

Abstract

During the last two decades the European societal environment has undergone crucial political transformation. The electoral support and general influence of populist parties and leaders is on the constant rise. The first results of rising populism can be seen, for example, in the so-called erosion of democracy in Hungary and in the British people's decision to leave the EU. An analytical part of this thesis is based on a theoretical framework which is presented in the beginning of this paper. It mainly elaborates on a definition that builds on Mudde's ideological concept and on possible divisions of populism which are used in the thesis. Useful definition and classification of the complex character of the term populism is crucial and allows proper understanding and also further development of the thesis itself. The conceptualisation of main attributes and causes is mainly based on the current literature and especially on the theory of economic grievance and on the Cultural Backlash theory. The first crucial contribution of this thesis is construction of an empirical model which is able to measure and categorise political parties by their level of populism. Closer look at these results created by factor analysis showed that the current success of European populist parties is highly alarming. In fact, according to the results, every third European voter votes for a populist party and the vast majority of populist parties can be considered as highly successful. These results are analysed and further specified in a second main analysis of this thesis, whose purpose is to reveal possible causes behind the described populist success. Results of multiple regression analyses showed that contextual factors do not have a significant influence on the current level of European populism. However, there has been proven a statistically significant relationship between the level of European populism and two of the individual factors, which were entering the final regression model. Specifically, those two factors are 1) level of Euroscepticism of each party and 2) personalised way of leadership in each party. It has been, therefore, proven that these two factors play a crucial role in rising final level of the European populism and the relationship between them has to be more emphasised in the current literature.

Key words: populisms, typology of populism, causes of populism, measuring populism, contextual factors, election, political parties