II

Populism in Action

4

How and Where Does Populism Thrive?

From what has been said so far, here is how the story of modern populism may be condensed: In some country where the tradition of liberal democracy is either not yet firmly established or its legitimacy has been called into question by sizeable parts of the population, and where the party system is either too feeble to withstand sudden political crises or undergoes violent internal shocks, a new leader sets up a political party that has no respect for liberal norms. He is always a man, never as yet a woman. At times calling to mind the ancient demagogues of Athens, at other times the archaic prophets that populate the Old Testament, and at still other times contemporary evangelists, preachers, and moralist crusaders, he searches out followers. He acts with intent and by design. He wants to win elections and rule his country. He has a talent with words and inevitably makes enemies. He talks in public about the need for radical changes in politics, makes fantastic promises, and offers, if elected, unbounded hope for the future. The liberal institutions of old democracy are good for nothing, he tells his followers, unless they are put into the service of their own interests. The people are now offered a new vision of democracy—one in which institutions neither check nor balance and leaders are expected to readily satisfy the people's particular needs and political wishes with no respect for the public good. This is an appealing idea that speaks easily to the hearts of the people and so, now, his followership begins to grow at fast pace. And then, when elections come, a majority of voters prefer to rebuff their old leaders and cast a vote for the populist one.

It is now time to beef up our story of populism with detailed empirical evidence. This part of the book surveys the emergence of populism in eight different countries from Europe and the Americas to find that all are variations of the foregoing story (which, if expertly broken down, will bring forth what in political science jargon is termed the supply-and-demand factors of populism). We are going to see how populism rose in Argentina, Venezuela, Peru, and Ecuador in Latin America; in Greece, Italy, and Hungary in Europe; and, more recently, in the United States of America. But our story also points to a kind of logical coda: If populist emergence requires a certain leader under certain conditions, if follows that populism is not possible

under one of the following settings: When a populist leader is not available; when the conditions that are necessary for populism to grow are lacking; or when, while both leader and necessary conditions are present, the former is unable to prompt populism. There are many such cases, which, if studied comparatively, would tell us a reverse story—one in which populism fails to materialize. And although this book is not meant to tell that story, it will deal briefly with two such cases, Brazil and Spain, in the hope that the lessons drawn there may be useful in further research on the topic.

4.1. POPULISM ASCENDANT: SEVEN POSITIVE CASES

With the sole exception of the United States of America, which is analyzed separately later in this chapter, nowhere in the postwar liberal democratic universe has populism risen to power when a solid and fairly well-functioning party system has been in place for some reasonable length of time. Instead, all cases of populist ascent to office have either coincided with, or been preceded by, either the absence of an established party system or the precipitous decline—and often collapse—of previous party systems. Following our earlier theoretical analysis on the crises of representation in democracy, this chapter contains a concise comparative examination of our cases from Europe and Latin America. In Argentina's case (the earliest in our chronological sequence), crisis in her political system was related to massive pressure being applied by hitherto excluded social sectors. In most other cases, political crisis relates to the chronic instability of political and party systems, which in turn bred low levels of social satisfaction with political institutions and high levels of electoral volatility. Significantly, Peru, Italy, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Greece in 2012, also experienced the collapse of their respective party systems. In Greece in the 1970s and Hungary in the 1990s (as well as the more recent case of Trump's rise to power in the U.S.), crises of democratic representation were actually engineered by political leaders—Andreas Papandreou and Viktor Orbán, respectively—in a context of young and poorly institutionalized liberal democratic polities. In the following, I offer abbreviated analytical narratives of the country cases proceeding in chronological and historical order of appearance.

Argentina, 1946

In September 1930, Hipólito Yrigoyen, Argentina's first elected president via universal male suffrage was overthrown by a military coup organized by General José Uriburu. Only two years later, Uriburu was forced to hand

over power to General Agustín Pedro Justo, thus initiating a decade-long political period that became generally known as the *Concordancia* (agreement). It lasted for eleven years and spanned the presidencies of Justo (1932–8), Roberto Ortiz (1938–40), and Ramón Castillo (1940–3). Politically speaking, it was a tumultuous period, during which all major actors "operated in a Hobbesian world of extreme uncertainty, short time horizons, and low levels of trust and cooperation" (Levitsky and Murillo 2005: 21). The whole period featured widespread corruption and electoral fraud, which is also why, specifically for the opposition, it also became known as the Decade of Infamy.

However, in terms of economic performance, and largely thanks to the import-substitution policies introduced in the 1930s by Argentina's authoritarian rulers, the country underwent a decade of impressive expansion, which made it Latin America's leading industrial nation. During the global economic recession, as falling exports—especially meat sales—restricted Argentina's ability to import finished products, its military rulers encouraged, through subsidies and tariff protection, the formation of local industries to produce what formerly was imported. The rapid industrial growth that followed naturally led to the creation of a sizable urban working class with increasingly vocal demands.

On the whole, the situation of the industrial workers and other lower classes (the famed *descamisados*, the shirtless ones), improved considerably during the industrial boom years. Already by 1930, the foundation of the General Confederation of Workers had helped to unite the labor force, articulate its demands, and amplify its voice. For many years in a row, there was full employment, wages were on the rise, albeit slowly, and labor legislation improved significantly, especially with the introduction of the eight-hour working day. And yet, in parallel, restrictions on political rights and social exclusion created among the disenfranchised poor a deep sense of alienation from and disillusionment with the established political system. Such was the social and political background against which, in June 1943, a new coup d'état brought to power a group of nationalist military officers, including Colonel Juan Domingo Perón.

An offspring of a family of Italian immigrants who rose socially to become part of the *porteño* upper class in Buenos Aires, Perón entered the Military Academy at the age of 15 and steadily rose through the ranks of the army hierarchy. Perhaps the most formative episode in his early life was a visit to prewar Italy on a military assignment to study mountain warfare with Mussolini's alpine troops. While there, besides learning new warfare techniques, Perón also became impressed by the organization of the fascist corporate state. After his assignment in Italy was over, and as World War Two had just started, he toured several European countries, awestruck by the military preparedness of Nazi Germany. When Perón's military mission ended in late 1940, he returned to Argentina feeling intellectually complete and eager to enter politics.

Perón was one of the key players in the 1943 military coup, afterwards also becoming a key figure in the new government. His initial post was Undersecretary of War, but he was soon elevated to head the National Department of Labor—an agency that he would meticulously use "as a platform from which to win over the hearts and minds of much of the working class" (Horowitz 1999: 29, Roberts 2014: 179). He thereupon transformed the previously insignificant agency into an independent Secretariat of Labor and Social Security with broad and nationwide jurisdiction; established a minimum wage; backed labor demands against employers' claims; supported strikes; and encouraged the organization of labor unions, provided of course that they remained cooperative with the government (Collier and Collier 1991: 337–8). Argentina's swelling working classes were quick to see the benefits derived from their patron's initiatives:

> unions began winning concessions which years of agitation and private negotiations [had] failed to accomplish. Workers had the satisfaction of seeing their employers finally toe the line. There were solid material rewards, too: between 1943 and 1946 industry's real wages rose by about 7 percent. (Lewis 1990: 141)

But there were dangers, too. In early October 1945, presumably alarmed by Perón's growing support among workers and disapproving of his labor-friendly initiatives, anti-Peronist officers had him arrested and stripped of his government positions. It was a mistake. Almost immediately (October 17), union leaders organized a mass rally in Buenos Aires demanding his return to government. So massive and successful was the rally that the army had to relent on its previous decision, release Perón, and call for presidential elections. Within just one week of these events, union activists had founded the Labor Party (PL) in support of Perón's candidacy in the forthcoming contest. And when the elections were held, in February 1946, Perón won with a solid 52.8 percent of the vote, thus emerging as the first populist leader in the postwar new liberal world. Interestingly enough, in the aftermath of his victory, he promptly dissolved the PL and, in 1947, founded in its place the Justicialist Party (PJ), thereafter resolving to govern by a system that was "rooted in electoral democracy at the same time that it display[ed] a tendency to reject democratic diversity" (Finchelstein 2017: 7)—in short, modern populism.

The question that arises is: Why did Perón choose to compete in elections rather than simply capture power by military coup, which was the common practice in his time and geographical region? Why did he risk elections that required an electoral majority when it was not clear that such support was readily available? Indeed, according to all known estimations, Perón may have enjoyed at the time the support of the vast majority of Argentina's working and lower classes, but, at about 35 percent of the electorate (O'Donnell 1973: 172, Levitsky 2003: 41) that support would not have been sufficient to provide

their preferred candidate with a presidential-winning majority. How, then, was Perón able to gain a nationwide electoral majority and rise to power by democratic means? The issue is important because it points precisely to how the generic and oversoul notion of the "little people" that we saw in Chapter 3.1 may subsume specific social classes; how the moral righteousness of the populist message may outperform ideological dogma and class consciousness; and how, via the mediation of extraordinary leadership, even detailed policy agendas may be upstaged by catch-all political platforms of general social resentment against a sinister status quo.

To disentangle these issues, let us begin by comparing Perón's populist party with its contemporaneous socialist parties in Europe. Although all of them were mass working-class parties, the Peronist party differed from the rest in several respects, including organization, leadership, and party–union linkages. More specifically, unlike the typical class-based socialist party, which features an autonomous and solid party organization, collective decision-making bodies, and direct linkages between party and organized labor, Peronism lacked an autonomous and hierarchical organization structure, became entirely subordinate to Perón's personal charisma, and had no formal mechanism of labor participation. Instead, Peronism relied on establishing numerous local party branches throughout the country, which

> served as hubs for the distribution of material benefits and [also] provided a space for political, social, and cultural interaction for hundreds of thousands of working-class Argentines. (Levitsky 2003: 40)

Populism, in short, offered class-based Peronism a solution of breaking through the cocoon of the working class and spreading out to broader middling classes via much more complex ways than simply working-class mobilization (for the problem of electoral socialism, cf., Przeworski and Sprague 1986). In short, the crucial difference between Peronism and classical socialist party electioneering was that the former utilized populism, rather than socialist ideology, to achieve three goals simultaneously: A cross-class appeal, which amplified its electoral base; an open critique of liberal institutions, which spoke of a state of democratic illiberalism; and an emphasis on selective incentives, which pointed to a promise of patronage politics.

At any rate, in his campaign Perón did his best to further politicize workers' resentment against the old political class and sinister capitalists, and thus create his own "people." In his own words:

> In the Stock Exchange they are some five hundred people who live by trafficking in what others produce. In the Unión Industrial they are some twelve gentlemen who never were real industrialists. And among the ranchers there are other gentlemen, as we all know, who have conspired to impose a dictatorship on this country. . . . This is the notorious behavior, you see, of these gentlemen who have always sold out our country. These are the great capitalists who make it their

> business to sell us out: the lawyers who work for foreign companies so as to strip us and sell off everything; the handful of men who work with certain ambassadors to fight people like me because we defend our country. They include the hired press, which publishes such profound articles, written and paid for by foreign embassies. . . . It is an honor to be opposed by such bandits and traitors.
>
> (Cited in Lewis 1990: 144)

Argentina's politics under Perón thus came to resemble the famed Manichaean struggle between the hard-pressed working people and the soft-mannered capitalist oligarchy. The former group embraced wage earners and small producers who feared a free market and free competition, resented the powerful and wealthy, and put their hopes in a caring and protective state. The latter group encompassed the more socially privileged and economically better-off strata with cosmopolitan styles, powerful connections, and liberal political ideas. With the middle ground between "the people" and the "oligarchy" thus having ceased to exist, Argentina's politics became a standoff and such it would remain for many decades to come.

Greece, 1981

When a seven-year-old military dictatorship crumbled in Greece in July 1974, the former leader of the political right, Constantine Karamanlis, was recalled from his self-imposed exile in Paris, and assumed the task of rebuilding democracy. He promptly created a modern political party, New Democracy (ND), and set out to sharply break with the past and build a new liberal democratic order. Within only a few months, he legalized the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and restored all civil liberties; called elections, which were held in November with ND polling a massive 54.4 percent of the national vote; convinced the army to return to its barracks; led the monarchy to its final defeat by referendum (December 1974); provided the country with a new liberal democratic constitution (June 1975); purged supporters of the dictatorship from the state administration; and set as his major goal the accession of Greece into the European Community (EC).

While Karamanlis was busy with his liberal and pro-EC democratic project, maverick politician Andreas Papandreou rose to prominence by attacking the new institutional foundations of the young democracy, questioning its legitimacy, and rejecting its goals. He promptly founded a new party, PASOK, which openly renounced social democracy, opting instead for paradigmatically populist tactics with three main thrusts: An intransigent stance towards the ruling conservative party and its leader, both pictured as reactionary stooges of foreign interests; highly moralistic appeals to social underdogs (an as yet unspecified social category that Papandreou referred to as the

"non-privileged" Greeks); and an ultranationalist stand against Turkey, as well as a rejection of Greece's yearning to join the EC.

Not unlike all other cases of successful populism, Greek populism cannot be explained without accounting for PASOK leader Andreas Papandreou. Son of a former Greek prime minister and himself a formerly distinguished professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley, Papandreou nonetheless appeared in post-dictatorship Greek politics as a self-declared Marxist determined to create an extraordinary movement promising general "change" (*Allagi*—a word that became PASOK's electoral battle cry). The new party was extraordinary because, first, it was, and always remained, Papandreou's personal political machine while, second, it was based on a radical and highly polarizing political platform, never making an effort to engage in moderation and political compromise. Its sole aim was to challenge the very institutions, beliefs, and meanings that sustained the legitimacy of the newly established liberal political and juridicial order in post-authoritarian Greece. Why did erstwhile liberal Papandreou choose an outright populist over a more moderate social democratic strategy? There are at least three reasons that explain the seeming paradox (for a full-fledged analysis, see Pappas 2009): Populism was first of all a cheap strategy; which, secondly, in the absence of internal party opposition, became feasible; while, thirdly, in terms of electoral competition, it seemed much more promising for boosting party growth and, possibly, providing a shortcut to power.

More analytically, opposition populism is particularly cheap when democracy is secure and institutional buildup goes on unhampered, as was the case in early post-authoritarian Greece. Karamanlis was an exceptionally able and politically strong prime minister, fully determined to use his then enormous political capital (and ample parliamentary majority) to solidify democracy. On the other hand, as leader of a minor opposition party, Papandreou could afford populist opportunism without jeopardizing Greece's major objectives, which were the creation of a liberally constituted democratic state and the country's accession to the EC. Thus adopting irresponsible populist tactics, Papandreou, who already in 1975 had refused to vote for the new democratic constitution, denounced each and every one of the government's initiatives, refused his party's cooperation in any emerging problems, and, instead, excited society with rhetorical maximalism and aggressive overpromising. PASOK stood against the prospect of Greece's accession to the EC, called for an exit from NATO, and, in 1976, even asked the government to sink a Turkish oceanographic vessel engaged in research activities on the seabed of disputed territorial waters in the Aegean, thus risking war. In domestic politics, Papandreou did his best to unrealistically inflate the expectations of Greek society, and hence became the champion of its less privileged sectors. At the highly important symbolic level, PASOK actively helped a "culture of resistance" to emerge and, progressively, become dominant in Greek society

(Andronikidou and Kovras 2012). For, at the very heart of PASOK's narrative was its claim that it was the genuine inheritor of two symbolically important historical events: The civil war in the 1940s, in which the left was militarily defeated by the right, and the anti-dictatorship struggle, especially the 1973 Athens Polytechnic uprising, which ended in bloodshed. Adroitly exploited by PASOK, these two issues acquired strong emotional and symbolic salience in Greek politics with far-reaching consequences.

The second reason why a populist strategy became advantageous for Papandreou was that he was in full control of his party and not obstructed by internal opposition. Not only was he the founder of the party, but he also led it in a most centralized and, indeed, monocratic way. Following a relatively short period of bitter infighting between 1975 and 1977, Papandreou succeeded in purging all moderate social democratic forces from his party and, now its sole and absolute chief, led it in a radical populist direction. Given the circumstances, that was a strategically calculated decision. The adoption of a social democratic model of party development would have entailed for Papandreou large organizational costs, besides of course his commitment to ideological and political moderation. The problem was that the organizational effort for building a social democratic party (meaning thick organizational structures, multiple hierarchies, detailed procedures, and collective decision-making in addition to ideological moderation and restriction to a typical reformist program) was for Papandreou a serious obstacle on his hurried way to power.

The third reason that made populism, and the polarization it entails, a tactically optimal strategy for Papandreou was the probability of an early rise to power. As shown in Table 4.1, in the 1974 elections, his party had received a paltry 13.6 percent of the national vote—a difference of over 40 percentage points from the ruling ND, which, as already noted, was under the firm leadership of Karamanlis—a remarkably capable opponent and great political achiever. As political moderation was therefore the surest way for Papandreou and his party to remain permanently in opposition, he chose a strategy of relentless polarization with the aim of both delegitimizing the governing party (which saw its electoral strength diminish by 18.5 percentage points in only seven politically successful years) and absorbing most opposition forces

Table 4.1. PASOK's electoral performance, 1974–81

Party	1974	1977	1981
ND	**54.4**	**41.8**	35.9
PASOK	13.6	25.3	**48.1**
Others	32.0	32.9	16.0
Total	*100*	*100*	*100*

Source: Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov): www.parlgov.org.

against the common enemy (as shown in Table 4.1, between 1977 and 1981 PASOK was able to capture almost half of the anti-ND opposition vote).

Populism, therefore, was for Papandreou and his party a perfect shortcut to office. Judging from his party's impressive short march to power, he was certainly right. After the 1977 elections, PASOK emerged as Greece's major opposition party and, already by 1981, was able to win an impressive electoral majority and rise to power.

Greek populism also cannot be explained without particular analysis of Papandreou's specific narrative about the country, her history, and her past politics. As described by his own son, Papandreou was a storyteller par excellence, a virtuoso of simile and metaphor, full of powerful emotional undertones, a great inventor of compelling slogans. "He has a knack for words," writes the son about the father, "he re-defines the out-of-daily-usage word establishment (katestimeno) to mean just that, . . . calls government changes a re-structuring (anadomisi), a new relationship with Turkey acquires the status of no-war. He draws his metaphors from the WWII [Greek] liberation movement and labels his political enemy as a 'collaborator' or 'national betrayer'" (Papandreou 2014: 20). This is a splendid case study of how "the people" is built.

In the context of post-authoritarian Greek politics, Papandreou managed to build a resonant and timely narrative, the symbolisms of which operated as a mechanism for achieving several ends: A novel interpretation of the world as being divided by binary oppositions; the amalgamation of disparate social demands into a single collective unit, "the people," with a communal consciousness; and the urge for radical political action on a promise of a better and fairer society which relies on national sovereignty. Papandreou claimed to represent many classes of people, "particularly the 'wronged' and non-privileged, the ones who have the right to come to power but who have been left out so far" (Papandreou 2014: 21). Papandreou thus presented reality as a dense historical drama, which revolves around the endless battle between good and evil, weak and strong, moral and corrupt, fair and unjust. In the end, firmly siding with and assuming the representation of the weak and moral, the narrator promised the final victory of the righteous people over the immoral and degenerate foes. What remained was turning those people into an electoral majority, able to capture state power.

Peru, 1990

After ten years of military rule in Peru (1968–78), a Constituent Assembly elected in June 1978 promulgated a new liberal constitution, which became the institutional basis for the country's new post-authoritarian era. Among its provisions, presidential office was limited to a single five-year term, a

bicameral legislature was established, literacy requirements for voting were eliminated, and universal suffrage was extended to all adults over the age of 18. The new constitution was inaugurated with the first democratic elections of 1980 (Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 4–17, Crabtree 2000: 170).

Under the new liberal democratic system, Peruvian politics saw during the 1980s the development of a multitude of parties covering a broad ideological spectrum across the left–right spectrum. Most important of them were the Popular Action (AP) on the right and the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) on the center-left. During the same decade, however, Peru's party system remained the least institutionalized in Latin America (Mainwaring and Scully 1995), which explains its exceptionally high electoral volatility in the contests of 1985 and 1990 (Kenney 1998: 1232), as shown in Table 4.2.

In the first half of the 1980s, Peruvian politics was dominated by AP-supporting President Fernando Belaúnde Terry, while in the second half of that decade political dominance passed onto APRA-supporting President Alan García Pérez. Both presidents failed to resolve the major economic and security crises that befell Peru during that dramatic decade. Under Belaúnde's administration, per capita GDP fell by 11 percentage points and inflation skyrocketed to 3,584 percent, thus forcing the economy into deep recession, while at the same time the war against the insurgent Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement cost over 8,000 lives, let alone large-scale violations of human rights. It was in such a context of multiple crises that García-led APRA won the 1985 elections handily, but failed to respond to the very same crisis situations that had plagued their predecessors. Under García's rule, per capita GDP fell a total of 15 percent and inflation climbed to more than 3,800 percent. As the death toll from civil war continued to rise, the Shining Path "appeared to be making qualitative advances in its war against the Peruvian state, and many despaired

Table 4.2. Major parties in Peru's presidential elections, 1980–90

Party	1980	1985	1990	
			Round A	Runoff
AP	**44.9**	7.3	–	
FREDEMO[1]	–	–	32.6	37.6
APRA	27.2	**53.1**	22.5	
Cambio 90	–	–	29.1	**62.4**
Others	27.9	39.6	15.8	
Total	*100*	*100*	*100*	*100*

[1] FREDEMO was created in 1988 and was a conservative liberal alliance of AP, the Christian People's Party, and Liberty Movement.

Source: Nohlen 2005: 472–3.

of even defeating the group" (Kenney 2003: 1232). The United Left party also found it increasingly difficult to become a consolidating force rather than an electoral front of fractious groups and independent leaders.

Inability to solve mounting state problems, naturally led to the near collapse of faith in institutional liberal democracy. By 1989, only 43.5 percent of Peruvians from lower-class sections in society said that Peru had a functioning democratic system while 42 percent believed the system to be outright undemocratic (Roberts 1995: 98). Broken promises by incumbent parties had made people turn against the old system, but not necessarily willing to follow new prudent leaders. During García's last years, in particular, the people viewed him "as unable to distribute even hope. They rejected not only him but virtually all political structures in Peru" (Stein 1999: 114). Social frustration was expressed in all possible ways—not least by street graffiti like the one spotted in Lima around that time of crisis by scholar Arturo Valenzuela that read *No más realidades, queremos promesas* (No more realities, we want promises) (reported in Walker 2008: 9).

By 1990, whether because of the parties' own failures and other mistakes (Levitsky and Cameron 2003) or because of Peru's highly proportional electoral laws providing at the time for a single national district (Schmidt 1996), Peru's already fragile party system disintegrated to such an extent that "not a party [had] remained from the 1980s that was capable of seriously contesting power. Rarely have party systems collapsed so completely and quickly" (Kenney 2003: 2010–11; see also Tanaka 2006: 48). The runoff of the 1990 presidential elections was contested between two candidates, neither of whom represented any of the traditional parties. The first contestant was the centrist liberal political alliance of Democratic Front (known as FREDEMO) supporting the candidacy of world-famous author Mario Vargas Llosa. He campaigned on a promise of "deep-seated reforms that would not have anything to do with the populism of AP or the conservatism of the [Christian People's Party] PPC, but would be associated, rather, with a radical liberalism never before put forward in Peru" (Vargas Llosa 1994: 80). The second contestant was the rightist Cambio 90 (Change 90), a movement-like force that entered the race only in early 1990 in support of a hitherto completely unknown man, Alberto Fujimori. He was to introduce in Peru a fresh variant of populist politics. Here is a short account of how populism emerged strong and victorious in Peru.[1]

Fujimori, the son of Japanese immigrants to Peru (popularly nicknamed *el chino*, the Chinaman), was the perfect outsider to Peruvian politics (Carreras 2014). In his previous career, he was an agricultural engineer and mathematics

[1] In this section, I rely heavily on Mario Vargas Llosa's own account of the events surrounding Peru's critical 1990 election, both for his intellectual fair-mindedness and the eloquence of historical description. Page numbers to quotations in this section all refer to Vargas Llosa (1994).

professor who was later elevated to the position of rector at the National Agrarian University of Lima. He appeared on the political scene suddenly, shortly before the 1990 presidential elections, but none seemed to notice. In early March 1990, Fujimori was only one of the five minor candidates who together had less than 1 percent of support in public opinion polls. As Vargas Llosa would bitterly recount later on,

> just four months away from the elections, [Fujimori's] name did not turn up in the surveys, and when eventually it did, he was vying for last place [among all ten candidates] with the Prophet Ezequiel Ataucusi Gamonal, the founder of the Israelite Church of the New Universal Pact. (p. 345)

In another instance during the electoral campaign, Vargas Llosa wonders in obvious exasperation:

> Who was he? Where did he come from? He had been a professor of mathematics and rector of the Agrarian University . . . [b]ut his candidacy couldn't be weaker. He hadn't even been able to fill the quotas for senators and congressmen on his list. . . . We discovered later that he had included on his list of candidates his own gardener and a prophetess and palmist, implicated in a trial having to do with drugs, named Madame Carmelí. (p. 436)

And yet, despite his lack of social connections, political organization, and governmental program, in the first round of the Peruvian presidential elections in April 1990 Fujimori was rewarded with a stunning 29.1 percent of the votes (see Table 4.2). He then went on to win the runoff election by a landslide and become Peru's president.

How did that happen? As shown by the facts themselves, exactly as with all other cases of populist emergence, Fujimori succeeded in setting in motion all the mechanisms that are necessary to produce the populist outcome, that is, the politicization of popular resentment, the forging of "the people" as a unitary social category, and the fueling of politics with polarization. That effectively caused Peruvian society to split into two unequal parts, one representing the creole minority of the mostly coastal liberal elite and the other representing the majority of the Peruvian people, *el pueblo Peruano*: Indigenous populations living in the Andean highlands in alliance with the mestizos of the sprawling urban centers. Each of the two parts of society appeared to have crystallized its own mindset and to favor entirely contrasting images of the Peruvian polity.

On this account, the case of Peru presents a most fascinating example of how to forge an oversoul "people" from a multitude of social divisions, of which the most important was race.[2] Peru's racial cleavage, which moreover

[2] With a population last estimated at over 30 million, Peru is an extremely biodiverse country roughly divided into three different habitats: The Pacific coastal region in the west, the Andes

crosscuts deeply with class and regional differences, "infects every stratum and every family in the country and leaves them with a bad aftertaste of hatred" and resentment, that is,

> an effervescent structure of prejudices and sentiments . . . which, many times, beneath ideologies, values, and contempt for values, is the deep-seated explanation for the conflicts and frustrations of Peruvian life. (pp. 5–6)

The social resentment produced from such differences is, of course, a two-way street. For, "parallel to the contempt that the white shows toward the mestizo, the Indian, and the black, there exists the bitterness of the mestizo against the white and the Indian and the black, and of each one of these latter three against all the others" (p. 6).

It was against such a social and political background of resentment and polarization that Peru's 1990 presidential elections were waged between the liberal candidate and his populist opponent. Vargas Llosa campaigned on a liberal program that addressed specifically the middle-class voter, underplayed social and cultural divisions, and aimed instead at a common effort for defending "democracy, private property and enterprise, capitalism, a market economy" (p. 445). Fujimori followed a different strategy. It consisted in politicizing widespread resentment in Peruvian society and the symbolic amalgamation of class, racial, and ethnic differences into a single *pueblo* that was now able to win power. As later rationalized by defeated Vargas Llosa:

> On the pretext of protesting against racial discrimination, beginning with his first public rally, Fujimori began to repeat what would be the leitmotif of his campaign from that time on: that of "*el chinito y los cuatro cholitos*," the little Oriental and the four little mestizos. . . . Was it fair that Peru should belong only to *blanquitos* [the whites]? Peru belonged to *chinitos* like him [Fujimori] and to *cholitos* like the first vice president on his ticket. (p. 501)

It was pure populism, and, for Vargas Llosa's electoral struggle, it was ominous. His sentiments during the last phases of campaign echo the fears and political paralysis of many a contemporary liberal politician faced with populist insurgents, and is worth quoting it at some length. As he describes it, upon realizing during the campaign how Fujimori was using the racial subject,

> defining the electoral contest before a crowd of impoverished Indians and *cholos* from the city's squatter slums as a confrontation between whites and coloreds, I greatly regretted it, for stirring up racial prejudice in that way meant playing with fire, but I thought that it was going to bring him good results at the polls. Rancor,

mountains extending from north to southeast, and the tropical Amazon basin in the east. No less diverse is the ethnic composition of its population composed of native Indians (about 45 percent), mestizos (about 37 percent), whites of European descent (about 15 percent), and afro-black and others (about 2 percent). Linguistically, too, besides Spanish, there are two more official languages—Quechua and Aymara, both spoken primarily in the Andes.

> resentment, frustration of people exploited and marginalized for centuries, who saw the white man as someone who was powerful and an exploiter, could be wondrously well manipulated by a demagogue, if he continually repeated something that, moreover, had an apparent basis in fact: my candidacy had seemed to enjoy the support of the "whites" of Peru en bloc. (pp. 501–2)

Fujimori won the elections because he was able, within an exceptionally short time, to construct the Peruvian "people" out of disparate social materials (of class, region, or race) and thus produce an electorally majoritarian constituency, which, represented by himself, was set to win over the white elite, represented by his liberal opponent. As realized by Vargas Llosa himself in the aftermath of his electoral defeat, the voters he was able to rally behind his liberal ideas

> represented almost exclusively the third of Peruvians with the largest incomes. . . . But there were the remaining two-thirds, all those Peruvians who had been most impoverished and most frustrated by the national decline of recent decades—including those who had once been interested in my proposals only to have their interest flag out of fear, confusion, and displeasure at the manifestation, in the last months of the campaign, of what appeared to be the old elitist, arrogant Peru of the whites and the rich, something that our advertising contributed as much to as did the campaign of our adversaries. (p. 440)

Italy, 1994

Among our cases of populist emergence, Italy represents, perhaps, the most spectacular instance of party system collapse. During the postwar decades in which the Christian Democracy (DC) party, aided by an assortment of junior coalition partners, dominated Italian politics, political corruption in that country had become endemic. In the early 1990s, a nationwide judicial investigation into corruption scandals, aptly named *Mani Pulite* (clean hands), revealed an extraordinary system of bribes, mostly offered for public works, that involved politicians of all parties, industry leaders, and various other key public position holders at regional and local administration levels. It has been estimated that, during the 1980s alone, payments for public contracts approximated US$ 4 billion per year (Koff and Koff 2000: 2). At one point during investigations, more than half of the members of the Italian parliament came under indictment, and more than 400 town and city councils were dissolved because of corruption charges. The revelation of the scandal, popularly nicknamed *Tangentopoli* (Bribesville), caused a deep legitimacy crisis, thus setting the stage for a widespread political (and ethical) protest movement throughout Italy against the old political class and the traditional parties.[3] That movement would soon

[3] *Tangentopoli* erupted in February 1992, when Judge Antonio Di Pietro had Mario Chiesa, a member of the Socialist Party, arrested for accepting a bribe from a Milan cleaning firm. During

obliterate, not only the entire political elite and the old parties, but also Italy's so-called First Republic (1945–94).

Political transformation was set off in 1991 with the split of the historical Italian Communist Party (PCI) into the more liberal left-of-center Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and the unreformed breakaway Communist Refoundation. The hardest-hit party by the political crisis, however, was the erstwhile hegemonic DC. Already in the 1992 national elections, that party had lost a large part of its former electoral strength, but still managed to keep a thin parliamentary majority. However, in the aftermath of that contest, DC split into four main groups: the Italian Popular Party led by former DC party secretary Mino Martinazzoli; the so-called Pact for National Renewal under Mario Segni; the Christian Democratic Center under the tandem leadership of Clemente Mastella and Pier Ferdinando Casini; and the Social Christians led by Ermanno Corrieri. Other former DC members flew to the right and to the left. To complete this picture of far-reaching change, the Socialist, Liberal, and Republican parties, all former DC allies in centrist coalition governments during Italy's First Republic, also disintegrated. And so, with the parties of the traditional political center either gone or reduced to insignificance, a large space in Italian politics became vacant and, naturally, went up for grabs.

After the demise of Italy's old party system, new political formations emerged: Silvio Berlusconi's fledgling Forza Italia! (FI) became the main contender for the highly contested center; the regionalist Northern League (LN), led by Umberto Bossi, made significant advances among the middle classes in northern Italy; and the formerly fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI), now renamed National Alliance (AN) and led by young and pragmatic Gianfranco Fini, was keen to seek new political legitimacy. These three parties contested the 1994 national general elections as a broad, albeit somewhat uncomfortable, right-of-center alliance, the so-called People for Freedom (PdL), and emerged victorious (Table 4.3).

Italy had entered the Berlusconi populist era. The son of a middle-class bank employee and a housewife, Silvio Berlusconi made his first fortune in construction and real estate before he became a media mogul by introducing pay television in Italy. He began buying television stations in the 1980s offering his audience cheap entertainment, game shows, and the dream of a glamorous life. Besides his three commercial channels and his control of the public television network, Berlusconi also bought himself a popular soccer team, AC Milan, and thus became the living proof of the dream that he so cheaply offered the average Italian. In the early 1990s, Mani Pulite led to the demise of the old political system and Berlusconi's businesses were among

interrogations, Chiesa gave information that implicated many other politicians and, as news of political corruption began spreading in the press, the judiciary decided to begin the Clean Hands investigation.

Table 4.3. Italy's party system transformation, 1992 and 1994 elections

Party	1992	1994
DC/People's Party	29.7	11.1
PDS	16.1	20.4
FI	–	21.0
MSI/AN	5.4	13.5
LN	8.7	8.4
Others	28.9	25.6
Total	*100*	*100*

Source: Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov): www.parlgov.org.

those put under investigation. When his chief political patron and personal friend Bettino Craxi, prime minister and head of the Socialist Party, was accused of corruption and forced to resign (and later flee to Tunisia as a permanent fugitive until he died), Berlusconi realized that his best shelter was politics itself. In January 1994 and as general elections were approaching, he created FI and ran for the premiership. It was an astounding success. Berlusconi presented himself as a pure political outsider promising to break with the sinister past and bring into new politics the secrets of his own success. Thanks to people's disillusionment with the established parties and his glittering image, Berlusconi was triumphant. As nicely encapsulated by a journalist,

> Almost overnight, the parties that had ruled Italy for 50 years were replaced by a group of well-groomed corporate suits whose only experience was working in Berlusconi's media empire, and whose only platform was Berlusconi. Fifty deputies came from his advertising company alone, dozens more from his other companies. "I'm like Prince Charming," he said delightedly. "They were pumpkins and I turned them into parliamentarians." (Peretz 2011)

The national elections of March 1994 caused a major turnover in Italy's top political personnel since 452 out of 630 deputies and 213 out of 315 senators were elected for the first time. Among all political newcomers, most important was Berlusconi himself, who became Italy's new prime minister. His was, however, a frail coalition government that lasted only until December 1994. It was followed by a short-lived technocratic government under Lamberto Dini and then a series of weak center-left coalitions led successively by Romano Prodi, former communist Massimo D'Alema, and social democrat Giuliano Amato. It was not until the national elections held in May 2001 that Berlusconi was returned to power at the head of a five-party center-right coalition, including Fini's AN and Bossi's LN. For the next ten years, Berlusconi manned the helm of three governments (2001–5, 2005–6, and 2008–11), which made him postwar Italy's longest serving prime minister.

Venezuela, 1998

In Venezuela, the return to democratic politics in 1958 was sealed with the so-called pact of Punto Fijo, a formal and highly consensual agreement among the country's major political forces to achieve two aims—to build a moderate party system and secure parliamentary democracy (Crisp 2000). According to scholarship on Venezuelan politics, the newly emergent political regime was fundamentally liberal "with a strong tendency to value democratic institutions for their own sake and to protect . . . the right of minority opposition groups to representation. . . . It marked a dramatic change from previous experiences with democracy that were largely elitist (during most of the nineteenth century) or populist" (Hawkins 2010: 44; see also Coppedge 1994). Under the new liberal design, Venezuela developed as a "partyarchy," that is to say, a system in which "political parties monopolize the electoral process, dominate the legislative process, and penetrate politically relevant organizations to a [whopping] degree" (Coppedge 1994: 2). A typical two-party system promptly emerged in the country (Sartori 1976: 185–92) based on the center-left Democratic Action (AD, founded 1941) and the center-right Social Christian Party (COPEI, founded 1946), with both parties regularly alternating in office (Molina and Pérez 1998: 11). As shown in Table 4.4, Venezuela's two-partyism grew increasingly stronger and, by the end of the 1980s, the two parties together controlled a stunning 93.3 percent of the national vote.

At approximately the same time, however, party politics also suffered from considerable legitimacy deficit, mostly because of corruption scandals and increased social inequality. A particularly critical moment was the so-called *Caracazo*—a massive and violent revolt that broke out in Caracas and other Venezuelan towns on February 27, 1989, in response to President Carlos Andres Pérez's attempts to implement neoliberal economic measures including the privatization of state companies, the elimination of gasoline subsidies, and increases in the price of transportation. Ensuing clashes between rioters and state security forces, including the military, resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people (López Maya 2003), besides of course the irreparable damage they caused to political system legitimacy. As the mainstream parties

Table 4.4. Venezuela's evolution of two-party system, 1958–93 (selected years)

Party	1958	1968	1978	1983	1988	1993
AD	**49.2**	28.2	43.3	**58.4**	**52.9**	23.6
COPEI	16.2	**29.1**	**46.6**	33.5	40.4	22.7
AD+COPEI	*65.4*	*57.3*	*89.9*	*91.9*	*93.3*	*46.4*

Source: Nohlen 2005: 580–3.

were no longer able to keep the lid on simmering social dissatisfaction, a prolonged crisis of governability developed, eventually culminating in the fatal 1992 coup, led by a then unknown soldier named Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías. As it turned out, although these attempts to overthrow the old political system failed, their long-term consequences would be catastrophic for Venezuela's experiment with liberal democracy.

The turning point was the 1993 elections, which saw the end of two-party politics. After a polarizing campaign that was dominated by allegations of corruption against AD President Carlos Andrés Pérez, but also characterized by widespread dissatisfaction with the political system in general, the two major parties, AD and COPEI, saw their combined vote plummet to a paltry 46.4 percent (Table 4.4). The winner of the election was Rafael Caldera, a highly regarded former president who had split from COPEI to found a new personalistic party, National Convergence, which became his vehicle for winning the 1993 contest with 30.5 percent of the vote.

Alas, during Caldera's presidency, Venezuela experienced financial and economic disaster, which accentuated the already immense social frustration and political mistrust. As indicated by the 1998 *Latinobarómetro* survey, the percentage of respondents from Venezuela with "little" or "no" confidence in parliament and political parties stood at 78.2 percent and 83.9 percent, respectively.[4] Meanwhile, "the vast majority of the public had become convinced that the *puntofijista* system was corrupt, inept, unstable, and rigid" (Corrales and Penfold 2011: 16).[5] At precisely that time of rapid de-alignment of voters from their previous loyalties, there emerged in Venezuela, besides Chávez, several other populist leaders who tried to tap "into expectations, illusions, fears, doubts, worries, and emotions in a population profoundly disenchanted with the existing political regime" (Canache 2002: 71).

The old system collapsed spectacularly in 1998. In that year's presidential election, AD and COPEI did not even run their own candidates. They backed the independent candidacy of Henrique Salas Römer, an economist and technocrat, but to no avail. What happened, instead, was that the vast majority of voters abandoned their traditional loyalties and turned to a young leader, Hugo Chávez, who promised "to eliminate the old parties, to end corruption, and to rewrite the constitutional rules" of the country (McCoy 1999: 66). No longer the obscure soldier who stood behind the 1992 military coups, Chávez had now transformed into the messianic leader of a new political movement that won an impressive 56.2 percent of the national vote.

[4] See http://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp.

[5] In 1998, Venezuela's GDP per capita was already at the level of the early 1950s, moderate poverty stood at a frightening 57.6 percent of households, and absolute poverty had reached 28.8 percent (Hellinger 2011).

Chávez was born in 1954 into a lower-middle-class family (both of his parents were schoolteachers), the second of seven children. He studied at the Venezuelan Academy of Military Sciences in Caracas, after which he became a career military officer. In the early 1980s, in reaction to widespread corruption in politics and social inequalities, Chávez, together with other junior army officers, founded the clandestine Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement 200 (MBR 200), which is considered as the beginning of "Chavismo" (Hawkins 2010: 16). Several members of the movement had unwillingly participated in suppressing the Caracazo events—something they deeply regretted since their sympathies were with the protesting populace rather than the government. At any rate, in the aftermath of those events, MBR 200 increased its membership and also became more determined to engage in active political intervention. The opportunity for that came in February 1992, when the soldiers of MBR 200, led by Chávez, attempted a coup against the government of Andrés Pérez. However, failing to mobilize popular support, they were forced to surrender. Chávez gave himself up to the government, and was subsequently imprisoned, but only after having a moment of great success: Allowed to appear on television in military uniform, he readily accepted responsibility for the coup and called for his fellow conspirators to lay down their arms. The movement had failed, he said on air, but only *por ahora*, for now. From that time on, Chávez became for many Venezuelans their symbolic leader and best hope against political corruption and kleptocracy.

Chávez's message appealed to Venezuelans who had suffered under the economic mismanagement and corrupt politics of the established elites. As Kurt Weyland has clearly shown, popular dissatisfaction with the state of democracy had a more significant impact on vote intentions for Chavez than had economic discontent (Weyland 2003). As Weyland further found, Chávez enjoyed his strongest support among the poorest and marginalized sectors in society, those who became radicalized during the Caracazo and, thereafter, remained openly hostile to the embattled liberal state and its institutions. This was a social bloc with excellent electoral majoritarian potential since it expressed "race, gender, and class oppressions" and consisted, among others, of

> poor women of color bear[ing] the brunt of neoliberalism, Afro and indigenous Venezuelans hav[ing] sought to hammer out an . . . alliance around questions of land, students hav[ing] come to understand that an entire society exists beyond university walls, aging guerillas and their contemporary progeny.
>
> (Ciccariello-Maher 2013: 236)

But it was not only the widespread political disquietude and social resentment that did a favor to Chavismo; it was also the fact that organizational structures quickly sprang up to actually enable it. After the aborted 1992 coup, a large number of *barrio* (neighborhood) assemblies mushroomed in Venezuela, out of which emerged the so-called "Patriotic Circles" expressing their opposition,

if not outright rejection, of the existing political system. These would later become the most ardent supporters of Chávez and, already transformed into the Bolivarian Circles (about which more later), would spearhead their leader's initiatives to change the constitution and oppress political opponents.

It was on such a social majority that Chávez was based to divide Venezuelan society into two antagonistic parts and forge, through symbolic discourse and other political actions, the electoral majority that brought him to power. He succeeded because, at a very basic level, his message

> did more than condemn corruption. It offered an appealing democratic interpretation of the problem that continued to celebrate popular virtue . . . [while also confirming that] the solution was not an elitist takeover of the state, but a reaffirmation of democracy through more direct popular participation.
>
> (Hawkins 2010: 45)

But there was another, much more sinister aspect behind Chávez's political ascent and eventual seizure of power: His was a revolution by democratic means against the established liberal institutions and, indeed, the state law itself, on the logic that those are subordinate to the will of the people. Although he avoided acting in open violation of the letter of the law, Chávez did certainly talk and act in ways that offered his supporters and followers clear cues that what mattered above anything else was seizing the state in order to change it according to popular will and, for this reason, any illegal or unethical political behavior would go unpunished (see, in particular, Chávez Frías 2005, Wilpert 2006). For, as put years later by a seasoned supporter of chavismo,

> The law claims "to create," but laws don't create, the will of the masses does! The law claims to "regulate," but you can't regulate popular movements without a straightjacket! (Cited in Ciccariello-Maher 2013: 250)

Ecuador, 2007

Among the countries examined in this book, Ecuador is probably the weakest in terms of political liberalism achieved during the postwar period. This is largely due, as many authors have pointed out, to the obduracy of antecedent conditions, those dating back to the beginning of mass politics in the 1930s—a time when populism eclipsed the traditional oligarchic parties and became dominant (e.g., Roberts 2014: 152). From 1934 to the early 1970s, populist leader José María Velasco Ibarra served as president of Ecuador on five different occasions. Unlike other populist leaders in Latin America, Velasco Ibarra, a fierce orator and crowd charmer, was not keen on creating a stable party of his own, believing instead, as he once publicly declared, that he was able to make himself president if only given a balcony (cited in Sosa-Buchholz

1999: 147). Ecuadorian politics came to feature proper political parties only after the relatively short authoritarian interregnum of the years 1972–9, and even then those parties presented doubtful liberal credentials and had little yearning for cooperation.

Besides, even more than Peru, Ecuador is characterized by sharp regional differences that divide it along multiple social, economic, cultural, and political lines. This has created over past decades specific "regional societies," which in turn has led to a two-tier political game. At the sub-national level, all politics has revolved around regional and territorial interests promoted by feuding local politicians striving to control local collective actors. At the national level, political entrepreneurs with strong local attachments have tried to supersede local with national interests—a far from easy task. In consequence, some parties have fared well in the coastal provinces and others have done better in the sierra regions, but no party has enjoyed relatively equal support across the country. In such a quandary, the traditional parties in Ecuador have faced the theoretical dilemma of

> either consolidating into national parties capable of working for the general interest and structuring government proposals, or remaining subnational parties with loyal constituencies but continually dependent upon socially and spatially limited interests. (Pachano 2006: 121)

Unable to accomplish the former task, these parties chose, at their peril, to stick to their regional and provincial loyalties.

Under the circumstances, Ecuador's party system was characterized by the fragmentation of its political forces and exceptionally high electoral volatility rates. Between 1979 and 2006, "at least ten parties secured congressional representation. All of them . . . have experienced erratic electoral fortunes" while the smaller among them have failed to survive more than two consecutive elections (Pachano 2006: 106). Populism ran supreme on a par with widespread social dissatisfaction. Perhaps more characteristic was the case of Abdalá Bucaram, the colorful leader of the Ecuadorian Roldosist Party (PRE). In 1996, he mobilized a multiclass alliance and won a majority of 54.5 percent only to be impeached for scandals and removed from the presidency in the following year for reasons of "mental incapacity" (de la Torre 2000). Another two democratically elected presidents, Jamil Mahuad and Lucio Gutiérrez in 2000 and 2005, respectively, were unable to complete their terms in office because of general discontent in society (Mainwaring et al. 2006: 1). As the country moved from one fruitless election to the next, amidst political scandals and a prolonged economic crisis, Ecuadorians expressed extremely low levels of trust in the main political institutions—the national government, the parliament, and political parties.

A particular episode that unfolded in Ecuador in January 2000, and which has often been narrated by various authors since it concerned the ousting of a

democratically elected president (e.g., Walsh 2001, Zamosc 2007, de la Torre 2015b), provides both context and valuable insights into the dynamics of populist emergence, as well as the reasons why populism may, or may not, succeed. In a nutshell, the story is as follows: In the midst of financial crisis and governmental proposals for the dollarization of Ecuador's economy, a broad social alliance of junior army officers, student organizations, left-wing labor movement activists and, above all, indigenous people (commonly termed *nacionalidades* and *pueblos*),[6] succeeded in overthrowing President Jamil Mahuad and, under army protection, taking over the buildings of Congress, the Supreme Court, and the presidential palace. The insurgents immediately formed a government of National Salvation consisting of Colonel Lucio Gutiérrez representing the army; Antonio Vargas, an activist leader and president of the powerful Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador; and Carlos Solózarno, former president of the Supreme Court. After that, in pure populist fashion, Vargas addressed the mass of insurgents boasting that their rebellion had succeeded in "overthrow[ing] the three institutions [executive, legislative, judiciary] of state power," before he went on to declare:

> The Ecuadorian people have triumphed. This time we won't disappoint you like the traditional politicians have. We, the junta of the Government of National Salvation, are the slaves of the Ecuadorian people, we are neither authorities nor chiefs. . . . We will work from an ethics based on *amaquilla*, *amashua*, *amallulla* . . . that is to say, no lying, no stealing, and no idleness. (Cited in Walsh 2001: 177)

And, in the words of Colonel Gutiérrez, another member of the triumvirate, "the Ecuadorian people understood that sovereignty rests in them. When their rulers misled them, betrayed them, lied and stole, the sovereign people rose up and told them, enough!" (de la Torre 2015c: 333).

Interestingly enough, for Ecuador's insurgents who revolted against the political establishment, "democracy" meant occupying public spaces and, above all, the state. "This explains," writes de la Torre, "why indigenous collective action targeted taking over the symbols of state power such as Congress [renamed 'the house of the people'], the presidential palace, and the Supreme Court" (de la Torre 2015a: 353). As an alternative, these resentful insurgents intended "to build a new political authority, an alternative to the national Congress and a participatory space in which the people can discuss social, economic, and political problems and collectively make proposals without having to go through the bureaucratic mechanisms of the electoral and political party structure" (Walsh 2001: 174). They only lacked leadership.

[6] Estimations of Ecuador's indigenous population range from a high 30–38 percent (Yashar 2005: 21) to a lower 14.3 percent (Zamosc 2007: 8) when including those declaring that they or their parents spoke indigenous languages. However, and irrespective of their numbers, the indigenous people of Ecuador have succeeded in building strong organizations and thus creating Latin America's "strongest, oldest, and most consequential indigenous movement" (Yashar 2005: 85).

The situation of low-intention crisis and high-pitch social resentment changed suddenly with the elections of October 2006 and the appearance in the electoral arena of the newly formed leftist movement PAIS Alliance (AP). Led by Rafael Vicente Correa Delgado, who, like Chávez before him, called for "21st Century Socialism" (Weyland 2013: 19), the party won second place with 22.8 percent of the vote. But in November of the same year, it won the runoff election with 56.7 percent nationwide.

Rafael Correa was born to a lower-middle-class mestizo family in the coastal city of Guayaquil and, according to his own account, his early formation was "rooted in liberation theology and the social doctrine of the Catholic Church" (Correa 2012: 89). He studied economics in prestigious university institutions in both Europe (Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium) and the United States (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) to become a professor of economics at the University of Quito in Ecuador. In 2005, he was appointed Minister of Finance in President Alfredo Palacio's government, a position he used to establish "an image as a maverick and a virulent critic of neoliberal economic policies" (Conaghan and de la Torre 2008: 271). His term in that ministry lasted little more than one hundred days before he quit in 2006 in order to campaign for that year's forthcoming election. Correa promptly assembled a new political party, the Movimiento Patria Altiva I Soberana to support his candidacy, mainly consisting of disparate leftist forces. On his lack of previous political experience, the following assertion is therefore fully warranted: "When Correa first ran for the presidency in 2006, he was the ultimate outsider—a college economics professor who had never even belonged to a party" (de la Torre 2013: 35–6) and, according to polls, at least 50 percent of the population had never heard of him (Conaghan 2011: 268). In spite of his political inexperience and the fact that his fledgling party organization was anything but effective in terms of organization and vote-fetching strategy, Correa was nonetheless able, in a crumbling party system, to defeat liberal Alvaro Noboa by a landslide in the second round of the 2006 presidential election.

As with other populist leaders, in Correa's case, too, campaign mattered:

> Out on the stump . . . [he] seemed to channel Ecuador's past and present in his dueling personas. On one hand, he was the fire-breathing, oligarch-denouncing populist of old, evoking comparisons to Velasco Ibarra and Bucaram. On the other, he was the unmistakable candidate of modernity. (Conaghan 2011: 262)

He skillfully exploited socio-economic and political grievances that had accumulated for years—concern over indigenous autonomy rights, land usage rights, and the distribution of state resources. By politicizing social resentments, Correa proclaimed in 2006 a "citizens' revolution" against the traditional parties, which developed after Ecuador's 1979 transition to democracy, and promised to establish a "participatory model that will allow citizens to

exercise power, take part in public decisions, and control the actions of their representatives" (*Plan de Gobierno de Alianza País 2007–2011*; cited in de la Torre 2014: 458). In addition, and following the polarizing electoral style of Chávez in Venezuela, he rallied against consensual and institutional politics, promising instead to "shutter the legitimized legislative body and replace it with a constituent assembly" (de la Torre 2014: 458). And so he did when, after his impressive electoral victory in 2006, he became Ecuador's new populist leader.

Hungary, 2010

Throughout the 1990s, Hungary's nascent party system had seemed fairly uncomplicated and relatively well crystallized in a moderate multi-party format. In regular interval elections, six parties were able to control parliament, neatly grouped into three political and ideological camps—the national-conservative right, the liberal center, and the socialist left. The first camp comprised the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP), and the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP). The liberal camp included the Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz) and the Federation of Young Democrats (Fidesz). As for the socialist camp, it consisted primarily of the reformed communists, now presenting as the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP). In such a moderately pluralist political and party arrangement, and to the extent that each camp was characterized "by the very similar socio-cultural composition of their core political elites and electoral bases" (Körösényi 1999: 32), early post-communist Hungary was effectively divided by several cross-cutting cleavages along class, territorial, and ideological lines.

Things changed rather abruptly once Fidesz, an initially youth-based party formed in 1988 to fight against communism and promote liberalism (Hanley et al. 2008: 411), decided in 1993 to abandon liberalism and convert instead to populism (Pappas 2014b: 10–11). The events leading to that transformation are described vividly by Tamas (2007) and are worth following for a while.[7]

By 1992, as Fidesz was expanding its electoral base and picking up speed for the forthcoming contest, a tactical (rather than ideological) difference between

[7] Parts of this section draw on information provided through personal communication with István Hegedüs, a political activist during the earliest post-communist phase of party system development in Hungary and eyewitness of Fidesz's transformation from liberal to populist party. I later corroborated this information by conducting a series of informal interviews with politicians and academics during stays in Budapest in 2016 and 2017, as well as with Hungarian MEPs in Strasbourg, France.

the party's two strong men, Gábor Fodor and Viktor Orbán, became obvious: While the more ideological Fodorites remained committed to their party's liberal values and emphasized the need to work in close partnership with the Free Democrats of SzDSz to strengthen the liberal center, the more pragmatic Orbanites determined to distance the party from the liberal center and, relying on a combination of their leader's personality and increased party organizational capacity, pursue a populist electoral strategy. Since this required both keeping a clear distance from centrist liberalism and circumventing all intraparty opposition, Orbán, influenced by his close friend László Kövér, a political moralizer and chief Fidesz ideologue, performed a dramatic shift in both the party ideology and its organization. "Besides overhauling the party structure," writes Tamas (2007: 185), Orbán resolved "to abandon the two key aspects of FIDESZ's front: That it was an organization of young people and that it was a liberal party."

The turning point was the 1993 party congress at Debrecen. It was decided during proceedings that Fidesz would abandon collective leadership and become a centralized and leader-centric party placing emphasis on building a stronger party organization for future political battles. Most internal opposition groups were eliminated and the upper age limit of 35 for party members was abolished. In November 1993, Fodor quit the party to join the liberal SzDSz. In his congress speech, the victorious Orbán defined the new Fidesz as a "national-liberal" party "committed to the nation" (*nemzeti elkötelezettség*) and having a "national responsibility" towards the Hungarian *polgár* (patriotic "citizen" and "middle class").

Already by the 1994 elections, Fidesz was no longer a liberal and anticlerical party since it had already abandoned its former centrism and politically moderate and socially secular attitudes in favor of an increasingly illiberal and confrontational stance. Orbán, in close collaboration with his right-hand man Kövér, devised a strategy of open confrontation with the conservative-liberal parties in an attempt to dominate them. Fidesz's new discourse was

> built on the metaphorical polarization between the communist past and [the] present, the clash of national and international interests, and the opposing interests of the ruling "elites of luxury" and the "working citizens."
>
> (Rajacic 2007: 650)

That was received as a clear indication of a shift away from democratic liberalism and towards right-wing illiberal populism.

The outcome of the 1994 elections may have been catastrophic for Fidesz (it received a mere 7 percent of the national vote), but Orbán held to his strategy of polarization for the major advantages it offered him: First, it kept Fidesz cohesive while also reducing internal organizational costs; second, it helped the leader's initiative to forge a broad anti-liberal alliance on the right; and, third, it effectively demarcated the frontier with liberal political

opponents on the center and left (Pappas 2014b).[8] More specifically, Orbán aimed to solidify the intraparty forces that had supported his rise to party leadership while at the same time thwarting party opponents from regaining legitimacy. At the same time, he used polarization to compel voters from the smaller and ideologically closer parties to vote for Fidesz lest their leftist opponents win power. It was not after long that Orbán's strategy of populism would pay off.

As shown in Table 4.5, Orbán's polarizing tactics soon resulted in the collapse of the liberal center and the complete reshaping of the party system from a moderate multiparty to a polarized two-party setup. The SzDSz, first, unable to defend moderate centrism by itself, entered after the 1994 elections into a political alliance with the victorious socialist MSzP only to be eventually absorbed by it. The moderate conservative parties KDNP and FKGP practically ceased to exist after the 2002 elections, while the MDF had already offered to sign an electoral agreement with Fidesz. Meanwhile, Hungarian politics had become divided along a single, largely symbolic cleavage between the socialist MSzP and its minor allies on one side, and Fidesz, now in firm control of the conservative right, on the other side:[9]

> From the late 1990s, there has been a steady division of the political spectrum into two camps that continuously produce themselves as a political unit through the construction of the other camp as their counterpart. They are named "left" and "right," denoting the Socialists and Liberals against the right-wing "civic" camp. (Palonen 2009: 320)

Table 4.5. Parliamentary elections in Hungary (selected years)

Party	1990	1994	2002	2010
MDF	**24.7**	11.7	–	2.7
FKGP	11.8	8.8	0.8	–
KDNP	6.5	7.0	3.9	–
SzDSz	21.4	19.7	5.6	–
Fidesz	8.9	7.0	41.1	**52.7**
Jobbik	–	–	–	16.7
MSzP	10.9	**33.0**	**42.1**	19.3
Others	15.8	12.8	6.5	8.6
Total	*100*	*100*	*100*	*100*

Source: Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov): www.parlgov.org.

[8] Characteristically, after the 1994 elections the party name was changed to Fidesz—Hungarian Civic Party (*Fidesz—Magyar Polgári Párt*). Note, in passing, the similarities between Orbán's political strategy in the 1990s and Andreas Papandreou's strategy in the late 1970s, which are analytically compared and explained in Pappas (2014b).

[9] Since the late 1990s, the only significant change in the party system has been the emergence in 2010 of Jobbik, an originally neo-fascist party that subsequently moved towards the political center seeking to scrape voters from Fidezs's right flank.

Needless to say, party polarization had important repercussions for political perceptions in society. As public opinion data show (cited in Enyedi 2005: 711), while in 1994 Fidesz was still the least authoritarian party in Hungary's party politics, by 2002 its electorate had moved to an authoritarian stance.

In the aftermath of the 2002 elections, with Fidesz still in full dominance of the right, Hungary's party system took on a clear two-party format (Pappas 2014b) with the two major parties running head-to-head. Polarization remained the staple of Hungarian politics and was quite visible in the 2006 electoral campaign during which

> negative campaigning centered around arguments that one side was nationalist and the other opposed to the nation. Similarly, both sides argued that the other focused only on accumulating wealth in the hands of a certain elite, while they fought the corrupt establishment as the other side using anti-elite rhetoric.
>
> (Palonen 2009: 325)

During 2003, and based on their perceptions of increasingly divergent cultural and political representations, citizens saw the two major parties 5.9 unit points apart, but by 2009 this distance had increased to 7.2 unit points (Enyedi 2015b: 5). Elections were won and lost with very narrow margins: As had happened already in the 2002 elections, and also in 2006, the victory gap (on both occasions in favor of MSzP) was about 1 percent!

Be that as it may, after the 2006 elections, Hungary fell into political turmoil. When it became known publicly that newly elected socialist Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány had admitted in front of his party cadres that "we lied [to the people] morning, noon and night," anti-government demonstrations organized by Fidesz became an everyday occurrence (see e.g., Korkut 2012: 43–4). Violent riots followed. In October, during a vote of confidence for the government in parliament, Gyurcsány offered his apologies and promised to implement a reform agenda. But it was too little and too late, for all precious traces of political legitimacy had already been lost. It was now firmly in Orbán's interests to step up polarization while also counterproposing his own populist agenda. Eventually, in 2008, the government broke down. There would follow another two years of massive social dissatisfaction with politics, further loss of legitimacy, a deepening crisis of representation, and more political instability, until Fidesz would triumphantly win the 2010 general elections.

4.2. POPULISM EVADED: TWO NEGATIVE CASES

While in previous chapters we developed an elaborate model for explaining what causes the populist phenomenon, and tested it empirically in our

universe of cases, in this section we will seek to reinforce our knowledge about populist causality by focusing on negative cases, i.e., countries that for long time periods remained populism-free. In what follows, then, I am going to offer relatively brief accounts of two countries—one from Europe, Spain, the other from Latin America, Brazil—where, at least until recent years (Spain in 2014 and Brazil in 2018), populism did not flourish. To advance my point, I will provide a longitudinal, highly stylized paired comparison (Slater and Ziblatt 2013) between Spain and her similarly conditioned Greece, followed by an account of Brazil analyzed against a background of contemporaneous developments in Argentina and Venezuela, already examined in Section 4.1, which produced populist outcomes. The fact that such pairs of countries are significantly comparable will thus allow "a balanced combination of descriptive depth and analytical challenge" (Tarrow 2010: 246) and will also facilitate a process-based analysis, thus helping determine causal inference (Brady et al. 2006, Bennett 2010).

With respect to our original puzzle—i.e., what causes populism?—Greece, Argentina and Venezuela present as positive cases while Spain and Brazil present as negative ones. To compare those countries, then, calls for counterfactual "thought experiments" (Fearon 1991) addressing the questions: Where, and why, may *non*-populism occur? And, once populism has occurred, what can prevent it from coming into power? Given the high comparability of the cases, we are going in what follows to apply a methodology of "most similar systems design" (Mill 1843: 455) in the belief that cases "as similar as possible with respect to as many features as possible constitute the optimal samples for comparative inquiry" (Przeworski and Tuene 1970: 32). That our comparison includes both positive and negative cases is of course an extra bonus, as long as we don't deviate from the following rule:

> Negative cases should resemble positive cases in as many ways as possible, especially with respect to the commonalities exhibited by the positive cases. Thus, the specification of negative cases rests on the prior constitution of positive cases. (Ragin 2000: 60)

Based on the same logic I developed in previous chapters, the comparisons to be attempted will combine structural analysis, historical institutionalism, and rational choice institutionalism to propose a two-stage explanation of populist emergence—or the lack of it—dependent on what has hitherto been the most neglected factor in the study of populism, namely, political agency. The causal logic behind such an explanation points to the lasting impact of initial agents' choices made during highly contingent "critical junctures" in political development (Collier and Collier 1991: 29–31, Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 348) including, for instance, regime change, party system collapse, or large-scale economic crisis. Such choices by powerful and influential actors with the ability to "shape outcomes in a more voluntaristic fashion than normal

circumstances permit" (Mahoney 2001: 7) in turn generate self-reinforcing path-dependent processes producing distinct legacies.

Based on (a) the causal model of populist emergence presented in Chapter 3; (b) the focused empirical comparison of post-authoritarian and newly liberalized politics in Greece, Spain, and Brazil; and (c) the standard toolkit of process tracing and disciplined analytic narratives (Bates et al. 1998), I put forward the following pair of arguments:

1. Populism materializes through the action of rationally motivated personalistic individual leaders who use it as a shortcut to power on condition that electoral democracy is not put in jeopardy.
2. If this strategy proves successful, populism is likely to become party-system contagious.

In contrast, when democracy seems unsafe or rickety, and no personalistic leadership is available, populism is simply *not* a real option. In that case, all major parties have an interest in pursuing democratic liberalism so as to achieve political moderation and reach consensus on how to build—and thereafter maintain—workable institutions and enforce the rule of law. In such political and institutional contexts, and as long as the major parties alternate in office, populism remains a suboptimal choice.

Spain

Unlike in Greece, where the transition to democracy signified a sharp break with the past, the Spanish transition was incremental and, above all, characterized by consensus and moderation (McDonough et al. 1986: 745). Polarization during the same time was remarkably low in the party system and polarizing figures almost non-existent (for general overviews of the liberal beginnings of contemporary Greece and Spain, see in particular, Fishman 1990, Gunther 1992, Pérez-Díaz 1993, Linz and Stepan 1996, Morlino 1998, Hopkin 1999, Gunther et al. 2004, Pappas 2010a). That was anything but a simply fortuitous outcome.

In Spain, the dictatorship lasted for thirty-six years before its self-liquidation in the aftermath of General Francisco Franco's death in November 1975. In July 1976, King Juan Carlos appointed Adolfo Suárez as the new prime minister, entrusting him with the task of dismantling the old regime and instituting a liberal pluralist state (Gunther 1992). Without delay, Suárez issued a blanket amnesty for political prisoners, dissolved Franco's secret police, allowed the rights to unionize and strike, and legalized the Communist Party of Spain (CPE). Meanwhile, he also succeeded in bringing together several moderate conservative forces, which coalesced to form the Union of the Democratic Center (UCD), a wobbly coalition of conservative reformists,

which won the first democratic elections of June 1977 and formed a minority government. In 1978, the new Spanish constitution was approved by referendum without serious opposition and, in the same year, the so-called Moncloa pact—an agreement among politicians, political parties, and trade unions about how to manage the economy and combat terrorism—was also passed.

However, in sharp contrast to similar developments in Greece, where Andreas Papandreou's PASOK developed as an "anti-system party" (Capoccia 2002) intent on irresponsible populist opposition (Linz 1978), its political equivalent in Spain, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) behaved moderately and was supportive of the government's proposed liberalism. Why? Keeping in mind the analysis of PASOK in Section 4.1, let us see how the development of PSOE followed a different path, which would then produce in Spain different feedback processes than those of PASOK on Greek politics (for a theoretical analysis of these issues, see Pierson 2000).

The PSOE, founded in 1879 and banned by Franco in 1939, became legalized just before the national elections of 1977. In previous years, a struggle within its exiled leadership between staunchly leftists and moderate reformists was decided in favor of the latter group and sealed with the election of youthful Felipe González as the new General Secretary of the party. The new leader promptly moved the party away from its earliest Marxist mentality and steered it down the path of classical social democracy. In Spain's first democratic elections (1977), the PSOE polled almost 30 percent of the vote. Internal ideological infighting had not, however, subsided and, in a highly strategic move at the 1979 party congress, politically moderate González decided to resign rather than comply with the radical leftist tendencies that, once again, were trying to reassert their control over the party. A new, extraordinary congress was called in which González was re-elected as party leader and the party agreed to officially renounce Marxism and, instead, adhere to European social democracy.

Why did González in the critical juncture of early democratization opt for a moderate social democratic course rather than choose a populist strategy like Greece's Papandreou? Three interrelated reasons, I submit, may account for this variance: First, the general perception in each country about whether democracy was in jeopardy or not; second, the degree of each leader's personal control over their respective party organizations; and, third, the probability of each socialist party winning forthcoming elections. It is worth examining these three factors in some greater detail.

To begin with Greece, according to my argument Papandreou chose populist polarization over liberal moderation for three main reasons—the seeming invulnerability of democracy, his control over PASOK, and electoral expediency. First, under Karamanlis' trustworthy governments, Greece's young democracy soon seemed to be firmly secure and stable, allowing for political risk-taking. Second, as the founder and sole focal point of his party, Papandreou

was in a position to steer PASOK in a radical populist direction without internal opposition. Third, populism was for Papandreou the necessary hopeful shortcut that would lead to a quick electoral victory—and this is why: In the 1974 elections, PASOK had received a paltry 13.6 percent of the national vote, a difference of over 40 percentage points from the ruling ND. Moreover, Papandreou had to compete for power with Karamanlis—a remarkably capable opponent who was both in charge of a large party organization and a great political achiever. As political moderation was therefore the surest way for Papandreou and his party to remain permanently in opposition, he chose polarization. The political situation González faced in early post-authoritarian Spain was quite different.

The Spanish transition to democracy, first of all, was not an easy one (see, in particular, Linz and Stepan 1996: 87–115). The authoritarian regime had left behind a complex institutional structure distrustful of democracy. There were fears of an impending military coup (which, in fact, was attempted in February 1981, but failed) and deep suspicion of the king, who had been appointed by Franco specifically to safeguard the institutions of Francoism. Even more ominous was the flourishing of separatist movements and the resurgence of terrorism. In the 1977 parliamentary elections, the separatist Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) and the Democratic Pact for Catalonia (PDC) demonstrated significant political strength, which was followed by a spree of deadly separatist violence (Martínez-Herrera 2002: 27).[10]

In such a setting of institutional fluidity and political uncertainty, González became strongly averse to risks with regard to national politics (Colomer 1998: 174–5, Mújica and Sánchez-Cuenca 2006). He decided not to politicize popular resentment, opting instead for a strategy of "negotiated" institutional change based on political pacts, consensus building, and collective forgetfulness. As already noted, in the referendum of 1978, the PSOE voted for the new Spanish constitution and, with equal readiness, pursued the Moncloa Pact, which is rightly considered "the culmination of moderation and self-sacrifice" (Preston 1987: 102) by the socialists (and the communists) through the transition period. Thus, there developed in Spain, as Víctor Pérez-Díaz (1993) has argued, a new democratic political culture based on a generally accepted feeling that the failed experiments of the Second Republic and the civil war should never be repeated. "Adversity," write Linz and Stepan (1996: 99), "was not deliberately used to delegitimize either the fledgling democratic regime or the new constitutional structures that departed from Spain's traditional unitary organization." During the same period,

[10] Other terrorist activity had meanwhile surged on both the extreme right and the extreme left. Groups like the fascist Apostolic Anticommunist Alliance or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, the Maoist First of October Antifascist Resistance Groups were busy in an orgy of bombings in public places, kidnappings of prominent public figures, and political assassinations.

> [a] curtain was drawn over the past in the name of "national reconciliation," and it was accepted that acts of institutional violence committed during the dictatorship should go unpunished. (Aguilar 2001: 96)

Not only did the civil war remain a non-issue during the Spanish transition to democracy, but what is more, the majority of people disengaged from politics and were relatively quiescent. As late as 1980, a full 63 percent of adults in Spain would identify with no political party (McDonough et al. 1981: 61).

The second reason why a populist strategy was not a real option for González was his lack of control over his own party. He, in fact, was in a weak position and initially had to play for time against his radical intraparty opposition. In the earlier phase of Spanish democratization, the PSOE was still a Marxist party calling for the construction of a classless society. And, although the party had publicly toned down its radicalism, the intraparty war of positions between its ideological factions continued unabated. As already noted, it was only at the 1979 party congress that González managed to shepherd the PSOE in a clearly social democratic direction. In the 1980s, too, in order to achieve and maintain internal party coherence, González found it necessary to form a working partnership with Alfonso Guerra, who thus became deputy party leader.

Finally, the electoral calculus seemed favorable for González even without reverting to populism. In the first democratic election in Spain, the difference between the winning UCD and the PSOE was only 5 percentage points. In addition, the UCD was widely perceived at the time as stillborn. Logically, therefore, the PSOE's prospects for coming to power within a reasonably short time were anything but unrealistic. For this reason, too, the PSOE had every interest in following a course of political moderation, liberal consensus, and restraint.

In 1981 and 1982, respectively, PASOK and the PSOE came to power with absolute—and absolutely impressive—parliamentary majorities: PASOK won 48.2 percent of the vote and 172 seats in the 300-member Greek *Vouli* while the PSOE won 48.1 percent of the national vote and 202 seats in the 350-member Spanish *Cortes*. They would thereafter rule their countries for long periods, but in very different ways—PASOK as an archetypically populist force, PSOE as a politically liberal one. From that time on, the two countries followed divergent paths, and each path led to a different political outcome: An (albeit embattled) liberal democracy in Spain, a populist democracy in Greece. Let us stick with the Spanish case.

As the general elections of 1982 approached in Spain, the PSOE completely disowned its former radicalism and presented itself as a moderate social democratic party calling for a social pact for development that consisted of "a deep tax reform, the extension of the welfare state, and the strategic use of the public sector to maximize long-term growth and reduce unemployment"

(Boix 1998: 107). Once in power, the PSOE embraced a strategy of macro-economic discipline and state-led transformation of the economy with the aim of modernizing the country and opening it to the world (Maravall 1991).

The new Spanish administration became first of all convinced of the necessity of adhering to the European project. Indeed, as Kennedy (2001: 49) has put it, "European integration provided the [PSOE] with a major framework for policy throughout its period in office between 1982 and 1996." During the same time, and amidst various nationalist voices calling for "a dialectical struggle between the center and periphery" (Muro and Quiroga 2005), the PSOE did not pursue the mobilization of society. Instead, it pursued a two-step macro-economic policy program: First, it reduced the budget deficit through tax increases and spending cuts in state subsidies and social spending, and, second, it expanded capital formation, especially by relying on an improved public sector (Pérez 1997, Boix 1998). To that purpose, the government became intent on rationalizing the public business sector of the economy through the improvement of infrastructure and other capital investment, layoffs of excess personnel, and privatizations. In several cases, the socialist administration assisted the development of strong companies to produce "national champions" able to compete internationally.

In addition to economic policy, the PSOE administrations in the 1980s also introduced liberal institutional reforms to foster the rule of law and advance "social citizenship" (Maravall 1991: 20). These reforms included the promotion of civil and human rights, such as the legalization of abortion and of conscientious objection; the introduction of judicial review by creating a Constitutional Court; and the substantial overhaul of Spain's education system at all levels. Moreover, the PSOE respected the autonomy statutes of the regions (*Estado de las Autonomías*) and, in large part trying to balance the various interests of regional party barons, increased the regional share of public expenditure from 3 percent in 1981 to almost 23 percent by that decade's end (Puhle 2001: 308). The PSOE's determination for moderation and compromise also became apparent in foreign policy. The most telling example in this policy area concerned Spain's membership of NATO. While it had previously opposed it, once in power the PSOE changed its posture and, in a referendum called in 1986, voted in favor of keeping Spain within the organization.

All in all, then, the PSOE governments in the 1980s tried hard to achieve macro-economic stability and prepare conditions for long-term growth, while at the same time they also tried to sustain the broad electoral coalition that had brought the PSOE to power and to balance the interests of various intraparty and other political factions: The moderates, on the one hand, who called for market liberalization and accelerated Europeanization, and the radicals, on the other, who demanded increased social spending and bold redistributive measures.

By the second half of the 1980s, and while populism had become predominant in Greece, Spain entered a protracted period of economic crisis and liberal decay. A number of authors have attributed that period's relative decline to a continuous institutional degradation that led eventually to "a Spanish version of crony capitalism characterized by the misgovernment of the public, an outdated and inadequate policy-making process; an inefficient state; and an often corrupt and inefficient political class" (Royo 2000, Royo 2014: 1569) amid increased patronage politics. Following the institutional economics approach (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012, Ferguson 2013), Royo and others (e.g., Molinas 2012) show how key institutions in Spain became increasingly sclerotic and the country's political class became less able to face new circumstances. Here, in brief, is how it happened.

Despite several successes during its first term in office (1982–6) in increasing public revenue, fighting inflation, and cutting the public debt, the PSOE was faced by mid-decade with a strategic dilemma (Boix 1998: 129): Should it increase social spending to satisfy its leftist voters, or should it quash taxes and not alienate its centrist ones? As with its Greek counterparts, the problem for the PSOE and its leader during the 1980s was how to sustain, and possibly extend, the broad electoral coalition that had brought them to power in 1982. Unlike PASOK, however, the Spanish socialists avoided populist tactics, instead banking on a program of social democratic inspiration based on prudent macro-economic policies and political moderation that would appeal to the centrist voter. Yet, by the second half of the 1980s this strategy had reached its limits. In the negotiations of 1987, the General Workers' Union (for the first time since 1976) disassociated itself from the PSOE project and demanded expansionary policies. The government did not cave in to their demands. There followed a period of several years characterized by general strikes, social unrest, and lack of coordination between the government and its social bases. In the 1989 elections, the PSOE suffered losses to parties further to the left, which deprived it of an outright majority in parliament. It was only then, under further pressure from a new wave of strikes in the early 1990s, that the government felt forced to make substantial concessions to the unions and give way to an expansive fiscal policy. Thereafter, public spending rose significantly, which caused an increase in the general government deficit from 2.8 percent of GDP in 1989 to 7.5 percent in 1993; public debt rose from 45 percent of GDP in 1991 to 64 percent in 1994 (Boix 1998: 139).

In the 1993 general elections, the PSOE won only by a thin margin. However, as by that time "the employment situation in Spain had worsened considerably, aggravated by a growing underlying inflation-proneness of the Spanish economy" (Pérez 1999: 660–1), the PSOE had begun losing its middle-class voters, who were now transferring their allegiances to opposition parties. In 1996, the PSOE was defeated narrowly at the polls by the conservative Popular Party (PP). Like his predecessor, Spain's new Prime Minister

José María Aznar followed a politically moderate, markedly consensual, and populism-free course. In 1998, the PSOE and PP reached agreement on the appointment of new members of the Constitutional Court. The president of the Court of Accounts was also replaced under a similar agreement between the two parties.

Things changed, however, after the 2000 general election, in which the PP won for the first time since the transition with an absolute majority, thus becoming less reliant on consensual politics. As a result, tension between the two major parties and their leaders increased (Field 2013), which was reflected in both programmatic stances and actual positions on key policy issues, such as, for instance, Aznar's decision to enter the Iraq War in the face of strong popular opposition, or the handling of the wreckage of an oil tanker near the Spanish coast, which resulted in a major ecological disaster. In 2004, it was the PSOE's turn to win the elections, but without a majority. Still, under the leadership of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, and despite PP's harsh opposition tactics (Queralt 2012), the PSOE did not shy away from adversarial politics and took a number of bold political initiatives including the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq; the legalization of same-sex marriage and adoption; the expansion of autonomy in several regions; the initiation of negotiations with the Basque terrorist group ETA with the goal of ending violence; and, on a very important symbolic level, the decision to lift the curtain that had been drawn over the memory of civil war and openly confront its legacy, which the PP saw as "an attack on the [spirit of democratic] transition" (cited in Field 2014: 48).

In the course of the 2000s, the liberal political institutions created in post-authoritarian Spain had become seriously corroded and Spanish public opinion was both polarized (Torcal 2014) and increasingly disenchanted with the mainstream parties. Still, between 1996 and 2007, Spain's economy grew fast and strong, although, tellingly, without any marked increase in productivity (Fishman 2012: 70). It seemed, Royo (2014: 1587) writes, as though Spain was experiencing "an Indian summer characterized by a series of bubbles: the housing bubble, the stock market bubble, the alternative energy bubble . . . [which] disguised the reality that things were fundamentally not working."

In 2009, both Greece and Spain were hit by severe economic and financial crises. Greece, where the general government deficit had reached by the end of that year 15.5 percent of GDP while public debt rose to over 115 percent of GDP, came to the brink of default. In May 2010, the Greek government entered into a bailout program offered to it by the so-called troika of the International Monetary Fund, the European Union, and the European Central Bank. Spain experienced a banking crisis. In June 2012, after credit agencies downgraded several Spanish banks, some to junk status, the government agreed rescue loans from the Eurozone with the troika, to be used for the recapitalization of banks risking default. But while Greece's predicament led to

the collapse of its party system in 2012 and, after the 2015 elections, brought to power a new populist party (of which more in Chapter 6.2), Spain once again followed an entirely different path.

During the crisis, Spain's party system underwent great transformations *but did not collapse*. In the 2011 general elections, amid the financial crisis, increased political polarization, and social turbulence, the socialist PSOE was punished severely for having issued since 2010 a series of austerity measures and budget cuts (Torcal 2014). It was replaced in office by the center-right PP, which, under the leadership of Mariano Rajoy, won a record 44.6 percent of the national vote and was thus able to form a majority government. It would take another three years, during which unemployment reached new peaks and corruption cases flooded the national news, until a populist party emerged, to which I now briefly turn attention.

In mid-January 2014, PODEMOS was founded in Madrid by a group of academics and social activists proclaiming that they would commence "a constitutional process for opening the lock of [the Constitution of] '78" and thus "transform [Spain's] hard-hit social majority into a majority for political change" (*El País*, November 15, 2014). Led by media-savvy Pablo Iglesias, a 35-year-old professor of political science, the new party contested the May 2014 elections for the European Parliament, in which it won almost 8 percent of the Spanish vote (and five seats in Strasbourg). And yet, in the general elections of 2015, PODEMOS ranked third, behind both the PP and PSOE.

The political outcome in Spain has thus been strikingly different from that of Greece. Whereas in Greece neo-populism grew strongly following the very early crisis period on both left and right, and no liberal party was able to withstand the populist deluge, in Spain populism emerged only on the left of the political spectrum and developed into a political party (PODEMOS) well into the crisis. Even more importantly, the rise of PODEMOS was accompanied in Spain by the simultaneous strengthening of Ciudadanos, a centrist liberal party, which thus counterbalanced the populist effect. Under such circumstances, it is no longer a puzzle why populism triumphed electorally during the crisis in Greece, but not in Spain. Consistent with the path dependence argument developed in previous sections, liberalism seems to have taken stronger root in Spain than in Greece, and to have created its own political legacy, which makes populism in the former country a far more difficult political enterprise even when, at least theoretically, conditions become advantageous.

Brazil

In the aftermath of democratic transition in 1985, Brazil was a country with an economy devastated by a previous debt crisis and an inchoate party system

that was characterized by great electoral volatility and fragmentation among "a dizzying array of new [party] labels" (Mainwaring 1995: 374). Parties appeared to have "weak roots in society and limited legitimacy, and [were only able to] exercise little influence over congressional representatives" (Mainwaring 1999, cited in Roberts 2014: 201). Under such conditions, these parties were uniquely unable to meet the demand for social inclusion, which had grown strongly especially as a reaction to the oppressive and exclusionary politics of the authoritarian period.

At about that time, the only political party with a coherent organization structure, relatively clear policy agenda, and programmatic discourse was the Workers' Party (PT). It was founded in October 1979 by labor unionists, church members, and intellectuals, under the leadership of Luíz Inácio da Silva, known universally as Lula, a former metalworker and trade unionist who had made a name for himself as a militant leftist leader at the first major strikes in São Paulo during the dictatorship. While firmly defining itself as a socialist, working-class party, the PT persistently shunned the label "Marxist–Leninist" or even "Marxist," instead presenting itself as a novel political force trying to appeal to the electorate in programmatic, albeit often radical, and certainly fiscally expansive terms. It proposed bold social and economic policies in favor of the less privileged, but also—and perhaps more importantly—brought forward a new conception of politics that seemed to imply the end of entrenched patterns of elite dominance and the full political incorporation of the previously excluded sectors of the population.

In the mid-1980s, the country's major party was the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), a big-tent patronage-based organization of conservative and centrist politicians. In the first democratic elections in 1986, the PMDB won a majority of seats in both houses of congress, facing little opposition from the other parties, especially the leftist PT. The new government of José Sarney (1985–9) adopted a stabilization program, known as the Cruzado Plan, which, after some early good results, caused an inflationary spiral and, by 1988, led the national economy into recession. Instead of populism emerging in the social and economic chaos of that period, in which the political system was enjoying anything but high legitimacy, two other developments occurred in Brazil.

The first of those developments was that several dissenters broke in 1988 with the PMDB to create the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB), which thus became the major force in the left-of-center area of party competition. Secondly, at about the same time, both conservatives and centrists converged along "a programmatic axis of competition, at a time when the [old] authoritarian–democracy cleavage had weakened" (Roberts 2014: 204) and hence supported structural adjustment policies to contain hyperinflation.

After the 1989 elections, in which the up-and-coming Lula was defeated at the polls, the new government of conservative Fernando Collor de Mello

(1990–2) continued in earnest his predecessor's program of market reforms for stabilization and the structural adjustment of the economy. Like his contemporaries Carlos Menem in Argentina and Alberto Fujimori in Peru "relying on populist language and theatrics and promising to kill inflation with a single bullet" (Kingstone and Ponce 2010: 102), Mello applied a program of neoliberal reforms and implemented severe austerity measures (Mainwaring 1995: 372). And yet, despite some initial successes, inflation was not tamed. Even worse, the government was soon tainted by corruption scandals, which in 1992 caused its premature downfall. Mello's successor, Itamar Franco (1992–4), formerly of the PMDB, chose as finance minister PSDB leader Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a former leftist academic who had now moved to pragmatic liberal social democracy. In the face of strong PT opposition, Cardoso was able to convince centrist and conservative forces to agree on a coherent plan of fiscal adjustment (the so-called Real Plan), and finally to bring hyperinflation under control (Cardoso 2007). The inflation rate fell from 2,076 percent in 1994 to 15.8 percent in 1996 (Roberts 2014: 206). By the end of Cardoso's administration in 2002, inflation stood at about 10 percent (Edwards 2010: 209–10).

By that time, after almost a full decade of instability and fragmentation, Brazil's party system seemed to have become sufficiently institutionalized, while it also remained populism-free. Political competition along the right–left cleavage had helped the major parties to build stronger organizations and solidify their electoral constituencies. In 1994, capitalizing on his successes as finance minister, Cardoso went on to win Brazil's 1994 presidential election against Lula, the PT candidate. As a president, Cardoso embraced economic orthodoxy, consistently trying on the one hand to privatize state-owned firms (especially utilities and banks), deregulate the economy, and limit federal spending while, on the other hand, offering social welfare schemes to alleviate poverty and improve public healthcare and education (Roberts 1014: 206). He was to stay in Brazil's presidency until 2002 and, under his two terms in office, Brazil achieved monetary stability, significant state modernization, and improved social welfare. Such was the context in which left-wing opposition leader Lula, after three consecutive failures (in the presidential elections of 1989, 1994, and 1998), won the presidency in 2002.

Lula had campaigned against the failures of the previous administration, including unemployment and sluggish growth, promised change and social justice, and also committed to preserving currency stability. In office, Lula's administration, often contrary to the radical program of his party, extended and consolidated Cardoso's commitment to fiscal stability and economic liberalization choices, also supplementing them with bold social welfare policies, such as the so-called *Bolsa Família*—an anti-poverty program reaching millions of poor citizens and other underprivileged beneficiaries with cash transfers and various other types of social benefits. For most of his rule, social

support for Lula was exceptionally high and came from all parts of Brazilian society. As late in his second presidency as 2008, a poll concluded:

> President Lula remains "bullet-proof." His popularity ratings are still high due to good economic outcomes and results in social programs, in addition to the fact that his political discourse is easily grasped by the population.
>
> (Cited in Barros Silva et al. 2010: 132)

All in all, the Lula administrations in Brazil preserved liberal democratic institutions. Under the motto *Um Brasil para Todos* (a Brazil for everyone), Lula ruled the country in a way that was moderate and respectful of existing political institutions, presided over free and fair elections, maintained the market-oriented capitalist framework, and sought out common ground and compromise with the opposition, which remained free to criticize the government and compete with it. His government, moreover, continued to deliver relatively strong economic growth and low levels of inflation, extensive social assistance and protection, the provision of public goods, and investment in human capital. This raises the counterfactual question: Why did Lula, unlike several of his contemporaneous Latin American presidents, in his several bids for power against opponents pursuing "neoliberal" policies, but also when he won office, prefer liberalism over populism? I think that there are four interrelated reasons that explain this outcome for the period that Lula was in opposition and a fifth one that is more specific to the period of Lula's rule.

The first part of the answer is that, soon after its formation as a party within the politically fluid environment of the 1980s, the PT, rather than using moralistic appeals to "the people" in general, was perfectly able to attract a socially specific electoral base on purely programmatic appeals. Over that decade—in which Brazil went from a severe downturn at the beginning, and through the elusive hopes of the government's Cruzado Plan to stem inflation, to the high inflation at its end—the PT built a solid base in labor and among social movements, Catholic activists, progressive politicians and intellectuals, and the broader middle classes. Already at the end of the 1980s, Brazilian sociologist Leôncio Martins Rodrigues characterized the PT as "a party of the wage-earning middle class, especially liberal professionals, with both manual workers and members of the upper classes in a minority" (cited in Keck 1992: 190).

Secondly, as various authors agree (e.g., Ginsburg et al. 2009: 208), the Brazilian political system is one whose prevailing dynamic in the post-authoritarian period was one of intra-elite negotiation and consensual agreement. That was chiefly achieved during the, otherwise erratic, process of approving the democratic constitution of 1988 with input from thousands of constitutional committees and numerous interest groups throughout the country (Alston et al. 2016: esp. 76–90, Raile et al. 2011). The new constitution prioritized, on the one hand, the necessity of both social inclusion and fiscal stability and, on the other, the importance of multiple checks and balances,

chiefly the judiciary, for constraining presidential power. As Alston et al. write: "Post-1988, successful presidents engaged in extensive bargaining with political partners in the coalition in order to control the agenda," although it oftentimes entailed their engagement in patronage, or "pork for policy," tactics with the legislature (Alston et al. 2016: 88–9).

A third part of the answer is that Lula was constrained in this choices by the highly doctrinaire and sectarian factions within the PT. As Mainwaring describes it, those factions had

> an unrealistic view of socialism, are somewhat ambivalent about "formal" (that is, liberal) democracy, and are less democratic than their discourse suggests. Some factions of the party remain wedded to Leninist principles and practices.
>
> (Mainwaring 1995: 382)

In no way, however, were those intraparty factions willing to allow Lula to revert to purely populist discourse or use populism as its main ruling strategy. Nor was he willing to take the populist path. That had become evident already during his 2002 presidential campaign when Lula famously wrote a "Letter to the Brazilian People" promising that, if elected, he would honor the existing social contract and secure the country's macro-economic stability. In addition, Lula knew that, unlike most other cases we have examined in this book (such as Argentina, Venezuela, and Greece), Brazil does not have a tradition of mass street politics except for politically specific reasons (Stein and Tommasi 2008).[11]

Fourth, even after having built its increasingly multiclass electoral constituency, the PT consistently resisted the temptation to turn into a populist party, thus appealing generally to "the people." It rather preferred to represent its own electoral base vis-à-vis the state rather than advance a majoritarian appeal aimed at taking advantage *of* the state and state-related benefits:

> [The PT's] conception of politics was of a process of *claiming rights* in practice, rather than demanding their concession by the state. Through the self-organization of society, the relations of power between state and society would change, and a new agenda based on societal needs would be created. . . . To a large extent, the party grew up with less of an ideology than an ethical proposal, within which a number of alternative visions of the good society competed, using different languages. A discourse about class, a discourse about citizenship, and a discourse about autonomy [from the state] formed an amalgam whose central characteristic was the image of a diffuse "we," currently excluded from the process, who would win in practice rights that were inherently "ours."
>
> (Keck 1992: 245–6)

[11] The most significant instances of mass protest in Brazil have been the 1984 "Direct Elections Now" campaign for presidential suffrage, the 1992 "Impeachment Now" protest that helped oust President Fernando Collor de Mello, and the more recent 2015 protests against the presidency of Dilma Rousseff that led to her impeachment.

Finally, there is one more reason that explains why Lula rejected populism *after* he won office in 2002, and this is the great risk such a turnabout would signify for the important achievements Brazil had already achieved under the previous administrations, such as the taming of inflation and the continuous modernization of the country (see e.g., Edwards 2010: 214). This point becomes clearer if you contrast Brazil in the beginning of the 2000s with Venezuela in the late 1990s, that is, the years preceding Chávez's ascent to power. During that time, Venezuela's political system was entirely delegitimized, economic growth was negative, and its society was in almost constant turmoil. The 1989 Caracazo events, together with a generalized sense of corruption and unlawfulness, had a tremendous impact on people's minds, which eventually made Chávez's message more easily perceptible, let alone welcome. In short, in 1998 in Venezuela there was nothing like the hope and expectation that characterized Brazil in 2002.

Before closing this section, a final note is due. The negative cases of Spain and Brazil clearly provide the strongest confirmation of the causal model of populist emergence presented in this book. The most important factors for populism's failures are the lack of suitable structural conditions *and* a leader capable of setting in motion the micro-mechanisms required to produce a populist outcome. Conversely, the availability of those conditions and a leader are the foundations for populism's successes. Further comparative research on how populism may fail would be beneficial—especially since, in our infatuation with rising populism, we tend to forget how often it actually fails to emerge and take root. Consider, for instance, the cases of Ireland, Portugal, and Chile, all countries that have escaped the populist spread in recent decades.

Postwar Ireland has never had populist parties, nor did any such party develop there during the recent Great Recession. Importantly, Ireland suffered a sharp economic decline and, like Greece, was bailed out by the troika, thus having to suck up the bitter austerity pill. Yet, unlike in Greece, where under comparable conditions populism grew strong, no populist contender emerged in Ireland although Sinn Féin, a party once associated with political violence in Northern Ireland increased its electoral support. As the Irish state retained its ability to provide a normalized environment for its citizens, and the party system remained in place, there was no significant social unrest and the overall legitimacy of the political system was never questioned (for a detailed analysis, see Pappas and O'Malley 2014).

Portugal presents as a case of a country with no past experience of populism, and has also avoided a populist flare-up despite the fact that she underwent an economic crisis of similar magnitude and intensity as that in Greece and Ireland. The case is even more remarkable given that, at least during the years of economic austerity and sharp public spending cuts, the Portuguese society also witnessed a number of system delegitimizing developments

including investigations into former Prime Minister José Sócrates on charges of corruption, tax evasion, and money laundering; the collapse of Banco Espírito, which sent shockwaves throughout the Portuguese economy; and high unemployment rates, especially among the youth. Still, both the party system and the political system remained almost intact and working. So, what was the reason for non-populist emergence in Portugal? Obsessed as we often are about high-flown theories, we tend to forget that for populism to emerge and take hold in the political field there has to be some agency to make it possible. It is therefore apposite that the more obvious—and most plausible—answer for the absence of populism in Portugal is the one offered by Ruis Tavares, a Portuguese politician and former member of the European Parliament: "At its simplest," he writes, "the explanation for the lack of political national populism in Portugal [is] that nobody has consistently tried to gain political advantage by advancing these politics" (Tavares 2017).

The case of populism-free Chile, finally, is sufficiently explained by a logic similar to Tavares. In recent decades, political elites in Chile have displayed, unusually for the region, pragmatism and have succeeded to put in place important liberal institutional reforms aimed at the protection of property rights, reinforcing the rule of law, and controlling corruption (Edwards 2010: 117–18). This effort, based on largely consensual politics and facilitated by political and electoral moderation, has served as a disincentive for populist leadership emergence. Why did this happen in Chile and not, for instance, in Argentina or Greece? Probably because, as Dornbusch and Edwards (1991: 12–13) have claimed, some countries, like Chile, develop "an economic and political *memory* that allows them to learn from their own past mistakes," while other countries, like Argentina and Greece, fail to do so.

4.3. NEW KID IN TOWN: UNITED STATES, 2016

Nowhere in the postwar democratic Western world has the struggle between liberalism and populism been more intense than in the United States of America. Populism in this country has a long political pedigree dating from the times of Andrew Jackson, but—save the historical peculiarity of the People's Party that emerged in the Midwest and the south during the economic turmoil of the mid-1890s—has enjoyed no political representation in party form. Even so, after World War Two and amidst the subsequent Cold War and, later, the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement, a populist constituency developed—and, indeed, thrived—in America, consisting predominantly of ordinary folks: White middle-class wage earners who felt themselves "under siege from both liberal authorities above and angry minorities below" (Kazin 1995: 223). As no established party could express

the growing resentment and sense of betrayal by elites felt by a good part of society's grassroots, populism grew strong within *both* major parties, thus filling many of the cracks in the American political system. The word "populism," which had in the meantime disappeared from general public discourse, resurfaced in the 1960s together with the rise of a nationwide protest culture that claimed to express the interests and values of the ordinary people against a self-interested elite. "Populist," writes Kazin (2016), "became a handle applied to anyone who fought the powers that be, however they were defined." On the left, young radicals called for "participatory democracy," while on the right, conservatives turned against the state that was alleged to usurp the people's rights instead of being their servant. This section, following the analytical and theoretical framework that has been presented in earlier parts of the book, tells the story of postwar American populism in a way that also offers a compelling, credible, and theoretically consistent explanation of the rise to power of Donald Trump.

Populist Myths and the Mythical American People

"Populism" in the contemporary United States is, for certain, something much more complex than the stillborn nineteenth-century agrarian movement led by James B. Weaver and the 1896 backing for the presidency "the Great Commoner" William Jennings Bryan that the term often recalls. It is, instead, the result of a long and vivid tradition which, transmitted through an endless sequence of thinkers and practitioners of politics, spans the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and takes concrete shape in postwar America setting populism in direct antagonism to modern liberalism.

In this sense, no understanding of American populism is possible without beginning with the nineteenth-century "agrarian myth," which still provides symbolic content to the—no less mythical—American "people." The agrarian myth, as Hofstadter has explained in beautiful prose,

> cannot be defined in a phrase, but its component themes form a clear pattern. Its hero was the yeoman farmer, its central conception the notion that he is the ideal man and the ideal citizen. . . . The yeoman, who owned a small farm and worked it with the aid of his family, was the incarnation of the simple, honest, independent, healthy, happy human being. Because he lived in close communion with the beneficent nature, his life was believed to have a wholesomeness and integrity impossible for the depraved populations of cities. His well-being was not merely physical, it was moral; it was not merely personal, it was the central source of civic virtue; it was not merely secular but religious, for God had made the man and called man to cultivate it. (Hofstadter 1955: 24–5)

Ever since the nineteenth century, Americans have been taught that hard-working farmers and other small producers (i.e., the majority of citizens) are

the backbone of society and, therefore, politically sacrosanct (e.g., Lamont 2000). Contemporary American populism is best explained as a resistance to late twentieth-century progress that threatens the destruction of this myth, aided by the advent and (temporary) triumph of political liberalism. In the words of Hofstadter (1955: 35) again, "The notion of an innocent and victimized populace colors the whole history of agrarian controversy, and indeed the whole history of the populistic mind."

Progressively, as the independent farmer of nineteenth-century America disappeared under the relentless advance of commercial agriculture mechanization and the end of the land boom, his sons and daughters moved to towns to form a new working and lower middle class of property-owning artisans, small shopkeepers, and industrial laborers characterized by strong religious attachments and low education; moral conservatism—including an anti-abortion stance and belief in creationism—and status anxiety; a belief in social egalitarianism together with suspicion of foreigners; respect for hard work and neighborly self-help; the assertion of a sacred right to bear guns but also an expectation that the federal government shows responsibility for the common weal; nostalgia for the past and fear of unconstrained progress. That was Middle America—a moral community of plain-speaking, hardworking people with steady jobs and regular social habits; society's real grassroots, who, like the yeomen of the past, felt anxious about the decline of rural America and fearful that technological progress would destroy their working conditions, social communities, and ability to pass on their moral economy to their offspring. And they did fail. Here, for instance, is how a grandchild of such average American folks would describe such a dystopian universe and its members' dire prospects in life:

> My grandparents, neither of whom graduated from high school, raised me, and few members of my extended family attended college. The statistics tell you that kids like me face a grim future—that if they're lucky, they'll manage to avoid welfare; and if they're unlucky, they'll die of a heroin overdose, as happened to dozens in my small hometown just last year. (Vance 2016: 2)

As earlier agrarian populism was based on the cliché of the farmers' superiority in society because they fed all others, modern populism would rely on the notion that the white middle classes are pre-eminent in forming the backbone of American society. And as the early American politician pledged to protect the honest tillers of the soil, whom Jefferson had considered "the most precious part of the state," modern populist politicians would consistently "vow to fight for 'middle-class taxpayers' and against a variety of 'bureaucrats,' 'fat cats,' and 'Big Men'" (Kazin 1995: 1). Yet, among this shapeless mass of ordinary folks, some sociologists had already by the mid-1970s isolated a cross-section of *radical* voters (predominantly white, with no college degree, holding semi-skilled blue-collar or clerical white-collar-jobs, with low income

and a strong feeling of being under siege from above and below) who displayed extreme anger at political and social institutions such as the courts (think of, for instance, the uprisings against the court-ordered busing of schoolchildren in Boston in the 1970s) and the media who supported them (Warren 1976, Halstead and Lind 2001). This immoderate segment of the voting public, which was labeled "Middle American Radicals" (or MARs), had distinct socio-economic characteristics and common political attitudes. According to the following oft-stated conclusion,

> MARs are a distinct group partly because of their view of government as favoring both the rich and the poor simultaneously. . . . MARs are distinct in the depth of their feeling that the middle class has been seriously neglected. If there is one single summation of the MAR perspective, it is reflected in a statement which was read to [interviewed] respondents: The rich give in to the demands of the poor, and the middle income people have to pay the bill. (Warren 1976: 21)

The point to be made is that, in postwar American politics, this broad and polymorphous middle class of producers constituted a potential electoral majority set against another potential majority ostensibly consisting of non-producers. The latter majority, as described by Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney during a private fundraiser before the 2012 elections, was Obama's liberal electoral base. In Romney's own words:

> There are 47 percent of the [American] people who will vote for the president . . . [those] who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it. That that's an entitlement. And the government should give it to them. And they will vote for this president no matter what . . . [So,] my job is not to worry about those people. I'll never convince them they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives. (Cited in Corn 2012)

For Romney, as for any prospective populist leader, it is the non-liberal majority that is up for grabs, and it is that majority they vie to represent. Before coming to populist leaders, however, it is worth first seeing how the populist demands were presented, and in a way crystallized, in the public arena.

Among America's postwar public intellectuals with a populist predilection, perhaps none has been more influential than Christopher Lasch (1932–1994), a prominent historian, social critic of contemporary American liberalism, and pessimistic foe of modernity and the "progressive" worldview (for a biography, see Miller 2010). Both prolific in writing and vocal in expressing his views, he was able to effectively resuscitate the legacy of old American populism and adapt it to modern political realities. Let us briefly follow his thought, which, to this date, clearly reverberates in American populist discourse.

From Lasch's point of view, postwar American society is being split into two broadly antagonistic groups. On the one side stand the "privileged classes,"

which in an expansive definition constitute the top 20 percent of the population and have "removed themselves from the common life. . . . Many of them have [even] ceased to think of themselves as Americans in any important sense" (Lasch 1995: 45). These are the urbanized, educated, liberal white "elites" who, at least in their eyes, "represent the best and brightest in American life"—all those who "have more in common with their [professional and social] counterparts in Brussels or Hong Kong than with the masses of Americans not yet plugged into the network of global communications" (Lasch 1995: 35). Such elites lack civic virtue. "Theirs," Lasch says, "is essentially a tourist's view of the world—not a perspective likely to encourage a passionate devotion to [populist] democracy" (Lasch 1995: 6). On the other side of the national divide, stand the elites' antagonists—the vast majority of the ordinary people who remain steadfast to old-fashioned virtue—"producers, working in order to acquire the virtues labor instill—among them independence, responsibility, and self-sufficiency" (Menand 1991) but also driven by lower-middle-class resentment. Like the populists of the old, they

> saw themselves as the enemies of wealth and privilege, champions of the "average man on the street," in the words of George Wallace: the "man in the textile mill," the "man in the steel mill," the "barber" and "beautician," the "policeman on the beat," the "little businessman." (Lasch 1991: 505)

It was those same people whom the so-called privileged classes saw as "technologically backward, politically reactionary, repressive in [their] sexual morality, middlebrow in [their] tastes, smug and complacent, dull and dowdy" (Lasch 1995: 4).

The cleavage between the two antagonistic groups could not be bridged. For each of them has a different idea of democracy. The liberal minority, first,

> have always taken the position that democracy can dispense with civic virtue. According to this way of thinking, it is liberal institutions, not the character of citizens that make democracy work. Democracy is a legal system that makes it possible for people to live with their differences. (Lasch 1995: 85)

The idea of democracy is quite different for ordinary people, who, deriving from classical republicanism, early Protestant theology, and rural Yankee culture themes, focus closely on the combination of self-reliance and civic virtue, the political equality of (otherwise unequal) citizens, and social responsibility. In this democracy, Lasch writes,

> We are determined to respect everyone [i.e., all minorities], but respect has to be earned. . . . Respect is what we experience in the presence of admirable achievements, admirably formed characters, natural gifts put to good use. It entails the exercise of discriminating judgment, not indiscriminate acceptance by virtue of individual compassion, social diversity or minority empowerment.
>
> (Lasch 1995: 89)

In almost all his writings, Lasch perceives a liberal democratic "malaise," visible above all in the "decline of manufacturing and the consequent loss of jobs; the shrinkage of the middle class; . . . the decay of the cities," to mention only the top items in a list of bad news that "goes on and on" (Lasch 1995: 3). What he laments, in short, is the crisis of democracy due to progress and modernity, which sap traditional civic virtues and morality of communitarian independence that, for decades, held America together:

> Democracy works best when men and women do things for themselves, with the help of their friends and neighbors, instead of depending on the state. . . . Self-governing communities, not individuals, are the basic units of democratic society. (Lasch 1995: 7–8)

And further:

> It is the decline of those communities, more than anything else, that calls the future of democracy into question. Suburban shopping malls are no substitute for neighborhoods. (Lasch 1995: 8)

But Lasch also shows a deep, albeit hardly perceptible, contempt for liberal institutions such as the courts and federal bureaucracy, arguing that such institutions engineer reforms that "might have failed to command popular support if they had been openly debated" (Lasch 1991: 37). He explains:

> The great liberal victories—desegregation, affirmative action, legislative reapportionment, legalized abortion—were won largely in the courts, not in Congress, in the state legislatures, or at the polls. Instead of seeking to create a popular consensus behind these reforms, liberals pursued their objectives by indirect methods, fearing that popular attitudes remained unreconstructed. (Lasch 1991: 37)

He thus undertakes to construct an alternative to modern liberalism political and moral tradition, which, indeed, he calls "populism" and apprehends as follows:

> Populism, as I understand it, is unambiguously committed to the principle of respect. . . . It stands for plain manners and plain, straightforward speech. It is unimpressed by titles and other symbols of exalted social rank, but it is equally unimpressed by claims of moral superiority advanced in the name of the oppressed. It rejects a "preferential option for the poor," if that means treating the poor as helpless victims of circumstance, absolving them of accountability, or excusing their derelictions on the grounds that poverty carries with it a presumption of innocence. *Populism is the authentic voice of democracy*. (Lasch 1995: 106, emphasis mine).

Populism in this sense is the constant quest for "another way of achieving America"—one that would halt the advance of malignant liberalism and replace it with the dignity of traditional values, joy in work, family life and

self-improvement, a sense of place, and a feeling of national pride. In the context of American politics, Lasch's preferred values clearly recall the political and cultural conservatism of older Jeffersonian and agrarian populism that, in his own thinking, would challenge the ideologues of progress and help to answer the great question of our times: How would Americans restore a spirit of civic virtue in their lives? Such ideas also provided familiar mottoes for the political discourses of a new generation of modern-day conservative populist politicians.

The Emergence of Populist Majority

There was a time in early postwar America when most people believed that, thanks to the acceptance of the New Deal's basic principles, politics had achieved an irreversible liberal consensus. Even the most prominent among the Republicans, such as President Dwight Eisenhower, governed as moderates and the GOP appeared to have become reconciled to key institutional innovations implemented by the Democrats during the 1930s, notably social security. By the early 1960s, Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society seemed to consolidate the liberal consensus and, indeed, the ultimate historical triumph of political liberalism. But then, amidst the cultural wars associated with the civil rights movement and identity politics, also related to the shifting social fortunes of the country's broad white working and middle classes, a political backlash occurred which, by the end of the 1960s, caused a radical realignment in American politics with its main characteristic the resurgence of conservative populism.

The turning point was the presidential elections of 1968. In the fluid political landscape of the late 1960s, where the old political categories of right and left no longer seemed to work, and therefore the political allegiance of millions of ordinary Americans seemed up for grabs, the trick was how to turn the disenchanted majority of hardworking Americans into an *electoral* majority. This task was boldly undertaken by George Corley Wallace, a canny post-New Deal Democrat and governor of the poor and racism-prone state of Alabama, who thus became the precursor of a populism that grew increasingly strong in America and, several decades later, would win office.

Wallace was a presidential contender in four elections—in three of them (1964, 1972, and 1976) as candidate for Democratic Party nomination and in 1968 as leader of his own American Independent Party. In all four cases, and against a background of both the racial crisis and the rise of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and early 1970s, Wallace expressed the feelings of ordinary white American folks who felt under siege both from the liberal establishment above and the undeservingly vocal minorities below. He appealed

to millions of resentful wage-earning white conservatives with two largely illiberal calls: First, a critique of the haughty liberal "establishment" of eastern politicians, bureaucrats, judges, and academics who worked for their own interests and against those of the average men and women across the country, and, second, a crusade against the moral anarchy fostered by that same cosmopolitan elite, together with the mobilized college youth, on the one hand, and the "unproductive" minorities on the other. Realizing that significant masses of vengeful middle-class whites were about to abandon New Deal liberalism, turning increasingly hostile to both its sophisticated elites and unbending institutions, he posed as the principled champion of a typically populist backlash centered on the superiority of "the people" over institutions. As he once put the matter in public: "There can be no submission to the theory that the central government is anything but a servant of the people" (cited in Kazin 1995: 231–2).

In the 1968 presidential election, the 57 percent of the American electorate who voted to eject the Democratic Party from power bespoke the end of liberal hegemony and also signified the emergence of a new "Republican majority," which would, however, remain for several decades split between moderate conservatives and radical populists.[12] As Kevin Phillips was keen to note at the time, the main political upheaval in the 1960s was

> a populist revolt of the American masses who have been elevated by prosperity to middle-class status and conservatism. Their revolt is against the caste, policies and taxation of the mandarins of Establishment liberalism.
>
> (Phillips 2015 [1969]: 550)

Which is to say that Wallace, although he failed to win significant nationwide support, succeeded in splitting the conservative electorate and facilitating a major "electoral realignment" (Mayhew 2002) between the electorates of the two major parties.

In the decades that followed the realignment of 1968, populism remained a persistent feature of American politics, constantly evolving and growing stronger, but never achieving power. Most of those who abandoned the Democrats eventually found shelter in the Republican Party, which thus turned into the bastion of white wage-earning voters and solid defender of their middle-class values. As Kazin writes,

> Beginning in the late 1960s, conservative activists and politicians—most of whom were Republicans—recreated themselves as the authentic representatives of average white Americans. They learned to harness the same mass resentments

[12] Richard Nixon won the 1968 presidential race with 43.4 percent of the national vote over Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey who polled 42.7 percent. Independent candidate George Wallace won 13.5 percent of the vote, most of it in the Deep South as well as in other regions where the Democratic tradition and party loyalties had already become obsolete.

> (against federal power, left-wing movements, the counterculture, and the black poor) for which George Wallace had spoken but was unable to ride to victory.
>
> (Kazin 1995: 246)

In the words of one of its earliest and most astute students, the emergent Republican majority represented "a popular upheaval which overthrows the obsolescent 'liberal' ideology and interests of today's Establishment." To which he immediately added in plain populist idiolect:

> Policies able to resurrect the vitality and commitment of Middle America—from sharecroppers and truckers to the alienated lower middle classes—will do far more for the entire nation than the environmental manipulation, social boondoggling, community agitation and incendiary promises of the Nineteen-Sixties.
>
> (Phillips 2015 [1969]: xxv)

Meanwhile, other populist contenders emerged and made their own political bids. In 1988, conservative media mogul Pat Robertson waged an (unsuccessful) presidential campaign "aimed at Main Street as opposed to Wall Street" (Kazin 1995: 270). Four years later, in 1992, and again in 1996, another wealthy man from Texas, Ross Perot, tried his luck as an independent presidential candidate by mobilizing the disenchantment of America's middle classes with inept federal bureaucrats and self-serving politicians. Pat Buchanan, Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, and Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum also made passing but far-reaching appearances on the populist scene in 1996, 2008, and 2012, respectively.[13] Newt Gingrich, a candidate for the Republican Party 2012 presidential nomination, never shied away from accusing the "corrupt liberal welfare state" while talking about family values and imposing controls over the "elite liberal media" (Packer 2013: 21, 22). Nor was the Democratic Party during the same time immune from populist allure. Instead, many Democrat politicians, including Bill Clinton, became eager to reinvent themselves as the real champions of the "average people," fully aware that, as journalist Robert Kuttner once put it, they could "regain their status as majority party only by rebuilding a majority coalition of ordinary wage- and

[13] While serving as an advisor and speech writer for Richard Nixon, it was Pat Buchanan who coined the phrase "the silent majority" to refer to those who work hard, save, and pay their taxes in order "to give life to the American Dream [and] steel to the backbone of America" (Buchanan 2014: 337). In 1996, Buchanan, running on a populist platform, attempted to win the Republican nomination (which he eventually lost to moderate conservative senator Bob Dole). It is worth noting how a prescient publication saw that race at the time: "Patrick J. Buchanan . . . is not going to win the Republican nomination in 1996, much less the presidency. . . . Presidential politics, however, has always been about more than simply winning elections: of all the candidates running this time on either side, Buchanan has the most potential to change our politics. His campaign is testing the viability of hard-right-wing populism, which, given the unchecked erosion of middle-class wages and living standards, may be the shape of politics to come" (Stark 1996).

salary-earning people, whose political and economic interests are not identical to those of the wealthy" (cited in Kazin 1995: 277).

The Tea Party as Catalyst

In February 2009, only weeks after Barack Obama, a man of diverse racial heritage and an ambitious liberal policy agenda, had assumed his role as the new president of the United States, accompanied by a majority in the House and a supermajority in the Senate, CNBC reporter Rick Santelli attacked the government's nascent mortgage plan for spending public money to "subsidize the loser's mortgages" and thus "promoting bad behavior." As Santelli promptly invited America's "people" to having a "Chicago Tea Party in July," across the country "web-savvy conservative activists recognized rhetorical gold when they saw it" (Williamson et al. 2011: 26). And as "Tea Party" stuck as a name, America's most recent manifestation of populism was born (Parker et al. 2013). Seen temporarily, it was a stunning grassroots rebellion against both the country's liberal elites *and* its subaltern social strata. But viewed in a more long-term perspective, the Tea Party movement was a yet another episode in the continuous battling of postwar populism to reverse the liberal achievements of "Woodrow Wilson's Progressivism, FDR's New Deal, LBJ's Great Society, and President Obama's fundamentally transforming America" (from the Tea Party "Principles" cited in Skocpol and Williamson 2012: 81). It was also the necessary precondition that facilitated Donald Trump's subsequent rise to power.

Slowly in the beginning, but soon thereafter gathering impressive pace, Tea Party adherents held local meetings and small rallies, which turned into protests, and which spread from local to national level. In April 2009, their Tax Day demonstrations dominated the news. By summer, "tea party patriots" showed up in congressional districts across the country chanting what became their battle cry: "Just say no!" In September of the same year, tens of thousands of Tea Party protesters marched for the first time on Washington, D.C. Already by 2010,

> self-declared Tea party activists and supporters were exercising significant clout in dozens of electoral races nationwide—first in Republican primaries, and then in the general election contests of November. (Williamson et al. 2011: 26)

Using such tactics, Tea Partiers ensured they tarnished and made unpopular liberal legislation initiatives, like the Affordable Care Act, while they simultaneously hijacked the national narrative, effectively shifting it in a populist direction. After the November 2010 elections, the liberal Democratic majority in the House and supermajority in the Senate were gone.

Who were the Tea Partiers—or, in proverbial populist parlance, "the people"—and whom did they stand against? What comes out clearly from both ecological analyses and survey data is that the American average people distinguish themselves from liberal elites at the top but also—and remarkably so—from subaltern strata in society. This sufficiently well-marked distinction between workers and non-workers, the latter category further divided between the leisure elites and the parasitical underclasses, is central to understanding modern American populism.

For the most part, the Tea Party supporters were "overwhelmingly elder white citizens, relatively well educated and economically comfortable compared to Americans in general. Almost all [were] Republicans or conservatives to the right of the GOP" (Skocpol and Williamson 2012: 20). At that moment, they feared the implementation of liberal policies by a president they despised but, more generally, they also dreaded the loss of the America they had known and held dear in their hearts. In terms of self-perceptions, they above all define themselves as hard-working people (which recalls the "producers" of old) in opposition to social categories of non-workers, or freeloaders, (that is, the "parasites" of earlier times). Accordingly, the Tea Partiers held positive views about public spending and, in particular, major entitlements, such as social security and Medicare, but only for themselves. To them, non-working, and especially low-income, people did not deserve government assistance.

And who are the freeloaders who are therefore deemed unworthy of government welfare programs? Here, as in many other aspects of U.S. national politics, race and ethnicity, together with the cultural divisions they tend to generate, play crucial roles. Blacks and Latinos, who are perceived as less hardworking but might benefit from government handouts and other state work contributions, top the list of undeserving citizens, followed by people on chronic welfare support and undocumented immigrants as prime examples of non-tax-paying freeloaders who only drain the public coffers (for an overview, see Kinder and Kam 2010). New immigrants, in particular, were explicitly included by Tea Partiers in the non-working and non-tax-paying population who freeload at the expense of hard-working American taxpayers, while some even expressed concern that "these people are going to be coming in and take our jobs" (Williamson et al. 2011: 33).

Finally, the Tea Partiers opposed the social and political establishment, but very selectively. On the one hand, they deplored the Obama administration and most liberal institutions, such as the Supreme Court. Perhaps above all, they condemned Obama himself as the most typical representative of the liberal elite class. The following personal account from the perspective of the people in Middletown, Ohio, is as candid as it is typical of a certain populist mentality that was common among Trump's voters:

> The president feels like an alien to many Middletonians for reasons that have nothing to do with [his] skin color. Recall that not a single one of my high school

> classmates attended an Ivy League school. Barack Obama attended two of them and excelled at both. He is brilliant, wealthy, and speaks like a constitutional law professor—which, of course, he is. Nothing about him bears any resemblance to the people I admired growing up: His accent—clean, perfect, neutral—is foreign; his credentials are so impressive that they're frightening; he made his life in Chicago, a dense metropolis; and he conducts himself with a confidence that comes from knowing that the modern American meritocracy was built for him. . . . [He] strikes at the heart of our deepest insecurities. He is a good father while many of us aren't. He wears suits to his job while we wear overalls, if we're lucky enough to have a job at all. His wife tells us that we shouldn't be feeding our children certain foods, and we hate her for it—not because we think she's wrong but because we know she's right. (Vance 2016: 191)

But, on the other hand, the same populist voters made common cause with several sectors of the national elite, including media celebrities, like Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity; corporate billionaires, like the Koch brothers; wealthy political action committees, like FreedomWorks. What happened in reality was simply that "[n]ew effervescence at the grass roots was electrifying for conservative big-money funders, political consultants, and organizations advocating free-market policy ideas" (Skocpol and Williamson 2012: 100). At the same time, many politicians and office-seekers of the Republican Party jumped on the populist bandwagon thrilled to exploit the new opportunities offered by revitalized populism.

To be sure, growing grassroots populism throughout America pushed the Republican Party further to the right—and exactly where other populists, as Pat Buchanan, always wanted it to be:

> If there is a role for the Republican Party, it is to be a party of the working class, not the welfare class. It is to champion the cause of producers and taxpayers, of the private sector threatened by the government sector, of the millions who carry most of the cost of government and share least in the beneficence.
>
> (Cited in Kazin 1995: 245)

What was still missing from grassroots populism to become politically dominant was a leader.[14]

Enter Donald Trump

In January 2016, after a Trump speech in New Hampshire, Tess O'Brien, a former Democrat, ascertained that the country's problems go "far beyond Democrat, Republican, conservative, liberal, [but] finally, a leading citizen is

[14] In the early 2010s Donald Trump was broadly thought of as a political midget. Characteristically, when he "was blustering about Obama's birth certificate, he got a chuckle and an 'Atta boy' from some Tea Partiers, but no one seemed to take him seriously as a presidential contender" (Skocpol and Williamson 2012: 194).

willing to stand up and talk about these problems" (Schreckinger 2016). He was not alone. Across the country, millions of ordinary white lower- and middle-class folks who felt they were on the losing side of history and deeply mistrusted every institution in American society were abandoning en masse their traditional loyalties to form Trump's new electoral constituency. As attested by Trump himself, the voters he addressed were those working in the "rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape," who had been "forgotten" and "left behind," and who, he promised, would be forgotten no more (Trump 2017). As clearly comes out of several recent ethnographic studies (e.g., Cramer 2016), what mostly characterized all those people was their deep resentment and bitterness towards big city-dwelling elites and poor neighborhood needy residents. Indeed, no issue united Trump's electoral constituency more than their opposition to patronizing elites and socialized welfare—both conveniently represented at the symbolic level by Obama (a black, highly educated liberal president) and Obamacare (a welfare scheme for the needy in society).

In the increasingly polarized country that America had become (Hetherington and Weiler 2009), those were the same people who spawned the Tea Party movement of 2009 and 2010, but their social bases extended well into the Democratic Party as well. All those people were simply "pissed off. And when Donald Trump came along, they were the people who told the pollsters, 'That's my guy'" (Frum 2016). To the frustrated and anxious American voters, Trump appeared as a rescuer. For, as remarked in Vance's memoir *Hillbilly Elegy*, which is precisely about those same voters and their broken families and social decay, "[t]here is a lack of agency here—a feeling that you have little control over your life and a willingness to blame everyone but yourself" (Vance 2016: 7).

It also helped that Trump was a political outsider. Never since Dwight Eisenhower in 1952 had the Republican Party nominated someone without political experience, and Trump had none of it. He was a real-estate businessman whose career was also marred by some failures. He, however, used his outsider status in order to set himself against the established political system. In his words,

> The establishment, the media, the special interests, the lobbyists, the donors, they're all against me. I'm self-funding my campaign. I don't owe anybody anything. I only owe it to the American people to do a great job. They are really trying to stop me. (Cited in Judis 2016: 72)

Moreover, unlike earlier populists, especially McCarthy and Wallace, who were poor public speakers, Trump was an energetic orator, able to touch several sensitive chords in his audiences. He also was a radical politician putting forward a novel illiberal message.

Recall that, according to Oakeshott, a moderate liberal politician is like a trimmer in the nautical sense—he who trims the sails of the ship in order to keep it afloat in choppy seas. Not so for populist Trump, a leader who shredded the liberal rule book and promoted political polarization at large scale. His messages, let alone political promises, were clearly illiberal—and even violence instigating; they also lacked essential policy specifics. To clarify with a few (among many similar) examples: In August 2015, two young followers of his campaign, Scott and Steve Leader, were charged for beating a homeless Mexican man outside a Boston subway station with a metal pole. To justify their action, Scott Leader told the police: "Donald Trump was right—all these illegals need to be deported." Asked to react to this incident, Trump said he had no knowledge of it, but he did not stop there. "I will say that people who follow me are very passionate," Trump went on. "They love this country and they want this country to be great again" (Lind 2015). In March 2016, during a rally in St. Louis in which anti-Trump protesters were also present, Trump raged against liberal tolerance to protest, openly lamenting that "nobody wants to hurt each other anymore," and concluding thus: "Protesters, they realize there are no consequences to protesting anymore. There used to be consequences. There are none anymore." He ended at a high pitch, openly instigating violence:

> Our country has to toughen up folks. We have to toughen up. These people [the liberal-minded] are bringing us down. These people are so bad for our country. You have no idea folks, you have no idea. [And] they contribute nothing. Nothing. (Cited in Klein 2016)

Only a few days later, Trump warned that there would be widespread unrest if he was not eventually given the nomination as the candidate with just a plurality of delegates. "I think you would have riots," he said during an interview with CNN, adding meaningfully that he represented "many, many millions of people," including many first-time voters. He concluded: "I wouldn't lead it, but I think bad things would happen" (Freedom du Lac 2016). And when asked during his campaign to release a substantive policy agenda, Trump would typically reply: "I know the press wants it, [but] I don't think the people care" (Lewis 2015). Above all, Trump painstakingly ridiculed, delegitimized, and in any other way possible trashed the liberal political establishment, especially his presidential opponent, Hillary ("crooked") Clinton, but also his own Republican Party and its elders. Nowhere was that better, and more powerfully, expressed than in the advertisement concluding his electoral campaign which employed perfect populist language:

> Our movement is about replacing the failed and corrupt political establishment by a new government controlled by you, the American people. . . . The political establishment that is trying to stop us is the same group responsible for our

> disastrous trade deals, massive illegal immigration, and economic and foreign policies that have bled our country dry.[15]

And yet, despite his typically populist discourse and style, and however radical his ideas and political message, Trump would have joined the legions of America's failed populist political entrepreneurs had he not succeeded in taking control of the Republican Party, which he then used as his vehicle to power.[16] Indeed, by 2016 neither the anxieties of the working middle classes nor the frustration with ailing liberal institutions were new. They had mounted for decades, boiling over during Obama's administration (2009–17) and while the country went through a slow recovery from the Great Recession in the late 2000s. What was different this time was the combination of a charismatic leader's radicalism with his control oven a mighty party organization. As Judis plainly puts it: "If he had based his campaign on . . . moderate Republicanism, Trump probably would not have won a single delegate. . . . But he combined his moderate Republicanism with a set of [radical] convictions, most of which went back two decades or more, that were very similar to those of Perot and Buchanan" (Judis 2016: 66), let alone those of George Wallace and governor of Alaska Sarah Palin among politicians, and Christopher Lasch among public intellectuals.

Trump addressed specifically the conservative populist base of the Republican Party. Ever since this party absorbed a segment of alienated white Democrats in the late 1960s and 1970s, a rift was opened within it between its disgruntled white working-class base and its moderate conservative leadership (including the GOP elite donors, traditional power brokers, and their subsidized think tanks). For a long time, the rift had no grave consequences since there was general agreement over social issues, such as opposition to abortion and gay marriage. Trump, with his anger at immigrants, trade, Wall Street, and Washington elites, revealed the void, and filled it with his own discourse.

Trump challenged core party beliefs on everything from the economy (free trade and less regulation) to entitlements (preserving Medicare and social security) to defense and national security (immigration), pushing the issues into a populist corner. But, above all, now in control of the party, Trump was able to trigger the mechanisms that we have seen in previous chapters to be necessary for populism to emerge—the politicization of resentment, the forging of "the people," and social mobilization.

[15] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vST61W4bGm8.

[16] Trump also vowed to radically transform the Republican Party. As he said in an interview with Bloomberg News, "Five, ten years from now—different party. You're going to have a worker's party. A party of people that haven't had a real wage increase in eighteen years, that are angry" (cited in Judis 2016: 77).

5

How do Populists Govern?

The United States is a country with a well-developed and established system of checks and balances. This system was put to the test in dramatic fashion upon the arrival of Donald Trump in the White House in 2017. During the first year of his administration as the forty-fifth president of the United States, Trump's populist track record can be summed up as follows: At first, presumably on his promise to "drain the swamp" in Washington D.C., he sought to colonize top state administrative positions with his own people, although initially with no great success. After numerous resignations of power holders in the administration and the dismissal of several of his initial top aides, including the White House chief strategist, his Chief of Staff, and the National Security Advisor, Trump increasingly entrusted extensive government responsibilities to members of his family, like his daughter and her husband. He also made use of discretionary power through, for instance, a large number of executive orders. Another area of concern for the president was the control of institutions of horizontal accountability. Early on in his presidency, he attacked judges personally for rulings he was not in agreement with and questioned the constitutional authority of the courts. For example, in reaction to a federal judge's decision to temporarily block enforcement of a controversial travel ban, he tweeted: "The opinion of this so-called judge, which essentially takes law-enforcement away from our country, is ridiculous and will be overturned." He fired the F.B.I. director and tried to undermine an independent investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. In addition, Trump became particularly active in attacking the liberal media claiming that they produced "fake news," which, as he tweeted, "is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American people!" While, on the one hand, he sought legal action against dissenting individual journalists and news organizations, on the other hand, he openly sponsored partisan media coverage that was favorable to him. The new president engaged actively in patronage of two types: firstly, by popular tax cuts benefiting Americans across the board, but mostly the rich, and, secondly, via political cronyism. Aiming to build a "political empire," Trump offered high-ranking administrative jobs especially

to large campaign donors and business people in the expectation of their political support.

All this is prima facie surprising since it concerns the United States, an erstwhile beacon of democratic liberalism. But Trump's populist administration is nothing new, or unfamiliar, when seen in comparison with other populist rulers, as we are going to see in this chapter. Instead, it follows closely what we may call the "populist blueprint," a well-scripted project of democratic illiberalism, which is common in all cases of ruling populism, whether in the Americas or in Europe. It includes "grabbing the state" and an expansion of executive power, an onslaught on liberal institutions, and patronage politics. The comparative analysis that follows, then, will seek to answer the question: When in office, how do populists succeed in preserving power by democratic means while at the same time attacking the institutions of liberal democracy?

5.1. POWER SEIZURE

Without of course denying that, in all democratic political systems, newcomers in office always tend to acquire as much state control as is allowed by constitutional legality, political convention, and ethical rules, populist rulers undertake an almost complete seizure of state power, which often runs counter to constitutional, traditional, and ethical politics. Such major power grabs take various forms, typically including the appointment of party loyalists at all levels of state bureaucracy; empowering the executive at the expense of other branches of state power; the emasculation of state independent authorities and other institutions of horizontal accountability; control over the media, the judiciary, and the education system; crony capitalism; and, ultimately, regime change through the introduction of bold constitutional reform. As I will try to show in this chapter, based on empirical comparative analysis, populists in power aim to consolidate their electoral majorities by illiberal means. For reasons of space and economy, empirical analysis will be limited to four most important cases of populist rule: Argentina under Juan Perón's first term in office (1946–52), Greece under Andreas Papandreou's governments during the 1980s (1981–9), Venezuela under Hugo Chávez (1999–2013), and Hungary under Viktor Orbán (since 2010). It will be shown that, once in power, populist rulers typically use a certain template that allows their consolidation in office for long periods of time at the expense of liberal institutions and political moderation. As one of the populist leaders to be examined in this chapter once put it while still in opposition: "We have only to win once, but then properly" (Orbán, quoted in Lendvai 2018: 94).

State Grab and Leader Supremacy

Interestingly enough, what emerges from a careful comparison of the countries in which populist parties have captured power, in most cases singlehandedly, thereafter enjoying it for considerably long periods of time, is nothing less than a *blueprint*, one that consists of typically similar elements each time. Once in office, any populist government tries to colonize, and enlarge, the state to achieve "an expansion of control over crucial political institutions at the expense of the opposition" (Corrales 2011: 70). The evidence that emerges from the comparative analysis of the cases is massive, but even a brief account such as the one provided here will suffice, I believe, to reveal the truth of my claim.

Beginning in chronological order with *Argentina*, no sooner had Perón risen to power than he left no doubt about his political ambitions: "Our aspiration," he said, "is not to rule for six years but to secure sixty years of government" (cited in Finchelstein 2017: 199). Nor did he dither about the method he was to follow. In a famous speech of October 17, 1945, addressing his fellow citizens in a third-person reference to himself, he urged:

> In this historical hour for the Republic, let Colonel Perón be the link of union that would make indestructible the brothership between the people, the army and the police. Let this union be eternal and infinite so this people will grow in the spiritual unity of the true and authentic forces of nationality and order.
>
> (Cited in Finchelstein 2014: 67)

During Perón's rule, the size of the state expanded enormously and became filled with regime loyalists. The civil service grew from 120,000 employees in 1945 to 540,000 in 1955 (Craig 1976: 709), who staffed new state agencies, organizations, enterprises, and a myriad of state-controlled charities or foundations (Lewis 1990: 258). One of the most visible of such entities was the Evita Perón Foundation, established in 1948 to provide social welfare to less privileged and more needy Argentines. Soon, the Foundation was among the better-funded and well-organized institutions in the country, easily outperforming most of the ministries. By the end of the 1940s, it employed over 10,000 people, owned 200,000 cooking pots for preparing food, and kept in operation 500,000 sewing machines in the service of schools, hospitals, and orphanages (Fraser and Navarro 1996). Individual patrons, trade unions and, crucially, the Catholic Church endorsed the project. In 1951, the parliament ruled that a proportion of all lottery tickets, cinema tickets, and gambling proceeds be given to the Foundation.

Ever keen to mobilize mass support for his political program, Perón also went on with his plans for constitutional reform shortly after the 1948 congressional elections in which he won almost complete control of the senate and a two-thirds majority in parliament. In January of the following year, a

constitutional convention revised the old (introduced in 1853) constitution and amplified presidential powers in order, as Perón claimed, to enable securing the country's economic independence from foreign interests and protecting the workers (Crassweller 1987). The new constitutional arrangements, Sebastiani explains, "accentuated the presidential nature of the political system," since they allowed for presidential re-election; widened "the president's powers of interference in parliamentary affairs" through granting the president a "partial veto," in addition to his right to declare a state of siege; and stipulated that "ministerial arrangements would be notified to the President before the Chambers, untying the institutional relationship that the ministers had maintained with Congress and reducing parliamentary control over the Executive" (Sebastiani 2003: 322).

Moving from postwar Argentina to early post-authoritarian *Greece*, one of the earliest decisions of Andreas Papandreou after PASOK, the movement/party he founded and led, came to power, was to abolish the tenured ranks of director general and deputy director general in the state bureaucracy, promptly filling the vacant posts with masses of party-loyal appointees who now overshadowed top civil servants (for an overview, see Sotiropoulos 1996). Almost simultaneously, the party passed legislation increasing the number of ministries and introducing new agencies for coordinating the cabinet. Scores of party cadres, at the time commonly known as the "green guards" from PASOK's campaign color, were recruited as political advisors to ministers, deputy ministers, and other top state officials, determined to serve their party rather than the national state—a system that was dubbed "bureaucratic clientelism" (Lyrintzis 1987). A new civil service recruitment system was introduced in 1983 that favored older and socially disadvantaged candidates over younger and more qualified ones. As shown by the time series data provided by the International Labor Organization (ILO 2014) and corroborated by many other sources, during the 1980s total public sector employment in Greece increased "at an average annual rate of about 4 per cent—around four times as fast as in the private sector" (OECD 2001: 50), reaching 786,200 employees by 1990, an increase of over 50 percent in the first decade of populist rule. As party membership was the ticket to public sector employment, PASOK membership doubled between 1981 and 1983 from 100,000 to 200,000 and continued to rise for some years thereafter, albeit at a slower tempo (Pappas 2014a: 28).

In Greece's new populist regime, Papandreou became the center of a vast power system extending from his inner personal circle to the remotest areas of party activity in which "official pronouncements and regulations of institutional organization or procedure would count for little" (Sotiropoulos 2004: 269). Mistrustful of his political associates and other entourage, one of Papandreou's favorite ways to maintain loyalty to this person was by creating conditions of insecurity about top state posts. For instance, during PASOK's

two terms in office in the 1980s, Papandreou reshuffled his cabinet no less than sixteen times utilizing 113 ministers and deputy ministers, that is to say, about three-fifths of all elected party deputies during the foregoing period (Featherstone and Papadimitriou 2015: 79). Papandreou also succeeded in increasing his executive powers through constitutional revision. By his own initiative in the aftermath of PASOK's second consecutive landslide in 1985, the revised constitution diminished the role of the president of republic and transferred most of that institution's political prerogatives to the prime minister, who now became the central actor in the political system at the expense of horizontal accountability (Alivizatos 1993).

Once again back to Latin America, soon after winning *Venezuela*'s 1998 presidential race and once established in office, Hugo Chávez busied himself in abolishing established checks and balances, and substituting them with new ones of his own. As with most other cases of populist rule, Chávez's first concern as newly elected president was to rewrite the—"moribund," as he said—constitution, with an eye to expanding his own presidential powers (Corrales 2011: 70). Within just weeks of assuming power, he called for a referendum to convene a constituent assembly. In April 1999, the idea was publicly approved by about 87 percent of the voters and, in fresh legislative elections held in July, a pro-Chávez alliance won the vast majority of seats in the newly elected constituent assembly. Now filled with Chávez supporters, the assembly moved briskly to produce, in November, a new ultra-statist constitution with its main characteristic the expansion of presidential at the expense of traditional checks and balances, including in other branches of government. Among the new constitutional prerogatives were the extension of presidential term from five to six years, the president's complete control over promotions within the armed forces, his power to call referendums without prior approval by the legislature, and the overall direction of economic and financial matters; the senate was eliminated.

Taking advantage of his expanded powers, in 2001 Chávez was able to obtain from the legislature the prerogative to rule by decree on a wide band of policy areas, including property rights and national education. And he certainly made heavy use of his new prerogatives. In November of the same year, for instance, "in a cabinet meeting that lasted almost fourteen hours, the president approved forty-nine laws, most of which had not been discussed with any social, business, or labor organization" (Corrales and Penfold 2011: 21). In parallel, Chávez planted his loyalist supporters in key positions at all levels of the state. His contacts from the army overwhelmed his first cabinet since they occupied six ministerial posts and 70 percent of vice-ministerial ones (Coppedge 2002: 25). The military apart, most politicians who came into office after the populist rise, originated from labor and civic organizations. To mention just a few prominent examples, former labor union leader Nicolás Maduro was made president of the National Assembly, founder of MBR-200

(the Revolutionary Bolivian Movement) Jesús Urdaneta was put in charge of the Venezuela's counter-intelligence agency, and Hermán Grüber Ódreman, one of the 1992 coup leaders, was appointed governor of Caracas (Jones 2007: 229). Soon, people referred to the newly appointed government officials as the *Boliburguesía*, or "Bolivarian bourgeoisie," fully aware of the fact that it "included few people with experience in public administration" (Marcano and Tyszka 2007: 127).

Chávez not only appointed loyalists in top state positions—his supporters colonized every space in the state and state-controlled areas. In 2003, after the defeat of a three-month long strike by the employees and managers of the state oil company (PdVSA) in protest over government policies, Chávez had almost 20,000 workers sacked, including most managers, and replaced them with loyal *chavistas*. Then PdVSA chairman Rafael Ramírez "made it an explicit company policy to employ only supporters of the President" (*The Economist* 2012).

Crossing the ocean again from Latin America to Europe, we see another repetition of the same pattern in *Hungary*. After its 2010 electoral landslide, Fidesz was able to form a two-thirds supermajority in parliament that allowed its leader, Viktor Orbán, to freely interpret his electoral victory as a "new social contract" with the Hungarian citizens that had been achieved via "a revolution in the ballot box" (Batory 2015: 288). Like Perón before him, who aimed to secure decades of uninterrupted rule for himself and his party, Orbán then became explicitly intent on using that majority to radically change Hungary's political system.[1]

Not long after, the state became "fully captured and centralized. . . . Central and local public administration bec[ame] heavily politicized, and the former colonized the latter. All leading positions in the purportedly independent institutions were filled by Fidesz party cadres" (Bozóki 2012: 16). As Bánkuti et al. (2012: 145) put it, "Fidesz loyalists [became] entrenched in every corner of the state," and this occurred with lightning speed and broad reach:

> From the public audit office to the financial supervision commission, the monetary and budgetary councils, from army generals to police chiefs, from the state lottery to the state railways, from disaster control to horseracing, from the social insurance institutions to the central statistical office, posts were given to Fidesz loyalists; in many cases top officials resigned on their own accord, jumping before they were pushed. A new law allowed the government to gratuitously fire civil servants at any time. (Lendvai 2018: 96)

[1] As the early Orbán once told a closed political circle, his plan was to create "a central political force field" which, based on Fidesz, could rule Hungary unobstructed by any opposition for "the coming 15 to 20 years." Or, as the later Orbán openly admitted in a famous interview he gave in 2011 to an Austrian tabloid, "I make no secret of the fact that [by using the two-thirds law] I would like to tie the hands of the next government. And not only the next one, but the next ten governments!" (both episodes cited in Lendvai 2018: 85, 93).

Still in its first year in office, the Fidesz government underwent a "constitutional revolution" passing about 350 new laws, including twenty-five so-called "fundamental" ones before eventually enacting a new constitution in January 2012 (Scheppele 2014a: 34). The drafting of the new constitution took place behind closed doors and without any attempt at seeking consensus with the opposition. Most certainly, it was a constitution that served the populist government's majoritarian ethos:

> Both the old and the new constitution have at their core a parliamentary system with a unicameral parliament. But unicameral parliaments need checks if they are to avoid the potential abuses of majoritarianism. The old constitution had many checks. The new constitution has substantially weakened all of them.
>
> (Bánkuti et al. 2012: 142)

In parallel, Orbán nominated for the position of president Pál Schmitt, a member of Hungary's fencing team who won two Olympic gold medals and former minister of sports under the communist regime. As respected Hungarian economist János Kornai noted at the time, "The state president is neither independent nor does he embody the unity of the nation. He is a compliant party hack" (Bánkuti et al. 2012: 142) who "never hesitated to sign anything that the Fidesz government put before him" (cited in Lendvai 2012: 217).[2] At the same time, again according to Kornai,

> The parliament . . . deteriorated into a voting machine, laws are churned out at an incredible speed. . . . The key position of the chief public prosecutor has been filled with a reliable supporter of the ruling party. . . . The legal authority of the constitutional court as the highest guardian of the constitution has been brutally curtailed. When it had the audacity to criticize the plans of the government, the independent budgetary board was dissolved without further ado.
>
> (Cited in Lendvai 2012: 217)

Within only a very short time, a "pyramid-like hierarchy emerged and solidified, with Orbán at its summit. Below him, ready to obey his every command, are handpicked henchmen. As we move down the pyramid, people in every position are chosen for their loyalty to the regime" (Bánkuti et al. 2012: 141). As the executive clearly overshadowed the legislature, the parliament turned into "a law factory, and the production line is sometimes made to operate at high speed: Between 2010 and 2014, 88 bills were introduced and voted on within a week; in 13 cases, this all happened on the same day or the next. Between 2011 and 2013, parliament also passed 32 fundamental laws that cover crucial aspects of Hungarian life" (Kornai 2015: 36–7).

[2] In April 2012, Schmitt had to step down amidst accusations of plagiarism. He was replaced by János Áder, a personal friend of Orbán, cofounder of Fidesz, and coauthor of the new election law.

Institutional Blitz

After state grab and, where feasible, radical constitutional change, the ruling populists' next major targets are those institutions that serve as mainstays of liberal democracy, primarily including the media, the judiciary, the educational system, as well as other state-independent organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are seen as sites of dissenting populist rule. Albeit in a necessarily impressionistic way, the account that follows will hopefully demonstrate how such developments have occurred in each particular country examined, but will also show the common logic that forms the basis of all cases of populist rule.

Beginning again with *Argentina*, on March 8, 1947, Perón announced his new government's policy and economic agenda in the Teatro Colón, the Buenos Aires opera house, and the opportunity was not missed for also warning about the principal enemies of his regime. One of them was the press, which Perón described as a windmill of "lies" and "betrayer" of the national interest. He denounced *La Prensa*, Argentina's major daily newspaper, as

> fundamentally anti-Argentine as well as ideologically, culturally, politically, and economically beholden to foreign interests, [in fact,] the capitalist instrument of a small group of proprietors to become the patriotic dominion of five million Argentine workers. (Cane 2011: 2)

Initially, Perón's effort to boycott *La Prensa* did not meet with success. But four years later, in 1951, with social and political polarization between Peronists and anti-Peronists growing apace, regime sympathizer newsvendors mounted a strike against the paper. When the strike turned into a violent event causing the death of one vendor and the wounding of several others, the Minister of Interior intervened and declared the closure of *La Prensa*. The paper owner fled to Uruguay.

Meanwhile, through systematic censorship, the detention of journalists, controls over paper distribution, and the strategic allocation of government advertising, Perón was able to control the majority of newspapers in Argentina. In August 1947, the Buenos Aires police ordered the closure of the printing press of *Vanguardia*, the Socialist Party newspaper, thus depriving the party of its mouthpiece (Sebastiani 2003: 331). In the same year, Evita bought *Democracia*, a little known daily, thereafter using donations made by wealthy Peronists to expand its circulation. Subsequently, *Democracia*, along with four other papers, magazines, and a radio network, were united in a company called Alea S.A. and placed under the management of Perón's administrative secretary, Carlos Aloe (Crassweller 1987: 200).

After the new constitution was passed in 1949, Perón's administration undertook "an official campaign of intimidation" against independent media under the guise of the Visca–Decker committee, originally formed to investigate

"anti-Argentine activity." According to *The Economist* (May 27, 1950, cited in Sebastiani 2003: 324), by the end of April 1950 the commission had closed more than 150 newspapers. By that time, Perón had effectively succeeded in fashioning "the vast majority of one of the world's more extensive and developed newspaper industries into an enormous quasi-state media empire" (Cane 2011: 3). By the 1951 elections, opposition parties largely lacked access to broadcasting by radio, giving Perón's campaign a clear edge.

With respect to the judiciary, still early on during his rule Perón impeached all but one of the federal Supreme Court justices on charges of "alleged malfeasance." With large Peronist majorities in the Chamber of Deputies and the senate, the convictions were easily approved in April 1947, which opened the way to the appointment of new Peronist judges. Following a similar practice, local legislators "defended Peronist measures by confronting their provincial courts" (Crassweller 1987: 191, Lewis 1990: 215). As of Perón himself, his contempt of the courts was consistent with his typically populist belief in the people's inalienable righteousness. Expressed in his own words,

> I place the spirit of justice above the Judicial Power. Justice, besides being independent, should be efficacious, and it cannot be efficacious if its concepts are not in accordance with public sentiment. Justice must be dynamic, not static, in its doctrines. Otherwise it frustrates decent public expectations and slows down social development, with grave prejudice to the working classes.
>
> (Cited in Lewis 1990: 254, Alston and Gallo 2010: 192)

Under such a populist mentality, the Peronist attack on the judiciary continued unabated. In October 1949, congress "strengthened the existing law on *descato*, or disrespect to the dignity of a public official," thus giving extra leeway to a partisan judiciary. In one instance, that law was applied retrospectively to prosecute Radical Party leader Ricardo Balbín for remarks he made against Perón during his 1946 campaign, leading to a ten-month prison sentence (Crassweller 1987: 199).

After bringing the media under government control and curbing the independence of the judiciary, Peronism turned its attention to the subjugation of civil society, including trade unions, the Church, schools and public education programs, trade unions, and other professional associations.

It should be remembered that Perón's ascent to power was based on organized labor.[3] And yet, once in power, one of his earliest concerns was to destroy the independence of Argentina's labor movement. Government intervention intensified in order to ensure "that 'safe' policies were adopted and

[3] During Perón's rule, and largely thanks to new legislation that established a centralized union structure and codified the right to organize, union membership skyrocketed. In 1945, Argentina had 529,000 union members, which increased to 877,000 in 1946, 1.532 million in 1948, and 2.257 million (or 43 percent of all wage earners) in 1954 (Collier and Collier 1991).

'safe' leaders elected" (Craig 1976: 714). Ardent regime supporters replaced old union leaders almost everywhere. The so-called Law of Professional Associations, which was passed by decree, forced all unions to acquire official state recognition and forbade employers from bargaining with unrecognized unions (Horowitz 1963). But even when officially recognized, unions could be declared illegal and lose their economic benefits if they decided to oppose Peronism. Progressively, "Eva and Juan Perón turned the CGT [General Confederation of Labor] into an instrument of government policy," firing and appointing a series of the confederation's secretary generals until the CGT gave up all independence in 1950, "rewriting its statutes to proclaim allegiance to Perón" (McGuire 1997: 67).

Peronism tried to control education, as well. In Argentina's secondary schools, Eva Perón's ghost-written *La razón de mi vida* became obligatory reading (McGuire 1997: 72). At universities, Perón's administration applied formal charges and forced resignations, resulting in the removal of hundreds of professors, and academic governance was taken over by Peronists. In 1947, a University Law abolished the universities' traditional autonomous status (Crassweller 1987: 203). Perón's attempt to maintain a so-called lay program of youth education, Catholic Action, led to serious tensions with the Church, which escalated in 1954. In response, Perón had several priests in Córdoba arrested, closed a Catholic newspaper, and placed restrictions on outdoor meetings (Crassweller 1987: 272).

In *Greece*, during the 1980s, the populist governments of Andreas Papandreou presented all the characteristics of their kindred in other countries—and this despite the fact that, by January 1, 1981, Greece had become the tenth member of the European Community (EC). This development allowed Greek populism to maintain a thin veneer of liberalism, while also offering it the opportunity to use plentiful EU funds for patronage purposes, as we are going to see shortly.

Recall that, prior to the 1981 elections, PASOK had stood firmly against Greece's planned entry into the EC. Claiming that this would lead to the abrogation of national sovereignty and Greece's economic underdevelopment, if not outright "servitude" to Brussels, Papandreou had instead advocated holding a referendum on EC membership but, on the run-up to the elections, that position became less and less prominent in his discourse. After his electoral triumph, Papandreou proposed to redefine Greece's membership status through "special agreements" that would permit the selective implementation of EU law, an action plan that was also abandoned. Then, from 1983 onwards, PASOK adopted a different strategy of bamboozling the country's European partners into believing that Greece complied with liberal institutions and so was a rightful recipient of financial and economic benefits. Under those tactics, the EU–Greece relationship resembled an arm-wrestling contest, simply consisting of defending Greece's interest within the EU and, in

particular, extracting as many benefits from membership as possible (Verney 1990, 1993). Years later, under similar circumstances, Hungary's Viktor Orbán was to use exactly the same strategy.

Bending, and even disregarding, liberal institutions was PASOK's chief characteristic in the 1980s as successive governments compromised, impaired, or otherwise twisted them in the ostensible pursuit of popular sovereignty.[4] As Papandreou once famously declared during a widely televised party rally, "There are no institutions—only the people rule in this country." Perhaps the most blatant moment of such institutional disregard occurred in March 1985, when Papandreou suddenly decided to renege on his promise and withdraw his support for the re-election to the presidency of the Republic of his old rival, Constantine Karamanlis, a development which led to the latter's resignation. In the ensuing vote for a new president, colored ballots were employed by the government in order to bypass the secret nature of the vote and intimidate internal dissidents who were against Papandreou's chosen candidate for the presidency, leading to accusations of constitutional derailment and serious disruptions in parliament.

With regard to the media, the situation under populist rule can be summarized as one in which

> the monopolistic control of the most massive medium, television, and of the national radio stations, was not regarded as sufficient. The insecurity of its leader vis-à-vis traditional publishers led PASOK from the very early years of its ascent to power to attempt direct control of the press using all means at its disposal.
>
> (Pesmazoglou 1993: 103–4)

More specifically, the new PASOK government immediately purged the top positions in broadcasting networks, and placed its own supporters in these strategic positions. Broadcasting came under the control of the Secretariat-General for Press and Information, an agency within the Ministry to the Prime Minister, which in practice was responsible for the government's propaganda. In the print media, Papandreou openly backed—and was openly backed by—*Avriani* newspaper, a yellow-press tabloid with wide circulation that effectively turned into a branch of PASOK and its leader. The government tried time and again to intimidate opposition papers and influence public opinion in several other ways, ranging from the use of preferential advertisement, to support and secret funding allocated to the friendly press, to allowing selective leaks to specific papers (Pesmazoglou 1993: 103).

Nor did the courts provide any resistance to PASOK's legislative activism related to state intervention and social regulation, perhaps because, as Alivizatos (1993: 71) remarks, by the beginning of the 1980s the judiciary consisted of acquiescent judges who, in their great majority and especially in

[4] Unless otherwise indicated, most of analysis in this section draws on Pappas (2009).

the upper ranks, were unready to declare laws as unconstitutional. One important piece of PASOK's (unconstitutional) new legislation was Law 1268/1982 on higher education, which allowed auxiliary teaching personnel in universities to become official faculty members with no review of their qualifications by high-ranking professors.

PASOK aimed particularly at reshaping civil society "at will by legislative fiat" (Mavrogordatos 1993: 52). Indeed, as further explained, the populist government's

> sweeping new legislation was first concocted by obscure handpicked cliques obsessed with bureaucratic standardisation, and then rammed through parliament as swiftly as possible. No effective debate was actually countenanced within the ruling party itself nor among its cadres in the relevant sector—still less in parliament or, least of all, with the organisations concerned.
>
> (Mavrogordatos 1993 52–3)

By this logic, a particular effort was made to control the organized interests, which was clearly reminiscent of Peronism. By introducing its own distinctively populist patterns of discrimination, the government left largely unchallenged the activity of organized groups allegedly representing the interests of the lower and middle classes (laborers, farmers and other small-business interest associations) while attacking the autonomy of commercial, industrial, and shop-owning interests regarding them as "congenitally illegitimate" (Mavrogordatos 1993: 50).

In *Venezuela*, Hugo Chávez carried out his power grab "by choosing one or a few, but not all, institutions and attempting to strip them of autonomy, almost one at a time. [T]he government would respond [to opposition] by becoming more hardline and exclusionary, in the end concentrating more power in the executive branch and leaving fewer institutional spaces for any other political group" (Corrales and Penfold 2011: 15–16).

Particularly affected by the new populist policies was the media world, where the balance between private independent media and government-controlled media altered dramatically against the former group and, in consequence, at the expense of press pluralism. On coming into office, the new regime established a real "communication hegemony" (Corrales 2015: 40) extending in both print media and television. The results of this strategy were impressive. For instance, in 1989 Venezuela had eighty-nine newspapers, all of them privately owned and independent, and twenty-four television channels nationwide, of which only three were publicly owned (Corrales 2015: 41). By 2014, there were 102 newspapers in the country, of which 8 percent were now state-owned (i.e., pro-regime), 15 percent systematically served as the government's mouthpiece, and 22 percent were too small and insignificant to even be accounted for. In the same year, the number of television channels had increased to 105, of which only 46 percent were

privately owned. Chávez even set up a new pan-Latin America channel, *Telesur*, as a counterweight to CNN's "tyranny" and persistent "campaign against Venezuela" (Zúquete 2008: 103). Chávez's government thus established a formidable "communications infrastructure" as follows: "the regime invested more than $40 million in upgrading the state-owned TV channel and the state news agency; established three other TV stations; acquired as many as 145 local radio stations and 75 community newspapers; and launched up to 66 pro-government websites" (Corrales and Penfold 2011: 31). At any rate, all TV and radio stations were obliged by law to broadcast the government's official announcements.

Moreover, Chávez tried personally to use the media, especially through *Aló Presidente*—a weekly radio (and later television) show, in which he talked directly to citizens. He often began by calling the opposition press "distorted" and "unfair" and its journalists "unpatriotic," "enemies of the people," and "counterrevolutionary," even making his attacks personal or threatening foreign journalists with expulsion from Venezuela in cases of "offensive criticism" (Hawkins 2003: 1156, Nelson 2009: 74). In 2001, the Chávez-appointed Supreme Court ruled that the press could be held accountable for "false news or news that is manipulated by the use of half-truths," a ruling that was criticized by the American Convention on Human Rights, while the Reporters Without Borders, another press watchdog, criticized Chávez's government for a heavy-handed approach to the media and for "steadily silencing its critics." Even so, organized attacks against independent media continued unabated. In early 2002, for instance, a group of regime supporters assaulted the offices of *El Universal* newspaper, while a few days later bombs were thrown into the offices of the paper *Así Es la Noticia* (Nelson 2009: 75). In May 2007, Venezuela's oldest and most watched television station, *Radio Caracas Televisión* (RCTV), went off the air. "Long a forum for virulent criticism of president Hugo Chávez, the station had served as a basic point of reference for the Venezuelan opposition, and its owner, Marcel Granier, had become one of the country's more visible anti-Chávez public figures" (Cane 2011: x).

Besides the media, Venezuela's liberal judiciary also became one of Chávez's earlier and most important targets. In December 1999, he dissolved the Supreme Court and replaced it with a new Supreme Tribunal of Justice, whose members (now expanded from twenty to thirty-two judges) were appointed by simple parliamentary majority (Castaldi 2006). He also replaced scores of judges. As reported by Coppedge (2002: 25), by the end of March 2002, "294 judges had been suspended, 47 others fired, and 101 new judges appointed." There is no wonder, then, that under Chávez's illiberal democracy "[h]igh-level judges have been overtly partisan . . . [while] many low-level judges . . . are often penalized for ruling the wrong way" (Corrales 2015: 43–4). And also no wonder that, out of 45,474 rulings issued by the Supreme

Court since 2005, none has gone against the government (cited in Corrales 2015: 43–4)! In this context the introduction in 2005 of reforms in the penal code that expanded the "insult law" (*desacato*) (making it illegal to act "disrespectfully of government officials") should also be mentioned, thus effectively restricting the right of public protest.

There are scores of other examples demonstrating Chávez's strategic plan to stifle liberal institutions and suppress Venezuela's civil society. Here is only a sampling (mostly from Corrales 2011, 2015): The cessation of the time-honored practice of subsidizing the unions, in addition to several attempts at dissolving them; numerous efforts, usually by decree, to increase control over the education system by creating a new body of state-appointed supervisors for schools and changes in the curriculum in both private and public schools; and the enactment of a series of laws governing "communal councils," which specified the legal prerogatives for public funding, public works, and other community development in those communities. There was, finally, the creation of the Bolivarian Circles in April 2001, groups of regime loyalists, often armed, entrusted with defending *chavismo* in local neighborhoods.

In *Hungary*, after his 2010 electoral victory, and with breakneck speed, Orbán passed new legislation that established a National Media and Telecommunications Authority to supervise all news outlets across every platform, including radio, television, the print press, and the Internet (Bajomi-Lázár 2013). The new institution was headed by a five-member Media Council, its chair directly appointed by Orbán himself, who also, like Chávez before him, was interviewed on Hungarian radio on a weekly basis. Now fully filled with Fidesz loyalists, it was given the power to levy fines on media outlets for failing to offer "balanced" news coverage (Bánkuti et al. 2012: 140); in parallel, "the clear signal went out that journalists should not report in ways that violate the interests of the nation (which were of course equated with the interests of the governing party)" (Müller 2016a: 45). This move, which caused an international outcry from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, and the United Nations, among others, allowed the government to "review the compliance of all public and private media with a vague standard of political 'balance' and 'proper' news coverage" (Lendvai 2012: 218). The new situation is well described in the following passage by Miklós Haraszti, the Hungarian-born former OSCE media representative:

> The National Info-communication Authority and the Media Council, both headed by the same person, appointed by Viktor Orbán, has authority over all audiovisual, print and Internet-based media. . . . The media regulatory boards, all named or dominated by candidates of the ruling party, have been made into a rubber-stamp, protected by strict secrecy rules; the various boards in effect are "departments" of the Authority that is practically a Media Ministry. . . . However, the single greatest danger for the freedom of press lies in the arbitrary licensing

> provisions, the parallels of which can only be found in some post-Soviet countries. (Article in *Vienna Review*, March 2011, cited in Lendvai 2012: 218–19)

Not surprisingly, whether for compliance with state regulations, a matter of survival, or both, newspaper journalists and television broadcasters became, with few exceptions, increasingly self-censoring.

As in the previous cases of populism already discussed, under Hungary's new constitutional order the judiciary was one of the major victims. The ruling party established control over the Constitutional Court by taking three measures: The introduction of a new nomination procedure for judges, the restriction of the Court's jurisdiction, and the expansion of the number of serving judges. By constitutional amendments, thus, the nomination of candidacies for the Court became dependent upon the governing party while the Court's capacity for judicial review of fiscal measures, including the budget and taxation, was severely restricted. Finally, the number of judges was increased, which thus altered the Court's composition; within just its first eighteen months in office, Fidesz named seven of the fifteen judges appointed to the Court (Bánkuti et al. 2012: 139–40). As these authors lament, "Although the Court still exists, it has now [2012] largely disappeared from [Hungary's] political landscape" (Bánkuti et al. 2012: 140). For, in the words of Kim Scheppele (2014b), referring precisely on the Hungarian case, "the independence of the judiciary is over when a government puts its own judges onto the bench, moves them around at will, and then selects which ones get particular cases to decide."

The government also tried to take control of the other courts. According to Kornai (2015: 36), it dismissed the president of the Supreme Court before the expiration of his mandate, created a new institution, the National Judicial Office, which it endowed with extensive powers, and lowered the retirement age from 70 to 62, thus forcing scores of judges out of the courts and into early retirement. "Moreover," Kornai further explains, "certain lawsuits have political ramifications, and impartial experts in the field believe that some judgments are biased in ways that favor Fidesz policies" (Kornai 2015: 36).

Besides empowering the executive at the expense of parliament, controlling the media, and weakening the judiciary, the new Fidesz government also attacked most other key liberal institutions and independent authorities. For instance, it took away several of the old functions of the Ombudsman, such as its data-protection responsibilities; granted extra powers to the state audit office and the public prosecutor for launching investigations into the (mis)use of public funds; and established a new Budget Council with veto power on any kind of public spending. The offices of the public prosecutor and the state auditor, as well as the Central Bank, were all organizationally restructured so as to allow more overtly political—and government friendly—management. Last but not least, was Orbán's disregard of the EU and its liberal democratic

institutions that Hungary is obliged to respect. As mentioned earlier, he typically tried to trick his European allies about his institutional allegiance while in reality he remained committed to his populist plan. As he made it clear in a since broadly publicized speech:

> Because of the diplomatic dance we must present the challenge in such a way as to make friends with [liberal EU]. Part of the skill of this dance is nodding our heads in agreement with two or three of their seven proposals (we had in any case implemented them but they hadn't noticed) and the other two, which we don't want anyway, we reject. . . . This complicated game is a type of dance of the peacock. (Cited in Lendvai 2018: 116)

In closing this section, it should be noted that, based on a meticulously detailed report (European Parliament 2018) prepared by Judith Sargentini, a Dutch legislator, in September 2018 Orbán's government stood in the European Parliament in Strasbourg accused of such illiberal practices as undermining the functioning of Hungary's constitutional system; the independence of its judiciary; the freedom of expression of press, academia, and civic associations; as well as violating minority rights, and mistreating migrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees. The European Parliament voted by an ample majority to trigger article 7 of the Treaty on European Union that, potentially, may lead to lifting Hungary's voting rights in EU institutions.

Patronage Politics

In 1953, Argentina's president Juan Perón sent a letter to newly elected president of Chile Carlos Ibáñez del Campo containing the following advice:

> My dear friend: Give to the people, especially to the workers, all that is possible. When it seems to you that already you are giving them too much, give them more. You will see the results. Everyone will try to scare you with the specter of an economic collapse. But all of this is a lie. There is nothing more elastic than the economy which everyone fears so much because no one understands it.
>
> (Cited in Hirschman 1979: 65)

Peron's patronage tactics is a typical representation of the model of populist economics as described in the classic study on the topic by Dornbusch and Edwards (1991). According to those authors' model, populist-controlled states seek to maintain, and possibly broaden, the ruling parties' electoral constituencies through an economic program whose main ingredients are the following: Expansive macro-economic measures of fiscal stimulus, nationalization of large sectors of the economy, and radical redistribution of income in favor of selected electoral constituencies, which in turn creates new patron–client networks. All this, of course, is at the risk of high inflationary pressures

in the economy, diminishing investment, capital flight, and declining productivity—in addition, of course, to growing social polarization and political strife. More specifically, Dornbusch and Edwards (1991: 11–12) distinguish four consecutive phases in the implementation of populist economics, as follows.

Initially, the populist government reverses previous efforts to stabilize the economy and initiates a new program of state expansion, output growth, and rising wages. Rising domestic demand spurs some economic growth but, very soon, it also causes imports to surge at the expense of domestic productivity. As a result, in a second phase, public debt increases quickly and sharply. Some early bottlenecks become visible, especially because of a growing scarcity of foreign exchange. Nominal wages still keep up but inflation increases, too. The budget deficit worsens. In a third phase, inflation begins to accelerate and some shortages appear in the market. As capital begins to fly abroad massively, there is a steep increase in state subsidy costs. Tax collection naturally declines further while budget deficits worsen. In a fourth and final phase, now faced with a deadlock of its own making, populist governments begin to cut subsidies while real wages also fall sharply. Social unrest and political tumult are quite common consequences of populist economic mismanagement. Eventually, economic collapse becomes a quite possible outcome. A new government has no other option but to impose a tough (usually IMF-devised) economic stabilization and political reform program, in far worse social and political conditions than before.

Although still the standard reference to the topic of populist economics, Dornbusch and Edwards' model is by now over a quarter of a century old, refers only to Latin American cases, and is based on a classic view of patronage politics centered on the distribution of material rewards from patron to clients. It therefore needs updating to be able to accommodate both a broader variety of cases and new forms of patronage exchanges.

In the classic view, patronage is seen as a linkage between politicians and voters "based on direct material inducements targeted to individuals and small groups of citizens"—or, in more formal language, a "particular mode of 'exchange' between electoral constituencies as principals and politicians as agents in democratic systems" (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007: 2, 7). In that view, patronage involves the preferential distribution of *tangible* private goods (say, jobs or other monetary benefits) to specifically targeted individuals or groups in the electorate, while public goods (say, macro-economic growth or full employment) cannot be traded through clientelistic exchange. In that view, patronage transactions are characterized by great information asymmetries, which are further intensified by the possibility of either principals or agents reneging on their bargain at any given moment. In short, classic patronage presents a zero-sum situation where my (or my group's) individual gain is your (and the rest of society's) collective loss. To be sure, this kind of

patronage politics, however typical in all populist states, is also detectable in most modern liberal democracies (e.g., Kopecký et al. 2012), only its magnitude in each democratic nation remaining conditional upon the vigor of respective institutions and the scope of "programmatic" exchange relations between parties and society on salient policy issues.

Populism in power, however, and precisely because of its tendency to overrule existing institutions, exhibits a variant of patronage whose features are notably more complex than those recognized by conventional theory, that is, the distribution of goods and other entitlements that are both tangible and individually (or group-specifically) beneficial. In addition to tangible benefits, and even more importantly, populist patronage politics involves *nontangible* rewards, or other entitlements, related especially to public goods. Most important of them are preferential impunity when violating the law, privileged treatment that violates the principle of institutional fairness, or discriminatory behavior towards political opponents that contravenes formal impartiality. In the populist discourse, such practices are meant to benefit populism's fabled "people" against the inflexibilities of institutional structures established long ago by "elitist" parties. In practice, however, each of them constitutes a breach from political liberalism and its principles as we have seen them in earlier chapters.

Imagine yourself, for instance, being allowed as a member of the omnipotent "people" to violate the law with impunity. Or suppose that you are given preferential treatment when it comes to state jobs or government contracts, and certain subsidies not available to others who support opposition parties. If so, why would you not try to evade taxation since the fiscal authorities will most likely not punish your evasion; or not make a practice of fraudulently collecting a pension; or not even decide to illegally build a home on public land in the knowledge that the government will eventually legalize it for a small fee (all these cases in Pappas 2014a with specific reference to Greece). And would you not be happy to get that public-sector job, state contract, or subsidy over others who are not loyal to the government and hence are discriminated against? What is common in these not-so-hypothetical cases is that, under populism, voters are allowed to gain individually at the expense of the public good, while institutions are disrespected, the rule of law degenerates, and corruption flourishes. And if you still think that those examples are exceptional and rather outlandish, you only have to remember the well-known dictum by Óscar Benavides, a former populist Peruvian president: "For my friends, anything; for my enemies, the law." Or, better, have a brief look at the empirical evidence provided by the country cases examined in this chapter.

By the time Perón came to power, *Argentina* was one of the world's creditor nations and had a semi-industrialized economy that was untouched by World War Two. New populist economics changed it all through a combination of state expansion and selective patronage politics. As Perón's willingness to

control an ever-expanding state increased, so did the number of people employed in state administration and state enterprises. In parallel, for all those salaried people, wages rose and benefits (such as rent freezes, low-cost housing, even new holidays on the calendar) increased steeply while, in order to compensate for the relatively modest 4 percent increase in real wages between 1943 and 1946, Perón created the *Aguinaldo*, a bonus payment for each worker amounting to one-twelfth of their annual wage income (McGuire 1997: 53). In July 1947, the government announced that "in the first eleven months of the administration, Perón had given away $4.28 million worth of school books, clothes, shoes, furniture, toys, and food," while, contemporaneously, the Eva Perón Foundation, the regime's main vehicle for distributing patronage,

> exceeded, in size, in influence, and in general significance, most of the ministries of the government, with assets valued at over $200 million; the foundation built twelve hospitals, a thousand new schools, and various types of housing for low-income Argentinians. (Crassweller 1987: 209)

In another instance, when on August 22, 1955, Perón undertook to attract an audience of two million to a main Buenos Aires avenue for the announcement of his running mate for that year's election,

> free round-trip railway tickets between the provinces and Buenos Aires were handed out to one and all for trains arriving on the 21st and 22nd. Caravans of busses and trucks were organized to flow into the capital. All city transportation, even the taxis, was free. (Crassweller 1987: 239)

Because of Peronism's spendthrift tactics, the sharp increases in nominal wages pushed prices up and soon created inflationary pressures in the economy. But the populist regime remained unmoved. As late as 1952, Perón could still proclaim:

> Economic calculations don't interest us; we assert social rights for retired housewives; let the actuarial issues be settled by those who come in fifty years.
>
> (Cited in Mendoza et al. 1996: 216)

In *Greece*, traditional patronage politics (Mitsopoulos and Pelagidis 2011, Pappas and Assimakopoulou 2012) accelerated steeply during Papandreou's populist rule. Perhaps more clearly than in any other case, patronage in Greece involved the preferential distribution of a mixture of tangible rewards (e.g., jobs, pensions) as well as nontangible entitlements (e.g., privileged protection of in-groups against market risks, impunity from the law) to the populist electoral constituency. Being a card-carrying party member was the surest ticket to landing a permanent state office job. A 1986 report found that of those who had joined PASOK since 1981, 89 percent were employed in the state sector, a figure which increased to 96 percent in the case of Central Committee members (cited in Pridham and Verney 1991: 49).

To finance the patronage supply of tangible benefits, PASOK's governments followed a typical (in such cases) expansionary fiscal policy that soon caused adverse economic consequences. As inflation rose throughout the 1980s, state subsidy costs increased while productivity continued to fall. The Greek economy had already entered a vicious circle of stagnant growth and ever-rising public debt from which it would be very difficult to escape. But it was the expansion of nontangible entitlements given to the Greek people that became the most erosive for institutional legality and, in the long run, for the well-being of Greece's fragile liberal democracy. Many of those entitlements related to a myriad of closed-shop professions that the populist patronage state was eager to shield from market hazards in exchange for their members' vote. Through a dense tangle of regulations and licensing requirements, many guild-like professions (ranging from taxi drivers to pharmacists and from electricians to notaries) enjoyed state-protected monopolies and profits ensured by law (Pappas 2014a: 48–9). A further, and still more outlandish, form of distributing state-related resources across society was simply to let in-groups expropriate them with impunity. Tax evasion, which under populist rule became "the national pastime" (Surowiecki 2011), extensive pension fraud (Matsaganis 2013) and illegal construction on public land (Potsiou and Ioannidis 2006) became common practices since none was penalized by populist governments intent only on receiving the votes that were necessary for them to stay in office.

The case of *Venezuelan* populism also displays a mixture of patronage types. Despite some fiscal conservatism that he showed when he came to power, Hugo Chávez responded swiftly to patronage politics after the removal of important institutional constraints and the 2003 surge in oil revenue. A key component of his policy were the so-called *misiones* programs, a set of social program initiatives described by Chávez as "missions to save the people," which, already by 2014, had absorbed a stunning 4 percent of GDP (Penfold-Becerra 2007). Another strategy was the expansion of the already large state sector and its staffing with regime loyalist employees. Indeed, under Chávez, the state expanded

> into almost every domain of the economy by means of nationalizations, firm buyouts, expropriations, direct subsidies to certain corporate groups, special credits, and heavy spending, to which was added regulation antagonistic to [private] business. (Corrales and Penfold 2011: 63)

From the beginning of Chávez's administration until 2008, when the pace of nationalizations was at its peak, the number of employees in the state payroll increased by 53.5 percent while that of employees in the private sector expanded by a relatively anemic 28 percent (Corrales and Penfold 2011: 64). Besides direct public fund spending in favor of his supporters,

Chávez also protected them from legal prosecution while at the same time using it against his opponents. Take, for example, the infamous *lista Tascón*, a catalog of the names of all citizens who had signed the 2004 recall petition against Chávez. Anyone on that list became ineligible for participation in the government's missions and, thus, receipt of state aid (Corrales and Penfold 2011: 27). Yet another form of patronage that developed in populist Venezuela was plain cronyism, that is, the granting of state subsidies or state contracts directly to elites who were friendly to the regime in exchange for political favors from the grantee that were expected to expand or solidify the electoral constituency. Those exchanges became so commonplace under the regimes of Chávez and his successor Maduro that they even gave rise to a new populism-serving elite—Venezuela's new Bolivarian bourgeoisie.

In Orbán's *Hungary*, too, whether through nationalizations or other regulatory mechanisms, the state increased in size and importance in many sectors of the economy, which in turn led to the expansion of political patronage, especially in rural regions. As shown by Mares and Young (2016), the ruling Fidesz party makes extensive use of positive inducements (e.g., promises to grant new benefits) and negative inducements (e.g. threats to discontinue existing benefits) in rural Hungarian communities. Core supporters, as Mares and Young explain the logic of patronage politics, usually receive entitlements before elections but are more likely to be targeted with negative inducements during electoral campaigns, specifically threats to be cut off from precious economic benefits of any kind. As in any other patronage state with no respect for institutions and limited accountability, corruption in Hungary is rampant. According to Transparency International, businesses' perception of corruption in Hungary is the second highest in Europe and has increased by ten points during Orbán's populist rule (Transparency International 2018). Of course, in populist parlance, things are not exactly what you see or think, but serve a different purpose. So, according to András Lánczi, one of the regime theorists and a man close to Orbán,

> What is called corruption is actually Fidesz's supreme policy. What I mean by this is that the government has set for itself goals such as the establishment of a group of domestic entrepreneurs, the building of the pillars of a strong Hungary.
>
> (Cited in Lendvai 2018: 151)

Look closer at this close-knit group of of "domestic entrepreneurs," though, and you will discover that it is composed of regime-friendly oligarchs, usually with time-honored personal and even family ties to the prime minister himself. Pro-Fidesz businessmen have prospered above all from public contracts, often part-financed by EU funds—of which Hungary is, in proportion to its gross domestic product, the largest recipient.

5.2. THE ILLIBERAL PROJECT: A RATIONALIZATION

Once in power, the populists' new goal is to retain it by democratic means but without necessarily observing the institutions of liberal democracy. How can that goal be achieved? To answer this question, we need a credible rationalization of populism as an illiberal project that will be generalizable across all cases and will draw from all major research traditions, including institutionalism, structuralism, and rational choice.[5] Above all, we need to understand the kind and intensity of polarization produced in populist systems since without it populism can neither thrive nor even survive. For, indeed, in Alberto Alesina's words (1991: 40), "explaining populism amounts to explaining why it is that [its . . .] policy has been so polarized."

As shown in Section 5.1, soon after winning state power, all populist parties have followed a *blueprint* consisting of four major parts: (a) colonizing the state with loyalists, (b) reinforcing the party and state leader's executive capacity, (c) assaulting liberal democratic institutions, and (d) utilizing various forms of state patronage to the benefit of their supporters. To be sure, most transfers of power in democratic systems involve state grabs and some degree of patronage politics. Ascendant populism, however, differs from ascendant liberalism in that it is invariably led by charismatic leaders (see Chapter 3.2) intent on maximizing their executive power while, at the same time, turning a blind eye to liberal institutional order. But there is more to it than that. For, if populism is to endure, it must preserve all four parts of the populist blueprint in a symbiotic relationship: Broad-scale patronage depends on massive state grab and the enfeeblement of check-and-balance institutions, all of which hinge in turn on a leader's supremacy and extensive executive powers.

Recall from Chapter 3.4 that populist parties emerge amidst crises of democratic representation that may be caused of pressures for hitherto politically excluded segments of society to enter competitive politics, the collapse of existing party systems, or the symbolic action of individual political entrepreneurs who portray politics as if it is in deep crisis and themselves as guarantors of the solution. No matter what the case, in the first instance populism wins power thanks to voters who are politically ambivalent and party volatile. The task of governing populism, then, is to consolidate its constituency by forging a majoritarian social and electoral support base. Let us sketch, based on the available comparative evidence, what happens in practice and how.

Initially, massive populist victories and state grabs cause disarray in the liberal opposition. Defeated leaders step down and often abandon politics, opposition intraparty strife intensifies, and non-populist voters are left in a

[5] Several of the insights in this chapter are owed to Corrales (2005) and Corrales and Penfold (2007, 2011) who analyze Venezuelan populism. For an analysis of modern Greek populism based on similar analytical and theoretical points, see Pappas (2014a).

state of frustration and political alarm. As the populist assault on institutions proceeds in full force, the opposition discovers that the playing field has become uneven and certainly not in its favor. The populist government now begins to make a reality of its pre-electoral promises about economic redistribution of state-related resources, which sets in motion an elaborate mechanism of patronage politics in any combination of its possible forms, including the granting of state jobs and other material benefits, and the ability to engage in corrupt practices with impunity for supporters, and discriminatory penalties and exclusion from the state protection zone for opponents.

That political patronage is a superior strategy for populists in office is not difficult to see. First, since they lack a coherent policy agenda, the systematization of patronage politics relieves populist politicians and parties of the need to engage in programmatic linkage strategies with voters. Second, since they address "the people" yet remain unconcerned about institutional legality, patronage is presented to voters as a well-meant and ethically righteous social policy—even if it is against the law. Third, and even more importantly, populist victories tend to increase the mass of ambivalent voters, those who are dissatisfied with the liberal parties—their past failures and current status in opposition—but not yet convinced about the populist promise. If populism is to solidify in power, such voters have to be won over.[6] There, however, rises a difficulty: Political rents and other patronage benefits are not unlimited; in fact, they are quite scarce. How, then, are ruling populists to solve this problem to their best political advantage?

Given that institutions of accountability and transparency are not respected under populism, the obvious solution to the foregoing problem is to rationalize patronage in a way that benefits only the populist constituency while denying state-related benefits—and, more generally, state safekeeping—to the liberal opposition. Crowding out the opposition solves the problem of systematizing patronage in a relatively simple way while also increasing the populist insecurity of populism's opponents: The liberal opposition parties realize that their chances in forthcoming elections become diminished and the opposition liberal voters realize that their access to valuable state resources and other patronage-related benefits gets more restricted.

By systematizing patronage in an economical way, procuring moral legitimacy even if violating established institutions, and further demoralizing the opposition by depriving it of precious state resources, governing populists make a reality of what they in opposition had portrayed society to be, namely, two antagonistic groups in constant conflict with each other: An

[6] In game-theoretical terms (e.g., Hirschman 1970), unless such disenchanted voters are still determined in forthcoming elections to stay loyal to liberal parties, they are left with only two other options—either cast a populist vote or abstain from elections (which typically favors the ruling party).

underprivileged moral majority, which has now become the backbone of populist rule, versus social elite groups and privileged minorities. The selective bestowal of state rents and other patronage benefits upon the populist constituency works toward forging in-group solidarity while at the same time excluding the non-populist opposition. Evidently, populism in power generates extreme polarization, which thus becomes the absolutely most important element of populist rule.

Indeed, as soon as populist parties rise to power, they are always intent on stepping up polarization to unprecedented degrees.[7] For instance, Perón "polarized the [Argentine] society as no man—neither Rosas, Mitre, nor Yrigoyen—had ever done" (Lewis 1990: 129). In Greece, it has been shown that the post-authoritarian "party system polarization [was] inextricably linked to the rise of PASOK" (Kalyvas 1997: 89). The Chávez administration was "the most polarizing government in Venezuela since the late 1940s and in Latin America as a whole since the Sandinistas ruled Nicaragua in the 1980s" (Corrales 2005: 105). According to a survey of American Political Science Association members—APSA is the premier organization of experts on American politics—Donald Trump is already ranked the most polarizing of all U.S. presidents (Eady et al. 2018).

What must be stressed at this point, however, is that the polarization generated by populists in power is not the same as the more conventional *ideological* polarization that is abundant in the work of Giovanni Sartori and others (notably Sani and Sartori 1983, Capoccia 2002, Bermeo 2003, Baldassarri and Bearman 2007, Ezrow et al. 2013) and concerns specifically ideological differences over concrete policy issues such as, for instance, taxation, abortion, Brexit, and the handling of the immigration crisis. That type of polarization over hot policy stances refers to the distance separating ideologically opposite parties as opposed to ideological proximity. When such parties exist in the polity,

> the spectrum of political opinion is highly polarized: Its lateral poles are literally two poles apart, and the distance between them covers a maximum spread of opinion. This is tantamount to saying that cleavages are likely to be very deep, that consensus is surely low, and that the legitimacy of the political system is widely questioned. (Sartori 1976: 135)

The existence of such parties at the outer flanks of a polity is likely to create what Sartori has termed a system of polarized pluralism: "If a political system obtains anti-system, bilateral oppositions and discourages—by the very fact

[7] Contrast this strategy with the electoral tactics of parties in more liberal societies, which, although distressed by intense conflicts and cleavages, tend to not generate unnecessary polarization, instead choosing to work toward producing consensus, as shown by the examples of Spain and Brazil.

that its center is physically occupied—centripetal competition, these traits add up to a polarized system" (Sartori 1976: 135). In brief, then, ideological polarization is a trait of multiparty systems in which two irreconcilable opponents occupy extreme positions—thus being effectively separated by a huge ideological distance.

But this understanding of polarization does not fit well in states ruled by populist parties, and there is a simple reason for this: Populism, as we have seen in earlier chapters, is not an ideology and therefore, just to state the obvious, populist-dominated politics cannot be ideological politics. It is, instead, politics based on *strategic*, rather than ideological, polarization. This deserves some further explanation.

To begin with, whereas ideological polarization depends on pre-existing ideological cleavages (say, left versus right), populism-related polarization is produced by political entrepreneurs who see advantages in a polarizing rather than a moderate and consensual strategy (Cohen 1994, Weyland 2001). In populist systems, therefore, polarization is deliberately constructed for political purposes. Especially once they have colonized the state and are in control of the state resources, strategic polarization becomes for the populists their best viable strategy for holding on to power.

Secondly, strategic polarization creates a new cleavage in society that subsumes all previous cleavages, including ideological ones. It entails just two antagonistic groups, the majoritarian populist constituency and the liberal opposition, each with unequal access to valuable but scarce state resources. As suggested by evolutionary biology theories showing how in-groups need to initiate and sustain hostilities toward out-groups for their own survival (Alford and Hibbing 2004, cited in Corrales 2005: 112), populist voters are united in their effort to preserve their gains for fear that these might be lost if the liberal opposition regains power.

Thirdly, because of its all-embracing character, the cleavage between populists and liberals comes to entail a high-stakes zero-sum game in which institutional legality, political compromise, and social moderation count for little or nothing at all. Populism-induced polarization often takes extreme forms as indicated, for instance, by the political climate during a heated 2012 recall referendum that was won by the governor of Wisconsin Scott Walker: "People stole yard signs from each other. They stopped talking to one another. They spat on each other. They even tried to run each other over, even if they were married to one another" (Cramer 2016: 27).

Fourthly, the combination of polarization with patronage in a system that relies on charismatic leadership at the expense of horizontal accountability causes the destruction of the center. The space of political and party competition is reduced to just two groups, broadly described as the populist camp and the liberal camp, and thus no real political room is left for other democratic parties to play significant roles. Of course, antidemocratic parties may

emerge in such polarized systems and, as plenty of evidence shows, even flourish electorally.

With the foregoing clarifications in mind, we can now provide a credible answer to the question with which we opened this chapter: How can democratic illiberalism hold on to power? It has been shown that, once in office, populism relies on the polarization of society into two antagonistic groups fighting over scarce state-related resources and other entitlements. It has also been emphasized that no such all-embracing polarization is possible unless orchestrated by strong charismatic leaders with no regard for institutional order and political accountability. In logical conclusion, then, populism prolongs its rule by permanently pitting insecure and opportunistic majorities mobilized in a zero-sum game against allegedly privileged minorities with no regard for the institutions of liberal democracy.

Before closing this mostly theoretical chapter, there are two further points that are pertinent to the present analysis. In view of the fact that the interplay of patronage and polarization is electorally rewarding, and creates a state that is very difficult to defeat through voting, an unintended consequence may emerge, namely, the adoption of a similar strategy by the liberal opposition. Indeed, having to deal with such an uneven playing field, the opposition has an interest in maintaining polarization and trying to outbid the incumbent party. In such cases, and as issue voting becomes secondary, if not altogether irrelevant, parties maneuver in order to convey an image of bipolar society to the electorate, as well as trying to degrade their opponents, outbid them, or both. Accordingly, as the average voter turns to the highest bidder, societies tend to cluster around opposed poles; as the majority of the people cleave to one pole or another, the middle ground is diminished and the median voter becomes a rare occurrence. The danger is that, using a similar strategy, liberal opposition parties may become transformed into populist ones, and democracy be turned into a *populist democracy* (Pappas 2014b). The final point that we should bear in mind is that populist polarization can only be feasible to the extent that—and as long as—state funds and other state-related resources are available to be handed out to government supporters. If they dry up, the most likely course of populist governments is to turn more authoritarian. I am going to return to both of the foregoing points in Chapter 7.

6

Who is the Populist Voter?

You are the famed average voter. If one party leader tells you that democracy is about institutions that serve the public good and another tells you that democracy is about the satisfaction of your own rights without regard to institutions, under what conditions will you prefer to rebuff the first leader and cast a vote for the second one? Answer: Unless of course you are a committed altruist, it is more likely that you will rate your individual rights higher than your preference for general institutional order under two conditions: You either are skeptical about the public utility of institutions or you have become convinced about the righteousness and moral superiority of your own individual claims. In both cases, and provided that a significant populist party exists in your country, it is likely that you feel attracted to it. You have a "populist mindset."

The two sections in this chapter deal with populism in electoral politics by asking: Who are the populist voters, and how do they make their voting decisions? Consistent with this book's central claim that democracy has two facets, one liberal the other populist, I put forward the theoretical argument that, in ideal-typical terms, democratic voters may come with one of two mindsets, each with its own worldview, belief system, and decision-making attitudes. The "liberal mindset" is one that works prospectively, has a better calculating capacity, and is more aware of the usefulness of institutions in social and political life. In contrast, what I term the "populist mindset" follows moral and other largely non-rational concerns, and shows little respect for institutional order. It will be postulated that the populist vote is relatively less informed, more determined by biased beliefs, and less politically responsible than the vote for liberal parties.

These theoretical, and at this point still tentative, postulates will be illustrated by the case of populist resurgence in Greece in the aftermath of recent financial, economic, and political crises—an important instance of populist emergence, which also completes the universe of cases selected for study in this book. During the politically dense 2009–15 period, Greece experienced five general elections and one plebiscite, saw the collapse of its post-authoritarian party system, voted a left populist party into power and then

saw it form a coalition government with a nationalist right populist party, was drawn to a plebiscite whose outcome was not respected by the government, and then gave that same government a fresh electoral mandate. The Greek case is the closest that we have to an ideal-type instance of how populist voting behavior trumps rationality, boosts biases, and, by being irresponsible, puts liberal democracy in serious jeopardy. It provides plenty of theoretical hypotheses and empirical clues that, one hopes, will be utilized in future surveys and other research to test their validity in more cases and so make further progress in the study of electoral populism.

6.1. INSIDE THE POPULIST MIND

At present, we need an empirically testable theory of electoral behavior specifically applicable to the populist voter. Is there a particular reason why some people vote for populist parties? And how do those people form their voting preferences? Based on the analysis already presented in previous chapters, such a theory should account for two factors: (a) The structural conditions within which voting occurs each time and (b) the very mindset of the populist voter and, in particular, the specific worldviews, beliefs, attitudes, and decision-making processes that guide it.

I advance a theoretical argument that consists of two parts: First, at least in ideal-typical terms (cf., Burger 1987 [1976]), the populist voter is considered to possess a different mindset from the ideal type of liberal voter. This part of my argument relates to, and is consistent with, the basic idea that runs throughout the entire book, namely, that democracy has two opposite faces, one liberal, the other populist (Riker 1982, Oakeshott 1996, Canovan 1999). Accordingly, whereas liberalism acknowledges the existence in society of multiple divisions, populism only accepts one single cleavage between "the people" and "elites"; whereas liberalism advocates political moderation and consensus, populism promotes the politics of adversity and polarization; and whereas liberalism is committed to the rule of law and the protection of minority rights, populism is only concerned with the rights of the majority ("the people"), even at the expense of institutions. The point to be made is this: If liberalism and populism constitute contrasting views of democratic politics, it then follows that liberal parties and populist parties address electoral constituencies with different mindsets about basic concepts of democracy.

The second part of my argument, retaining ideal-typical terms, is the contention that the populist voter is far less rational than the liberal voter. To be sure, as has been well established by robust research, the average voter, whether of liberal or populist proclivities, does not behave in the ballot box like the egotistical wealth-maximizing consumer in the marketplace (see e.g.,

Brennan and Lomasky 1993, Caplan 2007, Ariely 2008). In other words, when voting, all people are in general less rational than they are in their market transactions. Anthony Downs (1957) coined the term "rational ignorance" to denote the behavior of voters refraining from collecting and processing information, especially on complex issues, when the expected benefits of such information are small. Yet, my point is that the populist voter's "irrationality" is *even higher* than that of the liberal voter's. And the reason for this, I submit, is the disproportionate role of emotions and morality that are transmitted through populist discourse and other symbolic action that takes place between populist entrepreneurs and their followers, in addition of course to limited information generally available.

Before proceeding, let me clarify that when saying "voter's mindset" I mean the overall cognitive *and* affective orientation of individuals as informed by specific knowledge, symbols, values, biases, ethical preferences, emotions, or normal postulates that form the basis upon which individual beliefs are built and attitudes develop to eventually determine "why and how individuals and groups behave as they do" (Ross 1997: 45). Building upon what has already been explained in previous chapters, each of the two faces of democracy can be said to display a coherent set of core characteristics (condensed in shaded column 1 of Tables 6.1 and 6.2), which, in turn, are considered to correspond to particular worldviews (column 2), key beliefs (column 3), and attitudes (column 4) that are *distinctive* to liberal and populist voters. To understand the populist mindset, then, we need to shed light on the populist voter's worldview, key beliefs, and overriding attitudes in close correspondence to the core characteristics of populism as democratic illiberalism. Needless to say, the populist mindset finds its expression only when a populist party emerges in a party system and competes in elections as a significant contender.

Table 6.1. Populism: Core concept components and populist voters' mindset elements

Core concept	Worldview	Key beliefs	Attitudes
Single cleavage	Simplistic	Victimhood	Irrational
Adversity & polarization	Adversarial	Enmity	Uninformed
Majoritarianism	Moralistic	Redemption	Principled

Table 6.2. Liberalism: Core concept components and liberal voters' mindset elements

Core concept	Worldview	Key beliefs	Attitudes
Multiple cleavages	Muddled	Self-interest	Calculating
Moderation & consensus	Consensual	Compromise	Dispassionate
Rule of law; minority rights	Procedural	Pragmatism	Responsible

Using the elements of the Tables as our intellectual compass, let us now try to elaborate on the various components of the populist voter's mindset as directly opposed to and contrasted with the mindset of the ideal-typical liberal voter.

To begin with voter *worldviews*—unlike the liberal mindset, which allegedly perceives the world as a complex and muddled system of interdependencies, the populist mind sees it in a simplified way: Society is unequally, and unethically, divided between only two groups, the mass of ordinary people and the numerically smaller elites. To a large part because of its naïveté and simplicity, such thinking gives rise to strong feelings of powerlessness and victimhood that are finely summed up as the Fourier Complex. Named after the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier (1772–1837), it describes a syndrome, indeed a psychological disorder, motivated by simple-minded envy, and even misanthropy. It applies particularly to people dreaming of an egalitarian world, who moreover believe that, if general equality proves unattainable, society's general impoverishment is preferable to wealth variation in social plenty. Such a view does not stem from reason. Comprising "resentment and envious malevolence" (von Mises 1985 [1927]: 13), it is a pathological mental attitude that stems from the inability of individuals to cope with unfavorable circumstances in life, especially market competition, social distinction, calculated thinking, and the burden of having to obey impersonal liberal institutions.

Under such a simplistically resentful view of society, it is not surprising that the populist voter may develop an adversarial relationship to various "elites," those perceived as the *enemies of the people*.[1] In such a belligerent logic—one that necessitates continuous mobilization, whether directly (e.g., through plebiscites and street action) or indirectly (e.g., through polls or the social media)—the populist voter typically shuns the liberal cultural interrelation of "moral" with "high" for a new one that associates morality with "low"—the

[1] The phrase "enemies of the people" first entered the political lexicon during the 1789 French Revolution and referred to its opponents. By 1794, the revolutionaries had set up a tribunal to punish such "enemies of the people," usually by death on the guillotine. The term was revived after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, when Lenin declared that punitive action against "enemies of the people" was "instructive" and absolutely necessary for the eventual victory of the proletarian people over "landowners and capitalists as a class." Stalin, who took over as Soviet leader upon Lenin's death in 1924, expanded the scope of those branded as "enemies of the people" to include, not only capitalists, but also dedicated communists who had fallen into disgrace. It was eventually Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin's successor, who decided to end its use during his 1956 speech in front of the Soviet Communist Party together with his denouncement of the cult of personality. The term subsequently fell into disrepute as other dictators, like Mao or Pol Pot, used it only with relation to foreign foes, like Taiwan or the United States, rather than their domestic adversaries. It was not until Donald Trump, first as a presidential candidate and then as president of the United States, deployed it against media outlets that he considered hostile that the term resurfaced with new force (see full transcript of Trump's speech: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-38987938).

socially underprivileged and politically disadvantaged, the low and common people whom we met in Chapter 3.1. The break between *low* (the moral and principled people) and *high* (the immoral and unprincipled elites) that occurs in the populist mindset is thus reminiscent of Nietzsche's *ressentiment*—the moral anger of those suffering under privileged sectors of society—discussed in Chapter 3.3.

Finally, through a combination of a simplistic perception of the world divided into two parts in perpetual conflict and a strong conviction of moral self-righteousness, populist voters tend to believe that politics involves no compromise, which in turn sabotages the search for institutionally based, procedural resolutions. Populist voters tend to think that conditions are bad and will only get worse. Yearning for justice, they are attracted by a rhetoric that, on the one hand, is based on fear (Wodak 2015) while, on the other hand, is idealized by the distant past and portrays the present and the future in dark colors. If there is still hope, they think, it rests with identifying the general interest through the "will of the people." In such a majoritarian and highly moralistic view, the organic people is equated with society as a whole without requiring various checks and balances, detailed impersonal procedure, and even minority rights—in short, the institutional armory of horizontal accountability (Caramani 2017: 62). In a very real sense, then, populist voters perceive themselves as "consumers above all and view their leaders as waiters who are expected to move quickly in fulfilling their wishes" and other needs (Krastev 2017: 35).

Is there a solution? Yes, retorts the populist mind, but this could only materialize through the mobilization of righteous resentment to address wrongful harm and restore justice. For, as put by Margaret Walker (2006: 114), resentment is "an accusing anger"; it creates in its victims a longing for "moral repair," that is to say, a normative expectation that

> other people or institutions [will] come to their aid, acknowledge their injury, reaffirm standards, place blame appropriately on wrongdoers, and offer some forms of solace, safety, and relief. (Walker 2006: 20)

On an individual level, resentment is thus seen as a "reactive" attitude attributing guilt to offenders and demanding from them moral responsibility—that is, to set things right (Strawson 2008 [1974]). On a social level, however, resentment has the potential to become the basis for collective identity formation ("*we*, the resentful people"), which, transformed into a populist electoral constituency (the populist voters), will demand a new normative and ethical political order (that is, a moral majoritarian democracy).

As derived from the general populist worldview, and in sharp contrast with the liberal voter's mindset, we are now able to identify the *key beliefs* that constitute the populist mind and guide its decisions. As shown in Chapter 3.3, populist discourse is replete with them. And as indicated in Table 6.1, the

populist voter's most fundamental beliefs are, first, a pervasive sense of self as a powerless victim of multiple power holders; second, a strong sense of enmity stemming from moral indignation and resentfulness; and, third, a longing for final redemption. Victimhood is the natural outcome of a simplistically dichotomous view of the world populated just by innocent victims and blameworthy perpetrators. That such a sense of victimhood causes anxiety, fear, moral anger, and a desire for revenge is hardly surprising.[2] Nor is there anything enigmatic about the strong tendency of resentful victims to develop an almost mystical longing for future redemption, usually through the intervention of extraordinary leaders. Hence the populist voters' exceptional enthusiasm for charismatic leaders who address their enmities, pit moral against immoral, and promise to reinstitute political righteousness.[3]

We have now come a good way in defining the populist voters' worldview and the key beliefs that are ingrained in it. It is now time to focus on the very *attitudes* that justify the populist voter's choice (see column 4, Table 6.1). Maintaining the original argument about the distinction between populist and liberal mindsets, I advance three postulates (P1–P3) that help explain the populist vote. I argue that, in comparison to the liberal voter, the populist voter can dispense almost completely with calculated rationality; is willfully ignorant; and displays intuitively principled positions.

P1: Populist voters are motivated primarily by non-rational concerns.

Rationality is related to how one's mind works towards resolving problems in life while trying to increase personal utility (Downs 1957: 5). Although no voter can be said to act fully rationally, populist voters are distinctly irrational as long as, based on their beliefs, they prioritize vindictiveness over self-interest, enmity over compromise, and a longing for redemption over the need for pragmatism. In cognitive psychology terms, their mode of choosing among available options is fast, subconsciously biased, and highly emotional, in contrast to the liberal voters' way of thinking which, at least in principle, is slower, deliberative, and dispassionate (Quattrone and Tversky 1988, Kahneman 2011). Populist voters' irrationality increases when slogans in

[2] It is established in cognitive psychology that, when voters are angry, their choices are affected by their primary feelings rather than with issue concordance (see e.g., Valentino et al. 2008, Parker and Isbel 2010).

[3] Many of the points made here echo Margaret Canovan's (1999) felicitous analysis of contemporary democracy as having two faces—one "pragmatic," the other "redemptive"—further suggesting that the latter face is more receptive to "a romanticism that shades on the one side into populist rhetoric while on the other sustaining rationalist utopias." Unlike the more pragmatic style, which corresponds to liberal democracy, the redemptive style of populist politics is (a) characterized by a "strong anti-institutional impulse . . . [of] directness, spontaneity and the overcoming of alienation"; (b) salvation can come only through politics rather than by applying "a highly contingent collection of rules and practices"; and (c) that all legitimacy comes from the sovereign people and, therefore, "salvation is promised as and when they take charge of their own lives" (Canovan 1999: 10).

elections prevail over programs, and ideological differences become blurred or nonexistent. In such cases, to use the words of Joseph Schumpeter, "the pyrotechnics of party management and party advertising slogans and marching tunes are not accessories. They are the essence of politics" (cited in Brennan and Lomasky 1993: 32). In sum, unlike liberal voters, who, precisely because they tend to think more in terms of specific policy options, have to decide in a way that is more learned, logical, and calculating, populist voters don't have to do the same. As their parties of choice lack programs, policy positions, or clear ideologies, but have an abundance of slogans, they tend to vote with their hearts rather than with their minds.

P2: On the whole, populist voters are willfully ignorant.

Irrationality should not be confused with ignorance, and a distinction should also be made between Downs's "rational ignorance," which emanates from the difficulty of achieving cognition in a complex reality, and "willful ignorance," which usually takes the form of deceit and self-deception (Trivers 2011). Formal education, to be sure, is an essential indicator of all kinds of ignorance since more educated persons know not only how to obtain and process information better than less educated ones, but also how to subject intuitively moral judgments to evidence-based reasoning. And although one of the chief principles of social psychology is that moral intuitions come first and cognitive reasoning second (Haidt 2013: 106), this sequence appears more prominently in the populist rather than the non-populist voter. The reason is simple: Since the populism-induced cleavage between "the people" and elites is deep, and social polarization high, information becomes unnecessary and facts, even when easily to hand, are ignored as superfluous in making a voting choice.[4] Thus, almost certainly driven by confirmation bias and thereby unwilling to accept evidence that disconfirms pre-existing beliefs, the populist voter chooses to disregard complexity, opting instead for the comfort of positive emotion and moral righteousness.

P3: Populist voters are intuitively, and often unswervingly, principled.

Being largely irrational and uninformed, and on account of their moralizing views and belief in final redemption, populist voters are intuitively more principled than the more pragmatic and institutionally responsible liberal voters. In this sense, populist voters resemble righteous "theologians trying to protect sacred values from secular [i.e., liberal] encroachments" (Tetlock 2002: 451). In full reversal of David Hume's maxim that reason is, and ought

[4] For instance, according to a survey of the American National Election Study (ANES), a full 94 percent of Trump's voters did not attend a single political rally, speech, or meeting in the electoral year 2016 (cited in *The Economist*, July 1, 2017, Special Report: "Trump's America"). Still, both the sense of belonging in a victimized group (the average Joes) and feeling the indignant grievances such a membership helps generate were much more potent than being the potential recipient of good policy programs, such as better education or expanded health insurance.

only to be, the slave of passions, their tendency is to act on the basis of their moral sentiments so that "passion defeats reason [and] gains the upper hand over interest" (Hirschman 1977: 46). This happens because populist voters enjoy through their "principled" voting preferences significant expressive returns, which directly enhance their utility level. The argument here hinges on the distinction between instrumental (i.e., self-interested, or rational) and intrinsic (i.e., psychological, or expressive) elements in voting preference revelation. The need for intrinsic returns arises

> from a desire to express feelings . . . simply for the sake of the expression itself and without any necessary implication that the desired outcome will be brought about thereby. Revealing a preference is a direct consumption activity, yielding benefits to the individual in and of itself. (Brennan and Lomasky 1993: 33)

Voting in this sense is not a rational means towards an end; it is rather a psychologically desired end. It is likely to happen when political polarization is high and, consequently, voters tend to behave more vocally and take sides publicly. Preference revelation is then simply an act of declaring one's own political identity and being admitted to a virtuous community of "the people."

In concluding this—admittedly, rather postulating—section, I have tried to make a reasoned theoretical argument based on the distinction between an ideal-typical populist mindset and an ideal-typical liberal mindset. I do not claim, of course, to offer either a definitive analysis on the topic and, in fact, I can imagine numerous counterarguments to every single point made herein. Still, to the best of my knowledge there exists no general theory that disproves my overall analytical scheme. Therefore, until such a theory appears, the next section is an attempt to empirically exemplify—and, hopefully, validate—the theoretical points already raised, thus making a contribution to the still uncharted territory of electoral populism.

6.2. AN EMPIRICAL ILLUSTRATION: GREECE, 2015

Based on our theoretical discussion and postulates about populist voters' behavior, in this section I am going to provide an empirical illustration from real-life politics that best exemplifies our previous analysis. Our case study will be contemporary Greece, which, during the 2009–15 period of political and economic tumult, turned into a perfect laboratory for studying populist electoral politics and, in particular, populist voters' behavior. Within only six fateful years, there took place in Greece five parliamentary elections and one plebiscite featuring several significant populist parties, old and new, left and right, alternating between government and opposition, forming unconventional alliances, relentlessly pursuing their illiberalism in a climate of general crisis and intense political and social polarization.

The Greek experience of populist parties that rose and fell within a short but politically charged historical time presents us with two major puzzles about the populist voter—one related to populist emergence and the other to populist consolidation in power: First, why did voters with longstanding allegiances to established populist parties, primarily PASOK but also ND, decide to abandon them en masse and entrust their loyalties to new and entirely untested populist forces such as the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and Independent Greeks (ANEL)? And, second, why did the Greeks decide in September 2015 to reaffirm their support for the populist coalition government despite its many failures, including a disregard for the popular will as expressed in the July 2015 referendum?

Following inductive reasoning, I am going to employ the postulates of populist voting as suggested earlier with the aim of validating them empirically. The first section surveys the political setting within which new populist party emergence occurred; the second section begins with a brief discussion of why existing theories do not provide satisfactory explanations for such emergence, and then advances a more cogent theory based on the centrality of the populist mindset already analyzed.

Political Setting

A deep political crisis was evident in Greece well before the sovereign debt crisis erupted in early 2010.[5] By that time, as shown by repeated *Eurobarometer* surveys,[6] trust in Greece's political institutions was eroding across the board and really fast. Between 2007 and 2008, trust in government plummeted from 46 percent to 23 percent; in parliament from 52 percent to 32 percent; and in political parties from 21 percent to 14 percent. Institutional legitimation took a new deep dive between 2010 and 2011 as trust in government settled at a disheartening 8 percent; in parliament at 12 percent; and in political parties at only 5 percent (data cited in Verney 2014: 21–7). In December 2008, the killing of a young schoolboy in Athens catalyzed a violent mass insurrection against the state akin to a low intensity civil war (Pappas 2014a: 79). Greece was undergoing an unprecedented crisis of political legitimacy.

In the general elections of October 2009, populist PASOK, now led by George Papandreou, the son of party founder Andreas, won office singlehandedly for one last time (see Table 6.3), but singularly failed to change Greece's disastrous course. And when, in April 2010, international credit rating agencies downgraded Greek bonds to junk status, which put the country in immediate

[5] See, among others, Pappas 2010b, Featherstone 2011, Lynn 2011, Mitsopoulos and Pelagidis 2011, Bank of Greece 2014, Papaconstantinou 2016.

[6] See http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm.

danger of sovereign default, the Greek government requested from the troika of foreign creditors (the European Union (EU), the European Central Bank (ECB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)) a massive 110 billion euro loan, which was granted conditional on the implementation of tough austerity measures, bold structural reforms, and privatization of important government assets. Under the circumstances, PASOK, that erstwhile exemplar of pure populism, undertook reluctantly to transform itself into a liberal party.

As the troika put the screws on the governing PASOK, most opposition parties decided to steal the populist clothes and put them on themselves. They engaged in "blame-shifting rhetoric" (Vasilopoulou et al. 2013: 390), each of them claiming to speak in the name of the people whom they portrayed as the victims of foreign-imposed austerity; encouraged and, in many cases eagerly promoted, mass protest and political polarization; and disregarded institutional legality, especially the obligations imposed on Greece by the troika. At the same time, social unrest continued unabated throughout the country. Tellingly enough, several of Greece's subsequent political personnel would make their political debuts as leaders of mass social indignation, and some, like Yanis Varoufakis, even won celebrity status as fierce populist demonstrators.

In that setting of populist exuberance, Prime Minister Papandreou agreed in November 2011 to step down, thus paving the way for the formation of a grand coalition of ND and PASOK headed by Lucas Papademos, a former vice president of the ECB.[7] After PASOK, it was now ND's turn to abandon reckless populism in a willy-nilly fashion and try to play by liberal rules. But its effort was too little and it came too late. By then, the Greeks' satisfaction with democracy had dived from an already unhealthy 64 percent in 2007 to a menacing 14 percent—the lowest in Europe. Amidst the ever-growing political and economic crises in the country, the two general elections that were held in quick succession on May 6 and June 17, 2012 turned out to be the most volatile ever recorded in postwar Europe (Kriesi and Pappas 2015: 15).

In actual fact, the collapse of Greece's time-honored two-party system (Pappas 2003) amounted to a perfect crisis of democratic representation, in the same way as those already analyzed theoretically in Chapter 3.4. As seen in the data in Table 6.3, the consecutive 2012 "earthquake" elections brought about six major changes to Greece's political system:

(1) The erstwhile formidable center-right ND and center-left PASOK parties, which in the 2009 contest jointly won 77.4 percent of the national vote and 251 seats in the 300-seat parliament,[8] saw their combined electoral strength

[7] Initially, the coalition also included the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), a small right populist party, which however pulled out of government just before the February 2012 elections for fear of the political cost from supporting further austerity measures.

[8] During the roughly three decades that elapsed between 1981 and the 2012 elections, PASOK and ND alternated in office on a regular basis, together averaging an impressive 83.8 percent of the national vote.

Table 6.3. Greek general elections, 2009–15

	2009 October	2012 May	2012 June	2015 January	2015 September
ND	33.5 2,359,000 (91)	**18.9** **1,223,000** **(108)**	**29.7** **1,846,000** **(129)**	27.8 1,759,000 (76)	28.1 1,564,000 (75)
PASOK	**43.9** **3,092,000** **(160)**	13.2 854,000 (41)	12.3 764,000 (33)	4.7 297,000 (13)	6.3 350,000 (17)
SYRIZA	4.6 324,000 (13)	16.8 1,087,000 (52)	26.9 1,672,000 (71)	**36.3** **2,297,000** **(149)**	**35.5** **1,976,000** **(145)**
ANEL	— 	10.6 686,000 (33)	7.5 466,000 (20)	4.8 303,000 (13)	3.7 205,000 (10)
GD	— 	7.0 453,000 (21)	6.9 428,000 (18)	6.3 398,000 (17)	7.0 389,000 (18)
DIMAR	— 	6.1 395,000 (19)	6.3 391,000 (17)	0.5 31,000 	—
KKE	7.5 528,000 (21)	8.5 550,000 (26)	4.5 279,000 (12)	5.5 348,000 (15)	5.6 311,000 (15)
LAOS	5.6 394,000 (15)	2.9 187,000 	1.6 99,000 	1.0 63,000 	—
POTAMI	— 	— 	— 	6.1 386,000 (17)	4.1 228,000 (11)
Center Union	— 	— 	— 	1.8 113,000 	3.4 189,000 (9)
Others	4.9 345,000	16.0 1,036,000	4.3 267,000	5.2 329,000	6.3 350,000
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Turnout	70.9	65.1	62.5	63.6	56.2
Eligible voters	9,929,000	9,945,000	9,947,000	9,900,000	9,913,000
Actual voters	7,044,000	6,476,000	6,216,000	6,330,000	5,567,000
Absentee voters	2,885,000	3,469,000	3,731,000	3,570,000	4,346,000

Figures represent percentage of votes, number of votes cast, and number of parliamentary seats. Figures for the winning party in each election are in bold.

Source: Compiled from information available on Greece's Ministry of Interior website at http://www.ypes.gr/en/Elections/NationalElections/Results/

decrease to a mere 32.1 percent in May, and 42 percent in June 2012; numerically, their combined loss amounted to 3.3 million voters.

(2) The outcome was particularly devastating for traditionally populist PASOK whose vote share of 13.2 percent in May 2012 was the lowest this

party had received since its first electoral appearance in 1974. Worse was yet to come as PASOK now entered a spiral of fast and irreversible decline with its dyed-in-the-wool populist voters abandoning it in droves.

(3) As a direct consequence of their commonly embattled position, not only did the ancestral opponents of ND and PASOK decide to abandon their old populist clothes, but they also resolved to form a fresh governing coalition hoping to put a stop to a new populist tsunami that was under way.

(4) In the void created by the old parties falling apart, two new populist contenders emerged on both the radical left (SYRIZA) and the radical right (ANEL), which in the June 2012 elections enjoyed a combined 34.4 percent of the national vote. SYRIZA, in particular, under the firebrand leadership of Alexis Tsipras rose from an insignificant force that in the 2004 national elections had garnered merely 3.3 percent of the vote to major opposition party status.

(5) In addition to the new populists, a neo-Nazi party also emerged, Golden Dawn (GD), which would become a permanent fixture of Greek politics. As a typical anti-system nondemocratic party, it contributed to the deepening crisis through deep polarization of the party system and further de-legitimation of Greece's democratic parliamentary system.

(6) Perhaps more significantly, abstention from voting reached record levels—an unmistakable indication of low party system legitimation and voters' disenchantment with democracy.

In any event, following the 2012 elections, the new coalition government reached agreement with the troika to receive more debt relief in exchange for tough reform measures including new tax rises and pension cuts while unemployment, already over 20 percent at the time and still rising, was the highest in Europe. A glimpse of hope appeared in 2013, when the government completed the recapitalization of Greece's major banks and even achieved a primary budget surplus. By the end of 2014, the outlook of the national economy showed signs of improvement for the first time since the beginning of crisis. The ND–PASOK coalition government achieved a structural surplus, which, along with a modest decline in unemployment, created optimism for a return to positive GDP growth (Papaconstantinou 2016: 255–65). As the economy was expected to expand by 2.9 percent in 2015 and 3.7 percent in 2016 (European Commission 2014: 72), it seemed possible that the country might be able to return to the international bonds market in the course of the following year and resume sustained growth.

But then things went terribly awry. In early December 2014, the government decided that the presidential election due in the following spring should be held before the year's end. Since the rickety ruling coalition did not have the required

number of seats in parliament to ensure the election of a president, parliament was dissolved and the country became set for a snap election in early 2015. Almost immediately, the IMF suspended financial aid to Greece until a new government was in place. Trouble was visibly ahead.

In the fresh general elections held in January 2015, left populist SYRIZA came first with 36.3 percent of those who voted, but was still two seats short of securing a parliamentary majority. To general public amazement, it promptly formed a coalition government with the far right populist ANEL, which commanded 4.8 percent of the national vote and thirteen seats in parliament. Greece thus achieved the first government in postwar European politics—and, indeed, the liberal world over—consisting of leftist *and* rightist populists. In the tumultuous years to follow this "unholy alliance" would prove remarkably resilient.

Back to our narrative: In the aftermath of their electoral landslide, Greece's new rulers entered into negotiations with the troika about reformatting the Greek financial bailout. The negotiations, which from the Greek side were masterminded and led by Greece's flamboyant Minister of Finance Yanis Varoufakis, eventually failed. In late June 2015, lest a disorderly bankruptcy be avoided, the troika offered Greece a proposal including harsher austerity measures for a new loan. In that critical moment, the Greek prime minister decided to call a referendum, promptly scheduled for July 5, asking whether the Greeks would prefer the continuation of austerity of not. As was made abundantly clear by the troika top officials, a negative vote would open the door to "Grexit," with disastrous consequences for the country. Astonishingly, the Greek people rejected the EU proposals by a majority of over 60 percent. Most astonished of all was the prime minister himself, who, now coming face-to-face with the possibility of Greece's economic destruction, decided to perform what in popular parlance became known as a *kolotoumba* (somersault). He promptly dismissed his finance minister and returned to the negotiating table ready for an unconditional acceptance of the creditors' terms. On July 13, the Greek government reached a deal with its European partners and the IMF for a third bailout package of about 80 billion euros, with harsher terms than the previous two such programs. But surprises were far from over.

Amidst political flux and a collapsing economy, Tsipras called snap elections for September 20, 2015, which he won with 35.5 percent of the total votes cast (turnout stood at 55 percent). He also renewed his party's governing coalition with ANEL. What did not change was the ever increasing polarization, disrespect for institutions, and the agony of a country still in the midst of unstoppable decline.

After this brief exposition of the events that took place in Greece between the elections of October 2009 and those of September 2015, we are back to

where we started this chapter, namely, the two puzzles about the populist voter: How did populist SYRIZA (and ANEL) come to power? And why did the Greek voters decide to keep those parties in office despite all their evident failures and betrayal of the popular will as expressed in the 2015 referendum? Let us begin by asking whether existing theories of voting behavior can provide credible answers.

Populist Voting in Action

Is it possible to arrive at an integrated explanation for the foregoing puzzles that would fit this book's theoretical framework for analyzing populism while remaining close to empirical evidence? It must be noted right away that our proposed explanation should not be reducible to economic crisis alone, as in that case it would be refuted easily by the non-occurrence of populism in other comparable cases during exactly the same time period. As things stand, none of the available theories of voting behavior can provide a satisfactory answer. Before attempting a fresh look out of the box, however, it is worth first looking inside it for existing theories—most prominently the spatial, cleavage-based, and issue-based arguments[9]—and what makes them deficient in accounting for electoral populism.

Firstly, the spatial theory of voting, originally formulated by Anthony Downs (1957), assumes that voters are distributed along a spatial left–right axis, on which political parties occupy relatively stable ideological positions while voters primarily act to maximize their self-interest and personal utility. Since information is, however, incomplete, voters resort to programmatic issues, which they use as shortcuts. Parties, hence, according to a classic aphorism, "formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies" (Downs 1957: 28). Given that parties are characterized by relatively stable policy positions over time, and so they cannot leapfrog over each other, the theory predicts that voters will cast their ballot for the candidate who is ideologically closest to their position (Hinish and Munger 1994).

[9] Another important theory is *protest voting*, which suggests that voters decide to vote for populist parties as a protest against elites who ostensibly exploit society and, therefore, have to go. The theory is based on the idea that, given anti-elitist feelings cultivated by populist leaders, there develop in society strong "protest attitudes" that are "more important motivations for voters of populist parties than for voters of mainstream parties" (Schumacher and Rooduijn 2013: 125). This, of course, is an obvious conclusion and often holds true *as long as the populists are in the opposition*. It fails to explain, however, what the populist voters protest against when their preferred party captures power, which is the case with all the populist parties studied in some detail in this book.

Secondly, the various cleavage-based, or objective identity, theories of voting predicate a strong sense of identification between voters and parties, which both determines voting choice and limits electoral mobility. In such a context, political parties represent

> domains of group identities rather than units of electoral and ideological competition. In short, whatever is offered by the electoral market, the voter will always tend to register the same preference. In [an] extreme situation . . . there is an absence of a shared electoral market and . . . vote elasticity is virtually nonexistent.
> (Bartolini and Mair 2007 [1990]: 182)

Lastly, issue-based theories of voting postulate that voters "are not fools" (Key 1966) and cast their ballots after considering the party programs, and judging for themselves which of them best represents their interests. One particular branch of these theories is *economic voting*, which rests on the assumption that voters make their choices on the basis of candidates' economic performance. Voters reward the incumbent party in good times and punish it in bad times. Therefore, parties that have presided over economic prosperity are expected to win at the polls, while those who are deemed responsible for economic decline are punished (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2007, Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2008).

At a broad level of analysis, the reasons why none of the above theories seem to apply to the study of populism are easy to understand. The spatial theory of voting is not applicable because the populist voter is not a rational self-interest seeker and also because populist parties, since they lack ideology, cannot occupy fixed positions along the ideological and political spectrum. Cleavage-based theories of voting are similarly unable to account for populism inasmuch as the latter addresses "the people" as a potential electoral majority that transcends objective socioeconomic or other divisions; instead, as we have seen, populist parties forge new symbolic and political cleavages, particularly between "the people" and "the elites," which are anything but stable or permanent. Finally, issue-based theories fail to explain populism for the simple fact that populist parties lack clear policy agendas; instead, they thrive on the extraordinariness of their leaders, new symbolic politics, and incessant polarizing tactics.

As none of the existing theories of voting behavior can account sufficiently well for electoral populism, we need to rethink the matter from a new perspective. Importantly, such a perspective should be able to account for populist victories, not only when populist parties are in opposition, but also when they are in office. Contemporary Greek politics presents as an ideal testing ground because of the consecutive electoral contests that took place in the country between 2009 and 2015, during which new populist forces won over old populism, thereafter showing remarkable electoral resilience even in the face of thoroughly poor performance in office.

In what follows, based chiefly on the hard electoral data shown in Table 6.3, own participant observation, as well as a wealth of other primary and secondary supporting evidence, ranging from academic accounts to newspaper clippings, I will proceed in four steps. Each step refers to a critical time point (*t*) in which the Greek voters were called to make decisions on the future of their country. Each of the four instances represents a unique clash between populism and liberalism, and in each case populism was the winner—hence the importance of the cases to be examined shortly. The four time points to be analyzed are as follows:

*t*1: In the aftermath of the 2009 national elections, and especially after Greece entered a bailout-for-austerity program in early 2010, there was a flight of PASOK's electoral constituency to newly emergent populist parties, especially SYRIZA.

*t*2: In January 2015, with no regard for the gradual improvement of Greece's economic indicators, the voters who had abandoned the old populist parties decided to transfer their political allegiances to new populists, thus bringing SYRIZA and ANEL to power.

*t*3: When, because of its irresponsible and inept governing, Greece came in June 2015 to the brink of exiting the Eurozone, the populist government organized a referendum in which the majority of Greeks voted against continuing austerity. Performing a political somersault, the government disregarded the people's will and adopted a program of even harsher austerity.

*t*4: Even when the government surrendered unconditionally to foreign creditors, the loyalties of the Greek populist voters remained unshaken. And, in new general election in September 2015, they entrusted the left–right populist coalition with a fresh mandate to govern Greece.

A more detailed analysis of Greece's four steps towards new populist consolidation follows.

t1: A populist stampede.

Look again at Table 6.3 (p. 225) and you will see that, in relation to its 2009 electoral support, which stood at over three million, formerly populist PASOK lost in June 2012 around 2.328 million voters. Formerly populist ND lost 513,000 voters. The majority of those who broke with old party loyalties found new political shelter in neo-populist SYRIZA (with a net gain since 2009 of 1.348 million voters) while others turned to far right populist ANEL (466,000 voters in June 2012) and even the antidemocratic GD (428,000 voters). How are we to explain this stampede from old populist to new populist and antidemocratic parties?

In the first place, it seems reasonable to interpret those electoral outcomes as deriving from classical protest voting. Indeed, during the period beginning

with the first bailout (May 2010) and the 2012 elections, and as unemployment went from below 10 percent in 2009 to a stunning 25 percent by the third quarter of 2012 (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2012), Greece experienced successive waves of mass social unrest. In one case, protestors tried to storm parliament, which was in session, shouting "thieves, thieves" and "let the plutocracy pay." During the summer of 2011, indignant demonstrators from all opposition parties filled the country's city squares and for many weeks engaged in building "assemblies" mimicking direct democracy. The element that united the agitated protestors "was a common desire to punish both the old government parties and political class for having let them down and, by means of newly emergent populist [and non-democratic] forces, retain the sovereignty of 'the people'" (Pappas and Aslanidis 2015: 188). In such conditions, the majority of Greek voters became resentful and vindictive. And as they went to the polls with feelings of anger and despair, what became evidently "missing from [the] result was a strategic component in people's preferences" (Dinas and Rori 2013: 278).

Yet, while protest voting is a necessary explanation for Greece's 2012 electoral results, it is hardly a sufficient one. It fails to explain, firstly, why other crisis-ridden countries, like contemporaneous Ireland, Portugal, and pre-2014 Spain did not experience the rise of irresponsible populism in conditions that were quite comparable to Greece's. Secondly, it lacks an account of the reasons for the nonappearance amidst the crisis of new liberal parties offering fresh perspectives to dissatisfied voters, as happened, for instance, with the Ciudadanos in Spain (see Chapter 4.2) or, more recently, with Emmanuel Macron's En Marche in France. And, thirdly, protest alone is no explanation for the emergence of such a blatantly antidemocratic party in Greece as Golden Dawn.

A far better explanation obtains, I believe, if we consider the interplay between the supply of and the demand for populism in the particular circumstances of Greek politics during the early crisis phase. As already stated, Papandreou's decision to behave responsibly and accept a bailout program lest Greece avoid sovereign default instantly stripped his party of populist capacity forcing it instead to turn into a liberal reformist one—i.e., one accepting societal differentiation, appealing for political moderation and consensus, abiding by the rule of law and, on top of everything, trying to build new all-inclusive institutions under troika guardianship. As none of those changes was to the liking of PASOK's populist constituency, an increasingly growing part of it decided to sever their traditional political attachments and become free-floating voters. With such a sizeable part of the electorate up for grabs, a new breed of radical leaders emerged, representing both new populist and nondemocratic forces. A surfeit of demand for populism met its new suppliers.

In fact, what happened in Greece during the period under examination (2009–12) was a typical replication of the causal model of populist emergence

as explained in Chapter 3.4 (and condensed in Figure 3.5, p. 124). Amidst a massive crisis of democratic representation, new political entrepreneurs at the helm of radical political parties came forth, uttering paradigmatically populist discourses, and employing polarization as their chief strategy. They succeeded in politicizing resentment, forging "the people" afresh, and mobilizing them against foreign-imposed liberal politics. Theirs was a task made easier by the fact that, for many past decades, Greek politics had been imbued with populism, which had already beaten into shape a dominant worldview among the general electorate that was simplistic, adversarial, and highly moralistic—one that capitalized on deeply ingrained beliefs of victimhood, enmity, and ultimate redemption—eventually, one that became energized by irrationality rather than probabilistic calculation, willful ignorance rather than dispassionate thinking, and principled morality rather than responsible citizenship—all characteristic attitudes of the populist voter's mindset as presented in Table 6.1, p. 217).

Following Greece's first bailout and as social unrest intensified throughout the country, both the SYRIZA and ANEL leaders came out enthusiastically in favor of the protesters. Alexis Tsipras, in particular, took the initiative to organize and lead a massive grassroots movement of indignant citizens (Rüdig and Karyotis 2013) claiming that "'the people' had been betrayed by the political elites, which [were] held responsible for the socioeconomic collapse and could no longer represent them" (Katsambekis 2016: 392). His main mottos came straight out of the populist toolkit and his party's primary slogan "It's either Them or Us" appeared across billboards and stickers; "Together we can overturn them," was the byline. "They decided without us: we move on without them" said another party poster (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014, Pappas and Aslanidis 2015). In parallel with populist sloganeering and its pledge to "organize the democratic overthrow of the political system and its underpinnings" (SYRIZA 2012), Tsipras made improbable promises. He vowed to end austerity by simply "tearing up the Memorandum [i.e., the agreement signed between Greece and the troika]," end Greece's "humanitarian crisis" and restore the "dignity" of the Greek people (Tsakatika 2016), force creditors to write down the national debt, renegotiate Greece's massive international bailout, and lead the country to social peace and economic development. He also assured party supporters and voters that his government would rehire fired public workers, cancel an onerous tax on household property, halt privatizations of state-owned assets, and fight the corrupt oligarchs that had dominated the economy. What all this simplistic and adversarial rhetoric lacked was consistent ideological principles and a realistic policy package; what it had in abundance was a strong moralistic message as well as a promise, however vague and certainly unrealistic, for ultimate redemption from the crisis conditions.

***t*2: Populist victory.**

In the general elections of January 2015, SYRIZA and ANEL jointly won a majority of parliamentary seats (162 out of 300) because their quintessentially populist messages resonated with the populist mindset of a large part of the Greek electorate. Never mind the fact that, by that time, the country seemed to be approaching the end of crisis. After five years of austerity and fiscal measures, the economy looked to be back in shape. Unemployment was still high, but there was a primary budget surplus and the prospects for moderate growth seemed positive. Also, never mind the unrealistic character of the neo-populists' electoral promises given Greece's disadvantaged position and complete dependence on foreign credit. To the populist mindset, what mattered most were promises of hope, which resonated with deeply held beliefs of victimhood and presented a simplistic view of politics replete with notions of individual dignity, public morality, and other principled ideas.

Here is how a SYRIZA voter presented his voting choices in a way that exemplifies the populist mindset perfectly well: "It was hugely refreshing to have someone [i.e., Tsipras]," he wrote echoing many others, "speaking that sort of language, instead of tired neoliberal dogma of privatization equaling efficiency" (Andreou 2015). Besides, as the same voter went on to explain,

> Syriza gave me a way to voice dissatisfaction with the EU without aiming to dismantle it. . . . It was possible to be pro-EU and still want to punch its current monetarist policies in the face. (Andreou 2015)

Not that our voter was politically naïve. Quite the contrary, as clearly emerges from his written account:

> It is important to clarify that I am fully aware [that Syriza] might fail—everyone and everything is set against the party. The economic environment is as challenging as it could be. Syriza's ideas may prove unworkable. The leviathan of politics may swallow its politicians and regurgitate them wearing the same ties and telling the same lies as those before them. But this election was about putting down a marker. About saying "no more". Shock doctrine has its limits. You gotta leave the plebs with a little something to lose. (Andreou 2015)

Evidently, then, voting for SYRIZA represented for Greek voters a serious risk, which, however, they readily accepted. Why? The answer, I submit, lies in a variant of what in behavioral economics is known as "prospect theory," which describes the way people choose between alternatives that involve risk where the probabilities of outcomes are not known (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Briefly stated, the prospect of losses looms in the human mind larger than the prospect of gains. Therefore, people are loss averse except when all their options are bad, in which case they become risk seeking. Adapting this theory to Greece's crisis-ridden politics circa 2012, the Greek people had already

suffered great losses since 2010 but didn't know how long their suffering would last and how deep it might go. The crucial point seemed to be whether the Greek government would continue to apply the troika-imposed austerity program. This presented the voters with the following two options:

> [A] If Greece applies the foreign-imposed austerity *the majority* of Greeks will *surely* become poorer.
>
> [B] If Greece rejects austerity there is some possibility that nothing any worse will happen *and* some probability that *all* Greeks will become poor.

When faced with a dilemma involving two bad options, the liberal voter is expected to (at least try to) make a probabilistic choice based on calculating, dispassionate, and politically responsible criteria. She will then choose option [A] in order to eliminate any probability of nationwide poverty. The case is different for the populist voter. Whether because of their relative irrationality, willful ignorance, or strong moral principles, those voters choose under the weight of their emotions and unfounded hopes. They are, therefore, more likely to choose option [B] because the pain of becoming poor*er* for sure right away is more than a high possibility, and even the probability, of future impoverishment. "In bad choices, where a sure loss is compared to a larger loss that is merely probable, diminishing sensitivity causes risk seeking" (Kahneman 2011: 285).

With this illusion of hope (even if all reality points to a dismal outcome), voters who stand to lose for sure gamble at elections. Moreover, by doing so, they also penalize the parties held responsible for their losses. Why is that so? The answer is in the strong psychological value such an electoral behavior may offer. It makes populist voters feel good! Our previous SYRIZA voter explains it well:

> The more Christine Lagarde, of the IMF, and Wolfgang Schäuble, Germany's finance minister, warned of impending Armageddon, the more my will to defy them crystallised. Not because they were wrong, but because they were trying to use fear as an instrument of force. Not because it wasn't good advice, but because it was blackmail. Not because the reforms they imposed were wrong, but because they were imposed. (Andreou 2015).

In summary, Greece's populist voters voted exactly as predicated in Section 6.1: Motivated by resentment and other non-rational concerns, willfully ignorant of the consequences of their vote, but absolutely certain that they acted upon proud morality and according to individual political principle.

***t*3: The people's will.**

Such feelings of resentful victimhood, rightful pride, and defiant irrationality were still strong and alive on July 5, 2015, when the Greek voters were called to decide by referendum on the conditions proposed by the troika in return for continuing the bailout program. In the aftermath of their electoral landslide, Greece's tandem of new populist rulers embarked on protracted

negotiations with the troika in an effort to ease the conditions attached to existing bailout and, as promised on the campaign trail, end austerity. "Negotiations" is, however, a misnomer when considering that the Greek government, and especially its then finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, pursued a strategy of blackmailing their partners in the hope of getting a "political solution" that would include the curtailment of austerity measures and the restructuring of Greece's debt (for an excellent analysis, see Tsebelis 2016; for a personal, albeit biased, account of those events, see Varoufakis 2017). In the long and tortuous course of deliberations, the specter of Grexit (i.e., Greece's withdrawal from the Eurozone and a return to the drachma) haunted the country. Other troubles from misgovernment abounded: Cash liquidity for paying salaries and pensions; massive capital flight abroad; serious damage to Greece's tourist industry (as foreign travel agencies required contracts in which Greek operators assumed the risks of any currency change); the delay in June 2015 of foreign payments that were overdue, which further tarnished the government's negotiating credibility; and the temporary closure of banks and the imposition of capital controls, including limits on cash withdrawals.

The Greek government decided to reject the proposed bailout, thus choosing to enter into a "game of chicken" with the troika in the hope that it would not allow Greece to default. In reality, that was a quite improbable scenario. For the troika, Greece represented a clear case of moral hazard and, besides, the Eurozone countries were already well prepared to face Greece's exit from their club. Predictably, then, the negotiations eventually failed and, lest a disorderly bankruptcy be avoided, Greece's partners offered a proposal including harsher austerity measures for a new loan. In that critical moment, the Greek prime minister decided to break off negotiations and play the plebiscite card. Swiftly calling a referendum scheduled for July 5, the government imposed capital controls and thus inaugurated the short but fierce campaign for a "No" vote.

The referendum took place in a context of unprecedented polarization as political forces became divided into two opposed camps: On the one side stood the populist government partners of SYRIZA and ANEL, as well as the antidemocratic GD and the Communist Party. On the other side stood primarily ND and PASOK together with smaller liberal parties. According to the government side, a No vote would reinforce national dignity and give it a better bargaining position in renewed negotiations with the country's creditors. That made sense to the populist mind. To it, a Yes vote meant Greece's subjugation to the EU political establishment, best represented by Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel; a No vote was about national independence and pride and moral superiority. It was a view that clashed with the creditors' reality. To them, a No vote, as was made abundantly clear, would simply mean the exit of Greece from the Eurozone, and possibly from the EU as well. It would be a national disaster.

And yet, despite the high probability of disaster, rationality was in short supply. In the week preceding the referendum,

> newspapers were reporting opinion polls indicating strong support for the PM, strong support for the euro, willingness to do anything to keep the euro currency, and revolt against austerity and taxes, etc. That is, a series of statements that were not subject to logical constraints and ignorant of any tradeoffs. (Tsebelis 2016: 31)

And so, as Tsebelis again correctly remarks, the referendum turned out to be "a large-scale natural experiment" illustrating how deeply ingrained emotions and symbolic representations of the populist mindset may defeat informed and calculating logic.

Indeed, as it turned out, only about 38 percent of the electorate behaved rationally, in the sense that they measured the cost of Grexit to be far higher than the benefit from temporarily avoiding austerity measures. The other 62 percent of the electorate behaved in a logically perverse way: By turning down austerity, they took the risk of Grexit although a large part of those same voters wanted Greece to stay in the Eurozone. There was, therefore, an obvious divergence between electoral outcomes (i.e., enable Grexit) and true electoral preferences (i.e., stay in the Eurozone). That happened for one of the following reasons, or both: (1) The voters voted against austerity because they were made to believe that no Grexit could ever happen or (2) the voters decided to forego their own interests, choosing instead to express their feelings—defiance towards foreign creditors, and national pride. In the former case, the voters behaved as ignorant fools, in the latter case as simply irrational.

***t*4: Inefficacious Liberalism.**

In the aftermath of the referendum, Tsipras completely changed course. He dismissed his unconventional finance minister and surrendered to the troika by accepting a new austerity package and committed his government to tough fiscal measures, including a policy of budget surpluses, tax rises, pension slashing, and privatizations. To all intents and purposes, the populist government had just violated the popular will! In response, a good part of SYRIZA—including the colorful former minister of finance, the vocal Speaker of Parliament Zoe Konstantopoulou, and several leading MPs—defected to form Popular Unity (LAE), an ultra-leftist and anti-EU party. To many former supporters-now-turned-critics, SYRIZA "not [only] simply failed to deliver on its promises but also adopted the programme of the opposition, wholesale" (Lapavitsas 2016).

Deprived of a parliamentary majority, Tsipras announced snap elections for September 2015. In the months that had elapsed since power capture in January, SYRIZA had failed to materialize any of its previous promises, maintained all old taxes while inventing new ones, imposed capital controls in the economy, reversed the outcome of the July referendum, and agreed a new bailout program with the troika based on even more austerity. Regardless

of all his government's failures, Tsipras ran a highly personalized and steeply polarized campaign, in which he made the case that, during negotiations with the troika,

> he fought tooth and nail to get a better deal [and] that his defeat resulted from miscalculations regarding the strategies of other European countries and the power differential between Greece and Germany. . . . [In addition to that, a] soft communication strategy opposed the new to the old, describing SYRIZA as the new and arguing that change and reform could not be conducted by the old political personnel—"the establishment". (Rori 2016: 1337)[10]

It was a quite successful campaign. As shown in Table 6.3, SYRIZA enjoyed a new landslide, having lost less than 1 percent of its vote share despite the splintering effects of LAE. Major opposition ND, under the interim leadership of Vangelis Meïmarakis, was unable to exploit the opportunity and expand its electoral appeal. ANEL succeeded in securing ten parliamentary seats, which allowed the cohabitation of left and right populism in office to continue undisturbed. What had happened? And why did the Greek electorate *not* punish the populist government for all its failures and their frustrated hopes? To put it differently, if the irrational illusion of hope and a feel-good attitude can explain sufficiently well the populist vote in the first place, what may explain the persistence of populism even when hope had turned out to be a mere illusion while, on top of all that, the popular will had been blatantly disregarded? Logically speaking, the Greek voters should have regretted their January decision. But, as it turned out, they didn't! Why?

One possible explanation, to be sure, is Tsipras's continuing personal appeal (as indicated by surveys, cited in Rori 2016), as well as his undisputed control after the departure of internal opposition over the government and his party organization, especially when compared with the other leaders in the contest who ranged from uninspiring to simply incompetent. A second explanation is related to the difficulty of voters in general to cope with retrospective regret over past decisions. Regret (the Greek *μετάνοια*, or afterthought) is the negative and very painful cognitive emotion that people experience when realizing that their present situation would have been better had they decided differently. It centers on one's own causal role in a currently suboptimal situation and is "accompanied by feelings that one should have known better and by a sinking feeling, by thoughts about the mistake one has made and the opportunities lost, by tendencies to kick oneself and to correct one's mistake, by desires to undo the event and get a second chance, and by actually doing this if

[10] The official party explanation for the 2015 volte-face is best expressed by one of its deputies and a public intellectual: "One reason for the 2015 retreat was the absence of a strong solidarity movement by the European Left and Social-Democracy. The Syriza government fought and is still fighting a David and Goliath battle. The responsibility of European democrats is to support the Gaul village still resisting" (Douzinas 2017: 23).

given the opportunity" (Zeelenberg and Pieters 2007: 6). Arguably, populist voters are more regret averse than non-populist voters because of their unswerving principled mentality that we have already discussed. Finding themselves in such a mental state of having to protect their principles against reality, regretful SYRIZA voters had no other choice than to exalt Tsipras's enduring and "honest" efforts to achieve a better agreement with the troika despite all difficulties. True, his efforts were not successful, so the populist voter's argument went, but they were gallant and principled. And thus our voter remained consistent with his populist choice insisting on denigrating all alternative decisions with the claim that "at least, SYRIZA is not worse than the old parties."

Although the foregoing reasons may explain part of the puzzle about the continuing electoral support for governing populism despite its failures and other shortcomings, a third reason (about which more will be said towards the end of the book) seems to me the most important: The inefficacy of Greece's liberal opposition to convincingly put forward a solid ideological and political program ready to be implemented by a party led by capable leadership. Such inefficacy became apparent in several respects.

For one last time, then, look carefully at the September 2015 electoral outcome (Table 6.3) and what you see is a liberal defeat rather than a populist victory. Firstly, as already mentioned, ND, the main opposition force, stood on the election trail entirely unable to articulate a convincing discourse, offer a realistic program, or inspire by party leadership. Secondly, apart from ND no other liberal party was able to attract, and keep, the dispersed liberal voters. A first attempt was made with the left-of-center Democratic Left (DIMAR), which, however, disintegrated shortly thereafter partly due to the opportunism demonstrated by its leadership and partly for lack of a political program.[11] A second attempt to create a liberal party was made by River (POTAMI), a cadre party founded in early 2014 by a popular television journalist, which, however, suffered the same fate as DIMAR: between the two general elections in 2015, it saw its initially modest strength slump by one-third, after which the party followed a course of irreversible decline. Even more remarkable, thirdly, was the unwillingness of all small liberal forces, including DIMAR, POTAMI, and PASOK, to forge a common political front to withstand populism. As they remained dispersed along the electoral spectrum, and politically vulnerable, those liberal forces were uniquely incapable of fighting against populism and reinstituting liberal democratic politics. This contributed, fourthly, to what emerges as the most consequential failure of Greece's liberal opposition,

[11] These two are interconnected, of course. In June 2013, DIMAR departed from the governing coalition with ND and PASOK, which led to its gradual disintegration. In the 2015 legislative elections, it received a mere 0.5 percent of the vote. Soon thereafter, the party leader, Fotis Kouvelis, joined SYRIZA.

namely, the calculated exit of a significant part of society from participatory politics and their withdrawal to the private sphere. Within the short period that elapsed from the 2009 elections to those of September 2015, Greece's electoral turnout decreased by 14.7 percent (i.e., from 70.9 percent to 56.2 percent). This is definitely a negative factor for the proper function of representative democracy and also a bad omen for the restoration of political liberalism in populist-ruled democracies. I plan to return to these points in Chapter 7.

7

How Does Populism Endanger Democracy?

The comparative study of populism in power reveals a major paradox. It comes from the realization that, in the long run and almost without fail, populism is calamitous for liberal democracy: It decimates old established institutions, generates intense social polarization, and produces economic and political crises; sometimes, it even morphs into autocracy. And yet, ruling populism displays remarkable political resilience and, typically, enjoys governmental longevity. Given that populism *is* democratic, which enables its peaceful overthrow by ballot, how are we to explain its paradoxically enduring preference for voters?

The most compelling answer, I contend, lies in the presence, or not, and in the endurance of charismatic leadership. Whether in Europe or Latin America, from where most of the evidence comes, populism survives in office when, and as long as, leaders are extraordinarily able to forge a populist constituency and keep it together despite institutional decomposition, the persistence of political tumult, and general economic adversity. With this new realization in mind, and also taking the vicissitudes of political charisma as a given, one may reasonably ask: What happens when a populist leader's charisma is terminated, exhausted, self-destructs, or is otherwise cut short?

Once again using the comparative method, we may distinguish three pathways for the countries ruled by populist parties: populist entrenchment, veering to autocracy, or populism's dispersal. The first pathway is more common for populist parties in which charismatic founding leaders continue to cast long shadows over their parties even after having physically passed away. Those parties become solidly entrenched in their countries' party and political systems, often causing populist contagion in liberal forces. The second pathway is the one taken by charismatically led populist parties when they are politically predominant while the liberal opposition is particularly weak. In those cases, populism may swerve and turn into autocracy. The third pathway is one in the course of which populism rises and falls depending on the effectiveness of institutions, the strength of the opposition, and the

populist leaders' ephemeral charisma. However, in all such cases, even with an end to a leader's charisma and a decline in the fortunes of the original populist party, populism becomes dispersed across both the party and political systems waiting for a new chance for political re-emergence.

7.1. POPULIST PATHWAYS

Pick any of the populist parties that figure prominently in this book and you will find two characteristics that apply to all of them when in office: Incessant political polarization, inevitably dividing society into two irreconcilable parts, and irresponsible state patronage (or other state protectionist) politics to the benefit of the majoritarian populist constituency.[1] Each of these features is detrimental to respective political systems as it causes the emasculation of political liberalism and, potentially, the breakdown of democracy.

As shown in previous chapters, polarization is the principal strategy employed by populist parties in office in order to win the majority of ambivalent non-ideological voters in the middle, and prevent them from defection. To this end, state-holding incumbents offer undecided voters state-related inducements, both tangible and intangible, while at the same time making certain that opponents will be effectively excluded from state jobs and other patronage benefits. Polarization becomes electorally rewarding since it forges in-group solidarity by simply crowding out the opposition. However, although it may be a winning strategy in the short term, deliberate polarization has a major drawback and that is its dependence on the continuous availability of state resources. What happens when such resources are reduced or depleted, as usually happens in populist regimes because of their irresponsible politics? This brings us to the second characteristic of populist rule—fiscal profligacy.

While, to be sure, any government may fall victim to grave banking and financial crises, populist governments have a higher likelihood of doing so than liberal democratic governments. In liberal systems, institutional checks and balances are meant to hinder the government's capacity to violate constitutional—especially individual property—rights while they also delimit cronyism. With the risks of government expropriation and systemic crony

[1] Since U.S. populism under Trump's administration is a young and still open case, it will not be specifically examined in this last part of the book. It is worth noting, however, that, besides stepping up polarization domestically, the implementation of Trump's protectionist policies is a most crucial factor in determining which areas of the market will grow and, therefore, which classes or other social categories will be preferentially shielded from international market competition and its uncertainties. From this open market and political liberal perspective, therefore, Trump's protectionism has the same effect on state-led patronage politics that are common in all other cases of ruling populism.

corruption largely under check, the incentives system enters a rationally virtuous cycle:

> Citizens can vote for candidates who promise to open up the banking system to greater levels of competition, thereby increasing the amount of credit and reducing its cost. The net result is a banking system that tends towards efficiency and stability. (Calomiris and Haber 2014: 56)

Not so in populism. Here, the focus moves from the availability in the market of cheap credit to increased regulation of the economy by a state with strong incentives to help indebted citizens. To this purpose, populist governments have two options depending on the availability of reserves. If such reserves are available, whether from outside sources (e.g., EU funds as in Greece or Hungary) or domestic resources (e.g., oil in Venezuela and Ecuador), populists opt for the construction of an extensive welfare state for the protection of their electoral constituencies, including nationalized housing, education, health services and, in many cases, lifetime job security. But if they lack reserves, the other option populist governments have is to help debtors by expropriating banks. This, inevitably, may lead to banking and financial crises that destabilize politics and work to the disadvantage of the very people they were initially meant to aid.

The process by which such crises occur is described by Reinhart and Rogoff as follows: As markets under populist rule are highly regulated and economic entrepreneurship remains low, citizens have no other option than to put their savings into banks. When the economy downturns sharply, populist governments may force the banks to relend the money to fund part of their public debt at favorable interest rates. This is a case of "financial repression" under which banks turn into "vehicles that allow governments to squeeze more indirect tax revenue from citizens by monopolizing the entire savings and payments system, not simply currency" (Reinhart and Rogoff 2009: 143). And when a government can no longer pay its debt, this creates a domestic default that, in turn, forces banks to default on their liabilities so that depositors lose at least part of their savings.

Paradoxically, given the adverse consequences of polarization and profligacy during their rule, governing populist parties enjoy long incumbencies. They moreover tend to cause contagion in other parties, which now realize that populism is an effective strategy for building, or expanding, an electoral base with no regard for institutions of accountability. To make sense of this major populist paradox, we must pay close attention to the role of populist leadership and how it superintends the social majorities that are necessary for populism to stay in office by ballot; or, alternatively, decides to veer in an autocratic direction.

We need to know how things have turned out when populism has exercised power, and what the legacy has been in countries that have experienced

populist rule. The comparative analysis of populism in the postwar liberal world reveals three pathways, each with distinct outcomes—populist entrenchment, autocracy, and populist diffusion. Populist entrenchment, as exhibited by the most spectacular cases of populism in the liberal democratic world, Argentina and Greece, obtains when a founding populist leader is gone but his charisma becomes successfully institutionalized in his party. The second outcome, showcased by Venezuela and Hungary, is populism transforming into autocracy. Here, formidable populist parties led by charismatic leaders have maintained long and uninterrupted populist power with increasingly autocratic elements. While Viktor Orbán is still in power, and so Hungary's populist chapter is yet to be written, when Hugo Chávez died, his political successor Maduro had no difficulty in remodeling Venezuela as a classic autocracy. The third outcome is related to nations in which populist leaders were no longer able to maintain long-lasting charisma. As the cases of Italy, Peru, and Ecuador exemplify, populist loss of power is coincident with charismatic exhaustion. In such systems, however, populism has already become politically diffuse and its ideas, themes, and tropes are readily available to new political entrepreneurs who may usurp them in their own bids for power. In what follows, I am going to explain the three pathways in some detail.

Entrenchment

As shown particularly in the cases of Argentina and Greece, populism may become a permanent feature in a country's political system and, in fact, enshrined in all major parties. In these cases, populism derives its historical origins, symbolic power, and political legitimacy from important founding fathers—namely, Juan Perón and Andreas Papandreou, respectively—who, long after passing away, are still revered by large segments of the population demanding the continuation of populist politics. Populism exercises a strong allure on competing liberal parties, which, as the Greek case clearly demonstrates, may succumb to it, thus helping create what I have termed a *populist democracy* (Pappas 2014b). Political systems with strong populist parties drawing legitimacy from charismatic leaders with an enduring legacy are difficult to revert to reformist liberalism for the high costs it entails for established intraparty elites (those resembling what Max Weber once called "charismatic communities"). Instead, because of their constantly polarizing politics and spendthrift economic policies, those systems are extremely vulnerable to recurrent fiscal and political crises. Even when in crisis, though, and even if strong liberal pockets remain in opposition, populism is hard to eradicate. It either survives, waiting for its next chance to win power (as in post-dictatorship Argentina), or mutates into a new populist party (as happened in post-2012 Greece). A short analysis of the two countries follows.

Argentina, 1946–76

No explanation of modern-day Argentina can be valid without taking into account the pivotal period from 1946 to 1955, during which Juan Perón established his populist regime. Following, if not actually inventing, the populist blueprint (see Chapter 5.1), Perón ruled Argentina for almost a decade on the incessant mobilization of his followers against the opposition, by trading state patronage benefits for political loyalty, all the while exhibiting disrespect for institutions and the rule of law, offering instead his personal authority as the ultimate source of power. Although he enjoyed broad support from the Argentine pueblo and always made sure to keep the screws on his opponents tightened, Perón made powerful enemies, too, especially in the Church and the military. The Church saw Peronism as a secular faith, antagonistic to its influence, and also resented the popularity of Perón's leadership cult, while the military was worried about the possibility of a personalist dictatorship and also resented Perón's large cuts in military spending (Potash 1980: 83–4). A failed army revolt in September 1951 was followed by extensive purges of officer corps, and another plot was uncovered in early 1952, causing even more purges (Potash 1980: 83–4). Finally, on September 13, 1955, disloyal military officers succeeded in toppling Perón from power. Taken by surprise, he capitulated to the rebels and, a few days later, fled into exile. It was the end of Perón's first era of populism.

In the aftermath of the armed overthrow of populism, polarization in Argentina rose steeply. On the victorious side, army officers demanded investigations into corruption among officials in the previous government, labor leaders who had been removed from the trade unions asked for revenge, middle- and upper-class people wanted their former property rights fully restored, and journalists rejoiced over the unexpected freedom of the press. On the vanquished side, the Peronist party was banned and old regime loyalists were purged from their positions in the state, were not allowed to hold office, or were put under arrest. The polarization created by Peronism and continued by its opponents during the mid-1950s is captured concisely in the following excerpt:

> Perón's period was not only the period of Peronismo; it was also the period of anti-Peronismo. This polarization, as it was afterwards called, was the result of the articulation of power and opposition according to rules that were not shared. There were not two parties; there were two "countries": one whose inhabitants could only conceive of Argentina with Perón, and another that could only accept Argentina without Perón and, in terms of power, without Peronismo.
>
> (Cited in O'Donnell 1978: 147)

The new government of General Pedro Aramburu (1955–8) banned by decree any public "affirmation of Peronism" and even the mention of the names of Perón and his late wife, Evita. Aramburu referred to the exiled Perón as "the monster" and newspapers identified him as "the fugitive tyrant" (Robben

2005: 27). Still, Peronism remained as alive as ever. Already by the end of 1955, Argentina's *barrios* were teeming with resistance committees circulating handwritten propaganda, holding secret meetings, and painting slogans at night on walls proclaiming: *Perón vuelve* [Perón will return] (Lewis 1990: 234). Against that background Aramburu scheduled elections in July 1957 for a constitutional convention aimed at restoring the 1853 Constitution, to be followed by presidential elections in February 1958.

During the first of those elections, in a quite remarkable display of charismatic authority, exiled Perón instructed his loyalist voters to cast blank ballots. And when the votes were counted, the percentage of blank votes (24.3 percent) was found to outrun the strength of any other party. From his exile, Perón had become Argentina's kingmaker. Now confronted with the upcoming presidential elections, candidate Arturo Frondizi became determined to strike a political deal with Perón in exchange for the latter's endorsement. If elected, Frontizi promised to restore the Peronist party to legality, release all Peronist leaders from jail, re-nationalize the banking system, replace the current Supreme Court with justices sympathetic to Peronism, and call a fresh constitutional convention to restore the Peronist 1949 Constitution (Lewis 1973). And so it was that, making concessions to Peronism and borrowing voters directly from Perón, Frondizi was able to win by a landslide.

In the years that elapsed from Frondizi's 1958 electoral victory to the 1973 recapture of Argentina's presidency by Peronism, the country experienced a spiral of political and economic crises which no government, whether elected or not, could end. While Perón was safely in exile, Argentina's civilian and military leaders' greatest difficulty was how to treat large segments in society that still remained under Perón's populist spell. Ultimately, the failure of mainstream liberal parties to integrate the Peronists led to more political violence. Two attempts by elected presidents Frondizi (1958–62) and Arturo Illia (1963–6) to allow the Peronist party to run in elections ended in military takeovers. Here is a précis of the political situation in Argentina during the years following the first period of Peronism:

> Between 1958 and 1973 Argentina suffered more military revolts, both successful and unsuccessful, than any nation of the world except Iraq. Only India had more politically inspired labor strikes, and only the United States, racked by Vietnam protests, had more student demonstrations. Countries suffering all-out civil wars, like South Vietnam, Nigeria, or the Congo, had more bombings, armed assaults, and kidnappings, but Argentina ranked just below them. Some 287 people were murdered for political reasons, including ex-president Aramburu and two CGT [General Confederation of Workers, a trade union] leaders, Augusto Vandor and José Alonso. [. . .] In that period, Argentina underwent more cabinet changes than any country in the noncommunist world. It also had one of the worst GNP growth rates in Latin America: its average of 1.9 percent a year outperforming only Haiti, Uruguay, and probably Cuba. (Lewis 1990: 248)

Peronism returned to power after the presidential elections of March 1973. Although Perón was not allowed to run for president, his stand-in, Héctor Cámpora, won with 49 percent of the vote. In April, Peronists also won large majorities in congressional and gubernatorial elections throughout the country. In June, Perón returned from exile and in July Cámpora resigned from his post and called for new elections to be held in September. This time Perón campaigned as the Justicialist Party nominee and, not surprisingly, received a handsome 62 percent of the vote. This is how he returned to office for a third term with Isabel, his third wife, as vice president (for an excellent overview of the period, see Di Tella 1983).

But Perón failed to deliver what he had hoped to, namely, the restoration of political order and the enabling of economic growth. Instead, violence raged unabated, also splitting Peronism into right- and left-wing factions (Moyano 2012). The assassination of José Rucci, the CGT secretary general, just two days after the September presidential elections, forced Perón to declare an all-out war against leftist Peronism, especially the Montoneros, an urban guerilla group that endorsed Perón's populist ideals. Nor did social peace and economic development materialize. Unfortunately for Perón, the 1973 oil crisis hit Argentina's economy hard and that had negative repercussions for attempts to achieve social truce. As inflation went on an unstoppable spike, so workers' strikes for wage adjustments became more common and more violent. And as wages could not keep up with inflation, both government and labor were quick to blame the elites, invariably labeled "speculators," "negative elements," "enemies of the people," and "collaborators with foreign interests" (Lewis 1990: 428). Polarization skyrocketed.

When, on July 1, 1974, Perón died, Argentina seemed to be more ungovernable than ever. In an ostensible act of charismatic succession, the presidency passed to his widow, Isabel, even if she obviously lacked the intellectual capacity and political skills to run the crisis-ridden country. Soon the government faced complete paralysis, sinking fast in corruption and graft. It all came to a disgraceful end on March 24, 1976, when Isabel was taken by helicopter from the presidential residency in Buenos Aires to a military base, where she was held prisoner. A military junta under General Jorge Videla was promptly established in power and undertook the task of restoring order in a political and economic system that was in apparent chaos. The dictatorship, which was to rule Argentina until 1983, was one of the most repressive and brutal in postwar Latin American history. It fell after the shameful defeat of Argentina in war with Britain over the Falkland Islands.[2]

[2] In subsequent years, more political and economic calamities were to hit Argentina. Ruled by successive populist governments, the country experienced the most severe economic crises among developed nations. In early 1982, it defaulted on its $155 billion public debt, which at the time was the largest such default by any country in history. In 2001, it experienced a new

Greece, 1981–2012

When PASOK first rose to power in October 1981, Greece was already a consolidated democracy, with a liberal constitution, well-structured party system and, since January of that year, the tenth member of the European Community (Alivizatos 1993, Pappas 1999). And yet, under PASOK's two consecutive populist governments in the 1980s, Greece entered into a vicious cycle of polarization, fiscal profligacy, and disrespect for governmental and civic institutions. What had happened?

First, polarization was felt at the mass level of politics as society became bitterly divided between the seemingly irreconcilable supporters of the populist government and ND, the major opposition party. It was physically manifested through intense political mobilization; the politicization of society along party divisions; and even the separation of coffee shops throughout the country into "green" (for PASOK) and "blue" (for ND) according to the partisan identities of their patrons. Second, fiscal profligacy became evident in all indices of growth, which remained stagnant; investment, which sank; and public debt, which surged from 39.4 percent of GDP in 1980 to 109.2 percent of GDP in 1990 (OECD 1991: 13). Third, Andreas Papandreou, PASOK's charismatic leader showed no respect for government institutions, as most characteristically demonstrated in the following incident: During its second term in office (1985–9), Greece's populist government had tried for quite some time to implement a drastic stabilization program, only to see it halted by its leader's fiat during a party rally shortly before the 1989 parliamentary elections. On that occasion, standing on a balcony overlooking a large crowd, Papandreou publicly commanded his finance minister, Dimitri Tsovolas, to be of service to the people with the words "Tsovolas, empty the coffers!"—which was greeted with enthusiastic cheers from the thousands of supporters who had gathered to watch him.

In 1990, after almost a decade of PASOK's populism, ND regained office and, under the leadership of moderate Constantine Mitsotakis, endeavored to reinstitute liberalism and reinvigorate the economy (see Featherstone 1994, Trantidis 2014). The new government established as its top priority the country's preparation for joining the European Single Market, and moved accordingly to cut public spending and reform the civil service. In parallel with seeking to achieve fiscal consolidation, the new government also adopted a privatization agenda (New Democracy 1987: 14), while, in foreign affairs, it tried to restore ties with Washington and NATO.

fiscal crisis during which the government again defaulted on its debts, both domestic and foreign. In an ensuing "banking holiday" all deposits were frozen, the exchange of pesos to U.S. dollars tripled overnight, and inflation went up by at least 30 percent.

ND's reform program met ferocious opposition from many segments in Greek society, whose interests had been settled under the previous populist model of political economy, and triggered a general rebellion by opposition parties, trade unions, organized professional interests, the general public and, worst of all, intra-ND groups, especially those associated with the state and enjoying entitlements derived from it. Political polarization and social unrest returned to Greek politics with renewed energy. Led primarily by PASOK, the labor unions orchestrated countless demonstrations against the reformist government, the student community organized sit-ins in schools and universities that lasted for several months,[3] governing politicians distanced themselves from reformist policy implementation lest they take the blame for it, and the opposition press portrayed the government and its members as intransigent neoliberal zealots. The combination of intense external and internal opposition to the liberal ND administration made the proposed structural reforms and policy alternatives impossible to implement, and in 1993 the government collapsed, at the same time opening the way for evergreen charismatic Papandreou and his populist PASOK's return to power. What happened next was quite remarkable.

After its dismal spell in power, ND faced a hard choice: Should it cling to liberalism or learn to play the game of vote-catching populism? As it turned out, the outgoing Mitsotakis administration was liberalism's feeble last hurrah (Pappas 2014b). ND decided to follow the populist path under the leadership of a new leader, Miltiades Evert. He promptly rebranded ND a "people's party" and set out to outbid PASOK's already excessive promises. Thus occurred in Greece, to use Kazin's (1995: 4) felicitous phrase, the "migration" of populism from left to right, with the extraordinary transformation of an erstwhile liberal party into populist. Soon, populism contaminated the country's entire party and political system, and became the sole rational strategy for winning office. In Greece's polarized two-party system, the only way to win office was by addressing "the people" whose interests were allegedly under threat from the opposite party's elites, by fueling polarization in order to keep your votes together, and by promising to satisfy the interests of the majority with no regard for institutional legality and minority rights.

Papandreou died in 1996 but his charisma endured. As concisely stated in one of the obituaries written at his death,

> Perhaps his most remarkable achievement was that, after he won power in 1981, a solid two-fifths (or more) of the Greek people continued to vote for him however much his policies zigzagged, however demagogic his rhetoric, however erratic his

[3] It was during the student uprising of those years that Alexis Tsipras, then a high school student and member of the Communist Youth, led the occupation of his school in Athens, and rose to prominence as one of the leaders of the student movement when he was invited as a guest on a popular TV show.

> fiscal management, however corrupt his inner court of cronies, however exotic his private life. (*The Economist*, June 29, 1996)

Little would this devotion to Andreas Papandreou and his political legacy change in the years to come. By then, as described by one of his sons, Nick, the deceased leader's old populist narrative and practices "had been firmly established and you would be hard pressed to find a Greek [party that] did not borrow elements of the original story that he had helped shape" (Papandreou 2014: 27). Even today, for large parts of Greece's electorate, Papandreou is considered "the most important prime minister in post-authoritarian Greece" and his first government (1981–5) "the best government Greece has ever had" (Mavris 2007). It is little wonder, then, that PASOK was never able to relinquish populism and return to liberal normalcy. No wonder, too, that in 2004 PASOK tried to resuscitate its founder's charisma by electing another of his sons, George Papandreou, to the party leadership.

Eventually, when it was evident that a major crisis was imminent in Greece, George Papandreou won the 2009 parliamentary elections with a hefty 43.9 percent of the national vote on a strategy of uncompromising polarization and irresponsible overpromising. On the campaign trail, he opposed austerity policies and promised to enhance market liquidity by reinforcing middle and lower incomes. But when asked about how such a plan could be financed, Papandreou replied in fine populist prose: "The money exists, it is only that [the current ND government] prefers to give it to the few and powerful" (*The Guardian* 2011).

By then, as has been explained in previous chapters, the fiscal crisis was just around the corner, and when it broke out it inevitably caused the end of the old populism of both PASOK and ND in Greece. But, most interestingly, it did not lead to the reinstitution of liberalism. Instead, it created perfect conditions for the emergence of new anti-liberal forces, whether populist or nondemocratic, both striving alike to win over the populist voters. Their differences notwithstanding, all newly emergent anti-liberal parties made use of the distinctly populist narrative that for decades had resonated in the Greek voter's mindset. As Nick Papandreou again explains:

> The sway that this narrative still has over the Greek citizen is clear in the fact that all parties today have stolen bits and pieces of PASOK rhetoric. Tsipras, the leader of the left, has modeled his words and even his oratory on Andreas—even his enunciation and hand movements are recognizable as an outright copy. . . . The Golden Dawn Nazi party uses Andreas Papandreou's main slogan from the 1960s: "Greece belongs to the Greeks!" The so-called Independent Greeks [ANEL] party asks for "the true Greeks of PASOK, the nationalists," to vote for them. (Papandreou 2014: 29–30)

Greece was already heading towards a deeper economic crisis, more intense polarization, and the revival of populism in office. At the time of this writing (late 2018), no clear exit from that spiraling crisis is visible in Greece.

Autocracy

Similarly to the older cases of Argentina and Greece, populism in Venezuela and Hungary was introduced and established in power by single charismatic leaders, Hugo Chávez and Viktor Orbán, respectively. Both leaders thrived on intense polarization, each succeeding in making his party the predominant political force in his country. While in office, these leaders took meticulous care to shatter the opposition, manipulate institutions, and tilt the electoral field in their favor. As a result, in both Venezuela and Hungary, the opposition became ideologically fragmented and politically demoralized, short on organizational cohesion and long on personal ambition. With the liberal opposition plummeting and unable to withstand aggressive illiberalism, the populist leaders turned increasingly autocratic. From there on, the trajectories of the two countries diverged, again depending on the availability in each of them of charismatic leadership. In Hungary, where Orbán's charisma has been perfectly maintained, the path to autocracy has been continuous but, so far, has not crossed the line towards dictatorship. Venezuela followed a similar path as long as Chávez was in power. But when his successor, Nicolás Maduro, found himself in power lacking charisma and sufficient legitimacy, his option was to take populist autocracy a step further—to pure authoritarianism. As with the previous pair of countries, a short analysis of Venezuela and Hungary is in order.

Venezuela, since 1998

In Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, in office from 1999 until his death in March 2013, forged a leftist populist regime thanks to his personal political charisma but also, at least during the earliest phase of his rule, to high oil prices. The *chavista* era was a feast of democratic activity and illiberal deeds. According to one report, in the no less than sixteen elections that were held in Venezuela under Chávez, there were "more than 45 types of electoral irregularities, usually involving biased enforcement of electoral laws and often outright violations" (Corrales 2015: 43). Never eager to negotiate with the opposition, Chávez pursued a strategy of political polarization that soon led to the creation of a deep cleavage between his regime supporters and their liberal opponents. Such an internal split of the nation into friends (the *pueblo*) and foes (the enemies of the *pueblo*) offered the populist regime a legitimation basis to reward its supporters with what they considered the most important recompense or, better, bounty: state clientelism. Heading an oil-producing nation precisely at a time when world oil prices experienced a spectacular upwards spike was for Chávez a sign of good luck.

The oil windfall, especially after 2003, allowed Chávez's regime to abandon any fiscal responsibility in favor of expansionary fiscal and monetary policies,

including the swelling of state-owned enterprises and massive social handouts earmarked mostly for political supporters. For a few years, oil revenues provided generous subsidies for consumer goods and services from fuel to foodstuffs and from medicine to electricity. They were also used in Chávez's petro-diplomacy, especially his foreign aid program, known as Petrocaribe, which aimed to supply cheap oil to several small Caribbean and Central American countries in exchange for diplomatic support for Venezuela.

Despite several partial imbalances, between 2004 and 2008 Venezuela's economy generally showed strong growth. Yet, by the second half of 2008, world oil prices took a sharp downturn and, as state expenditures surpassed revenue, the government found itself under heavy fiscal pressure. To avoid taking unpopular austerity measures, it then responded with price controls in the economy and the curtailment of bank liquidity, which, in turn, led to consumer goods shortages, rising inflation, and capital flight. Venezuela's economy entered into a deadly, swirling crisis. However, although exports collapsed, Chávez's regime continued to spend lavishly for economic and political expediency reasons. Fiscal deficit increased from 2.8 percent of GDP in 2007 to almost 16 percent in 2012; at the end of the latter year, inflation surpassed 25 percent, then the third highest rate in the world (see Corrales 2013). As the economic situation became increasingly dire, and his own popularity took a dive, Chávez adopted an autocratic style of rule—one that violated institutional legality, enfeebled checks and balances, sought to control the media, intimidated the opposition, and crippled the autonomy of civil society.

In 2012, having long suffered from cancer but still declaring himself ready to serve his country, Chávez won his fourth presidential election with 54 percent of the vote. And when he died, in March 2013, he was still in full control of his party organization and in charge of his government and policy agenda. As for his supporters, he had never ceased being considered the ultimate charismatic leader: a symbol, a martyr, an exemplar, the second Bolívar, a saint, a spirit (Michelutti 2017). Popular belief in Chávez's super-human personality and outstanding political qualities would be carefully preserved and adroitly utilized by his successor in Venezuela's leadership, Nicolás Maduro.

Maduro, a former bus driver, trade union leader, and regime loyalist, had served Chávez's governments in several top state positions, the last of which being Minister of Foreign Affairs. Unlike his mentor, Maduro lacked personal charisma, political skills, and even luck. In 2013, he won the presidential race—promptly denounced by the opposition as fraudulent—by just 1.5 percentage points. With doubts now raised within the chavist PSUV, as well as the military, about his viability as a leader, Maduro responded by sticking to the policies of his predecessor in the hope of preserving the old social alliance structures and traditional political allegiances. That was, however,

in vain since Venezuela's economic situation was rapidly worsening. Galloping inflation created shortages of food while crime rates took a dangerous upward spike (Corrales 2015, Smilde 2015).

In early 2014, as foodstuffs, medicines, and other basic goods became scarce, mass protests broke out and soon escalated into daily riots nationwide. Maduro responded to civil insurrection in two ways—rhetorically, by intensifying polarization, and politically, by state violence and repression. First, the regime's propaganda machine aimed to generate fear and imagined threats to the country's manufacturing base. It blamed the country's woes on an "economic war" supposedly waged against it by domestic elites in collaboration with international political opposition. Second, to physically stop the protests Maduro sent in the National Guard and the national police, thus infringing civic rights of the freedom of assembly and expression. More than 3,000 citizens were reportedly detained, many of them also harassed by armed civilians friendly to the government (Smilde 2015: 54).

In a parliamentary election held in December 2015, the first to take place after Chávez's death, the allied opposition won a three-fifths supermajority that, for a brief moment, was regarded as enough to claw back power from the president. But Maduro, by now deeply unpopular, was determined to cling to power. In May 2016, the regime-controlled electoral council blocked an attempt by the opposition to recall him from office. Venezuela's descent into authoritarianism accelerated in March 2017, when the puppet supreme court dissolved the opposition-controlled legislature. Although partially reversed in April, that move intensified dissatisfaction and led to even more protest demonstrations on the streets. Not long after, as the economy continued to slump and poverty to rise, Maduro announced plans to convoke a hand-picked assembly to rewrite Chávez's constitution of 1999. Indeed, a fresh electoral contest held in 2017, convened by presidential decree but boycotted by the opposition, produced a constituent assembly that was composed entirely of PSUV members. It subsequently became the regime's chief means for dictating policy and for stifling opposition dissent. But elections were not over yet for 2017 in Venezuela. In December, a new mayoral election, in which the three main opposition parties fielded no candidates, gave Maduro the chance to boast another victory, however a hollow one. It also offered him an opportunity to inch closer to dictatorship. With new presidential elections forthcoming, Venezuela's president declared that the parties that shunned the mayoral ballot had disqualified themselves from all future elections—an act immediately backed by the stooge constituent assembly. In 2018, Maduro was able to secure a fresh presidential term in office with 67.8 percent of the vote. It was an election characterized by the lowest turnout (46.07 percent) in Venezuela's democratic history. The only thing was, on account of electoral fraud and political violence, Venezuela was no longer a real democracy.

Hungary, since 2010

In our comparative probe into populism, Hungary presents a most interesting case for at least three reasons: The great speed and success in building a populist regime, especially in a country that is part of the EU bloc of liberal democracies; the exportability of the Hungarian model of illiberal democracy to other countries in Europe and beyond; and the clear penchant of Hungarian populism for more autocracy rather than for a return to the liberal canon.

As shown in Chapter 4, under the leadership of Viktor Orbán, consecutive Fidesz governments since 2010 have succeeded in transforming Hungary into an ideal-type of populist regime proudly self-described as an "illiberal democracy." During that period, polarization in politics has increased steeply, checks and balances have been systematically dismantled, and the economy, despite overall growth, has taken on the characteristics of crony capitalism (Magyar 2016). Interestingly enough, similarly to what happened in populist Greece during the 1980s and 1990s, Hungary's economic growth under Fidesz has been highly dependent on EU funds. According to one authoritative source, between 2009 and 2016, such funding constituted nearly 4 percent of Hungary's GDP per year, one of the highest rations in the bloc (European Commission 2018).

As with Greece, the rise of populism in Hungary cannot be understood without taking into account the growing polarization that has become its most important characteristic. Political polarization helped create a deep rift in society that is well captured in the following description by a political scientist and Fidesz MEP:

> Hungarian society [has become] deeply divided—in fact, it is in a state of "cold civil war." The extraordinarily deep cleavage, unparalleled in Europe after 1945, is far more than a political phenomenon. It can be described as ontological, and is about qualitatively different and mutually exclusive visions of justice, of good and evil, of the country's past, and ultimately, of the "good life." (Schöpflin 2007)

As Hungarian society split into two ideologically and politically antagonistic camps in a field where Fidesz alone had already chosen to represent democratic illiberalism, some smaller liberal parties ceased to exist (e.g., the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) or the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP)), while others offered to sign electoral agreements with Fidesz (e.g., the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF)) or simply turned themselves into populist parties when in office (as was the case with the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP) in the 2000s). By the time Fidesz returned to office in 2010, populism had become the unmistakable characteristic of most parties across Hungary's party system spectrum (Pappas 2014b).

By the same time, too, Orbán had seized total control over Fidesz and was able to dictate his own populist narrative and policy positions. Even when

Fidesz suffered two consecutive electoral defeats in 2002 and 2006, Orbán went forth and, by dividing and discrediting the opposition, he triumphed in 2010 by winning a two-thirds parliamentary majority. Since then, with his poll ratings inside Hungary always high, Orbán has gone on to transform Hungary "through legislative fiat and force of will" (Kingsley 2018) into what Scheppele (2013: 560) has termed an illiberal "Frankenstate."

In parallel, Orbán has achieved international fame as a political trailblazer and role model for other populists, while, for a long time, European Union officials did very little either to stop the slippage of the country into institutionalized populism or defend political liberalism at a European level.[4] At the same time, even more ominously, Orbán's model of democratic illiberalism has had a strong attraction for other leaders in Europe and, possibly, the Americas.[5] In several speeches and other public proclamations, the Hungarian leader has argued that Europe's postwar liberal consensus is now at an end, and this belief is being used as a template in various other places. It is, thus, primarily due to his influence that the four post-communist EU states (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) have emerged as a nationalistic and largely illiberal group, blocking European integration, and thereby also assisting Russia's expansionist strategy. Witness the following incident:

After its 2015 electoral victory, Poland's populist Law and Order (PiS) party became particularly emboldened in its initiatives thanks to the successes of Hungarian populism. In a public appearance together in September 2016, Poland's strongman Jaroslaw Kaczynski and Hungary's Viktor Orbán pledged to wage a common political and cultural "counter-revolution" to radically reform Europe. Orbán was particularly eloquent: "There is a saying in Hungary," he said, "that if you trust somebody, we say 'you can steal horses together'." To which a smiling Kaczynski replied: "There are a few stables, and one particularly large one called the EU, where we can steal horses with Hungarians." And then he added: "For us, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has demonstrated in Europe that things are possible. You have given an example and we are learning from your example" (all quotations from Foy and Buckley 2016).

Finally, since Viktor Orbán and his party came to power in 2010, almost continuously enjoying a constitutional supermajority of seats that enables them to rewrite the rules of the democratic game and so remake Hungarian politics at will, the tendency has clearly been one of taking the country away from liberalism and towards autocracy. In a report issued in early 2018 by a respectable German research group, Hungary was said to be "nearing" the

[4] For EU institutions' more recent reaction to Hungary's populist regime, see the closing paragraphs of "Institutional Blitz" in Chapter 5.1, pp. 203–4.

[5] To take just one example, Steve Bannon, a former White House Chief Strategist under US President Donald Trump, said that he admired Viktor Orbán as a "hero" and "the most significant guy on the scene right now": https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/09/world/europe/horowitz-europe-populism.html.

threshold of autocracy (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018, European Parliament 2018). Many have, in fact, questioned whether Hungary under Orbán's rule still constitutes a democracy. True enough, populism has damaged democracy by degrading its principles and distorting its processes, but, even as a fierce critic of Orbán's regime accepts, classifying it as authoritarianism is problematic. For, indeed, in today's Hungary,

> it remains perfectly possible to demonstrate on the streets, publish critical blog posts, or found new political parties. The game is being rigged, but it is not impossible—yet—to win an election on the basis of criticizing the populists in power. Perhaps, then, a designation like "defective democracy" would be more appropriate. Democracy has been damaged and is in need of serious repair, but it would be misleading and premature to speak of dictatorship. (Müller 2016a: 58)

It is equally true, however, that, despite all demonstrations on the streets, critical blog publishing, and the founding of new parties, in the national elections of 2018 Viktor Orbán was able to win his third consecutive victory, also preserving his two-thirds supermajority in parliament. This naturally raises the question: Is it really possible in future elections to defeat the ruling Fidesz when it has tilted the playing field in its favor? The answer, I submit, lies in whether that party's leader and current prime minister is able to retain his charisma. If he loses it for any reason (see Section 7.2), his party will become significantly weakened and will probably be torn by internal infighting. The new leadership will then be faced with a dilemma similar to Maduro's, albeit in a quite different political and institutional context: Deprived of charismatic leadership, would they steer Hungary back to liberalism, thus risking re-election, or follow the road to autocracy, thus risking EU membership and more? This part of Hungary's populist story is yet to be written.

Dispersal

There is, finally, the case of populism that rises to power thanks to an extraordinary leader, who is, however, unable to sustain his charismatic qualities for long. As exemplified by the cases of Italy's Silvio Berlusconi, Peru's Alberto Fujimori, and Ecuador's Rafael Correa, this may happen for a variety of reasons ranging from a normal withering away of charismatic allure (as indicated by both Berlusconi's and Correa's progressive loss of direct relationship to their party base), the ability of liberal institutions to tarnish populist appeal (as happened with retributive justice in the case of scandals related to Fujimori's leadership), or the emergence of political competitors with charismatic potential, that is, better organized parties and more radical political messages (as indicated by the emergence in Italy of novel party types led by organizationally innovative and ideologically flexible leaders).

Whatever the case, the common outcome in all of them is that, when the founding populist leader's charisma is gone, their populist parties tend to decline irreversibly, or disappear totally. Populism, however, becomes dispersed across the political system, affecting most other parties. Whether it may be revived, or not, will depend on a number of causal factors, including the resilience of institutions, the strength of liberal opposition, and contingent crises. But, above all, it will depend on the availability of new charismatic populist leaders ready to reunite the scattered populist constituency and turn it once again into a formidable political force.

Italy

Regardless of whether he was able or not to bend the institutions of Italy's liberal state or to maintain his personal control over his parties and appeal to his supporters, Berlusconi's charisma eventually faded away and disappeared altogether. In August 2013, the Supreme Court handed down its conviction of the ex-prime minister on various criminal charges, together with a four-year prison sentence. Even worse, Berlusconi was afterwards expelled from the senate and barred from elective office. "Across Rome," wrote Berlusconi's biographer, "jubilant anti-Berlusconi crowds took to the streets to cheer the court sentence, popping open bottles of Champagne and rejoicing in this" (Friedman 2015: 242). With the chips down, Berlusconi could not keep his allies together. Then, in a desperate effort for political survival, he revived his Forza Italia! (FI) party but to no avail. His former party secretary, Angelino Alfano, together with several former Berlusconi party strongmen, refused to join FI, deciding instead to form another party (called New Center-Right). As Berlusconi struggled for survival, stubbornly refusing to consider a plan for succession, more and more of his old supporters turned their backs on him. In the 2014 elections for the European Parliament his party received only 16.8 percent of the vote, an all-time low. In the following year's elections for governorships, FI received around 10 percent. Meanwhile, new populist leaders had appeared on the scene overshadowing Berlusconi. In 2010, another media personality-turned-politician, Beppe Grillo, co-founded the Five Star Movement (M5S) a party that blended populist rhetoric with liberal spirit, leftist oratory with conservative policies, personalist leadership with impersonal intraparty processes. And in 2013 Matteo Salvini assumed the leadership of the Northern League party and became determined to transform it from a regional-based force to one with national appeal. He ditched the word "Northern" and styled the party simply as "League" while, in parallel, he abandoned the old party themes about secession and adopted a more nativist and anti-EU discourse. Amidst such dramatic political changes, and although he was banned from public office until 2019, octogenarian Berlusconi decided to run once again in the elections of 2018 for the premiership. When the

ballots were counted, FI was found to have finished fourth with a paltry 14 percent, behind both the M5S and Salvini's rebranded League. It was the end of populism Berlusconi-style. But, certainly, it was not the end of populism, which by then had become widely dispersed in Italian party politics.

Ecuador

At the time of the 2017 presidential elections in Ecuador, outgoing president Rafael Correa could boast that he had brought political stability to a country that, before his decade-long presidency, had seen incessant instability, several coups, and a currency collapse. But he was not allowed to run again for the presidency. In 2014, well into his last term in office and following the example of Hugo Chávez, he attempted to change the constitution and eliminate term limits that would have made possible his indefinite stay in power. That galvanized the opposition and, in the face of mass protests against the proposed constitutional reform, Correa backed down. Now, with presidential elections forthcoming, he handpicked Lenín Moreno as candidate of the ruling PAIS Alliance (AP). Correa nurtured a hope and nursed a fear. The hope was that Moreno would win the race and then continue his so-called "citizens' revolution" and achieve "21st-century socialism" (Conaghan 2011). The fear was that, if Moreno fell short, a president from the center-right would bring a decade of plebiscitary *correísmo* to an end (Conaghan 2008). In a curious way, both Correa's hope and fear came true: Moreno scored a victory, albeit a narrow one, but then, despite his pledge to continue Correa's policies, he decided to be his own man with his own—mostly liberal—ideas. Where his predecessor was a polarizing rabble-rouser, the new president became a consensus-seeker, building bridges with the opposition and various interest groups in society. He purged AP and the government from officials facing corruption charges and vowed to respect the constitution and rule of law. He also promised to grant full independence to the judiciary, the electoral authority, and the prosecutor's office. Ecuador's future development is, of course, hard to predict, but much depends on the success of the new president's liberal changes over his predecessor's populist agenda. All the same, Ecuador's case shows that transitions from populist to liberal rule can occasionally be successful and even productive. It often takes just a leader, who is animated by pragmatism and able to hold on to institutions, to pull a country back from the populist brink.

Peru

Once in office after the 1990 elections, Alberto Fujimori, like many a populist leader before or after him, showed no real wish for political compromise, near zero patience for institutional political procedure, and barely any respect for

constitutional legality. Already by early 1991, the political climate in Peru was heavily polarized and there was talk of impeachment (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018: 74). Fujimori's initial response was to try ruling by decree. But when this proved insufficient, he decided, in April 1992, to simply dissolve parliament by coup and revoke the constitution. Ironically, perhaps, Fujimori's popularity increased in the aftermath of the coup, which allowed him in 1995 to win a fresh presidential mandate with almost two-thirds of the vote. For the rest of the 1990s, he continued to rule Peru in an autocratic way, especially since opposition remained fragmented and unable to prevent him from dismantling institutional checks and balances. In the presidential elections of 2000, Fujimori won a third term in office with 51 percent of the vote in the second round, and even survived a round of post-electoral protests for alleged irregularities in the polls. Fujimori's fall, and the implosion of his populist regime, was brought about by a corruption scandal. In September 2001, a video was released showing Vladimiro Montesinos, the head of Peru's intelligence service, bribing an opposition leader to defect to Fujimori's party. Almost immediately, the president's legitimacy vanished, his government disintegrated, and his mass support collapsed. Seeing no real way out, Fujimori resigned and so his regime was also gone. As everyone in Peru seemed to agree at the time, if it were not for the release of the video and its ensuing scandal, the Fujimori populist government might well have survived (Levitsky and Cameron 2003: 21).

7.2. POPULISM RESISTED

Populism matters a whole lot. As today's liberal democracies seem to have entered into a clearly perceptible process of decay, it stands as a realistic option, which, however inimical to political liberalism, is still democratic. It represents an innovative and radical political project that seeks to replace the old postwar liberal democratic arrangement with a new one that keeps the electoral element but has no use for the liberal component. As the empirical evidence abundantly shows, when the appropriate conditions are present and the causality chain is set into seamless motion, populism may achieve impressive outcomes: Electoral landslides, polity constitutional rearrangements, long office tenures, the ethical and moral transformation of societies. Wherever it governed, or is at present governing, in postwar Europe and the Americas, populism, invariably led by extraordinary leaders, has expanded the boundaries of the political, increased the amount of social participation, broken the liberal opposition, prompted surprising political alliances, articulated new norms, and transformed institutional and power structures, often beyond recognition. But populism's radicalism can lead it off the democratic script,

as well. Standing uneasily between liberal democracy and autocracy, populism may eventually turn nondemocratic. Evidence of that trend has also been shown to abound.

As we are now approaching the end of this book, a final set of questions inevitably emerges: What are the empirical and theoretical lessons learned from the comparative analysis of populisms in modern and contemporary Europe and the Americas? How can the lessons learned in this book help us understand more recent and forthcoming cases of populist rule, such as those that have emerged in Greece and the United States, but also in Poland, Mexico, or elsewhere? And what kind of general predictions can we make about the future of liberalism in the face of the populist threat? Evidently, most recommendations on fighting populism come from liberal think tanks or liberal-minded academics and other intellectuals. Most of the proposed solutions, however, are rather unrealistic or impractical, always fragmentary, usually verging on mere wishful thinking.

Take, for instance, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, which in November 2017 organized a mega conference entitled "Is Populism a Problem?" after which it produced a report with a number of "recommendations" (Council of Europe 2017). The report includes no less than two dozen fixes and other general advice addressed to specific social and political agencies, such as political parties (e.g., "Reinforce and apply codes of ethical conduct, through use of sanctioning mechanisms"); the media (e.g., "Be more self-critical, responsibility for keeping democracy on line is a shared one"); local, regional, and national authorities (e.g., "Enhance integration policies"); civil society (e.g., "Co-operate with media and justice institutions to counter political corruption"); and international organizations (e.g., "Establish and monitor standards for the use of big data for political campaigning").

Or, to continue with more wishful thinking, consider how academics, pundits, and other intellectuals deplore populism, at the same time offering as an antidote to it a concoction of policy ideas and good citizen practices (Galston 2018). Some liberal thinkers put all the emphasis on preserving such traditional democratic norms as self-control, restraint, and tolerance: "When American democracy has worked," we are reminded, "it has relied upon two norms that we often take for granted—mutual tolerance and institutional forbearance" (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018: 212; also 102). For others, preventing populism from destroying democracy is a far more demanding task since what is required is

> to unite citizens around a common conception of their nation; to give them real hope for their economic future; and to make them more resistant to the lies and the hate they encounter on social media each and every day. It is these immense challenges that will define our fight against populism, and for a better society, in the decades to come. (Mounk 2018: 194)

For still others, the solution rests on all of us liberal democrats who must "engage" the populists in debates with proper arguments and plenty of evidence, but also on the symbolic level (Müller 2016a: 84, 85). However, as we know well by now, populism prospers precisely where rational arguments are inessential and empirical evidence is scarce or, even more simply, fake; besides, populists are masterful when it comes to symbolic politics. Even so, as Edward Luce admonishes in a recent book:

> In the years ahead, we must be especially alert to Benjamin Franklin's wise words: "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance". Liberal elites, in particular, will have to resist the temptation to carry on with their comfortable lives and imagine they are doing their part by signing up to [an] occasional Facebook protest.
>
> (Luce 2017: 203–4)

Alas, notwithstanding the value of many of the recommendations proposed, none of them individually or any of them in combination will suffice to overcome populism in the political arena if we still fail to understand its real nature and internal logic; its causal factors and electoral appeal; above all, its leadership at both the symbolic and the politically strategic level. Let us, then, for just a brief moment, revisit the issue of the pathways that populism in power may take, as analyzed in Section 7.1, and see what are the lessons learned from that comparison, especially with regard to charismatic leadership. There are four major takeaways.

First, charismatic leadership is not only necessary for populism to emerge in power (see Chapter 3.2); it is also essential for the conduct of populist rule. It moreover explains the remarkable longevity of populism in office, despite the political and economic crises it tends to produce as a result of its preference for combining polarizing political tactics with profligate economic policies.

Second, populist rule is highly contingent on the vicissitudes of populist leadership. Leaders who succeed in preserving their charisma throughout their rule continue to have an impact on the parties they once founded even after their deaths. And leaders who see their charisma wither away, also see their populist parties decline, and even disintegrate totally.

Third, charismatic leadership may come to a—temporary or permanent—end in various ways including, but not limited to, charismatic atrophy; the strength of legal–bureaucratic liberal institutions able to withstand charismatic authority; damaging political and economic scandals; or forceful overthrow (as happened in 1955 in Argentina).

Fourth, populism may turn autocratic in cases of either unbounded charisma (as in Hungary) or unsuccessful charismatic succession (as in Venezuela). In the former case, autocracy becomes feasible for charismatic leaders in situations where both the opposition and the liberal institutions are feeble. In the latter case, successors of charismatic leaders who are devoid of charisma

themselves may have no other option for holding onto power than to switch from democratic illiberalism to outright autocracy.

With these four important lessons in mind, let us now think about all the possible ways for liberal opposition (including ordinary voters and political elites) to react to populism. There are three such ways: *surrender*, *conformity*, and *resistance*. In the first instance, and in the face of a powerful populist regime that has colonized the state and debilitated the institutions, employs large-scale polarization, and is in complete control of state resources and its preferential distribution, the liberal segments of society simply cave in, eventually giving up in defeat. In the second instance, and under similar conditions of populist rule as the ones just described, the opposition may conform to populism and abandon liberalism. This can only happen, however, under two conditions: Either when state resources are sufficient for satisfying an increasingly large number of populism converts or when two populist parties alternate regularly in power so that all populist voters share in limited state resources, each in turn. It is only in the third instance that liberal opposition is determined to stand up to populism and fight for the return of liberal democracy. This, however, requires leadership with a clear vision, plenty of party organizational resources, and a novel symbolic and political discourse. In short, rather than the "trimmers" of old, it requires new radical liberal leaders. Leaders, in other words, who are able to turn the rudder hard to steer democracy's vessel away from populism and towards liberalism.

This assertion will make perfect sense if we reconsider the beginnings of modern liberalism. We often tend to overlook the fact that, long before liberalism became the current political model, its postwar rise was an extraordinarily radical episode in world political history. The military victor over fascism and Nazism, liberalism brought lasting peace and democracy; breaking from the traditional prewar order, it became the harbinger of modernity and progress; and substituting the collective utopianism of past eras with individual rationality, it called for citizens to be the authors of their own destiny within constitutionally guaranteed institutional structures. Born in 1945, modern liberal democracy presented as an entirely novel (and, indeed, radical) political system with its own legal foundations, procedural rules, normative aims, and political legitimacy, which enabled the creation of multiple arenas for participation and contestation: Political parties, interest groups, nongovernmental organizations, and a flourishing civil society. They all contributed to the astonishing development of liberal democratic practices by means of free and fair elections, the rise of social movements, the expansion of individual and social rights, the proliferation of opportunities for education, and the incessant symbolic production of new meanings and ideas. Eventually, especially after the two waves of liberal expansion, first in the mid-1970s and then in the late 1980s, both Europe and the Americas experienced an extraordinary change of norms,

values, and institutions, which in turn regulated politics, markets, and the organization of social life in those global regions.

Yet, progressively, liberalism has ceased to be yesteryear's extraordinary project and has become routinized—and then increasingly unprincipled, fraudulent, and opaque. And citizens have become discontented with what they perceive as liberal decay: Increased bureaucratization and institutional rigidity in politics, the recycling of political elites and the rise of technocracy, the entrenchment of interest groups, the lack of transparency, widespread corruption, and spreading cynicism. Meanwhile, liberal democracy has experienced a series of great historical failures: The apparent exhaustion of social democracy, recurrent crises of capitalism and the inexplicable complexities of globalization, a deep disquietude with multiculturalism and, more recently, an inability to confront new challenges such as immigration and the refugee problem. Elected leaders and political elites have become of no real and practical help. Instead, during the decades of liberal democratic expansion, they have become increasingly isolated from society (Mills 1956), more complex (Dahl 1974) and technocratic (Putnam 1977), and unethically "elitist" (Bachrach 1980). Along the process, voters have come increasingly to question the representativeness of liberal democracy and distrust minority elite groups, and masses of ordinary people feel "semi-sovereign" (Schattschneider 1975). The door for populist leaders willing to offer simple solutions and promising to make the people sovereign again is already wide open.

Given the limitations, shortcomings, and failures of liberal political elites, today's populists have reason to portray contemporary liberal democracy as static and inflexible, deprived of its past legitimacy, taken hostage by unethical and impersonal bureaucracies, and regulated by antiquated institutions. In a very real sense, then, it is precisely because of a lack of fresh vision by liberal elites that populist leaders have been able to seductively promote their illiberal ideas in a large number of states. But populism is not invincible. Its main problem is that, with all its radical zeal and moralistic pretenses, it lacks a political program of its own. As Christopher Lasch once nicely put it, populism "offers no panacea for all the ills that afflict [the] modern world. It asks the right questions, but it does not provide a ready-made set of answers" (Lasch 1991: 532). Instead, as we have seen, populism spawns crisis politics.

For populism to be defeated, therefore, liberalism needs a fresh, radical beginning. At a minimum, this requires two things to come together: The unification of the liberal opposition into a major political force that will be animated by a realistically radical idea about a liberal reconstitution of society. None of those requirements is easy to achieve. Each of them calls for far-reaching political entrepreneurship capable of providing novel party organization structures, practical goals and policy solutions, new symbolic frames for political action and convincing counter-narratives. None of those objectives is possible, however, without extraordinary leadership in the sense

described in this book—one, in other words, that supplies a radical realistic program for the future, but also a political organization that is capable of assuming the implementation of such a program. That is certainly a tall order. Meanwhile, for all of us, the voters, there are two things to always bear in mind. The first is that, without a doubt, we live in a critical moment of history, and are perhaps sleepwalking through a major political paradigm shift. The second is the admonition by the great American playwright Edward Albee in one of his plays: "Remember one thing about democracy," he says, "we can have anything we want and at the same time we always end up with exactly what we deserve" (Albee 1962).

Glossary of Key Terms

Authoritarianism (often also referred as "competitive authoritarianism"). A political system of limited pluralism and low social mobilization run by an interventionist and ideological state; it occasionally allows unfair elections. It is distinguished from *totalitarianism* and *sultanism*.

Autocracy. A general term to denote any form of government in which a single individual or group of individuals (such as a junta) holds nearly unbounded and, to a large extent, arbitrary power; it comprises *authoritarianism* but also extends beyond it to include other forms of *nondemocratic* systems.

Charismatic leadership. A distinct type of legitimate leadership that is personal and aims at the radical transformation of an established institutional order. Also see *personalism*, *radicalism*.

Competitive elections. Regular, adequately free and relatively fair contests by ballot in a way that allows alternation in office. All these criteria coexist in *liberal democracy* but never in the various types of *non-democracy*.

Democracy (or *parliamentary democracy* or *representative democracy*). Instrumentally defined as a system in which incumbents may lose office after *competitive elections* with no violence or voter-intimidation. Also see, *electoral democracy*; *liberal democracy*; *non-democracy*.

Democratic illiberalism. Synonymous with *populism*.

Electoral democracy. A superfluous term given that all democracies require elections. It is used for convenience (e.g., by Freedom House) but causes the accumulation of cases by conceptual stretching. It should not be confused with *liberal democracy* since, while all liberal democracies are "electoral," not all electoral democracies are liberal.

Elitism. An empty term, unless specifically used to criticize *political liberalism* qua "democratic elitism" (as in Bachrach 1980). Significantly, liberalism *is* an elitist project.

Ethnonationalism (or ethnic nationalism). A specific type of nationalism that defines the nation in terms of a certain group's shared ethnicity; it advocates the political interests of the particular ethnic group, especially its national independence or self-determination (cf., for instance, Serbian or Catalan ethnic nationalisms as contrasted to Yugoslav and Spanish civic nationalisms). Different from *nativism*.

Illiberalism. The exact opposite of *liberalism*. It disregards individual liberty and promotes the idea of an oversoul "people," advocates polarization and disrespects the rule of law. A characteristic of *non-democracies*, it is also a core feature in populism qua *democratic illiberalism*.

Liberalism. A set of ideas based on the primacy of individual liberty over equality. It is distinguished by three interrelated tenets (a) the broad acknowledgment that society is divided by multiple and often crosscutting cleavages, which (b) necessitates the

employment of political moderation and "overlapping consensus," which in turn can only be achieved by (c) sticking to the rule of law and established institutions, as well as the protection of minority rights. When all the foregoing conditions are met, the outcome is a *liberal democracy*.

Liberal democracy. Ideal-typically, a pluralist political system based on electoral turnover *and* the rule of law. Empirically, it has been best approximated in postwar Europe and the Americas. Normatively, it is based on the principles and precepts of secular political *liberalism*. Synonymous for the most part with Dahl's *polyarchy*.

Nationalism. The idea of a nation's supremacy vis-à-vis other nations. Different from both *nativism* and *ethnonationalism*.

Nativism. In its standard (as per the Oxford English Dictionary) lexical definition, the "attitude, practice, or policy of protecting the interests of native-born or existing inhabitants against those of immigrants." It sets natives (autochthons) against aliens (allochthons) rather than nation against nation (i.e., *nationalism*). Different from *ethnonationalism*.

Non-democracy. It does not necessarily preclude elections but opposition parties, even when they are allowed to compete, cannot win office. It is distinguished by several subtypes, of which the most important are *authoritarianism*, *sultanism*, and *totalitarianism*. Synonymous with *autocracy*.

Personalism. A necessary element for *charismatic leadership* to obtain, it requires two elements: a leader's full sway over a party or movement and a leader-led relationship that is direct and unmediated.

Pluralism. A characteristic of any *democracy* by definitional fiat. It requires a party system with more than one party (otherwise, monism), the possibility of multiple affiliations in social and political life, and the acknowledgment by the state of the plurality of cultural differences in society. Best achieved in polyarchal *liberal democracy*, pluralism is impaired when populism rises strongly.

Polarization. In essence, zero-sum politics. An inherent feature of *populism*. Opposite of *political moderation*.

Political moderation. A key component of liberal democratic politics, aims at reaching consensus and creating positive-sum social and political outcomes. Opposite of *polarization*.

Polyarchy. Robert Dahl's (1971) preferred term for capturing the conditions and workings of modern *liberal democracy*.

Populism. Synonym of *democratic illiberalism*. A political system which, although pretty much *democratic*, hardly follows the principles and precepts of *political liberalism*.

Populist democracy. A democracy in which most or all of the major parties are permeated by populism. In a very real sense, a degradation of *liberal democracy*. Also see, *authoritarianism*.

Radicalism. It has always a subversive function and, therefore, precludes *political moderation*. Situated midway in the continuum from reformism to revolution, it aims at the non-violent but wholesale substitution of some legal and constitutional order by an alternative one. Together with *personalism*, it constitutes the necessary elements for *charismatic leadership*.

Sultanism. A form of nondemocratic system characterized by the predominance of the ruler, or despot, and his family and personal clique in all levels of governance. Example: North Korea.

Totalitarianism. A nondemocratic, mobilizationist, and highly bureaucratized political system based on the idea of an all-embracing state exercising *total* control on the citizens' lives—hence, a monistic party-state system as has been historically exemplified by Nazism, Stalinism, and Maoism, among others. Distinct from *authoritarianism* and *sultanism*.

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