

**POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY:
THREAT OR JUSTIFIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO
LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC THINKING ?**

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Abstract

This thesis assesses the difficult concept of populism within political theory. Hereby it tries first to conceptualize populism as such within political theory and differentiates it from a social movement by characterizing it as political ideology. Furthermore, it will analyze the main ideas and themes of populism, especially the idea of protest of the people against the political elite. After having determined the theoretical ideas of populism, this thesis will make clear that populism can take shape in different forms. One of these forms, which will be analyzed in this paper, is extreme right-wing populism, which can be seen as a one of the dangerous forms of populism. This paper will especially investigate the reasons for the success and respective failure of extreme right-wing parties within Western Europe. In this context certain variables such as party ideology, electorate, leadership and institutional environment will be taken into account. At the last point this paper will then put populism within democratic theory and will argue that compared to the empirical level populism on the democratic theoretical level can be seen as complementary to liberal democracy as some elements of popular democracy attribute to points where liberal democracy can be seen as incapable. At the end this paper will conclude that populism should not only be seen as a dangerous challenge to established democratic systems, it can be also seen as complementary tool in order to achieve an ideal model of democracy.

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Introduction

Within social and political theory, democratic theory is one of the most important ones, which shapes the basic values and virtues of how democracy should be performed within one state. With no doubt one can say that within a democratic state the most important focus is set on the interest of the people. In this respect different groups of scholars try to contribute with their ideas how far people should be involved in the democratic process. One of the most crucial concepts of classical democratic theory is the one of ‘popular sovereignty’, which is the belief that the state is created by the will of its people, who are the source of all political power.

At the end of the 18th century this term was especially used by the philosophers of the social contract, namely Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Thomas Hobbes argued in the work *Leviathan* that a political society has as its first and only task to assign an individual or a certain group of individuals as sovereign, which would then have absolute power and obedience owed by each citizen. In his writings such as *Second Treatise of Government* John Locke states that the legislative within the social contract is only empowered to legislate for the public good. This can be seen as a certain trust between the people and the legislative. A certain violation of this trust would then lead to replacement of the legislative by the people.

In his crucial work *The Social Contract* Jean-Jacques Rousseau argues that legitimacy of rule or of law is based on the consent of the governed. Further, he argues that laws enacted by the legislature could only address the common good of the members of the society, who only can extend the same rights or obligations to all citizens. Nevertheless, Rousseau did not emphasize the fact what would happen if these conditions would be violated. Instead he proposes certain mechanisms to analyze the ‘general will’ and he emphasizes the belief that the legislative powers are vested in the people itself.

One should note that the concept of popular sovereignty is rather a concept, which is developed through the liberalist democratic school and can be seen as a more consensus seeking concept within liberalism involving the people into democratic processes. In his crucial work *We the People* Bruce Ackerman describes democracy as dualist, consisting of ‘normal’ and ‘constitutional’ politics. Moreover, he argues that democratic decision-making process within ‘normal politics’ can be seen as economic, as the voters are equal to agents who try to maximise their own preferences. Therefore, a certain fear of a strong authority is understandable and this can only be undermined through judicial review, divided representation and checks and balances¹. Contrary to this, ‘constitutional politics’ only arises when through a national crisis leads to the unification of ‘the people’, giving them the occasion to perceive their own interests but still respect the common good. In this type of politics decision-making can be seen as deliberative, in which a deliberative majority represents the general will of every ‘people’ with certain essential rules and principles in order to benefit everyone of society. Thus, it is crucial that voters already should respect the rights of other members of society while making or weighing out their decisions².

Taking these classical ideas of popular sovereignty within democracy into account one can say that these ideas and values are represented in modern political theory in the scope of populism, which can be described as the movement of ‘the people’ against the representative ‘elite’, being in favour of direct democracy and popular sovereignty. One should note here that populism is a difficult concept to assess and has to be regarded from different perspectives. In this context one should make a certain distinction between the empirical and the theoretical point of view as populism, as shown in this work, can be seen and discussed from the different perspectives of political science.

¹ Ackerman, B. (1991). *We the People*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., pp.186-195

² *ibid*, pp. 266-94

This thesis will deal with the political theoretical discussion of populism within democratic thinking and will analyze how far populism can contribute to the liberal democratic thinking shaped by democratic theory. Further, this paper hopes to contribute to the debate between populism and liberal democracy. Democratic theory classifies populism as a danger to liberal democratic thinking. However, one might assume that populism should not be seen as a dangerous form as it is literally democracy made by the people; and is it not the basic idea of democracy to represent the interests of the people?

The main question of this paper will be whether populism can be seen as a justifiable alternative or as threat to liberal democracy. In order to solve this main question certain research questions have to be answered. The first question will ask what populism is about and in what extent it is related to democracy. In addition to that, this paper essay will emphasise on the interests of the individual as such, analyzing different political ideologies in order to make the difference to populism clear. Then it tackles the question to what extent populism can be seen as a danger to established liberal democracies. At this juncture different forms of populism will be looked at. The type of populism, which will be especially taken into account by talking about the danger of populism, is the one of extreme right-wing populism, which occurred which gained support in the last thirty years. At this point this paper will investigate why this dangerous type of populism gained much support of western European people in the last years and whether one could assume that liberal democracy has lost its significant impact within democratic thinking. Related to this question is the fact that populism is represented within different forms of democracy. Taken this fact into account one asks whether populist democracy can be seen as threat or as an alternative within democracies.

This paper is structured as followed. The first chapter will deal with an overview of different political ideologies. The different ideas and thoughts, especially regarding the will

or the people, will be here taken into account. After having given an overview of political ideologies such as liberalism, conservatism and constitutionalism, populism as such will be assessed by analysing its themes and ideas representing the will of the people.

The next chapter will now give some current political examples of this political ideology, taking into account the extreme right-wing parties in Western Europe. This chapter will give an empirical overview of this topic, by analysing the reasons of success or respective failure of this right-wing populism in established Western European democracies. In this context the motives and aims of these parties will be elaborated in order to make clear that this form of populism is a dangerous form to liberal democracy thinking.

After having made clear the scope of the danger of right-wing populism the last chapter will then try to analyse the relationship of populism to democracy, taking into account different forms of democracy. Further, this chapter will try to find out in how far populism can be seen as a danger to liberal democracy. However, this chapter will also try to argue that the ideal type of democracy has to include populist themes and thinking in order to serve a democratic model, in which the interests of the people are interested and in which a democratic consensus is provided. At the end of this paper an appropriate conclusion will be provided.

Chapter 1: From Liberalism to Populism: The representation of ‘the people’ reconsidered

Before assessing populism from the theoretical point of view it is crucial to reflect the idea of popular sovereignty in different political ideologies in order to make visible the different approach of the will of the people, which populism assesses. This part of the paper will elaborate the different ideas and thoughts of the ideologies liberalism, conservatism and constitutionalism. In this regard the emphasis is put on the idea of the representation of the people in order to make clear the different ideas how the individual as such should be in political society.

1.1 Liberalism: the focus on the individual human being

With no doubt one can say that liberalism is one of the most complex political ideologies in political theory. The term ‘liberalism’ as such did not appear before the nineteenth century. However, one can say that it was based on ideas and theories, which developed throughout three hundred years before its appearance. As Heywood states “liberal ideas resulted from the breakdown of feudalism in Europe and the growth, in its place, of a market or capitalist society”³. Moreover, these liberal ideas differed from the ideas of absolutism represented by the established power of monarch and from the developed aristocracy. Further, these ideas, which represented the thoughts of the growing middle class, aimed at fundamental reform and event till revolutionary change⁴.

It is crucial to note that there are different explanations how this liberal thought developed. Firstly, some scholars relate the origins of liberalism to the development of nation-states. In this context they argue that liberalism in different European countries

³ Heywood, A. (1992). *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*. St. Martins Press: New York. p.15

⁴ *ibid.*

developed in particular political and socio-cultural contexts. One should note here that there is no consistency of liberalism found, instead different national traditions. Secondly, other scholars concentrate on the character of specific liberal ideological traditions, especially on the distinction between Continental and British liberalisms. As Vincent (1992) describes British liberalism “is usually seen to be of greater antiquity and more empirical in character”⁵, whereas continental liberalism “is related more to the French Enlightenment and the overactive use of ‘abstract reason’ in human affairs”⁶. Nevertheless, this approach to the origin of liberalism might be difficult, as it does not regard the complex origins of liberalism as such. A third approach mostly taken into account is an economic one, which links liberalism directly to capitalism. In this context the rise of industrial capitalism coexists together with liberalism, making liberalism as the ideology of capitalism.

The fourth approach of the origin of liberalism, and the most preferable of Vincent itself, is linked to the tradition of constitutionalism, which was identified together with liberalism during the nineteenth century. Due to this European constitutionalist tradition certain ideas on individual rights, individual freedoms, consent, the separation of the private and public realms, contract, limited and balanced government, popular sovereignty evolved and became the foundations of the liberal thought⁷. As Vincent further states, this constitutionalist thought would keep on being one-dimensional if two main developments would not have occurred. The first development, which should be mentioned in this respect, is the Enlightenment, which underlined the use of reason in human affairs. Due to this use “theology, economics, politics, law and philosophy were all profoundly affected and authority in religion and politics was no longer affected”⁸. The second development, which should be taken into consideration, is the one of the revolutions in America and in France in

⁵ Vincent, A. (1992). *Modern Political Ideologies*. Blackwell: Oxford. p. 24

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Vincent, 1992, pp.24-25

⁸ Vincent, 1992, p.25

the years 1776 and 1789. These revolutions led to regard of various ideas on ideological themes such as popular sovereignty, natural rights, consent and contractualism from a political, contextual point of view⁹.

After having explored the different possible approaches to the origin of liberalism, one will now try to focus on the role of the people within this political ideology. In this respect one can refer to the idea of individualism, which emphasises the belief in the central significance of the individual human being. Thus, liberalism focuses on the needs and interests of the ‘individual’ more than those of the ‘collective’¹⁰. Further, one should take into account that the individual person should be regarded as “inviolable, and all human life as sacrosanct”¹¹. Therefore, violence is something, which is rejected within liberal society and which only should be used in war times to protect the liberal society. Moreover, individualism is built upon a certain morality, which demands equal respect for everyone as “moral beings with equal sensitivity”¹².

Individualism evolved during the Age of Reason or Enlightenment, during which traditional religious views were replaced by new rational and scientific explanations. Thus, the liberal society was understood from the point of view of the human being, the individual of the society itself. In this context one can say that these individuals obtain certain personal and distinctive qualities, of which each has a certain special value. Thus, with this idea theories about natural rights grew during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and led to the fact that individuals are promised with certain natural rights “to preserve his property – that is, his life, liberty and estate”¹³. Therefore, the theorists of natural rights state that within

⁹ Vincent, 1992, p.26

¹⁰ Heywood, 1992, p.18

¹¹ Goodwin, B. (1997). *Using Political Ideas*. John Wiley & Sons: New York. p.37

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Locke, J. *Treaties of Government*. (1962). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.159

liberal society these rights and interests of each individual have to be protected. Thus, one can say that this belief is the characteristic theme of liberal ideology¹⁴.

This belief of the utmost importance of the individual goes ahead with the assurance of individual freedom. In this context Locke regarded the natural state of as that of individual freedom, stating in political terms that “the duty of government was to provide the conditions for him to enjoy the maximum possible freedom within the framework of law”¹⁵. Thus, individual liberty can be seen as the highest political value and the combining principle within liberal ideology¹⁶. Moreover, within liberal ideology freedom is often associated to the ‘human essence’, leading to the fact that the three important freedoms within society - political, economic and social – are seen as “human necessity, and a good in itself, rather than merely as a means to an end”¹⁷.

Although liberals focus on the commitment of individual freedom, they do not agree with the view that individuals have an absolute entitlement to freedom as it can come to misuse of this unlimited liberty. In this context one can refer to Mill who states that “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others”¹⁸. In this context Mill’s view is libertarian as he encounters the prevention of harm to others as the only minimal restriction to individual freedom. Another restriction to individual freedom is given by Isiah Berlin, who distinguishes between negative and positive liberty. Whereas negative liberty is lacking of external restrictions on the individual, positive liberty represents the self-mastery, which strengthens the ability of the individual to develop certain skills and abilities. This contrast between positive and negative liberty does not contribute too much to the understanding of

¹⁴ Heywood, 1992, p.19

¹⁵ Goodwin, 1997, p.38

¹⁶ Heywood, 1992, p.20

¹⁷ Goodwin, 1997, p.41

¹⁸ Mill, J.S. (1972). *Utilitarianism, On Liberty and Consideration on Representative Government*. London: Dent.

liberalism itself but to the understanding of the relationship between the individual and the state¹⁹.

In regard to the view of civil society, one could assume that in liberal ideology the individual is far more important than a social group itself. Nevertheless, it should be noted that there is a certain awareness of the liberals that individuals can reach their needs and interests only if they build up a relationship with others. Thus, this cooperation would ensure the satisfaction of economic needs. Furthermore, within the liberal society the individual should cooperate in economic terms with one another in order to achieve the goods which the individual cannot produce self. Therefore, liberal society is seen as “a society, in which individual needs and interests are satisfied through voluntary co-operation and the formation of free associations”²⁰. This formation of free associations can only be done by taking into account the concept of contract into account. More specifically, associations and agreements between individuals can only be done by a contract, which is an agreement, binding its parties only when these parties entered into this agreement voluntarily and have full knowledge about its conditions. The idea of the social contract was for example represented by John Locke, who “imagined a peaceful, sociable state of nature with many of the characteristics of established society; men would own property in such a state”²¹. Thus, contracts would be formed voluntarily to guarantee convenience, safety and peace within liberal society. Thus, government and community are built up with taking the majority decision into consideration. Therefore, one can say that the contract is an essential tool ensuring the person’s liberty, which is visible through the voluntary will of the people to do so.

To sum up, one can say that liberalism is a political ideology, in which the individual and his interests are strongly emphasized. This emphasis is laid on individual freedom, the

¹⁹ Heywood, 1992, pp. 20-21

²⁰ Heywood, 1992, p.24

²¹ Goodwin, 1997, p.39

social contract and the individual society in order to guarantee that the interests of the individual are represented and achieved. All in all, one can say that liberalism is an individual based political ideology, which is based on institutional instruments of political society.

1.2 The Ideology of Conservatism: the view of human imperfection

Opposed to the liberal idea of progress as innovation one can mention in this context the political ideology of conservatism, which came into its evolve after the French Revolution in 1789, as a reaction to this change of society what the French Revolution caused. This was especially visible through the work of Edmund Burke, who stated that the preservation of the past is good and new change is bad for the society. As he further argued tradition is essential as it leads to social continuity, which led to social tranquillity, which again could be seen as the final political goal²². Thus, one can say that conservatism try to defend the traditional social order against ideologies such as liberalism, which demand for reforms and even, in some times, revolution of the social and political order of the state.

Taking Burke into account one can say that one of the crucial themes of conservative ideology is the individual right to conserve. This can be easily understood as the belief resisting any form of social and political change. In this context one can say that conservatives think that change is never accepted although it is welcome. Thus, one can say that conservatives defend tradition strongly and have the “desire to maintain established customs and institutions”²³. In contrast to liberals, who, as mentioned above, think that institutions should be reformed if they are not capable to fulfil the interests and needs of the individuals, conservatives consider that institutions should be controlled precisely as they have shown success throughout history. Further, tradition is important for conservatives as it

²² Goodwin, 1997, p.152

²³ Heywood, 1992, p.58

guarantees the individuals a certain sense of belonging and stability. In short, tradition contributes to the identity feeling of the individual²⁴.

Regarding the human being conservatives have a pessimistic view of human nature. This is visible with attribution such as weakness, selfishness and irrationality, the aggressive and selfish behaviour “men in the state of nature, which justified the creation of an absolute sovereign”²⁵. This human imperfection can be seen in further ways. Firstly, humans are mostly seen as psychologically limited and dependent. In this context one can say that conservatives think that people are scared of isolation and instability. Further, their wish for security and identity strengthened the conservatives’ emphasis on the significance of the social order. This social order leads to stability and predictability and security of human life. Liberty is not welcomed in the idea of conservatives as it provides change and uncertainty²⁶.

This traditional view, which can be seen as pessimistic and egalitarian of the human being, presumes that the government should be of strong authority. This could be mostly referring to royalist movements within Europe, promoting the idea that the monarch, who is the head of the state, represents the tradition and continuity. In countries, where monarchy was abolished, conservatives advocate for a strong presidency or other forms of elite government. Thus, one can say that conservatives believe strongly in the leadership principle, promoting stability and continuity of the leader self. Further, conservatives emphasise their desire to avoid conflict-based politics and promote consensus. This can also be associated with their fear of disorder and anarchy, which can be easily caused through these strongly rejected liberal ideas mentioned above. Moreover, within conservative politics nationalism plays an essential role as patriotism within this ideology is seen as a duty. The nation is seen in this context as a product of traditional values incorporating the land, culture and institutions. In most present politics conservatism can be seen in the political direction of the

²⁴ Heywood, 1992, pp.58-59

²⁵ Goodwin, 1997, p.155

²⁶ Heywood, 1992, p.60

New Right, which underlines issues such as the protection of private property, the rule of law and the promotion of family and moral values.²⁷

1.3 Constitutionalism: Popular Sovereignty within democracy

Within constitutionalism two main form of democracy can be seen as the founding stones. These two are constituting and constitutive democracy, contributed by scholars such as Dworkin and Rawls, providing a system of judicial order, in which the judicial authority has the power to interpret the constitution. Nevertheless, a certain group of scholars established another form of constitutionalism, which aims the incorporation of popular sovereignty within constitutionalist theory.

Indeed, popular sovereignty is a crucial concept within every form of democracy as ‘the people’ make democracy in a certain way. Nevertheless, certain scholars could not agree to what extent this popular sovereignty should be incorporated within constitutional theory in order to represent the popular will. According to a group of political theorists a certain problem between the two versions how democracy should be constituted, either substantive or procedural, is visible, as these accounts do not regard the “virtues of democratic decision-making as a mechanism for legitimately handling our disagreements”²⁸. Nevertheless, this group of theorists, who were criticising the two accounts of democracy constitution, for them, the constitution is equal to a product of a special kind of politics. Thus, democracy is self-binding, which involves real politics than constitutive and constituting democracy. In this respect one should refer to Bruce Ackerman who argued that there is a dualistic approach of democracy within politics. Hereby he differs between two types of politics.

²⁷ Goodwin, 1997, pp.157-159

²⁸ Bellamy, R. (2006). *Constitutionalism and Democracy*. The Cromwell Press: Great Britain, xxxv

Firstly, there are ‘normal’ politics, arising under established constitutional systems, and secondly, there are ‘constitutional politics’ which occurs in exceptional times and criticises the whole system of government²⁹. As he further states ‘the people’ do not have any single voice during ‘normal’ politics but are fragmented into different ideologies and interest groups³⁰. Democratic decision-making process within ‘normal politics’ can then be seen as economic, as the voters are equal to agents who try to maximise their own preferences. Therefore, a certain fear of a strong authority is understandable and this can only be undermined through judicial review, divided representation and checks and balances³¹. Contrary to this, ‘constitutional politics’ only arises when through a national crisis leads to the unification of ‘the people’, giving them the occasion to perceive their own interests but still respect the common good. In this type of politics decision-making can be seen as deliberative, in which a deliberative majority represents the general will of every ‘people’ with certain essential rules and principles in order to benefit everyone of society. Thus, it is crucial that voters already should respect the rights of other members of society while making or weighing out their decisions³².

Therefore, according to Ackerman, within ‘constitutional politics’ is higher lawmaking provided, which will lead to the fact that “a significant portion of the citizenry will depart from its customary patterns of behaviour”³³. He states that this departure from ordinary behaviour will happen in two aspects. Firstly, due to higher lawmaking the people will not care much about their own demands and will become more enthusiastic to inform themselves about governmental issues and discuss them in public³⁴. This shows that ‘constitutional’ politics’ is deliberative as in this style the aims of deliberation, namely “to

²⁹ Ackerman, B. (1991). *We the People*. pp.3-33

³⁰ Ackerman, 1991, pp.181-183

³¹ *ibid* pp.186-195

³² *ibid*, pp. 266-94

³³ Galston, M. & Galston. Reason, Consent, and the U.S. Constitution: Bruce Ackerman’s “We the People”. In: *Ethics*, Vol. 104, No.3, (Apr., 1994), pp.446-466

³⁴ Ackerman, 1991, pp.272-73

arrive at a rationally motivated consensus – find reasons that are persuasive to all who are committed to acting on the results of a free and reasoned assessment of alternatives by equals”³⁵ are included. Secondly, this engagement into politics lead to the fact that the people become ‘private citizens’, questioning about efficient policies strengthening the public good, not only their personal good³⁶. Both developments will take place only when fundamental constitutional principles and the will of ‘the people’ binding the process of democracy are present.

Although Ackerman’s argumentation seems plausible, some remarks have to be made. As mentioned above Ackerman tries to make clear that his ideal type of dualist democracy consists of winning over the other only through fairness and correctness. However, it is a fact that in real democracy “deliberative democrats standard attribute such shortcomings to group interest or ideology leading politicians or citizens to abandon reasoning for rhetoric and bargaining in order to get their way”³⁷. Thus, the debates become longer, arguments run out and have to be new formulated, and solutions will be accepted although they do not fit into one person’s way of thinking. This rejects Ackerman’s idea that constitutional politics are superior to normal politics as this shows that both politics are similar to each other. “The one is less high-flown and consensual than its advocates imagine, the second more principled – even in the negotiation of compromises, than its critics contend”³⁸. Further, Ackerman’s claim for ‘constitutional moments’ is not really valid, as constitutional changes do not only occur because of special circumstances and special politics. Further, debates about the constitutions are nowadays part of ‘normal politics’ as many policy regulations obtain constitutional implications. This shows that particular constitutional reforms are hardly to find. Therefore, “it is implausible to justify constitutions as the products of a special

³⁵ Cohen, J. (1996). Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy. In: Benhabib, S. (ed.). *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, p.23

³⁶ Ackerman, 1991, pp.272-73

³⁷ Bellamy, 2006, xxxvii

³⁸ *ibid*, xxxviii

‘moment’ of popular commitment. Instead, a people continuously reconstitute itself and democracy through normal politics³⁹.

To sum up, one can say that Ackerman’s differentiation between ‘normal’ and ‘constitutional’ politics is understandable but overlaps in some sense. Nevertheless, this approach is consensus seeking as it tries to incorporate popular sovereignty for short term and also represents the dualist structure of an ideal type of democracy, consisting of constitutional and normal politics.

1.4 The definition and ideology of Populism

After having elaborated on some existing political ideologies this part of this chapter will now try to characterise and define populism from its ideological point of view. It should be noted here that populism has many definitions and studies. Throughout time different scholars at different times have tried to conceptualize and define populism in order to give a clear definition of the contrary pillar to constitutional democracy. Nevertheless, a lot of studies on populism refer to special political situations in different countries in the world. This chapter will pick out some general studies, which gives a good overview of populism. Hereby, it will take more into consideration the political form of populism.

The first main conceptualization of populism was made by Edward Shils who argues that “populism exists wherever there is an ideology of popular resentment against the order imposed on society by a long-established, differentiated ruling class which is believed to have a monopoly of power, property, breeding and culture”⁴⁰. Here one can see that the key aspect in order to understand populism lies in the opposing relationship between elites and masses. Further, Shils argues that populism distrusts strongly institutions of state, universities,

³⁹ Bellamy, 2006, xl

⁴⁰ Shils, E. (1956) *The Torment of Secrecy: The Background and Consequences of American Security Policies*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press., pp.100-101

bureaucracy and financial institutions. These institutions are seen as politically corrupt but also lack in wisdom, which lives in the people. This wisdom is not represented by political institutions but identified with⁴¹.

In addition to this view Ernesto Laclau (1977) argues that populism can be seen as the ideology of the elites. This is so as the dominant ideas of a society will always attract other ideas and neutralize them by allowing their expression but only in a way that projects them as different but not as fundamentally hostile⁴². More specifically he states that this ideology of elites applies to events in which one group of the dominant class wants to establish hegemony but makes a direct appeal to the masses, as it is unable to fulfil this hegemony alone⁴³. In his analysis Laclau focuses more on the opposing classes within society. Furthermore, he argues that there is not only a class antagonism within societies but also a wider conflict between the ‘people’ and the ‘power bloc’. Notable here is that the popular ideas reflect the concerns of the popular masses who are against the dominant class and who are subjects to rule.

A recent definition of populism was given by Cas Mudde who sees populism as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people”⁴⁴. This definition consists of different elements, which will be taken shortly into account. The first element is the distinction between the well-known antagonism between the people and the elite. Hereby Mudde characterizes the people as ‘pure’ and the elite as ‘corrupt’. Further Mudde stresses in his definition on the fact that populism is an ideology, which already presumes an antagonism within society. Another crucial element in the definition of Mudde is the inclusion of the general will. This term is going back to Rousseau who states that “the

⁴¹ Shils, 1956, pp.101-3

⁴² Laclau, E. (1977) *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*. London: Verso. , p.173

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Mudde, C. *The Populist Zeitgeist*. *Government & Opposition*, 39, 4, pp.542-563(22), p.543

general will alone can direct the State according to the object for which it was instituted, i.e. the common good...and it is solely on the basis of this common interest that every society should be governed⁴⁵. Thus, populism includes the expression of this general will of the people.

In order to understand, however, populism in its ideological scope one should stick to Paul Taggart (2000) who states that there are six main themes of populism. First, it is hostile to representative politics. Thus, one can say that political populism is dependent on the conditions set by representative politics. This statement is referred to the fact that populism can only developed itself as a political force with the existence of representative institutions with their processes and demands. As a result of this populism is obliged “to transform itself from a cultural leitmotif into either a fully-fledged political movement or political ideology”⁴⁶. The second main theme of populism is an idealised conception of the community populists serves, the so-called ‘heartland’. Taggart defines this heartland as a place “in which, in the populist imagination, a virtuous and unified population resides”⁴⁷. Thus, from this heartland populists construct ‘the people’ as the object of their politics. Moreover, this heartland has to be seen here as a vision that originated from the past but projected onto the present. Also, the feeling of a unified force is guaranteed through the shared sense of this heartland⁴⁸.

The third theme of populism Taggart describes is the lack of core values. The variety of the heartlands constructed by different groups of populists leads to the fact that different values of the different forms of populism exist. Furthermore, one can say that populism is easily attachable to other set of ideas. “Populists have been revolutionary, reactionary, left-

⁴⁵ Rousseau, J.J. (1987) *On the Social Contract*. [Excerpts] Indianapolis–Cambridge: Hackett, p.24

⁴⁶ Taggart, P. *Populism and the Pathology of Representative Politics*. In: Mény, Y. & Surel, Y. (2002) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Palgrave: Oxford. , p.66

⁴⁷ Taggart, 2000, p.95

⁴⁸ Taggart, 2002, p.66

wing, right-wing, authoritarian and libertarian”⁴⁹. As a fourth theme of populism one can mention that populism emerges as a reaction to change, crisis and challenge within a political society. It is crucial to mention here that populism emerges mostly in cases with a strong sense of crisis in order that populists then can use this crisis to deliver their message⁵⁰.

The fifth theme of populism covers the aspect of the self-limiting quality. Populists can be seen in this respect as political reluctant as they only try to spread out their ideas when there is a sense of crisis. Therefore one can understand two important characteristics of populist movements. First, populists accept new and different forms of politics, and second, that there is a big difficulty that populists movements sustain in the long run⁵¹. The final theme of populism defined by Taggart is “that populists tend to be highly chameleonic”⁵². This refers to the fact that populism is constrained by its context. This is a consequence of the different populist movements emerged and also of the different studies on different populist movements made throughout time. Thus, each populist movement follows its own developed specific features than part of the wider populist sphere. Populists only mobilise when their own heartland is threatened, not when one heartland is threatened⁵³.

1.5 Political Populism and its Position within established Democracies

After having examined the different themes of populism it is crucial to elaborate more on political populism as such in order to understand this. Margaret Canovan (1981) offers here an appropriate study of political populism and distinguishes between four types of political populism. The first type is populist dictatorship. Here she refers to populist movements encouraged by strong leaders. In this case it is notable to mention that in most cases the

⁴⁹ Taggart, 2002, p.68

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Taggart, 2002, p.69

⁵² Taggart, 2002, p.70

⁵³ *ibid.*

leadership is often charismatic in order to gain the trust of the masses⁵⁴. The second type of political populism she mentions is populist democracy. This type distrusts the institutions of representative politics and tries to introduce mechanisms such as initiatives, referendums and recalls in order to avoid the role of representatives⁵⁵. It has to be noted that for the scope of this paper this type will be considered most and will be analysed later. The third form is reactionary populism. This form of political populism consist of political appeals that emphasize the gap between the values of the elite and the people, making known “a clash between reactionary, authoritarian, racist, or chauvinist views at the grass roots, and the progressive, liberal, tolerant cosmopolitan characteristic of the elite”⁵⁶. The final type of Canovans analysis is politicians’ populism. This form of populism emphasizes on the meaning of ‘the people’. Politicians try to make the masses aware to which group of the society they belong, namely ‘the pure people’. Thus, the hostility against the elite grows⁵⁷.

In order to assess populism and its relationship to democracy one should first take some ideas in this respect into account. As Mény and Surel (2002) argue it is difficult to define explicitly populism as its ideology is very complex and its meaning is diverse. Further, both emphasize on the difference between popular and constitutional democracy. They argue that both pillars of democracy have a lot of differences and that there is a certain amount of discussion and disagreement over the correct balance between these two pillars. However, according to Mény and Surel, both pillars are the founding stones of all existing democracies. Moreover, Mény and Surel state that populist movements establish their arguments in three steps. Firstly, they stress “the role of the people and its fundamental position, not only within society but also in the structure and functioning of the political system as whole”⁵⁸. Secondly, they claim that the people have been betrayed by the representative institutions. And finally,

⁵⁴ Canovan, M. (1981) *Populism*. London: Junction. p.136

⁵⁵ Canovan, 1981, p.177

⁵⁶ Canovan, 1981, p.229

⁵⁷ Canovan, 1981, pp.269-73

⁵⁸ Mény, Y & Surel, Y. (2002) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Palgrave: Oxford. p.12

the primacy of the people has to be restored, which means that the elites have to consist of real ‘people’ who are able to govern.

As Canovan further states there is a democratic paradox. She argues that politics have to be brought to the people and it is the only way to do by having the ideology as a type of political thought. However, as she further emphasizes, ideology is not compatible with democracy at all and therefore populists are encouraged to believe that they are the true democrats and not the politicians⁵⁹. Regarding the ideology of populism Canovan describes that the key concept of populist ideology is ‘the people’, which is followed by ‘democracy’, ‘sovereignty’ and ‘majority rule’. Therefore, for the populists, as Canovan states, “democracy is understood as government by the sovereign people, not as government by politicians, bureaucrats or judges”⁶⁰.

Concerning the relationship between democracy and populism Yannis Papadopoulos describes that there are two main dimensions between democracy and populism. First, democratic ideology has caused the populist demand for more inclusiveness. Further, this populist demand remained due to the failure of democratic practice to fulfil this ideology. Secondly, “institutional techniques available to deal with ‘complexity management’ are likely to nurture populism”⁶¹. Therefore, populism can be seen as a claim for a political order as the governmental institutions are not capable of representing the politics of ‘the people’.

Another contribution to the relationship between populism and democracy is made by Paul Taggart, who focused especially on the relationship between populism and representative democracy. As he argues, populism has some crucial effects on the political system of representative democracy. As first, one can mention that it is an indicator of failings within the political system of representative politics. As a further impact of populism

⁵⁹ Canovan, M. Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy. In: Mény, Y. & Surel, Y. (2002) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Palgrave: Oxford

⁶⁰ Canovan, 2002, p.33

⁶¹ Papadopoulos, Y. Populism, the Democratic Question, and Contemporary Governance. In: Mény, Y. & Surel, Y. (2002) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Palgrave: Oxford. p.57

on representative democracy one can mention the importance of the populist view of ‘the people’. Representative democracy always represents the ideas of the people. However, populism creates a potent political weapon in so far as it creates certain aggression of the people against the elite. With this political weapon populism changes within the political system of representative democracy the relationship between the politicians and the people⁶². In this context Peter Mair also describes that parties play a more central role in the organisation and functioning of constitutional democracy than in populist democracy. However, due to changes in the role of party identities and their functions the representative role of political parties and their governments become weaker. Therefore, as Mair argues further, it is also more logical why constitutional democracy and populist democracy grew apart from each other. Parties in both types of democracy tried to bridge and to blur any boundaries, which should exist in political society. When these parties became more institutional than representative the popular pillar of democracy started to become more imperfect and more problematic. Thus, one can speak here of the decline of party democracy and one see the need to moderate the popular pillar of democracy. Furthermore, Mair states that the shift in party identity and party functions also led to the tensions between constitutional and popular democracy as this shift led to frustration of ‘the people’ towards the institutional ‘elite’ as parties are seen as representative elements as the preference of institutional functions than representative one ensures the distrust and aggression against the government in which the parties do not play a representative role at all⁶³.

As Alan Ware states, populism in the United States did not become a political movement outside from the politics. This is due to the fact that political values and traditions of American politics fit together well with populism. Thus, populism forms a political

⁶² Taggart, P. Populism and the Pathology of Representative Politics. In: Mény, Y. & Surel, Y. (2002) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Palgrave: Oxford.

⁶³ Mair, P. Populist Democracy vs. Party Democracy. In: Mény, Y. & Surel, Y. (2002) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Palgrave: Oxford.

mainstream in American politics⁶⁴. Taking a look to European countries one can say that populism can be seen as anti-governmental movements. In Italy as example, “populism has left a deep and visible mark in the 55 years of republican Italy”⁶⁵ (Tarchi, 2002, p.135). Further he states that the influence of populism as a political style was in Italy quite constant due to the fascist heritage and due to the populist themes such as the distrust of the political class, the desire for a reshaping of society without class distinction, the faith in the personal values of individual charismatic leaders. In turn, France could try to avoid the challenge with the problem of populism as the French Republic introduced populist components at the time of Charles de Gaulle. Populism only appeared again after the 1980s as a transformation of social cleavages (Surel, 2002).

Hans-Georg Betz states the ability to appeal and mobilise popular resentments is one of the most crucial factors, which causes the rise of populism. Nevertheless, he also stresses the point that there are differences between the populist movements and that “we need to gain a better understanding of the specifics of each individual case” (Betz, 2002, p.213). Also Herbert Kitschelt demands for a more careful approach of populism as, according to him, it does not make much sense in “vague and generalised theorising about ‘rightist’ and ‘populist’ currents in developed post-industrialising democracies”⁶⁶. He recommends more the examination of the theoretical diversity of populism the challenges to representative democracy.

Taken all these definitions into account one can say that populism is more than a social movement and can be characterised as a new political ideology. Certain common elements with ideologies such as liberalism, conservatism and constitutionalism are

⁶⁴ Ware, A. The United States: Populism as Political Strategy. In: Mény, Y. & Surel, Y. (2002) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Palgrave: Oxford.

⁶⁵ Tarchi, M. Populism Italian Style. In: Mény, Y. & Surel, Y. (2002) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Palgrave: Oxford. p.135

⁶⁶ Kitschelt, H. Popular Dissatisfaction with Democracy: Populism and Party Systems. In: Mény, Y. & Surel, Y. (2002) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Palgrave: Oxford. p.196

incorporated into the ideas of populism but it should be clearly note that populism opposes strongly the political elite. However, one should make clear that populism should be regarded from different angles as in these perspectives it can be seen as danger or as new form of democracy.

Chapter 2: New Populism in Western European Democracies: The Rise of Right-Wing Extremism

In the last thirty years Western European democracies has experienced a certain movements of right-wing populism that is characterised by extreme right-wing parties. In certain countries these movements led to significant electoral success and in some to failures. Therefore, this part of this paper will deal with the research question what are the factors that determine the electoral success of right-wing movements in Western Europe. In order to do this analysis this chapter will take three movements of right-wing extremism as examples in order to find out similarities and differences and in order to answer the research question mentioned above. In this analysis this chapter will compare the Front National in France, the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs in Austria and the British extreme right-wing movement. It should be note here that this analysis is focusing only on the successes and failures of these parties till the year 2002 as the party histories till this year are more interesting for this analysis and for the overall thesis. At first glance two main ‘puzzles’ occur. First, in Austria the extreme right-wing party managed to form the government, and secondly, in Britain the extreme right-wing parties did not show any electoral success and failed to play a significant with the politics of their respective country. This part of this paper will try to solve both puzzles. In order to do this it will first describe the emergence of the New Populism in Western Europe. Then it will analyse the three cases mentioned above, elaborating the party history, ideology and the electorate. After that it will examine the reasons for electoral success and failure of these parties by taking into account the variables ideology, leadership and organisation, party system and electoral system. Finally, this chapter will provide with an appropriate conclusion including the solution of the two puzzles and the research question mentioned above.

2.1 The emergence of New Populism in Western Europe

After the Second World War a certain post-war consensus was visible. This consensus included certain ideals of social democracy and the obligation of Western European states for a mixed economy. Regarding the political parties included in this consensus one can say that a certain expansion from social democratic parties to Christian democratic and conservative and liberal parties was visible. However, this post-war consensus, as Paul Taggart argues, was confronted by different challenges. The first challenge to this post-war consensus can be seen in the form of the new social movements, which evolved in the 1970s and 1980s and “advocated a commitment to the environment, feminism, students’ rights, and opposed nuclear power and war”⁶⁷. Thus, one can say that new parties on the left side of the party spectrum evolved and tried to enter the political sphere from the left.

These ‘new politics’ were characterized by a political style, which combined “the egalitarianism of the traditional left with the commitment to libertarianism”⁶⁸. Further, due to their challenge to the consensus between major parties, to the centre-left, to the social democratic and to labour parties one can say that the existing model of political parties was attacked by this evolvement of ‘new politics’. In reaction to this wave of ‘new politics’ from the left side of the political party sphere a second wave of parties from the other side, more precisely the far right, of the party sphere achieved to enter successfully into the political party arena. This wave, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, was built on the ideology of neo-fascism, which corresponded together with a new wave of populism.

This new populism can be seen as a negative reaction against the development of a welfare state with strong bureaucracy and emphasizes the existing corruption and collusion in established political parties. Although this new populism rejected such as the ‘new politics’ the post-war consensus, it tried to reconstruct politics around issues of taxation, immigration

⁶⁷ Taggart, 2000, p.74

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

and nationalism or regionalism. Thus, one can say that this combination of neo-fascism and new populism has led to the increase, on political and electoral level, which helped extreme right-wing parties to enter easily the political systems of Western Europe⁶⁹. It has to be noted here that new populism, as its name states, represents a contemporary form of populism “that stems from a populist rejection of the political agenda, institutions and legitimacy of the modern welfare-state model of mixed-economy capitalism”⁷⁰.

According to Hans-Georg Betz (1998) radical right-wing extremism in western European democracies has certain features, which should be taken into account. Firstly, it promotes a certain radical transformation of the socioeconomic and sociocultural factors within the state. Therefore, it is quite logical why the targets of radical right-wing populism are primarily the social welfare state and multicultural society. Secondly, radical right-wing populism has as one of its features, as its name even incorporates, its populist appeal, which includes core elements of the populist strategy such as “the claim to speak for the unarticulated opinions, demands, and sentiments of the ordinary people; and the mobilization of resentment against a set of clearly defined enemies”⁷¹.

Further, one should mention here the core elements of populist ideology, which characterises the extreme right-wing parties of Western Europe. First, there is a certain ethic, which promotes the contribution of each individual to the community based on the individual effort. Second, there is a certain claim for democracy and egalitarianism with the basic belief in fundamental harmony of the interests of each individual. Finally, there is a strong rejection of the current socioeconomic and socio-political system, which represents the special interests of the minor group of the political society⁷². In this context it is notable to mention the main targets of extreme right-wing populism, to which one can count the established

⁶⁹ Taggart, 2000, p.75

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ Betz, H.-G. & Immerfall, S. (Eds.) (1998). *The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*. Macmillan Press: London. p.4

⁷² *ibid.*

political parties, which represent the political class, immigrants, refugees and the resident foreign population within the state. Nevertheless, these targets may be different according to the country and the different circumstances. Further, one can see that radical right-wing populism has a strong hostility against two elements of the political society; first, against the political class and the administrative bureaucracy, which has a strong control over the fiscal policy, and second, against social groups, which number increases and which claim for social rights in order to achieve access to the public funding of the state⁷³.

Due to their motives and target strategy mentioned above extreme right-wing parties have gained in the last two decades significant electoral success, in some countries more than in other, as the case studies later will show. However one can already say, as Martin Schain states, that the electoral success of right-wing parties has certain outcomes on society and politics in Western Europe. Firstly, it enabled them to spread out their organizations, promote their racist and extremist propaganda. Secondly, their success authorises them to express and encourage intolerant and violent behaviour toward immigrants and to those of different ethnic origin. And finally, this success has changed the political environment, sphere and the political agenda due to legitimisation of on racism and intolerance based policies. The latter is often seen in fields of immigration policies but also in issues about education and employment is dominated by these policies of extreme right-wing populism⁷⁴. In order to show the objectives, strategies and the respective success of extreme right-parties in established Western European democracies this chapter will deal in the next sections with three specific cases, where extreme right-wing parties tried to enter the political arena and even gained certain electoral success.

⁷³ Betz, 1998, p. 5

⁷⁴ Schain, M. (2002). *Shadows over Europe : the development and impact of the extreme right in Western Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. p.4

2.2 Party History, Party Ideology and Electoral Support

After have given an overview of Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe this paper will now look in detail on three cases in Western Europe where extreme right movements tried to enter the political party system. These cases are the Front National in France, the Freedom Party of Austria and the British extreme right movement dominated by the National Front and the British National Party. In this section the parties will be analysed on the ground of their history, ideology and electoral support in order to give an overview and a picture of the different movements.

2.2.1 *The Prototype of the Extreme Right: the Front National in France*

One of the most successful extreme right-wing parties in Western Europe is by far the Front National in France with its strong leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. Although the party itself entered the French political arena in the 80s in France a certain tradition of extreme right existed. As Betz argues two crucial factors in France have had a big impact on the return of the extreme right in France after the Second World War. The first factor was the decolonization in Algeria. Due to the treaties of Evian in 1962, which ensured independence the French colony and the end of the Algerian War, over a million of French settlers were exiled to France. Thus, strong anti-Arab feelings were established from that period on and spread out quickly.

The second factor, which led to the establishment of the extreme right, was the election of Francois Mitterrand in 1981 as a socialist president, whose government disappointed with its “sharp turn to more orthodox social and economic policies”⁷⁵. Due to this political change the French people were confronted “with the seriousness of recession, its

⁷⁵ Betz, H.-G. & Immerfall, S. (Eds.) (1998). *The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*. Macmillan Press: London. p.11

international dimension, and the inability to cope with it”⁷⁶. This led to the decrease of the electorate of the socialist and to the increase of the constituency of the far right. Furthermore, this government, which even consisted of a cohabitation and demonstrated the failure of the right and left centred parties, was shattered with a lot of affairs and scandals which led to the destruction of the confidence of the political class. All in all, one can say that both factors mentioned above led to the development of the Front National.

The Front National (FN) was founded in April 1972 with Jean-Marie Le Pen in its presidency. This charismatic leader decided to include the national tradition of the French right and wanted to create a party, which should operate within legality. Although first conflicts within the party arose due to different opinions of the anti-Gaullists and the French post-war right-extremists, Le Pen managed it well to develop a first FN programme, which had a low profile and aimed a certain consensus with the centre right⁷⁷. Nevertheless, the results of the 1973 first elections, in which the FN participated for the first time, were disappointing as they gained less than 0.5 % of the votes. This is also caused by the internal tensions mentioned before, which even led to the split of the original composition of the party and to a competition with the Parti des Forces Nouvelles, an independent organisation after the split from the Front National⁷⁸.

However, in the 80s the Front National gained in some local elections good results. Notable in this context are the local elections in the small French town Dreux in September 1983, in which the Front National obtained 16.7 % of the votes. In the second round of the elections the centre-right made a coalition together with the FN and gained at the end 55 % of the votes, resulting in three councillors from the Front National Party. These elections were quite important as in following local elections as this time the FN made a progress. However, except one short electoral success in 1986, which can be explained with the change of the

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Ignazi, P. (2003). *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*. Oxford University Press: New York. p.91

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

electoral system from a two-ballot majoritarian to a proportional representation system. As the electoral system was again re-changed in 1988 the Front National did not won more than one seat in the French National Assembly since then⁷⁹.

Nevertheless, in the French political system the most important elections are not the elections of the parliament but of the president. In these presidential elections the Front National could show always its ability to mess with the other political parties of the French political system. The charismatic leadership of Jean Marie Le Pen who always could pursue a certain electorate for his-self mostly contributes this. He managed to develop a strategy putting the FN in the role of a 'protest party', which stresses on "anti-establishment issues along-side the immigration-security refrain"⁸⁰. For example, in the presidential elections of 1988 Le Pen achieved 14.6 % in the first ballot of these elections. This is also attributed to the merge of the electorate, between "the self-employed and the owners with the blue collars, and the old Poujadism with the workers' protest"⁸¹. Thus, one can say that the 1988 elections showed that Le Pen is favoured by a large and diverse constituency of voters in the competition of becoming president and in gaining seats in the French parliament.

This success was repeated in the presidential election of 1995, in which Le Pen gained 13.5 % of the votes. In this context it is notable to mention that in comparison to the voters of 1988, who were coming from all social classes, one can see here that the FN was in 1995 was mostly supported from the middle working class, of which also the unemployed supported strongly the Le Pen's political intentions. Further, it is crucial to mention that the main motive of voting for Le Pen was in during the 1988 election were political frustration, whereas in 1995 alienation and marginalization were the main motives voting for the Front National⁸².

⁷⁹ Betz, 1998, p.13

⁸⁰ Ignazi, 2003, p97

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² Ignazi, 2003, p.97 & p.101

The peak of Le Pen's success were with no doubt the presidential elections of 2002, in which he succeeded to be elected with 16.9 % of the votes into the second round of the elections as candidate against Jacques Chirac. Although Chirac was elected in the second round of the elections with a huge majority over Le Pen, the fact that the Front National achieved to come into the second round of the elections shocked the French and international political arena⁸³.

Regarding the electorate of the Front National one can refer hereby to Kitschelt who found out that "the French radical Right represents a case of right-authoritarian mobilization"⁸⁴. Due to a well-organised party strategy developed by Le Pen the FN the electorate consists of an overrepresentation of workers and small-business entrepreneurs organized around issues such as law and order, xenophobia, catholic fundamentalism and the rejection of feminism. Further, attitudes of alienation and strategic voting are the main contributions to the success of the Front National mentioned above.

2.2.2 *The Freedom Party of Austria: Movement from Liberalism to Right-Wing Extremism*

The beginnings of the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), can be traced back till the time after the Second World War when a third political camp established itself as a protest against the dominance of the socialists and the conservatives of the Austrian political sphere. These two parties strongly rejected the ideology of German Nationalism, a combination of a cultural nation (*Kulturnation*), including common language, history and ethnicity, and of Nazism. According to both dominant political affiliations this political view was seen as right-wing extremism⁸⁵. Although half of the Austrian population did not share this view and insisted

⁸³ Durand, C., Blais, A. & Larochelle, M. The Polls in the 2002 French Presidential Election: An Autopsy. In: *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol.68, No.4, Winter 2004. pp.602-602. P.603

⁸⁴ Kitschelt, H. (1995). *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. University of Michigan Press. p.116

⁸⁵ Betz, 1998, p.28

more on the fact that they represent national-liberalist views. However, there was no initiative in re-establishing the national-liberalist party, which existed before the Second World War, as certain associations with National Socialism were scared. However, “a hastily de-Nazification policy that failed to distinguish between mere party members and real war criminals”⁸⁶ led to the foundation of the League of Independents (*Verband der Unabhängigen: VDU*), which was succeeded in 1956 by the above mentioned FPÖ.

In the beginning of its years the party could reach only some marginal efforts as it was still connected with its nationalist socialist past and could not easily escape from its ‘ghosts of Nazism’. Though, this changed from the late-1960s as the party went through a big modernisation process, stressing in its programme economic liberalism and the free market. Further, the party recognition through Prime Minister Bruno Kriesky, who was Jewish, led to the integration of the FPÖ into the Austrian political arena. In the 70s due to new leadership the party managed to progress in the same direction as the German liberal party and accepted the ideology of authentic liberalism. This successful orientation towards a liberal approach was confirmed through the cooperation with the Social democrats of the SPÖ and through the formation of a coalition government with this cooperating party⁸⁷.

However, this coalition had a negative impact on the traditional electorate of the FPÖ and it came to a split of the party. As a result to this “the milieu of the Burschenschaften, the nationalist student associations that had long provided party cadres, and the nostalgic groups made a comeback”⁸⁸. This young, new, more traditional oriented group of party members defeated the liberal oriented party members at the party congress of 1986 and brought a new party leader to power, the charismatic Jörg Haider. This victory of Haider led to the end of the government coalition and to new elections issued by the socialists⁸⁹.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Ignazi, 2003, pp.111-112

⁸⁸ Ignazi, 2003, p.112

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

In the following years Haider managed through populist rhetoric and through well organised campaigns to gain strong electoral support. Hereby the main issues the FPÖ mainly focused were “unemployment, waste of tax monies, corruption and excessive political patronage, and scandals. At the same time it campaigned for the privatization of state-owned enterprises, for lower taxes, and for a reduction of regulation on business and individuals”⁹⁰.

Due to Haider’s charismatic leadership and his growing power within the party the electoral results in electoral and regional elections improved more and more, even so far that the party managed to overthrow the ÖVP during the 1999 parliamentary elections with an amount of 26.9 % of votes resulting in a coalition government with that defeated ÖVP with Wolfgang Schüssel as prime minister⁹¹. Regarding the electorate of the FPÖ one can say the social stratification of the FPÖ is composed mostly have the working class (25%) and self-employed professionals (21%)⁹². However, as it was visible in the 1999 parliamentary elections the FPÖ manages also to address the general Austrian public, especially the electorate, which is not satisfied anymore about the politics of the other two parties in the Austrian political arena. Thus, one can say that the FPÖ in Austria managed to breakout from the classical minority role, which extreme right-wing parties normally have, and started to play a crucial negotiation partner in government formation.

2.2.3 *The Extreme Right in Great Britain: a failed Attempt*

Compared to the cases of extreme right parties in France and Austria in Britain the extreme right could never experience any success. Still, some attempts should be mentioned here in order to give a visible picture. The extreme right movements in Britain can be traced back to

⁹⁰ Betz, 1998, p.29

⁹¹ Ignazi, 2003, pp.113-114

⁹² Ignazi, 2003, p.114

the 30s when Oswald Mosley, a former Labour party member, founded the British Union of Fascists (BUF), which differentiated from the other British parties in its ideology and in its organisation. With the outbreak of the Second World War the existence of the BUF came rapidly to an end by being dissolved from the government. Till that time the BUF had marginal electoral success. It could only have some success in few areas of London but “outside London the BUF performed disastrously”⁹³.

After World War II the British extreme right appeared back in the British political arena through the foundation of the Union Movement in 1948 done by the already known politician Mosley. However, again he could not make the desired success and it came in the 50s it came to a split of this movement giving rise to a new generation of extreme right leaders, notable should be mentioned in this case Martin Webster, John Tyndall and Colin Jordan. These leaders founded and established several extreme right movements in the 50s and 60s such as the British National Party (BNP), National Socialist Movement (NSM) and the League of Empire Loyalists (LEL). Nevertheless, none of these movements could make any impressive impact on British politics⁹⁴.

Still, one further attempt was made by Webster and Tyndall with the foundation of the National Front (NF) in 1967. This new organization can be seen as the most successful extreme right party in Britain after the Second World War. In the following years the party could show some notable electoral results. Notable of these are the results of the by-elections of 1973 in which the NF gained 16.4 % of the votes, “the best result ever achieved by an extreme right party in a British general election”⁹⁵. Though, the party never succeeded to break into the British party system. Further, internal quarrels and disputes led to further splits and changes in the leadership, which had an impact on the strategy and on the minor success of the party. In the 80s a third generation of extreme right leaders emerged, notable here are

⁹³ Ignazi, 2003, p.175

⁹⁴ Ignazi, 2003, p.176

⁹⁵ Ignazi, 2003, p.177

Griffin and Pearce. However, this party also did not succeed well as it has also a competing party founded by former NF leader Tyndall.

This party was the British National Party (BNP) founded by Tyndall and described as the succeeding party to the 70s National Front. Its main points were nationalistic racism and the destiny of Great Britain. This party proposed certain policy proposals regarding “forced repatriation of immigrants, tough measures for criminals, drastic cuts to the welfare system, the death penalty for terrorists, and legal prohibition of abortion and of homosexual conduct”⁹⁶. The BNP could show good results in some local elections but in the general elections of 1992 it showed again minor results in the form of 1.0 % on average in all constituencies. Thus, a new beginning of the British extreme right movement failed again and showed that the failure of the extreme right in Britain is already a certain routine in British politics.

Regarding the ideology of the British extreme right one can say that it is mainly characterised by nationalistic racism and strong anti-Semitism. Mainly this racism was argued on biological and genetic grounds stressing on the pure genetic clean Anglo-Saxon race. Further, it demands for prevail of British national spirit and British virtues⁹⁷. This ideology addresses a certain electorate, which is composed of economically marginal, culturally threatened white workers of heavily working-class districts who mainly vote for the extreme right in Britain⁹⁸.

This section has shown the party history, the party ideology and the electoral support of extreme right movements in France, Austria and Britain. Although, this chapter has given an overview of the functioning of these parties in each country it has not yet provided the

⁹⁶ Ignazi, 2003, p.182

⁹⁷ Ignazi, 2003, p.181

⁹⁸ Kitschelt, 1995, p.256

reasons for its respective success or failure. This will be done in the following part of this paper.

2.3 Reasons for success and failure of Extreme Right Movements in Western Europe

After having described the three parties of this chapter's case rationale this part of the chapter will now proceed by finding out the reasons for the respective success or failure of these extreme right-wing movements. Hereby this section refers to the analysis conducted by Elisabeth Carter and takes the variables as she does into account in order to find out the reasons for the success or failure of the parties mentioned above. Hereby four main variables will be taken into regard: party ideology, party organisation and leadership, party competition and electoral systems.

2.3.1 Party Ideology

The first variable, which one should take into account, is party ideology. Hereby one can say that there are different typologies of extreme right parties. As Carter (2005) argues that there is threefold division, which constructs the typology of right-wing parties in Western Europe. This division consists of "the importance attached by the parties to the issue of immigration, the nature of the parties' racist attitudes, the parties' attitudes towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism" (Carter, 2005, p.28).

According to this division then one distinguishes between five types of extreme right parties. The first type is the Neo-Nazi parties, which are radically xenophobic and have a strong attitude towards classical racism. The second type, the neo-fascist parties, are not xenophobic and racist as the first type but refuse strongly the existing democratic system out

of the political right as the first type does too. The third type, the authoritarian xenophobic parties, differ from the first two types in the sense that they do not decline the democratic order completely but rather demand reforms, which “would strengthen the executive and would weaken the rights and freedoms of organised interests and individuals”⁹⁹. In context with this one shall mention the fourth type, the neo-liberal parties, which are such as the third type radically xenophobic and culturist but demand compared to the authoritarian xenophobic parties more democracy. Finally, the type of neo-liberalist parties, the fifth type, is absent of xenophobic and racist attitudes and demand as the fourth type for more democracy¹⁰⁰.

Taking these types into account one can say that the French Front National and the Freedom Party of Austria can be identified as authoritarian xenophobic parties whereas the British parties National Front and British National Party are clearly Neo-Nazi parties. Therefore, it is remarkable that the parties in France and Austria, which have a different ideology as the British parties, could gain more electoral success than the British parties. Therefore, one can say that party ideology plays a crucial role regarding electoral success extreme right-wing parties.

2.3.2 *Party organisation and leadership*

As mentioned before in the context of characteristics of populism one of the most crucial ones is a charismatic leadership. In the context of electoral success of extreme right parties it is crucial as this leadership shows the capability to organise the party and this affects also the degree of electoral success of right-wing parties. According to Carter one distinguishes between three types of extreme right-wing parties in the context with party organisation and leadership. Here one differentiates between, firstly, weakly organised, poorly led and divided

⁹⁹ Carter, E. (2005). *The extreme right in Western Europe: success or failure?* Manchester University Press: Manchester. p.52

¹⁰⁰ Carter, 2005, pp.51-53

parties; secondly, weakly organised, poorly led but united parties; and finally, strongly-organised, well-led but factionalised parties¹⁰¹.

Taking this typology into regard one can say that the British parties National Front and British National Party fit into the first category as mentioned above both parties in Britain had a lot of internal problems, which led several times to the split of the extreme right movement in Britain. Further, the party leaders were lacking of ability to organise and to lead the parties well¹⁰².

Compared to the Front National in France and the Freedom Party of Austria, which both are well-organised parties. Both parties have a strong leader who was capable to unite the party and convinced the public with strong arguments and a charismatic image. In the case of Austria one can say that Haider even made some modifications to the internal party structure in order to lead it more freely and get a more direct contact to the Austrian public. These modifications included a strong centralisation process on the leader in order to eliminate the right and left fractions of the party. Thus, one can say that the Austrian party has become more and more Haider's party¹⁰³. This did not happen in France, as Jean-Marie Le Pen could not control his party completely as within his party he has some party members who think that his era is coming to an end and the 'post-Le Pen' time should begin. Further, due to the racist remarks of this charismatic leader and the strong electoral success of the party Le Pen raised more protests against his party and did not find the right strategy to convince the French public opinion¹⁰⁴. Thus, one can say that strong leadership and well organisation are important criteria for electoral success of extreme right parties.

¹⁰¹ Carter, 2005, p.66

¹⁰² Ignazi, 2003, p.185

¹⁰³ Ignazi, 2003, p.115.

¹⁰⁴ Betz, 1998, pp.22-23

2.3.3 Party System and Electoral System

The following variable that will be now analysed is an institutional one, the party system of the country of the respective extreme right party. As Carter states the party system of a country is often associated with the political space, in which the extreme right parties are located and which gives certain room of party competition¹⁰⁵. Taking this fact into account one can say that in Britain the political space for right-wing parties is relatively small. This can be seen as a consequence of the dominance of the Labour party and Conservatives, which even did not let any room for entering new small parties into the British political arena. As the Labour party was staying for long time in the opposition the probability was lowered “that some workers support the extreme Right because they have been disappointed with Labour’s government performance”¹⁰⁶.

Further, the Conservatives noticed quite early that the extreme right could be a potential competitor and started from the end of the 70s on, noticing that the extreme right gained significant support, to face the immigration problem of Britain and began to cope with it. This hindered the rise of electoral support for the extreme right as the Conservatives showed to the British public that they are able to solve the immigration issues in Britain¹⁰⁷. Another important reason why the British extreme right could not show significant electoral results is simply explained by Britain’s electoral system of a majoritarian first-past-the-post system, hindering the growth of new small parties¹⁰⁸.

In France the political space for the Front National was big due to the multiparty system with different parties in the political arena. Furthermore, the opponents of the extreme right-wing are more moderate which led to more space for the Front National to enter into the French party system and try to convince a certain electorate for its’ voting. However, it is

¹⁰⁵ Carter, 2005, p.141

¹⁰⁶ Kitschelt, 1995, p.256

¹⁰⁷ Ignazi, 2003, p.186

¹⁰⁸ Ignazi, 2003, p.186

notable to mention that the electoral success of the FN was hindered by institutional features. Hereby one should mention the form of Semi-Presidentialism, which France has. Therefore the presidential elections are the most important elections and as France has a double ballot electoral system was it difficult for Le Pen's party to enter into the government. Thus, institutional features are crucial for electoral success of the extreme right-wing in France¹⁰⁹.

The same is valid for the FPÖ in Austria, which was part of the third camp of in Austrian politics, resembling the competitive party structure in that country. In this case one also mention the proportional representation electoral system, which facilitated the electoral success of the Austrian extreme right as it played in its history a crucial role in building a coalition with one of the other dominating and competing political parties. Further, one can say that the FPÖ initially was located more moderate but through Haider it changed its ideological location within the political space from liberal to extreme right. This step back to the traditional political culture of the Austrian extreme right and its continuing stress on immigration issues mobilised the Austrian public to support this alternative style of politics as the other two parties failed with their political program¹¹⁰.

This section has provided the important variables, which lead to the electoral success of extreme right-wing parties in Western Europe. Although institutional features play a crucial role other factors such as party ideology and party leadership are also important as all variables are some how connected with and dependent on each other.

This chapter of the paper has analysed the reasons for the rise of extreme right-wing parties in Western Europe. Hereby it has first taken into account the common ideology all parties have, New Populism. Further, this part has taken as case rationale three extreme right movements in Western European democracies, namely in France, Austria and Great Britain. After having

¹⁰⁹ Kitschelt, 1995, p117

¹¹⁰ Ignazi, 2003, pp.119-121

analysed the party ideology, party history and the electorate, this chapter has tried to solve the two main ‘puzzles’, which occurred. The first riddle was why the Freedom Party of Austria could break into the party system and even came to governmental power. This can be traced back to the institutional features but also to the fact that in Austria Nationalism has a long tradition, which could not be erased easily from the minds of the people. Further, charismatic leadership provided by Haider led to the success of the party. This charismatic leadership was also visible in the success of the French Front National, which not could enter the government as its Austrian counterpart did, due to the semi-presidential political system. Further, in France the extreme right was strongly opposed by the other parties as in Austria the FPÖ was mostly used as a tool of the other parties in order to form a coalition government by using the FPÖ as a minor coalition partner.

This second puzzle dealt with the question why in Great Britain the extreme right could not show any electoral success. This paper has found out that despite the fact that the British electoral system hinders significant electoral success of the British extreme right, the right-wing parties in Britain lacked of strong leadership and of good organisation. Throughout its party history it always split into small groups, which hindered the unity of the party and its members. Further, compared to the other two cases in this paper the British extreme right was ideologically oriented as Nazi-party, which made it difficult to gain success as this was a certain taboo in Britain after the Second World War. Further, the traditional party culture in Britain made it impossible that new parties such as the National Front could not enter into the British political area. Finally, one should also agree with Ignazi who states that in Britain a certain political culture which consists of “the leaning towards gradualism and the inheritance of a culture of rights, the deeply rooted liberal-democratic institutions, and the bargaining, pragmatic attitudes which relate to a civic culture nurtured by

a long-standing practice of the rule of law” (Ignazi, 2003, p.185) put the British extreme right-wing movement already in a weak position before it even could begin its failed attempt.

Chapter 3: Populist Democracy: Threat to Constitutional Democracy?

In the last decades a certain trend in European politics has been visible. This trend was that many radical right parties gained votes and even managed to have great influence in the governmental politics in domestic politics of European countries. This tendency can be seen as “New populism”, a contemporary form of populism, which emerged in the last part of the twentieth century. New populism can be described as a series of different political parties in different countries which arose during the same period and which are also characterized by some similar themes. Further, new populism demonstrates the anti-institutional politics of populism in general. This can be seen through the attack on political parties, party systems, and the agendas of party politics¹¹¹.

Indeed, populist democracy is the contrary form to constitutional democracy within the democratic sphere. Populist Democracy is identified with an importance on the role of the demos, which is, “the free association of citizens, the maintenance of free elections, and the freedom of political expression”¹¹². Further, popular democracy entails government by the people. Constitutional Democracy, on the other hand, is identified with an emphasis on the institutional requirements for good governance, that is, “the establishment of rules and constraints limiting executive autonomy, the guaranteeing of individual and collective rights and the maintenance of a system of checks and balances intended to prevent the abuse of power”¹¹³. Thus, the constitutional democracy can be associated with the defence of the public and entails government for the people.

So how the ideal system of democracy looks like when both forms are clashing with each other? This chapter will show that populism is needed in a certain level to complement constitutional democracy. First, it will define populism as such by analysing its main themes

¹¹¹ Taggart, P. (2000) Populism. Open University Press: Philadelphia, p.73

¹¹² Mair, P. Populist Democracy vs. Party Democracy. In: Mény, Y. & Surel, Y. (2002) Democracies and the Populist Challenge. Palgrave: Oxford., p.81

¹¹³ Mair, 2002, p.81

and its ideology. In this context the focus is set on the conflict between ‘the people’ and the representative ‘elite’. Then, this extract will analyse the relationship of populism and representative politics. Here, the impact of populism on representative democracy will be examined. One crucial element of representative politics is the role of political parties. However, in recent years a certain shift in the identity and functions of parties is visible. Further, this chapter will examine these shifts which consequence is the decline in party democracy. Thus, at the end of this part it will be shown that it is populist democracy, which can be seen as a solving solution to this erosion of party politics, and that populism complement constitutional democracy.

Having collected the knowledge about populism and its ideology this chapter will now continue by analysing the relationship between popular democracy and constitutional democracy. In the following part the impact of populism on representative politics will be shown.

3.1 The Relationship between Populism and Representative Politics

Political scientists who have dealt with populism state that populist democracy is a type of democracy that opposes liberal democracy. The latter type of democracy is also characterised as representative democracy. In representative democracy the source of laws and public policies is represented through officeholders who come into office through contested elections. These elections in turn can be seen as general guidance to the winning officeholders concerning public opinion and preferences on laws and public policies that have been and have to be made. There are two ways in which the different offices are specified. Firstly, they can be specified by the ratification of the constitution, which is always subject to amendment of the people who ratified it. Secondly, they can be specified through a basic

common understanding. Therefore, one can see that the fundamental institution of representative democracy is the electoral system and voting¹¹⁴.

As mentioned before one of the main themes of populism is the opposing attitude towards representative politics, which can be seen as politics, occurred around the institutions of liberal democracy. Representative politics are made up through a range of different interacting and independent processes. These cycles and processes are electoral cycles, party politics, public debate, and interest intermediation and end up in the processes of public policy-making. Populism reacts negatively to these processes and tried to construct alternative processes to direct democracy, radical grass-roots co-operative democracy or authoritarian leadership¹¹⁵. As Taggart argues populism can be characterised “as the embodiment of a primal political instinct of the ruled against the rulers”¹¹⁶. In order to become a political movement populism as such has to be structured against and through the processes of representative politics. Hereby populism is forced to express a constant position through the competition of representative politics.

Nevertheless, the root of this political instinct is not this constant position but the rejection of representative politics¹¹⁷. If one accepts Taggart's argument that populism has its roots in a reaction of the ruled against the rulers, one can see two effects. First, populism is unformed and diffuse. This refers to the different forms of populist reactions that exist. This is due to the different systems of representative politics and to the vague sense, which is translated into political actions and political ideas. Second, populism cannot be seen as a reaction to modernity. In turn, modernity gives populism the conditions to react to representative politics. Modern politics creates complex forms and structures of representative politics, which become the target of the populist thinking.

¹¹⁴ Taggart, 2002, p.357

¹¹⁵ Taggart, 2002, p.71

¹¹⁶ Taggart, 2000, p.109

¹¹⁷ Taggart, 2002, p.72

One might think that populist movements have no impact on representative politics. In reality, however, they have some crucial effects of the political system of representative democracy. Firstly, one can mention as one crucial effect of populism that it is an indicator of failings within the political system of representative politics. As a further impact of populism on representative democracy one can mention the importance of the populist view of ‘the people’. Representative democracy always represents the ideas of the people. However, populism creates a potent political weapon in so far as it creates certain aggression of the people against the elite. With this political weapon populism changes within the political system of representative democracy the relationship between the politicians and the people. As Shils states populism “injects politics with an inverted egalitarianism because it is tinged with the belief that the people are not just the equal of their rulers; they are actually better than their ruler”¹¹⁸. This is present in populism through the belief that politicians are corrupt, while the people represent the true values of wisdom and purity. This populist thought changes the basic idea on which institutions declare legitimacy and make claims about public policy¹¹⁹.

A further argument given by Taggart says that there are three ways in which populism structures political debate. First, it creates a ‘politics of simplicity’. According to this view politics should include the knowledge of the ordinary people and therefore should be simple and direct. Thus, populism claims for clarity, directness and simplicity in all its ways expressing this claim. The second way in which populism structures political debate is that it reasserts popular sovereignty as a primary value. The vague claim of populism’s commitment to ‘the people’ is a powerful tool, which has the effect of legitimising populist claims. Further, one can say that the popular sovereignty of ‘the people’ plays a crucial role in excluding and demonising key societal groups. This can be seen through the certainty of

¹¹⁸ Shils, 1956, p.101

¹¹⁹ Taggart, 2002, p.76

populists to what kind of group of people within political society they do not belong at all. The final effect of populism on political debate to be mentioned here is that it forces a dichotomy on political debate. This means that there is a certain political dualism within populism, which frames the political world in either pro or anti terms. This dualism can be seen as a result of the attempt “to construct simple politics that allow direct representation, but it is also symptomatic of another way of seeing the polarising of elites and masses as a whole”¹²⁰. Thus, political issues become dualised in terms of simple politics of good and bad and of right and wrong.

To sum up one can say that the relationship between populism and representative politics is closes as expected. More precisely, populism is deeply rooted in the processes and practices of representative politics. Although representative politics can be seen on one hand as the source of frustration for populists, at the same time representative politics are a good tool for populists to express that frustration and wins support of the people. Having analysed in this part of this chapter the relationship between populism and representative democracy the next part of the paper will now taking the role of parties more into account and will describe the erosion of party democracy due to the shifting role of parties.

3.2 The Decline of Party Democracy

In representative democracy the role of political parties can be seen as very crucial as the parties organise the linkage between voters and governments. First, voters chose between parties, secondly representation is channelled through parties; thirdly parties formed governments, and finally accountability is assured through parties. The emphasis of party as the main representative leads to the fact that one talks of party democracy. According to Katz this emphasis has included certain assumptions and beliefs how modern democracy should be

¹²⁰ Taggart, 2002, p.77

functioned. Firstly, the link between voters and governments is mediated rather than direct. Moreover, the organised political party is acting as the main mediator within the electoral channel. Secondly, the electorate is characterised by a set of diverse and reasonably enduring interests. These interests race with one another for the distribution of rare public resources. The third assumption how modern democracy with should function states that these interests are reflected more or less faithfully in programmes of the parties which compete for electoral support. Finally, governments, which were constructed through this process of party competition, are partisan. Thus, there are in any political solution winners and losers¹²¹.

However, these assumptions of party democracy are difficult to keep up. Further, due to two crucial aspects it is difficult to characterise modern democracy as party democracy. The first aspect to mention is the change of party identity. In the last decades parties have become more accessible for voters which led to the result that the notion of politics as reflection of social and ideological conflict lost its meaning. Further, parties that take over governments from previous parties continue mostly the same policies and programmes although they might be capable in turning these policies easily.

However, this capacity is often unknown to political parties. The consequence of these shifts in party identity is that voters find it difficult to detect significant differences, ideological and specific ones, between parties. Thus, certain distrust against parties developed among voters. The second aspect, which has an impact on the difficulty characterising modern democracy as party democracy, is the change in party functions. Parties had throughout time always representative and institutional functions that were of equal significant importance. However, the institutional functions become more important than the representative ones. Further, these functions have changed from those of a largely representative agency to those of a governing agency¹²².

¹²¹ Mair, 2002, pp.84-85

¹²² Mair, 2002, pp.85-86

One can say that parties play a central role in the organisation and functioning of constitutional democracy than in populist democracy. Taking these changes in party functions together with the changes in party identities one can say that these changes strengthen the fact that the partisan and representative roles of political parties and their governments always have been weak. Thus, the role of the political parties becomes more institutional. Thus, it is also more logical why constitutional democracy and populist democracy grew apart from each other. Parties in both types of democracy tried to bridge and to blur any boundaries, which should exist in political society. When these parties became more institutional than representative the popular pillar of democracy started to become more imperfect and more problematic. Thus, one can speak here have the decline of party democracy and one can see the need to moderate the popular pillar of democracy¹²³.

One can say that the shift in party identity and party functions has also led to the tensions between constitutional and popular democracy as this shift led to frustration of 'the people' towards the institutional 'elite' as parties are seen as representative elements as the preference of institutional functions than representative one ensures the distrust and aggression against the government in which the parties do not play a representative role at all.

3.3 Popular Democracy as Solution for Democratic Tension?

As mentioned above the erosion of party democracy is one crucial reason for the tension between constitutional and popular democracy. In order to solve this tension one could argue that populist democracy itself can be seen as solution. Here it should be noted that popular democracy itself is not seen as a favoured democratic concept but that certain small portions of it in combination with representative democracy can help to establish certain equilibrium between both democratic pillars.

¹²³ Mair, 2002, pp.86-87

According to Mair (2002) there are two senses of populism, which contribute to the solution demanded. The first sense of populism is the substantive sense, which is populist protest in general. In the context of the decline of party democracy one should mention that popular protest gains more while party democracy declines as a certain anti-party sentiment leads to the de-politicisation of inter-party relationships. The second sense of populism, which is taken here more into account, is populist democracy itself. One can define popular democracy easily as partyless democracy as democratic governance is performed without any emphasis on party. Further, in popular democracy representation is not longer consisted through party competition and it does not suppose any clash of interests between the different classes of the electoral society. At first glance voters are seen as citizens and only even later are seen as different social classes. Thus, the people are undifferentiated and this equality is a crucial element within populist democracy¹²⁴.

Regarding populist democracy more specifically it is clear that it depends on the decline of parties as organisations and thus it can work without any intervention of party. Further, in this sense of populism there is no dominating distrust with the political class growing as in the substantive sense. In turn, what grows in this sense of populism are the citizens, namely in an indifferent way to democracy. Thus, populist democracy cannot threaten political leaders easily but serve the interests of the leaders in legitimating government by emphasizing on the context of de-politicisation¹²⁵.

One can see populist democracy as a solution to the debate between constitutional and popular democracy in so far, that, regarding the role of parties, within populist democracy the parties do not play any representative or institutional role at all. In this context parties play only an important role in structuring collective electoral preferences and political identities. What follows is that the boundaries between constitutional and popular democracy vanish

¹²⁴ Mair, 2002, pp.88-89

¹²⁵ Mair, 2002, p.90

and no tension between the two pillars of democracy is to be found. The position of parties should become more familiar to the landscape in order to avoid the tensions between both pillars and in order to hinder neo-populist movements such nowadays in Europe to criticise the failure of the government establishing alternatives for a traditional concept of representative democracy. After having elaborate on the tension between the both pillars of democracy, the next part of this chapter will now discuss, which forms of democracy can be associated with populism.

3.4 Populism within different forms of democracy

As mentioned above representative democracy can be seen as an opposing type to popular democracy as institutions play a more crucial role in making government than the people itself. However, there are some forms of democracy, which can be closely associated to popular democracy, as the people's interest is one of the main themes within these types of democracy.

One form of democracy, which can be associated to today's popular democracy, is the Marxist idea of 'people's democracy', based on the Marxist-Leninist principles. This conception of democracy has as its main idea that politics reflect class interests. According to Marx a certain dictatorship of the proletariat should play as a main element of this form of democracy. In this way a revolution of the proletariat in order to stress the need for political organisation is inevitable. This revolution can be seen as the mobilisation of the people against the political elite, which is a characteristic of populism.

In contrast to Marx Lenin saw the leadership of a vanguard party more necessary than a revolution of the masses. This party could be seen as a revolutionary party, which "would be able to perceive the genuine interests of the proletariat and guide the class towards its

revolutionary destiny”¹²⁶. It should be note here that this form of democracy is characterised by communist ideals. Nevertheless, some elements of populism are comprised here. Therefore, one can say that in present and former communist democracies populism was one of the key ideologies used in the democratic system.

Another form of democracy, which would be similar to populism, is the idea of radical democracy. This type of democracy can be seen as a direct democracy, “in which everyone could represent himself”¹²⁷. In this context strong political participation can be seen as one of the main crucial ideals of this form of democracy. This political involvement could be reach through different social movement groups, which aimed to mobilise popular support through protests, demonstrations and marches. Thus, one can characterise this type of democracy as ‘grass roots democracy’.¹²⁸ Further, such form of democracy can solve problems such political obligation and other democratic paradoxes as the individual is faced with laws, which he self has made. Therefore, it is free for the individual to obey his own laws¹²⁹. One can rely this form of democracy to populism as the people play here also a crucial role in making laws. Further, direct democracy demands strong political participation, which is strongly in the interest of the people. Thus, one can say that populism is reflected in the ideas of the Marxist and radical democracy.

This chapter has shown that populist democracy has not to be seen as a threat for democratic systems but as a complement tool for constitutional democracy. Although populist democracy is based on populism itself, including the distrust towards representative governments and its parties, this paper has shown that one should take populist democracy into account if there is a wish to solve or at least minder the tension between the both pillars of democracy, popular

¹²⁶ Heywood, 1992, p.285

¹²⁷ Goodwin, 1997, p.282

¹²⁸ Heywood, 1992, p.290

¹²⁹ Goodwin, 1997, p.284

and constitutional democracy. The impact of populism on representative democracy is visible in so far that populism creates a potential political weapon against representative politics and inserts its own ideas of politics made by the people. These politics should be clear, direct and simple and not complex with different parties and institutions. A further aspect, which this paper has discussed, is that in recent times the role of the parties have a shift and therefore they became more institutional than representative. This led to tension between the constitutional and popular pillar of democracy. This chapter has also shown that populist democracy can be seen as solution for this tension as it is partyless democracy and therefore no change in role of parties can ever happen. However, at the end one should say that popular democracy couldn't be seen as a lonely form of democracy. It has to be seen as a complementary element for constitutional democracy. Indeed, populism plays a crucial role in different forms of democracy as this chapter has also shown. In types of democracy such as people's democracy or radical democracy, strong participation of the people in form of masses plays an essential role in making politics. Thus, popular sovereignty within democracy is a crucial element, which should be taken into account in assessing the ideas of democracy.

Conclusion

This thesis has made the attempt to assess the difficult concept of populism. In order to make clear that populism should not just be seen as a social movement the first chapter of this paper went through existing political ideologies such as liberalism, conservatism and constitutionalism and has hereby mainly focused on its ideas about the individual within political society. Whereas within the liberal thought individualism is a crucial element, conservatism sees the human being as imperfection, which has to be guided by political institutions and strong authority. Within constitutionalism the individuals' choice is restricted and bound to the legal framework of the state. However, popular sovereignty plays a crucial role as through higher lawmaking strong political participation is more guaranteed. Moreover, the first chapter has assessed the different themes and ideas of populism. At this juncture it should be noted that within populism the masses play a crucial role and the interest of the people should be represented. Moreover, within populism the protest against the political elite is of great importance and institutional features such as parties and governmental institutions should not exist. It is the people who made democracy and government, not institutions.

The second chapter of this paper has analysed the reasons for the rise of extreme right-wing parties in Western Europe. Hereby it has first taken into account the common ideology all parties have, New Populism. After having analysed the party ideology, party history and the electorate of extreme right-wing parties in France, Austria and United Kingdom this chapter has tried to find out the reasons for success of these parties. At this one can say that charismatic leadership, the right choice of party ideology and the institutional environment are elements, which determine the success of these parties. This chapter has also made clear the scope of the danger of populism in the form of extreme-right wing parties.

Undoubtedly one can say here that in this form populism is a big danger to liberal democracies as it claims nationalist ideas.

The last chapter, however, has tried to assess populism from the political theorist point of view and has in this respect tried to assess the relationship of populism to democracy. It has shown that populist democracy has not to be seen as a threat for democratic systems but as a complement tool for constitutional democracy. Although populist democracy is based on populism itself, including the distrust towards representative governments and its parties, this paper has shown that one should take populist democracy into account if there is a wish to solve or at least minder the tension between the both pillars of democracy, popular and constitutional democracy.

The impact of populism on representative democracy is visible in so far that populism creates a potential political weapon against representative politics and inserts its own ideas of politics made by the people. This thesis has shown that populism should be regarded from two main different angles. Regarding it from the empirical point of view, meaning the rise of extreme right-wing parties in established Western European democracies, populism is indeed a danger to liberal democracy as these parties do not follow and represent liberal values at all. However, this thesis has argued that within democratic theory populism, especially popular democracy, should not be seen as a danger but can be seen as a complementary political ideology shaping the ideas how democracy should be. In this context the thesis showed that in populism plays a crucial role in getting political support. Further, this paper made clear that within different types of democracy, such as the Marxist approach of democracy or direct democracy, characteristics of populism are incorporated and play a crucial element within these forms of democratic thinking.

This thesis has contributed to the difficult discussion about populism and its relationship with democracy. It should be note here again that this paper did not promote

populism as political ideology but made aware that within democratic theory the interest of the people plays a crucial role and that populism, by mobilising 'the people' against the institutional 'elite' should not only be seen as a danger to liberal democratic thinking. In this context one should really take into account that populism can be seen as a complementary tool to liberal democratic thinking. The interest of the people is strongly represented and democratic decision-making is not in the task of institutions. Although one should not agree with the populist thinking that institutional representation is not desired, one should, however, take into account that in established liberal democracies a certain democratic deficit is visible and that liberal democracy in its scope cannot solve this deficit anymore.

Therefore, as this thesis stated, new alternative solutions have to be taken into consideration and with the populist thinking one might be on the right way. At this juncture one should again emphasize strongly that one should take populism only into consideration when one talks about the ideas and concepts of democracy. If one would take populism into consideration on the level of day-to-day politics one might go on the dangerous path against the liberal democratic thinking, which is visible through extreme right-wing populism.

Thus, this thesis made clear that populism might have a chance in democratic theory to get a certain position in democratic thinking. Even though one can be sure that this position would not be strong such as the one of other different political ideologies such as liberalism but in the future theoretical discussion about democratic thinking this position can be elaborated much more, linking it to the different ideas and concepts of democratic theory. Maybe, if the thin borderline between theory and practice at this time is still not vanished, one could apply the populist thinking to present politics and could shape a form of democracy, which is mainly characterised by the consensus between the different thoughts and ideas of democracy.

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