

Editorial Note: Populism and Its Impact on the Political Landscape

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DOI: 10.5817/PC2017-1-3

During recent decades, populism and populist political parties have become an integral part of European party systems. With the growing number of successful populist challengers and stabilization of their electoral support in many countries both in the Western and East-Central European countries, an important question has arisen: what is the impact of populism on the political landscape in Europe? This question was addressed by the 2nd Prague Populism Conference which took place in May 2016. It was organized by the Institute of International Studies at Charles University and the Heinrich Böll Foundation in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut. To understand the impact of populism on the political landscape, various researchers from all around the world discussed the growing success of populist parties and movements from a theoretical point of view and as case studies in individual European countries (60 researchers from 20 countries presented their research and findings, including the key note speeches by Michael Freeden, Paul Taggart, and Reinhard Heinisch).

The present issue of the Czech Journal of Political Science consists of selected papers presented at the conference.

The recent success of populist parties and movements has attracted the interest of scholars all around the world and has made research about populism the centrepiece of comparative political science of these days. In particular, two areas of research related to the impact on populism seem to have garnered the most scholarly attention so far. The first one is embedded in the study of party politics. Regardless of whether populism is defined as a (thin-centred) ideology, a discourse or a rhetorical style, it is defined by a set of claims constructing a moral conflict between the pure people and incompetent, selfish corrupt elites and – at the same time – refusing the ways politics has been conducted so far. In other words, the established political conflicts are likely to transform either through the adaptation of new issues emphasized by populists or by the emergence of a new dimension of party competition.

Two articles aimed at examining the nature of electoral support for two distinguished populist actors. Anna-Maria Schielicke and Julia Hoffmann studied the attitudes of supporters of the PEGIDA movement in Germany by testing an analytic model derived from

the literature dealing with voting for right-wing populist parties in Europe and using original panel data. Their results show that the most important factors driving the support for PEGIDA are hostility against foreigners, fears of foreign domination, distrust in the media and also right-wing attitudes. Quite interestingly, political disenchantment and fears of economic decline do not play a role in explaining the support for PEGIDA; this indicates that the character of supporters of the movement can be well-explained by socio-cultural factors, namely by nativist attitudes. Emilia Zankina's paper is focused on the impact of the rise of populist parties on electoral competition in Bulgaria. With different types of successful populist parties, Bulgaria is one of the most suitable cases for studying populism in Eastern Europe. The paper uses exit-poll surveys and focuses on voter demographic profiles and the mobility of the vote. Zankina shows that when populist parties first appeared in Bulgaria they predominantly mobilized previous non-voters, but that their support quickly waned afterwards. The finding proving the hypothesis about "populist rotation" is also interesting, i.e. the results point out voter mobility from one populist party to another. The two studies also show the important effect of a host ideology (or an absence thereof) on the character of supporters of populist actors.

The second area deals with the impact of populism on the functioning of political systems including changes in policies and the quality of democracy. Due to its strong anti-establishment appeal, government participation is seen as a challenge for populists. At the same time, the essentially illiberal nature of populist parties is considered to be a threat to democracy, although it might be possible to identify some positive effects of populism on democracy (one of them may be mobilization of passive voters as shown in Zankina's text). In his mostly theoretical and conceptual contribution, Attila Antal discusses both the causes and the consequences of the political regime in Hungary headed by Viktor Orbán. Antal concludes that "elitist populism" (as Antal characterized the nature of the regime in Hungary) and illiberal democracy can to some extent quite easily converge contradictory theoretical conceptions, as is seen in Orbán's Hungary. Benjamin Biard's empirical study is focused on the influence of the populist radical right Swiss People's Party on policy-making on a "radical right populist" issue: law and order. The study uses the data about electoral pledges and shows that SVP government participation did impact policy-making in the law and order area. On the other hand, this influence is rather indirect and changes over time depending on the phase of the policy cycle.

All in all, we believe that the present issue of the Czech Journal of Political Science shows the importance of populism for politics in different parts of Europe and the articles confirm that populist political actors cannot be seen as a "come and go" phenomenon. On the contrary, they have made visible footprints in the political landscape in Europe, transforming party politics and in some cases having important influence over policies and – more importantly – undermining some principles of liberal democratic regimes in Europe. It seems that they are here to stay and that they will influence European politics in the future and (less importantly) provide us with rich empirical material to study. The editors of the special issue of the Czech Journal of Political Science would like to thank the organizers of the conference, the panellists and the authors of the articles for creating a very inspirational and fruitful discussion about the faces and the future of European populism.