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POPULIST POLITICAL PARTIES IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Populism is a term which has become established in the public consciousness. It has become a part of the rhetoric (as a form of attack) of political players and has also found a firm place in academic debates. This is despite the fact, or perhaps because, that a generally accepted and heuristically seamless concept of populism does not exist. The term populism somehow carries an automatic negative connotation. Party leaders are accused of populism, proposed solutions to political problems are attacked by their opponents as populist and, as such, summarily rejected. Populism in the public as well as journalistic discourse has in many cases become synonymous – as we describe in the theoretical chapter of this book – with demagoguery or rhetorical statements full of empty promises.

Yet there is consensus among professionals dealing with party politics that populism is alive and well in many party systems and does not necessarily have negative connotations. In the academic environment, populism is (mostly) a neutral category, or a defining feature of an attempt to capture certain specifics of some political parties or party politics. The problem is that even in an academic setting politicians and political parties with different historical backgrounds, voter bases or – and this is probably the most troubling area in the contemporary debate about populism – different electoral appeal and political programmes are labelled as populist. The populist epithet has been applied to the French Poujadists, the National Front, the Austrian Freedom Party, the Scandinavian Progress Parties, Hungary's Fidesz, and the Slovak National Party and to South American politicians in the Juan Peron mould. Likewise, new conjugate forms can be found such as agrarian populism, national populism (also populistic nationalism), extreme right-wing populism or social populism.

The theoretical chapter of this book will attempt to systemise the current academic debate about populism and, by following recent articles from scholars such as Ben Stanley, Cas Mudde, Kevin

Deegan-Krause and Peter Učeň, we hope to offer a clearly defined theoretical basis of the perception of populism. Regarding populism and especially populist rhetoric perceived primarily as emphasising antagonism between a corrupt political establishment (not only governmental political parties) and the "betrayed" people, we distinguish between parties which can be identified as exclusively populist and non-exclusively populist political parties. We unequivocally reject the understanding of populism as demagoguery or policies of empty promises (from discussion with one of the authors of the case studies emerges a certain irony over such an understanding of the term populism as "doubled-wage populism").

In the section of the book consisting of case studies, we focus exclusively on the region of post-communist East-Central Europe, and only on current (mid 2012) European Union member states. First, we believe that the countries in the region, despite their mutual differences such as the level of economic development and different cultures have in common something that could be called a "legacy of communism" – experience with a communist regime and resurgent political pluralism, including newly configured party systems lacking long-lasting links between civil society and its party representation. At the same time the membership of the European Union these countries (with respect to admission) points to a degree of democratic consolidation and political processes. A tricky issue in preparing the concept of this book was whether to include the Baltic countries. On the one hand, of course, all three states meet the requirement of post-communist members of the European Union. On the other hand, their inclusion in the East-Central Europe region is problematic for geographical and historical reasons. The Baltic countries were therefore finally – also with regard to the fact that they are small states – dealt with in one joint chapter.

The main aim of the book is, therefore, through case studies to present an in-depth description of the appearance and activities of political parties and also to compare their differences and similarities. In other words, is there something that unites the populist political parties which would emerge from a study of the specifics of the studied region? The analyses yielded some interesting results, and also incentives for further research. The aim of the book is not only to

find answers to the question formulated but also to provide the reader with a comprehensive overview of parties in the region corresponding to our concept of populism.

Populism is often seen as an effective tool for attracting protest votes, which leads to its frequent use by new political parties and formations, or non-parliamentary actors trying to gain relevance in the party system. This book focuses only – except in rare cases justified in the individual chapters – on parties that during their tenure managed to gain parliamentary representation and can therefore assume at least some degree of relevance. The timeframe of the study is set on one side by the foundation of democratic party systems and on the other the year 2011. This limit is not strictly complied with – in justified cases, authors briefly reflect the developments during 2012. The authors of the case studies focus on a wide range of aspects of the political parties, including their electoral performance, program identity, internal functioning and involvement in the political system. All authors of case studies in this book followed the same theoretical framework set out in the theoretical chapter. Each of them used their expertise and knowledge of the particular country to select the parties analysed in their chapter. Should no populist parties be indentified in the political system, the authors were given the option to analyse the possible reasons of the low significance of populism in the party system.

In the first case study Ilze Balcere analyses the situation in the Baltic countries, which usually remain on the margins of research interest into populism in post-communist countries. The author identifies four potential populist parties, Lithuanian Order and Justice (TT) and the Labour Party (DP), Latvian New Era (JL), and Estonian Res Publica (RP). With the exception of RP, all the named parties have their leader in a characteristic key role, which not only affects the organisational operation of the party, but often its successes (or not) in elections. The electoral success of the party, other than the popularity of the leader, is affected by the intensity of the protest vote in elections. As in the majority of other countries, in the Baltic States, populist parties have repeatedly entered into government coalitions, often as the strongest party of government. Government engagement has led to

the abandonment of original populist rhetoric (JL) or to a significant fall in electoral polling (RP, DP).

Blagovesta Cholova deals with populist parties in Bulgaria. As in most of the other countries, there is no agreement between Bulgarian authors about which parties can be described as populist. This chapter analyses in detail three parties, the National Movement for Stability and Progress (NDSV), Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) and Political Party Attack (Ataka). The first two are understood as exclusively populist parties and the last of them as a nationalist party with a strong populist element. Cholova's analysis confirms the generally accepted assumption that while populist parties can be very effective in mobilizing floating voters, their success is often followed by voter disappointment when the parties come to power, and is then followed by their marginalization.

Vlastimil Havlík in a case study about the Czech Republic deals with the Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ). Czech Republicans tend to be labelled as a radical right-wing political party mainly because of its nationalism bordering on xenophobia and racism. Nevertheless, a significant part of their identity was formed by the populist appeal of accusing the "governmental garniture" (including in their understanding also President Václav Havel) of "stealing the revolution" or "stealing national property". The republican appeal found its voice in the 1990s, at a time of ongoing economic transformation which quite clearly divided society into "winners" and "losers". A completely different case is that of Public Affairs (VV), a political party which – as it turned out later – was infiltrated by rich businessmen who wanted to connect their businesses to public contracts and managed in the 2010 election to benefit from a growing dissatisfaction with the political situation, and not only enter the parliament, but subsequently to become part of the centre-right government. After a series of corruption scandals and deepening internal disputes VV broke up and left the government.

Vratislav Havlík, in the chapter on Hungary, identifies three populist parties, the ecologically oriented Politics Can Be Different (LMP), the nationalistic Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP) and the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik). The oldest of these parties, MIÉP, managed to enter Parliament in one parliamentary term, but

by 2002 had lost its relevance. The radical Jobbik was ideologically quite close to MIÉP and both parties even ran together for office in 2006. As in many other countries, expressions of populism in Hungary are often closely connected with nationalism. An exception is the left-wing, environmentally-oriented LMP, which has only been on the Hungarian political scene since 2009 and is still establishing its position in the party system.

A long tradition of populism in Poland is reflected in the modern Polish party system. Populist elements can be found in many contemporary Polish parties. Kinga Wojtas, author of the Polish case study identifies only one party, Self-Defence, which can be classified as an exclusively populist party and focuses on it in her analysis. A specific feature of Self-Defence, in the context of other parties analysed in this book, is a combination of defending the interests of relatively narrowly defined socio-economic groups (de facto Polish rural areas) with a strong anti-establishment appeal and ideological profile.

Also in the case of Romania, only one party really met the criteria for deeper analysis, the Greater Romania Party (PRM). Markéta Smrčková in this chapter describes the organisational and ideological evolution of the party, which managed to remain on the Romanian political scene from 1991 almost to the present day. The party, in spite of its short tenure in government in the early nineties, was able to maintain its protest character and populist rhetoric, and in 2000 achieved its greatest success so far, which brought it to a strengthened position on the party scene and gave it a relatively large blackmail potential. PRM was not able to utilise this credit from the opposition parties and the 2004 elections brought failure, which led to a loss of relevance and, in 2008, parliamentary representation.

Peter Spáč in the chapter on populist parties in the Slovak Republic analysed a total of six subjects – The People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), Association of Slovak Workers (ZRS), Party of Civic Understanding (SOP), Direction-Social Democracy (SMER), Alliance of the New Citizen (ANO) and Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OĽaNO). Populist parties have long been a part of the Slovak political spectrum. The author of this chapter speaks of two waves of populist parties. The first was epitomized

by HZDS and ZRS in the early nineties, while the second, later wave, benefiting from high polarisation of Slovak politics at the turn of the millennium, brought the rise of SOP, SMER and ANO. The analysed entities constitute a rather heterogeneous group, both in terms of internal organisation, ideology and partly even electorate. In terms of the success of the party and its position in the party system, we find common features especially for ZRS, SOP and ANO, which after a successful entry into the parliamentary scene became part of the national government. However, in subsequent elections they were unable to defend their parliamentary party statuses. They differ from HZDS and SMER, which over time were able to maintain a position of relevance, and even became the strongest of Slovak political parties.

Alenka Krašovec, in her chapter, analysed the situation in Slovenia, a country which is not normally focussed on in research on populism. Unlike most post-communist parties, populism does not present a significant force in the political arena. We do not find any exclusively populist parties and only one party according to the author meets the definition of being a non-exclusively populist party. This is the Slovenian National Party (SNS), a right-wing nationalist party with strong populist elements.

We would like to acknowledge the role of at least some of the people, who made the publication of this edited volume possible. First of all, the editors would like to thank all the case studies' authors for their input and participation in the project. Special thanks go to Kevin Deegan-Krause for the comments and insights included in the pre-publication review of this book. We would also like to thank everybody who participated in the discussions during the conference Populist Political Parties in East-Central Europe (Brno, 4th Dec 2012), which helped us clarify some of the issues discussed here. This edited volume was prepared and the research conducted as part of the project Contemporary Challenges of Democracy in East-Central Europe (GAP408/11/0709). The publication of this volume was funded by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. We would also like to thank Mark Alexander, Martina Alexanderová, Todd Hammond, Štěpán Kaňa and

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2. SEEKING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: HOW TO DEFINE AND IDENTIFY POPULIST PARTIES?

Vlastimil Havlík, Aneta Pinková

Recent decades have seen a pronounced rise in political parties which may be identified as populist. Scholars have reacted with an increased number of studies devoted to the phenomena of party populism and other expressions of populism. Special attention has been paid to political parties identified as radical right-wing populist parties and nationalist populist parties. (Former) Communist political parties have also often been included under the populist umbrella (see, e.g., Deegan-Krause 2007, March 2008). A relatively novel phenomenon, and one whose "breakthrough" has come particularly in post-communist countries, consists of political parties without a clear platform, who have built their electoral success almost entirely as advocates of ordinary citizens and critics of existing elites. Examples of these parties, which we refer to in what follows as exclusively populist parties, include SMER in Slovakia (in the first years of its existence), Self-Defence in Poland, the Bulgarian National Movement for Stability and Progress, as well as Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria and, in the Czech Republic, Public Affairs.

Despite the frequency with which one encounters "populism" as a term in academic literature, the media and non-academic discussions, its meaning remains somewhat unclear. Outside of scholarly discussion, populism often seems to be viewed as interchangeable with demagoguery or opportunism (unfairly from the point of view of how political scientists conceive the term). Although populism may be and often is connected with demagoguery, the two phenomena are quite different. Populism may, but need not be, accompanied by demagoguery, just as demagoguery may, but need not be, accompanied by populist argumentation. Unfortunately, the way the two terms are equated in ordinary discussion also often makes its way

into academic debates, to the extent that some researchers (see e.g., Sikk 2009) doubt whether there is any sense in continuing to use the term at all. Although this position may be too radical, it is true that within the academic environment, the concept of populism preserves, to cite Paul Taggart (2000: 1), "an awkward conceptual slipperiness". Although it is far from unusual for an agreed definition to be lacking in the social sciences (think, for example of the debate over how to define euroscepticism or interest groups), when it comes to populism, the situation is more complicated than usual (see below). The confusion between populism and demagoguery has contributed to the fact that negative connotations are often ascribed to populism, or populism may be viewed quite directly as a negative phenomenon. This normative aspect then negatively impacts the otherwise legitimate discussion of the relationship between populism and democracy (see, e.g., Panizza 2005) and is reflected in the interpretation and use of the term "populist political party". The negative connotations associated with the term therefore present a challenge which must be faced in any attempt at a precise conceptualization of populism (see Deegan-Krause 2007). The utility of the term populism for analytical purposes is also mitigated by the variety of party entities which have been labelled populist and the frequency with which populist parties are equated with nationalist and extreme right-wing parties (see, e.g., Norris 2005). This last problem increases the relevance of populism as a topic of research into radicalism and extremism, where the specific conceptualization of populism as a "basic concept associated with nationalism" (Laryš 2012: 141) blurs even further the already indistinct terms "populism" and "populist political party". To quote Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008: 4), to equate or automatically associate the term populism with radical right-wing populism "…is detrimental to our understanding of specific mislabelled parties (for example, the Northern League or the Swiss Lega dei Ticinesi) and populism itself". Under this view, the situation is not aided by the creation of various types of populism (exclusive/close to populism, nationalist populism, new populism, xenophobic populism and populist nationalism – see de Lange 2008), which are often remotely related to or even inconsistent with prevailing notions of populism in the literature (see below).

Also confusing is the fact that the same phenomenon or type of political entity may be described in scholarly discourse with the use of terms or classification schemes which are often at variance with one another (but whose meaning is similar). The most frequently occurring instances include anti-political establishment parties, anti-party parties, anti-mainstream parties, protest parties, discontent parties, unorthodox parties and anti-system parties. An example would be Italy's Northern League, which has been labelled a radical right-wing populist party, as well as an anti-political establishment party (see Rooduijn et al. 2012, Zaslove 2008, Abedi 2003).

This monograph will not offer yet another complex definition of populism and has no ambition to contribute to the complex debate concerning its character. This may be found in the work of Ionescu and Gellner (1969), Margaret Canovan (1981), Wiles (1969), Mény and Surel (2002), Taggart (2000), Panizza (2005) and many others. The theme of this book is not populism as such but rather populist political parties in a particular region. Questions to do with the nature and definition of populism per se will therefore be touched on only to the extent necessary to explain our conception of a populist party.

2.1. Definition of Populism – Minimalist Definition

One of the key topics in the debate on the character of populism is the issue of whether it should be considered an ideology or thin-centred ideology, or a communication strategy. For more on this debate, see e.g. Laclau (2005), Abst Rumments (2007) and Stanley (2011). The portrayal of populism as a full-blown ideology comes primarily from research into radical movements and socioeconomic doctrines defending the interests of peasants and small farmers in the United States and Russia at the end of the 19th century (see Canovan 1981, Miller et al. 1995). It is thus of only marginal relevance for research into current-day populist parties and need not be discussed further. More common in current political science discussions is the vision of populism not as a full-blown classical ideology, but rather as a so-called thin-centred ideology, based upon the work of Freeden (1998).

For examples, see Mudde (2004), Canovan (2002) and Stanley (2011). In contrast to a full-blown ideology, a thin-centred ideology does not present a comprehensive vision of society, but rather focuses on certain specific aspects of social life, particularly the structure of political power and the form taken by political processes. The third approach to populism sees it not as an ideology, but as a political practice or form of political communication (see Školkay 2000, Fiala 1998, Učeň 2007, Laclau 2005).

However intriguing the debate over the nature of populism may be at the philosophical level, in seeking a definition of populist parties, attempting to differentiate between populism as a thin-centred ideology and a political practice or strategy, the distinction essentially loses its meaning. The identity and ideology of a party or political movement are formulated and articulated in the party's materials and declarations made by its leaders. It thus becomes difficult to classify a party by any means other than analysing the party's official documents, the rhetoric of its leaders and its relationship to other political actors. From this standpoint, there is no sense in differentiating between populism as a thin-centred ideology and populism as a political practice or communications strategy, because in practice, these two cannot be reliably distinguished. Thus the group of actors whose statements, platforms and behaviour systematically include populist elements should be labelled populist parties. It is therefore crucial to determine what elements may rightly be considered populist and the extent to which their use entitles us to label a party as populist.

The answer to the first question lies in what Panizza (2005: 1) has called the analytical core of populism "around which there is a significant degree of academic consensus…". This so-called analytical core of populism consists of three fundamental, tightly connected characteristics which we will look at in more detail in what follows. These characteristics are: 1) the people and the elites seen as a homogeneous entity, 2) a stress on the antagonistic nature of the relations between the two, and 3) a view of the people as a morally pure sovereign (see Mudde 2004, Hawkins et al. 2012, Stanley 2011).

2.2. The People and the Elites as a Homogeneous Group

The key term in populism is "the people", conceived as a monolithic or homogeneous group with collective interests. To present the people as a monolithic entity is to refuse to divide society into groups as one might do, for instance, with social status or religious faith. The people (citizens, often the "common people") are differentiated from the governing elites (in the broad sense of the term) with "particular interests" sabotaging the interests and democratic rights of the "people" (Laycock 2005: 173). The essence of populism thus becomes the discursive construction of enemies (Laclau 2005: 39), which allows the notion to be maintained of a people whose interests are being advanced. Taggart, by contrast, asserts that populists create the notion of "the people" by using the term "heartland", referring to an idealised image of people living in an idealised region of that name. Taggart does not use the term "people" in defining populism because of its ambiguity (Taggart 2002: 67–68). Taggart's conception does, though, heavily blur the distinction between populism and nationalism, leading us, in so doing, to one of the problems in the perception of populism as a political ideology: "the people" are a focal point for many other political ideologies, including fascism, liberalism and more (Laclau 2005: 32).[1] Taggart's conception thus stands outside the mainstream of research into populism focusing more on the people/elite dichotomy (see Ionescu, Gellner 1969, Canovan 1981, Mény, Surel 2000, Mudde 2004, Panizza 2005).

Although from the standpoint of political philosophy, defining "the people" is crucial to the definition of populism perceived as an ideology, from an empirical point of view suited to research on political actors, it may not be central. Political parties may, for example, intentionally avoid explicitly defining who "the people" are (in terms of a particular social status or race), so that they might attract the widest possible range of potential voters.

[1] Taggart also adds a negative view of representative politics which usurps the power of the people as an element of populism. Other authors, however, do not see a rejection of representative democracy as a defining characteristic of populist parties (see, e.g., Stanley 2008: 104).

2.3. Antagonistic Relations between the People and the Elites

One of the key characteristics of the populist appeal, which thus becomes its emphasis, is a necessarily antagonistic relationship between the people and the political elites. Populists maintain that citizens are not represented by the elites voted into power. These are seen as defending their own interests from a station distant from the common people.

A starting point to explore the antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite is given by the term anti-political-establishment party (APE), introduced by the Austrian political scientist Andreas Schedler. He says it is typical for APE that they "accuse established parties of forming an exclusionary cartel, unresponsive and unaccountable, and they portray public officials as a homogeneous class of lazy, incompetent, self-enriching and power-driven villains" (Schedler 1996: 291). As this definition makes clear – and as Schedler himself maintains – APE parties share with populism an outrage against the establishment, elites and power blocks. But Schedler sees this similarity as strictly superficial. In his view, the critique offered by populist entities is primarily aimed against economic as opposed to political elites (anti-capitalism, anti-oligarchism and anti-imperialism). Schedler's conception of APE is also close to political populism as understood by Margaret Canovan (Schedler 1996: 292–293, see Canovan 1981) and Cas Mudde (2000).[2]

The core of Schedler's APE argument is symbolised by a triangle whose vertices represent the political class, citizens and the APE itself. APE is presented as the saviour of the citizenry, victims of the ill will of the political elites. In the eyes of the APE, the chief social conflict (or *cleavage*) is that between the governing and the governed, between voters and the political parties or the silent majority and the (alienated) elites that make up the power cartel. APEs are also character-

[2] It is no surprise that Schedler attempts to set his definition of APE apart from populist party definitions and definitions of populism as such. But as is clear from our foregoing overview, authors who pay systematic attention to populism do not accord economic protest the weight that Schedler does.

ised by aggressive or mocking rhetoric directed at the political elites (Schedler 1996: 294–295).

It is noteworthy that the anti-establishment appeal of populist parties typically does not target the regime as such but "merely" the existing establishment, which is alleged to have "betrayed" voters and eviscerated political trust for a long period of time. Populist political parties thus present themselves as defenders of "clean politics", as fighters taking on corruption, who are able to renew the "distorted" relationship between the elites and the people.

Populist political parties may therefore not be seen as interchangeable with anti-system political parties, who direct their critique against the "democratic" regime and seek its transformation. Giovanni Sartori's classic study of political parties, in its narrower definition of anti-system parties, emphasised ideologies foreign to a particular regime (typically communism or fascism, sometimes nazism), which were to serve as a guide or tool for changing the system as a whole. For anti-system parties in the strict sense, a "mere" change of government would therefore not suffice (Sartori 1976; see, e.g., Fiala, Strmiska 1998, Kubát 2007).[3] With populist political parties, there is no ideology hostile to a democratic regime. To the contrary, there is often an ideological vacuum which is filled by the anti-establishment appeal. However, the democratic basis of the regime is not called into question.

At the same time, the anti-establishment appeal is defined more broadly than is the case with "classic" (loyal) parliamentary opposition parties who are "only" against the government. In anti-establishment rhetoric, there is no difference between the government and the opposition. The parties identify themselves as being against the political establishment as a whole, with populist parties seeing themselves as the only real opposition. This ties into Schedler's classification of the opposition. This partially builds upon Juan Jose Linz's concept of dividing the opposition into loyal, disloyal and semi-loyal (Schedler

[3] Giovanni Capoccia has largely followed Sartori and speaks of two levels of analysis of anti-systemicity – relational and ideological. Capoccia sees as anti-system only those political parties located at a significant distance from other political parties in the ideological spectrum which, at the same time, have an ideological base which is incompatible with democracy (Capoccia 2002: 23–24).

1996: 303). Populist political parties critically differentiate themselves from all established political parties, but do not oppose the form of the regime as such. In this respect, the critique they offer is more moderate than that put forward by anti-system parties. Populist political parties are thus actually a part of the loyal opposition, if by that we mean the opposition which does not challenge the democratic basis of the regime. However, they see other parties in the opposition as subject to criticism because, like the governmental parties, they are part of the "corrupt" political establishment.

2.4. Defence of the People as Sovereign

Populist parties present themselves as the sole trustworthy defender of the interests of the people, viewed as the morally incorrupt bearers of sovereignty. The established political parties are seen as having stolen their power from the hands of the people and misused it for their own purposes. They are seen as corrupt. The declared aim of populists is therefore to return power "to the people", often by implementing elements of direct democracy. This defence of direct democracy is not, however, the result of an attempt by populist parties to change the regime as such. Nor is it necessarily the result of a critique of the system of representative democracy. The goal is to provide the means of weakening the hold on power of the "corrupt and incompetent elites". The problem does not lie in institutions or mechanisms of the system as such, but rather in the behaviour of the established elites who have been misusing the system of representative democracy for their own benefit. Ben Stanley (2008: 104–105) notes in this regard that the emphasis on direct democracy is not an essential attribute of populism in and of itself, but rather the importance accorded by populists to the concept of sovereignty (of the people), or the general will, which is elevated above the preferences of the elite. The general will is connected to the concepts of majoritarianism and authenticity. Direct democracy is often taken as a tool for determining the will of the majority, linked to the authenticity and credibility of the will of the people. Populists present themselves as "sounding boards" which resonate with the "reason of the ordinary person" (Stanley 2008: 105).

The populist goal, as stated by Peter Učeň is neither to "educate the people" nor to shape voter opinion. Rather populists reflect the opinions of the people and claim to defend the interests of the "common people" (see, e.g., Canovan 1984, Canovan 2004, de Raadt et al. 2004).

2.5. Typology and Types of Populism

Populism has become part of the electoral strategy and identity of many different political parties. This brings us to the issue of populism's importance for individual party actors. Work in this area has been done by researchers including Kevin Deegan-Krause and Tim Haughton (2009), Peter Učeň (2007) and Andrej Školkay (2000), along with explorations of typologies for populism and populist parties (e.g., Canovan 1981, Mudde 2000, de Raadt et al. 2004).

Haughton and Deegan-Krause (2009) point to differences depending upon whether the term populism is used as an identity or as a typical appeal used by the political party in question. They incline toward the second model and are explicitly critical of attempts at a binary classification of political parties (populist X non-populist). Their preferred conception allows every political party to use populist appeals. They are differentiated only in terms of their intensity. In contemplating a framework to determine the "level of populism" in political parties, they supplement the four characteristics defined by Stanley (2008) and contrast them with the non-populist appeal represented by the heterogeneity of "the people" (i.e., that parties only protect the interest of particular groups rather than the people as a homogeneous entity), the heterogeneity of "the elite" (vs. elites as a monolithic block), distance from "the people" (not an uncritical perception of the "common people") and acceptance of elite status (understanding the irreplaceability of the elites in the decision making process as opposed to undifferentiated criticism of the establishment), support for institution-building and maintenance (as opposed to direct democracy) and a positive relationship to compromise and collaboration (as opposed to the populist view of democracy in crisis and the futility of compromising or cooperation with the current elites).

In a case study devoted to Slovakia, the authors subsequently coded all relevant political parties for the presence of each of the six elements of a populist appeal (High = 1, Medium = 0.5, Low = 0). They calculated the appropriate values for each political party in each election period and derived an average designating the level of populism for the party in question. They then examined the values in greater detail for "durability" and the dynamic of the populist appeal (Deegan-Krause, Haughton 2009). Deegan-Krause and Haughton thus effectively rejected the existence of a dichotomy between populist and non-populist parties, characterizing populism (in terms of its individual elements) as something present to varying degrees in the identity of *all* political parties. A similar approach was taken in a study of six European political parties conducted by Jasper de Raadt et al. (2004), which prepared a "preliminary typology of populist parties". They refused to label the political parties under observation (the Free Will Party in Austria, the People's Party in Switzerland, the Republicans in Germany, the Flemish Bloc, the French National Front and the Pim Fortuyn List) as populist without further differentiation, creating several categories for the presence and character of individual populist elements (references to the people, direct democracy, anti-establishment appeal) in their platforms. Similarly, the gradualist approach is used by Seán Hanley and Allan Sikk in their study of so-called anti-establishment reform parties in East-Central Europe (Hanley, Sikk 2011).

In agreement with Deegan-Krause and Haughton, and partially with the study of de Raadt et al., is the view of Cas Mudde, who sees populism as a "thin-centered ideology easy to combine with other ideologies, whether they be thin or full ideologies, including communism, ecologism, nationalism or socialism" (Mudde 2004: 544). In a similar vein, in later work in conjunction with Hawkins and Riding, Mudde maintains that "populism can be associated with a number of different ideologies. It is certainly more likely to be associated with radical versions of a given ideology, and it predictably tacks to the left in developing countries or to the right in the advanced industrial democracies. But populism is to some extent an empty box waiting to be filled with programmatic substance" (Hawkins et al. 2012). As part of a chronological overview of the post-war occurrence of

various populist parties, in one of his early texts Mudde mentions the Italian Front of the Common Man, the French Poujadists, the Danish Progress Party, the New Left movement in the late 1960s, Green parties, the French National Front, Berlusconi's *Forza Italia!*, and the German Party of Democratic Socialism. Mudde concludes by saying (2004: 551): "at least since the early 1990s populism has become a regular feature of politics in western democracies", while noting the use of populism by mainstream, even governing parties (including among populists the former leader of the British Labour Party Tony Blair and Steve Stevaert of the Flemish Socialists).

A similar direction is taken by Paul Taggart, who states that populism "has been a tool of progressives, of reactionaries, of democrats, of autocrats, of the left and of the right" (Taggart 2000: 3), adding that an "empty heart", i.e., an absence of key values, is typical for populism. This differentiates populism from other ideologies focused on one or another value such as equality, liberty or social justice. In Taggart's view, populism thus becomes a natural complement to other ideologies. Unlike the "grand ideologies" of liberalism, socialism and conservatism, which often come modified by other adjectives (e.g., social liberalism or radical feminism), it plays the role of a complement (Taggart 2000: 4). Andrej Školkay takes a somewhat different stance on the issue of the intensity of populism. Školkay stresses the need to differentiate between use of the term populism as a property (in adjectival form) and its use as a characteristic (noun). It makes a difference, for example, if we choose to use the term left-wing populism as opposed to the populist left. In the first case, we have a populist party with left-wing rhetoric. In the second case, we have a left-wing party making use of populist rhetoric, that is to say, populism is not an essential component in the party's identity. Školkay does not develop this implicitly dichotomous classification scheme for political parties further, but rather focuses primarily on factors contributing to the appearance of populism in post-communist Europe (Školkay 2000).

Grigore Pop-Eleches puts forward the provocative thesis that political parties in East-Central Europe should be divided into two fundamental categories: mainstream parties and unorthodox parties. A political party may be understood as mainstream if "its electoral appeal is based upon a recognizable and moderate ideo-

logical platform rather than on the personality of its leader and/or extremist rhetoric. In other words, a mainstream party represents an ideological orientation that can be mapped with reasonable accuracy onto the mainstream ideological spectrum of established Western democracies" (Pop-Eleches 2010: 225). In contrast, an unorthodox party is differentiated from mainstream parties along one or more of three dimensions/defining characteristics including "adapting extremist political platforms in a number of issue areas and/or by sidestepping ideology and acting as political vehicles for their leaders" (Pop-Eleches 2010: 226). Pop-Eleches differentiates several types of unorthodox parties based upon the dimension which sets them apart from mainstream parties and how great the distance is, with key policy dimensions taken to be economic policy orientation and reliance on ethnonationalist appeals. The two valued dimensions are complemented by an organisational dimension which reflects the relative prominence of individual leaders (Pop Eleches 2010: 227). Pop-Eleches subsequently defines three or four types of unorthodox parties. Alongside the radical left and extreme nationalists (who are subtyped as radical parties), national populist parties and new/centrist populist parties are noteworthy for this discussion. Nationalist populist parties sound nationalist overtones similar to extreme nationalists on Schmitt's "us vs. them" dichotomy, but they differ from the latter in the moderate nature of their nationalist appeal. Nationalism is not their raison d'être but rather complements a broader non-nationalist policy agenda. New/centrist populist parties differ from the mainstream primarily in declaring themselves to be a non-ideological or anti-political formation which does not even make use of the nationalistic appeal. Typical for parties in this group are leaders hyped in the media for whom the party serves as a tool for fulfilling their personal ambitions. Also typical is a critique of mainstream parties portrayed as the culprits behind a decline in living standards and burgeoning corruption (Pop-Eleches 2010). In comparison to the foregoing approaches, Pop-Eleches introduces new elements in the form of the non-ideological nature of new/centrist populist parties.

Particularly in the context of an analysis of Slovak party policy and partially in connection to the work of Pop-Eleches, Peter Učeň developed a concept of new/centrist populism which, aside from its

anti-establishment appeal, emphasises the tendency of these parties to move toward the geometric centre of the party system (Učeň undated, 2007a, 2007b).

We understand populism as a complex body of defining elements which have been discussed above. In our view, none of these elements can be taken as more important than any other. We agree with "gradualists" that almost every political party can meet some of the definitional criteria of populism. On the other hand, it does not mean that every party is populist to some extent. Only if a party systematically meets all the criteria, can it then be classified as populist. One can imagine a political party that criticises the established elites for betraying the people. However, the same party may promote interests of only a narrowly defined social group (a social class, an ethnic minority, or Christians). Such a party does not meet one of the fundamental features of populism – does that mean that the party is populist to a limited extent? We believe not. Otherwise, the heuristic potential of the concept of populist political parties would be very small as almost every political party could be labelled as populist. Only a holistic approach to the definition of populism can be useful for the party politics approach and can enable us to define a specific group of political parties which differ from other parties by the systematical and complex usage of populism. We do not deny that are different forms of populist political parties. It is reflected in our simple typology which distinguish between exclusively and non-exclusively populist political parties. What is very important, they do not differ in the level of populism (both the types of populist political parties meet all the criteria of populism as defined above and a systematic/not occasional usage of populism is typical for them), but they differ in whether populism is accompanied by another clear set of ideological preferences or not. This distinction is to some extent a reaction to the rise of a new type of political party in East-Central Europe in recent years (new/centrist populist parties, anti-establishment reform parties – see above).

The work of Mudde, Taggart, Pop-Eleches and others serves as a starting point for our differentiating between two fundamental categories of populist parties: exclusively and non-exclusively populist political parties.

Indeed, populist rhetoric appears in political party practice either as a core identity element for a party which is otherwise vaguely defined or as a (more or less logical) complement to a primary program for other political parties. The identity and/or rhetoric of "exclusively populist" political parties is *based upon* the populist appeal. The core of the identity of exclusively populist political parties is political protest aimed at the existing political elites, which defends the interests of the "common people". From the standpoint of traditional cleavages and party families, these formations defy classification. In addition, these political parties implicitly or explicitly reject being identified with a clear ideological orientation. The right-left view of political conflict is, in their opinion, obsolete or not relevant to the political situation at hand.[4] In this regard populist political parties differ in an essential manner from the "traditional" party establishment (social democracy, liberal parties, Christian democrats), as well as from anti-system parties based upon an ideology which rejects democracy (typically fascist or communist parties). In contrast to that of anti-system parties, their critique is aimed at other actors (the elite, the establishment) rather than at the system as a whole.

Probably the closest terminologically to our conception of exclusively populist parties is the term centrist populist parties used by, among others, Grigore Pop-Eleches (2010) and Peter Učeň (2007a, 2007b). We do not consider the term centrist populist party entirely suited because such parties purposely stand outside the left-right division of the political spectrum or reject it outright. The term exclusively populist party, by contrast, clearly reflects the (in this case key) role played by populism in formulating the party's identity and in its rhetoric. With exclusively populist parties, populism by nature becomes the core of the party identity since, lacking an ideology, there is nothing else upon which to build that identity. As we have indicated

[4] Schedler takes a different view of the issue in his interpretation of anti-establishment parties. Although he maintains that APEs are reluctant to take a position along the right-left axis, most of them may be placed clearly to the left or to the right. He even speaks of a tendency to being right-wing parties, tied to allegations of the "dark sides of capitalism". After the fall of the actual socialist regimes, it appears to Schedler that anti-establishment politics has been formulated as a "new ideology of the right" (Schedler 1996: 302).