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The Great Recession's contribution to the spread of populism in the European political system

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Introduction

In the aftermath of the Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy in September 2008 the trust in our economic system has declined. This has greatly contributed to feed the mistrust towards our political system which was already in a period of uncertainty. People felt that their interests weren't represented by national parliaments, especially when, after 2008, austerity was introduced as the main policy to solve the crisis in Europe. The general sentiment was that normal citizens were paying for the mistakes of an "elite". This dichotomy between "The People" and the "Elite" is one of the main arguments of a populist leader, so, in this scenario, it was easy for populisms to become attractive.

The economic crisis was the trigger for a political revolution that was waiting only for a big shock to explode. Populist parties and ideas were already present in the pre-crisis period, the elements for a political crisis were already inside our democracies, but the economic crisis gave a major push. The lower general standard of living made people eager for someone to blame on one side, and on the other made them aspire for an immediate solution. This was the perfect ground for the propagation of populist arguments. To all of this we must add the constant presence of media in the political scenario, populists have demonstrated, thanks to their characteristics, to be perfectly comfortable and particularly fit to appear in television.

The goal of this essay is to observe and analyze the spread of populism throughout Europe in recent years with particular emphasis to its connections to the early 21st century recession. This work will be divided in three parts, in the first one we will try to give a general definition of populism, we will see which characteristics of populism are present, and to what extent, in the European political system nowadays, and we will analyze why they have become attractive in this particular period for many European voters. Then we will investigate how the economic and political crisis in these years are related and how have they contributed to the spread of populism. We will look at three European countries and we will analyze the parameters that indicate the level of the politic and economic crisis, such as electoral volatility, trust in parliament, and satisfaction in the way democracy works in one's own country for the former, and GDP growth, level of unemployment, and government gross debt as a percentage of GDP for the latter. These parameters give us a subjective idea of the level of the crisis before and after 2008 and we will be able to see if there are any patterns in each state between the two crisis. Finally we will sum up the data from the second part to drive a conclusion on the general level of populist influence on European democracies, and we will try to predict future developments in our political system interrogating ourselves on a possible way to bring Europe out of the stagnation in which it seems to be.

Chapter 1
What is Populism

It is common today to hear that populism is the biggest threat to our democracies, and that populists are leading the way to a more illiberal world. Representative democracy is living a period of crisis. Between voters there is a rising feeling of impossibility to have an influence over the decisions of the elected. Extremisms are gaining sustainers, and the traditional parties seem not to be able to catalyze the will of their voters. New actors are appearing in the political scenario to try to incarnate the will of the people, like the Five Star Movement in Italy, or old extremist parties are living a moment of great consent like they haven't for a while like the Front National in France. All these parties have been labelled as populist from political commentators, but if we give a closer look we can see how there are huge ideological differences both internally to a single party and externally between different populist parties. In fact when speaking of populists we could be referring to an enormous variety of different realities. In Europe we can find right wing populist parties like Alternative für Deutschland in Germany, left wing parties like Podemos in Spain, we can also find centrist parties like the Five Star Movement in Italy. How can realities that are so different from one another be labelled all as populist? This brought scholars to interrogate on the nature of populism and on a possible definition that could include all populisms, also because as Tagueiff sustains during the '80's and the '90's it almost became a synonym for demagogy since it has been overused. Now we will try to give a definition and find the characteristics that can fit all modern populisms.

1.1 The quest for a definition

As we said elaborating a general definition for Populism is not an easy task. Studies on post-war populisms started in 1967 when at the London School of Economics an inter-disciplinary group of scholars made a conference to define the phenomenon. Two years later the conference proceedings have been published by Ionescu and Gellner in book form, but a final conclusion on the definition of Populism was missing. Unfortunately they were not able to conclude their task since, as they say, populism seemed to "bob up everywhere, but in many and contradictory shapes"(Ionescu and Gellner, 1969). The phenomenon was observed in a multitude of different realities, from anticolonialist movements in Africa,

to peasant movements in eastern Europe. This permitted it to assume various forms, making it impossible for these scholars to arrive to a definition. "There can be no doubt on the importance of populism, but no one is quite clear just what it is" (Ionescu and Gellner, 1969). They didn't distinguish between the different historical and political contexts in which Populism was capable of emerging making it impossible to find a common ground. As Sartori later will say it was a "fishing expedition without adequate nets"(Sartori, 1970:1039).

Margaret Canovan in 1981 published an important study on the phenomenon of populism distinguishing between various types of populisms, but still fails to arrive to an unique definition. She distinguishes between agrarian and political populism. The first one includes three categories which can be associated at precise moments and revolutions in which a part of the population was fighting for reforms and a better condition like the US Peoples Party in late 19th century, the post-WWI east European peasant movements, and the radical agrarian movements like the Narodniki in Russia. Political populism instead is more modern, its scope is to generate a movement to establish popular sovereignty. In this case she identifies four categories: Populist dictatorship, populist democracy, reactionary populism, and politician's populism. Even if her work was appreciated and is a milestone today for the study of populism, Canovan fails to give a unique definition that could fit all movements defined as populist.

Latin America was a major source of study on the matter during the 70's and the 80's. Unlike the European counterpart who aimed to arrive to a definition, their focus was on the socioeconomic determinants that were generating the development of mass political agitations, and how the political participation of the lower class was channeled through a populist movement. Two different approaches where developed: a modernization theory, and structural Marxism. For the sustainers of the first theory populism was a means to introduce into what used to be oligarchic politics the new emerging urban lower and middle class (Drake, 1982). Structural Marxism sustainers instead thought that the stage of import substitution industrialization brought to a multiclass political movement whose leaders could build cross-class alliances (O'Donnel, 1973). The problem with these studies is that they are applicable only in specific contexts, there is no possibility of comparing different cases, they are all focused on Latin America authoritarian regimes, Peron in Argentina, Vargas in Brazil or Cardenas in Mexico. They observe and describe very specific contexts, so they can't explain other realities like Europe or North America. Nevertheless these studies highlighted two important features of an emerging populist movement: its mass movement character, and the importance of a charismatic leadership (de la Torre, 2000).

By 1990 a new form of populism has been observed in Latin America, neopopulism. The interruption of Import substitution industrialization and the rise of liberalism permitted to the new political figures to implement neoliberal policies while enjoying high levels of popular support. This happened to Fujimori

in Peru, Menem in Argentina, Salinas de Gortari in Mexico, and de Mello in Brazil. This was a new era for populism and permitted scholars to analyze a new trend which is the use of populism as a political instrument. Using Weyland's words populism is "a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, unistitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers"(Weyland 2001:14). Again these studies lack a comparative potential with other socioeconomic realities, but have contributed to observe three characteristics that are present in modern populisms: the charismatic leader, populism seen as a political instrument to gain consent, and an interest in the discourse patterns used by populist leaders. These movements didn't have an organized base so they had to attract a multicolor electorate, having various different realities in it, and these instruments were particularly useful for the task.

1.2 Methodological pitfalls

Today the study of populism has a major role in western democracies. European leaders are united in contrasting the new wave of populism that is spreading in the continent. It has been identified as a common enemy to eliminate in order to save liberal democracy. Scholars are now focusing on the degree of populistic influence more than on the strict definition, it seems like the task to include all populism under one definition cannot be achieved. Pappas(2015) trying to arrive to a definition identifies 10 methodological pitfalls that impeded the achievement of this task in the past:

    1.Unspecified Empirical Universe

- In order to find a definition we first need to clarify to what family does populism belong. It has been defined as an ideology, a political strategy, and also as a communication technique. For Pappas the solution is to see it as a general concept that includes various subcategories.

    2.Lack of historical and cultural context specificity

- It is important for our definition to be sensitive to the historical and political context to which it refers. Populisms change in time and in place. In the US we had the People's Party in the 19th century and now the election of Donald Trump, two phenomenon that can be described only in their context even if they share points in common.

3.Essentialism

- Populism is frequently treated as a family in which there are shared characteristics between its members. Not all need to be present in all members. But being these characteristics vague and numerous comparison results difficult. Some features that are considered essential for Populism are essential also for other mass movements that, on the other side, have little to share with Populism. Pappas invites to focus more on the ontology of the phenomenon than on the characteristics for a more precise and useful definition.

4.Conceptual stretching

- Related to essentialism is conceptual stretching: broadening the boundaries of the concept in order to have more possibilities of inclusion. Canovan states that " The more flexible the word has become, the more tempted are political scientists to label populist any movement or outlook that does not fit into any established category"(Canovan, 1981:6).

5.Unclear negative pole

- There is no clear complete opposite of populism. The only one could be elitism, a situation in which an elite rules, but it is a concept that is so broad that it can't be considered as a category, it lacks empirical referents. The term could include situations that have very little in common going from non-democracies(oligarchy, aristocracy, fascism) to pluralist democracies(technocracy, meritocracy).

6.Degreeeism

- When studying Populism two approaches have developed, a continuous approach (more or less) or a dichotomous approach (either-or). The first approach has been widely used from scholars, but others like Sartori have greatly sustained the dichotomous approach. This is because it is impossible to precisely measure the degrees of populism, Sartori encourages a necessary and sufficient condition approach. What is possible is to use an ordinal scale to rank the populist phenomena.(Sartori, 1970:1038)

7.Defective observable-measurable indicators

- Being the concept of populism so broad, it is difficult to select all the significant indicators and the process is still under development. These indicators using Hempel's words must be "criteria of application couched in terms of observational or experimental procedure"(Hempel,1952:41). Having populism many characteristics we must undergo

through many operations to verify the concept, and the operations must be performed for all properties, not only some. As we said the research of all the indicators is still going on.

8.Neglect of micromechanisms

- Pappas identifies the lack of a systematic attention to the role of various mechanisms as one of the major absences in the literature of populism. A mechanism stands mid-way between a general theory and an empirical fact, "A specific casual pattern that can be recognized after the event, but rarely foreseen.[…] It is less than a theory, but a great deal more than a description since it can be used as a model for understanding other cases not yet encountered"(Elster, 1993). He acknowledges that many have been identified, but they have been rarely examined and tested with the aim a creating a mechanism-based theory. Some examples of such mechanisms are charismatic leadership, social mobilization, strategic use of political polarization, or cognitive and psychological mechanisms.

9.Poor data and inattention to crucial cases

- The data on populism isn't complete and even when it is it has been accumulated in indiscriminate and hazardous ways. Poor data also prohibits any classification of the cases and makes it difficult to develop a theory. Another problem is case selection bias, the scholars frequently choose the populist cases with which they are more confident and that best fit their point. This has caused very important cases to have been left out of the studies. For example the Panhellenic socialist movement (PASOK) has been rarely analyzed due to language difficulties even if it can be defined as one of the most successful manifestations of populism in contemporary Europe.

10.Normative indeterminacy

- When analyzing populism especially inside a democratic scenario the burden of normative connotations is heavily present due to the populist affinity to moral precepts. Populism has been defined as an enemy of democracy, " it is to representative democracy what demagoguery was to direct democracy, internal and parasitical on it"(Urbinati, 2013:145). But it has also been defined positively highlighting how it can be the means to bring the excluded masses in the political debate. Rovira Kaltwasser and Mudde, standing in the middle, sustain that it can be both a corrective and a threat to democracy since there can't be a generally accepted conceptualization of populism.

1.3 The minimal definition

These pitfalls brought Pappas(2015) to the conclusion that the only possible definition for populism is a minimal one because of it's different shapes in space and time. He rejects Taguieff's (1995:25) implicit suggestion to abandon attempts to a rigorous definition because, now more than ever, we need to be able to classify and compare empirical cases to fully understand the role of populism in our democracies. In order to do so Pappas(2015), avoiding the past methodological pitfalls, wants to find the core characteristics in order to arrive to a definition that could substitute the word populism.

So, in the context of our current democratic world, Pappas(ibid.) finds in Sartori the best definition for populism: "the idea that political sovereignty belongs and should be exercised by the people"(Sartori, 1984:84). He stresses the importance of the term "the people" in this definition because it may differ from place to place, and so identifies four attributes the term must embody:

1.Potential to form a political majority.

2.Homogeneous "over-soul" nature.

3.Embattled social positioning in an ostensibly bipolar world.

4.Belief of holding the moral right.

For Pappas(2015) these attributes are not against the democratic principle, but are fundamentally inimical to contemporary political liberalism. For this reason he arrives to the conclusion that the best minimal definition for populism is democratic illiberalism. The two terms are perfectly substitutable when studying modern populism. Pappas(ibid.) goes further highlighting how his definition doesn't fall in the methodological pitfalls highlighted before. This definition underlies that populism isn't one hundred percent illiberal, it is so in the context of contemporary representative democracies, and so is in opposition to political liberalism.

The two necessary properties in the definition, democracy and illiberalism, are sufficient to describe the core, the constitutive dimension of modern populism. Using Pappas's words: "Populism is always democratic, but never liberal"(2015:24). For this reason Pappas(ibid) sees populism as the greatest enemy of contemporary liberal democracy. Once populist parties become able to form a single majority government, they seem to be able to damage political liberalism leading those countries to greater illiberalism, like Greece, or to autarchy, like Hungary.

1.4 Characteristics of modern populisms

We have arrived to the conclusion that the definition which suits best for modern populisms in a democratic scenario is democratic illiberalism. This was necessary in order to have a clear and precise idea of the central issue of our analysis. Now having it in mind we will look at some characteristics that are found, in different degrees, in populist parties in order to easily identify them when studying their influence in the European political scenario. Vittori (2015) identifies seven features to describe a prototypical populist phenomenon:

1. Hostility to representative politics. As Taggart(2000) says populists advocate for simplicity and directness in their politics, sometimes invoking the use of referenda.
2. Representative of a homogeneous group defined as " the people" who fight against the corrupt "elite".
3. Powerful reaction to a sense of extreme crisis, be that economic, social or political.
4. Proponents of a radical-change approach making far-reaching if not utopian promises entirely rejecting gradualism.
5. Personification of the "last chance" for ordinary people to be heard.
6. Strong leader that personifies the unity of the party in contrast to the factionalism of ordinary parties.
7. Emphasis on conspiracy theories, constant mention of obscure interests and lobbies which threaten the integrity of the people.

Chapter 2

Political and economic Crisis

The features we have identified in chapter 1.4 can be found in all populists movements in Europe and constitute the core of the populist message. But why has this message become so attractive recently? Has populism always been one of the many faces of representative democracy waiting for times in which it could be effective? For Cas Mudde " widespread demand of populism is a given, rather than the main puzzle, in contemporary western democracies"(2010:1167) . Also Vittori(2015) states that populism is an integral part of the process of transformation of western democracies whose success may be facilitated by political, social or economic crises. In this sense the rise of populism can be seen as an indicator of something that is going wrong in one of these areas. When there is a period of crisis voters perceive radical solutions as legitimate to promptly bring the nation back on track.

2.1 Political crisis

The political crisis we are observing in recent years has been caused by the radical change parties have undergone starting in 1970. Professionalization of politics transformed parties into campaigning organizations in which preference accommodation substituted preference shaping. This brought to the de-idealization of the political bargaining and the parties started to become more and more similar to one-another.

Mainstream parties don't provide services to their members and don't socialize their membership through education or training classes like they used to do in the past. Parties aren't able to channel the information in a mass media society, they are obliged to use television or social media to arrive to their sustainers. The decline in party membership witnesses the incapacity to mobilize on a permanent basis a segment of the population. A solid base of certain voters doesn't exist anymore, electors are more prone to changing side from one election to another.

The Populist parties capitalize this crisis by sustaining that mainstream parties forming the "ruling" elite are really cartel parties worried only to keep their seat and that there is no real opposition. As Katz and

Mair(1995) put it, these parties increasingly resemble one another in terms of their electorates, policies, goals, and styles, there is very little dividing them, and their interests are much more shared. This mutual awareness of shared interests, the sensation of "being on the same boat" and relying on the same sort of resources brought mainstream parties to adopt a cartel-like behavior. Anti-establishment parties are so perceived as outsiders to the political status quo and can gain consent from this situation highlighting the differences between "the common people" and "the ruling elite". The slogans "Roma Ladrona" of the Lega Nord in Italy, or the incentives of the Front National in France against the "gang of four" (communists, socialists, liberals, and conservatives) are a clear example of this tendency.

The birth of the Eu and of international organizations aggravated this political crisis because of multilevel-governance. Parliaments in the populist view are "kept in the dark" with regards to what happens in the European institutions. Many decisions today are not taken in national parliaments, but are discussed inside international organizations and parliaments have only the task of adapting them to national legislation and ratify them. This constitutes a perfect scapegoat for those populist parties who promote conspiracy theories. A perfect example is given by the pillar of the four freedoms within the Eu: free movement of capital, services, goods, and people. These principles have been used to sustain the thesis of the obscure non-democratic power that imposes burdens on the people to protect the interests of the "elite". Right-wing populists like the Lega Nord or Alternative für Deutschland mainly attack the fourth freedom, sustaining that the "invasion" of immigrants is to blame for the lack of jobs and for an increase in violence and illegal activities. Left-wing populists like Podemos or Syriza on the other hand oppose to the first three freedoms because of the inequalities they generate in favor of corporations, multinationals and lobbies.

The recipes for recovery prescribed in the Troika or the TTP or CETA agreements are all examples of policies that have been largely attached by populists because they have been discussed at a supranational level. It is undeniable that in the complex multi-level governance system reigning now in Europe, national parliaments have lost part of their power because of the shift of the decision making process from a national to a supranational level. This is used by populist parties to sustain the theory of violated sovereignty.

Another factor that contributes to the crisis of the political scenario and goes in favor of a populist approach is the mediatization of politics. Sartori in 1997 describes how we passed to a new form of politics: videopolitics. In videopolitics something exists only when the television reports it, it is the image that creates the facts, and it is not a successive representation of them. In this way it is the media who decides the news(news making),and it's not politics that gives to the media the information on which the debate must take place. What we see on television is what matters for us, so by deciding what to give relevance to, the media creates the political agenda. Sartori sustains that it is the media that informs the

people today, but since this information is usually incomplete or approximate , facts are reported incorrectly or not reported at all.

Our democracies are governed by opinions, since today our opinions are induced mainly by television, televisions have a big role when it comes to decide which candidate to vote. In order to simplify the information regarding the political debate which is usually complex and has a historical background, the various positions are incarnated for simplicity in the person of the leader, making the debate became a clash between people and not between ideas. This brought to the emergence in all parties, not only in populistic ones, of the figure of the strong leader, the man that can solve the problems.

Populist parties have various characteristics that make them comfortable with the overwhelming presence of the media in the political debate. The two are useful to one another. On one side populist parties need a constant media presence, on the other medias are attracted by these new figures that want to change the status quo, they are a constant source of news thanks to their public protests and abrasive language. Populist parties usually already have strong leaders who can attract the public, so they are perfect to broadcast on television. The language in politics is adapting to this new reality and it is became a language of advertising, public relations and show business. This fits perfectly the simple language and the Manichean division of populists between the "honest" and the "corrupt" that populists advocate. Tagueiff(2003,29) defines this interconnection between media and populism as "Telepopulism". Silvio Berlusconi and Beppe Grillo in Italy, Chavez in Venezuela, and Trump in the U.S.A. are all examples of this new trend in politics. The leader is easily recognizable and incarnates the values the voters regard as fundamental, if he has the "right" set of characteristics it is more likely that in a fast and complex world he will take the right decision.

Personalization of politics ,so, has not been caused by populism, but rather populisms fit perfectly in this new political arena. Stewart, Mazzoleni, and Horsfield(2003) identify six communication strategies frequently adopted by populists: (1)identification as media underdog, (2) use of professional expertise, (3) reversion of more traditional "unmediated" forms of communication such as rallies, (4) clever exploitation of free media publicity, (5) strategies to attract media attention, and (6) strategic attacks on media. Personification of politics so is important for populist parties because they need to get the attention of the media in the first place, and then need to keep it thanks to the constant presence of their leader in the news. This is particularly helpful for populist parties since by concentrating the attention on the leader it is easier to hide the structural weaknesses of these parties.

When populist leaders lose their appeal usually all the party disappears from the political arena. The Union de défense des commercants et artisans (UDCA) founded by Pierre Poujade in France, Il partito

dell'uomo comune founded by Guglielmo Giannini in Italy or more recently the Lijst Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands ,led by Pim Fortuyn, all disappeared when the star of their leader stopped shining.

## 2.2 Economic Crisis
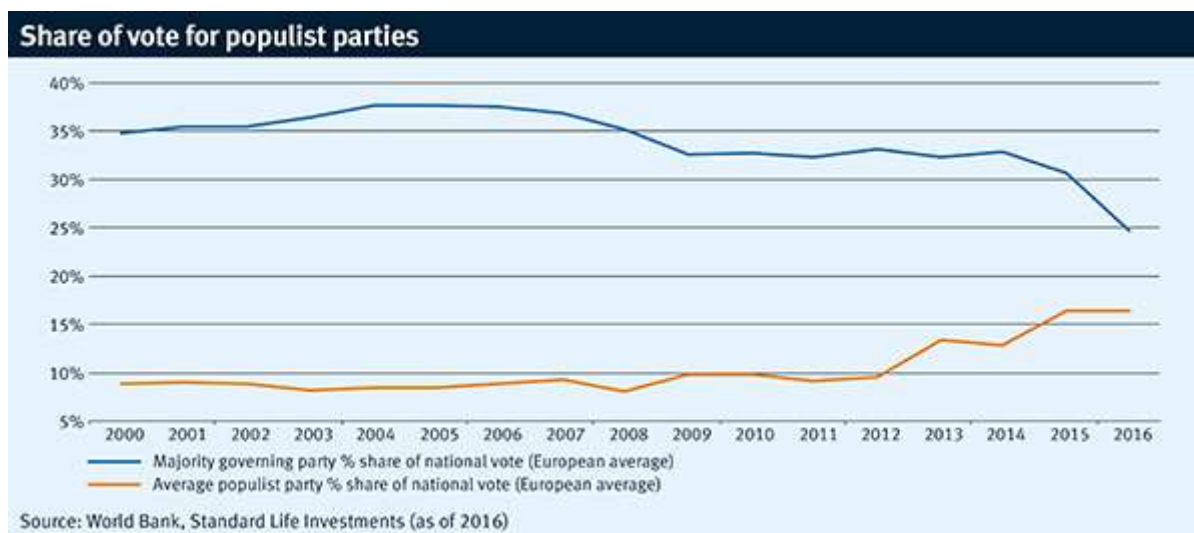
Graph 1

As we said the political crisis European parties were undergoing was already happening by the beginning of the century, in fact back in 2002 Giuliano Amato sustained that what he defines as the new populisms were the disease to be eliminated from democracies and that this will be the future task of the European countries. His prediction was right even if at the time in which he was speaking populism didn't seem to represent a threat. According to the World Bank, in 2002 the average share of total votes received by populists parties in Europe was about 9%. In the same year the majority governing party's average percent of votes was about 35%. With the help of the graph 1 we can see how since 2006, the start of the subprime crisis in U.S.A., the average percent of votes for the governing parties starts to shrink, and with the explosion of the 2008 recession the situation worsens. On the other hand populist parties percent of votes starts to rise sharply from 2012 onwards, it didn't happen in 2008 because they needed time to partly institutionalize and to gain consent. People needed time to change their usual preference and seeing that the traditional parties couldn't find a medicine for the economy the newcomers gained preferences.

 In this period of crisis only in Germany the party that was in government in 2008 was confirmed at the successive elections. In the rest of Europe who was in government has been harshly punished by voters.

This happened because the impact of the crisis was devastating for many European countries. In graph 2 we can see how GDP drops in the second part of 2008 as a result of the crisis. Uniting the two graphs we can observe how the crisis has had an important role in aggravating the political crisis that traditional parties where already undergoing. Their incapacity to find new ways to be near to the citizens and to increase political participation, and the sense of cartel-like behavior people felt parties were adopting were already important issues causing a loss in trust, with the advent of the crisis this process became much faster.

A context of political and economic crisis was the perfect scenario for the rise of new parties that wanted to substitute the "old elite" that was held responsible for the crisis. As we said the adoption of austerity policies extended the sense of injustice the people perceived since they felt that normal citizens where paying for the mistakes of politicians, bankers, economists which constitute that "ruling elite" that populists always attack. Those institutions that in theory had to safeguard the interests of the normal citizens where seen as ineffective in this situation and in some cases suspects of collusion with the famous "ruling elite" have been presented.

In a complex and multifaceted scenario like the European political arena various different populisms have developed. On one side they all share populist characteristics we have identified earlier, but on the other they present differences given by the different regions in which they develop. The populist message, for definition, is very sensitive to the needs of the people, which change from one place to another. For our research we chose to analyze three countries that present different significant arenas for the spread of populism: France, Italy, and the United Kingdom.
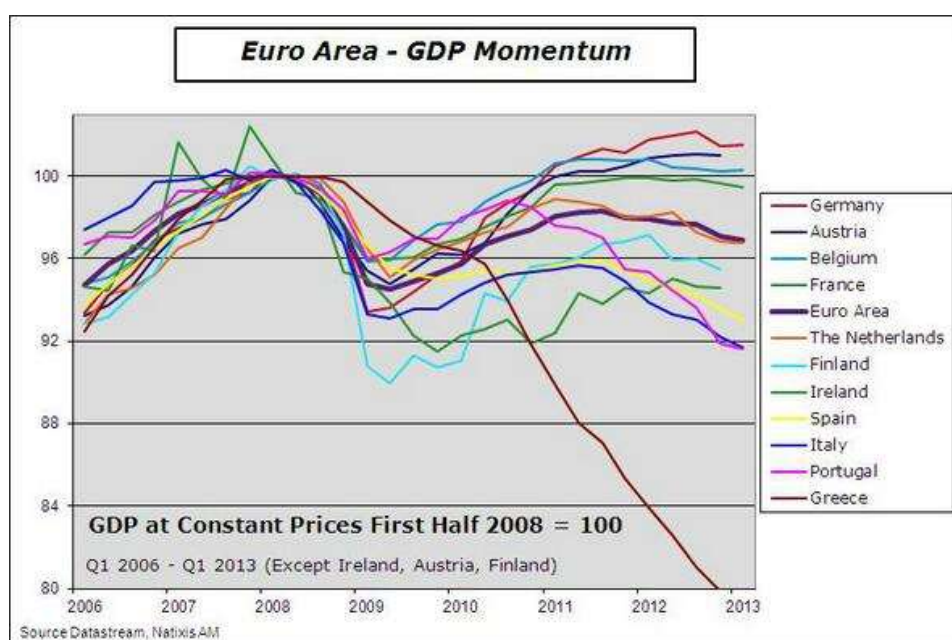
Graph 2 (source: Datastream, Natixis AM 2014)

2.3 Case study 1: France

France is one of the European nations in which the presence of important socio-economic problems, aggravated by the Great Recession, granted ample room for populist mobilization. Nevertheless only one party seemed to be able to exploit the moment and attract a significant number of voters, the right-wing Front National under the new guidance of Marine Le Pen. There has been an attempt made by Jean-Luc Mélenchon to converge populist votes in a far left party, but this attempt was unsuccessful. His incapacity to attract voters was caused by his excessively highbrow discourse, and because the alternative policies he proposed where too timid to capitalize the widespread popular disenchantment and discontent according to Cassely (2013) and Bernier (2014). On the other side Marine Le Pen's populist rhetoric and strategy proved very efficient and was able to catalyze an important portion of voters.

The Front National had been founded in 1972 from the ashes of the far-right movement Ordre Nouveau with the intent to unite all the right winged French parties under the guide of their president Jean-Marie Le Pen. The party did pretty well resulting as the third French party in the preference of voters until the 2007 presidential and legislative elections in which Sarkozy was able to converge many votes to his party. The successive European elections in 2009 and regional elections in 2010 basically confirmed this trend leading Jean-Marie to resign as president, and in January 2011 his daughter Marine was elected as president of the party.

As soon as Marine was elected she found herself at a crossroad, continue to be the point of reference of several extreme right movements, or to change the image of the party to give it's leader a more respectable image. The second path was chosen and the results where incredible. At the 2012 presidential elections Marine received 6.4 million votes (17.9%), at the subsequent legislative election the FN received 13.6% of votes, and two years later at the local elections the party was able to elect a dozen mayors reestablishing it's position of third French party. The big victory was at the 2014 European election in which the FN resulted as the first French party with 24.9% and 23 seats of the 74 total. This gives an idea of what was the average sentiment of the French population towards the Eu at that moment. Successively the FN did well at the 2015 regional elections, although at the second ballot they lost all regions, and achieved an important success arriving second after Emmanuel Macron at the 2017 presidential elections.

Marine's success has been possible thanks to her strong personality and to the shift of the party's main arguments from immigration to a more general critique of globalization, and to the economic policies of the Eu. The profound economic, political and psychological crisis the country was suffering permitted her to describe herself as the last defender of the country's historical heritage, cultural identity and

fundamental values. Shifting towards a more populist program, Marine stated to attack the "ruling elite" governing the country accusing them of perpetuating a system in which the ordinary people were being exploited. The goal was to make the FN a catch-all party of protest. Nevertheless in the media it continued to be represented as a right wing extremist party (Mestre 2014).

France had a particular reaction to the crisis. Output and employment losses weren't particularly significant if confronted to other countries including Germany or the United States. What made the crisis so profound in France was the inability to recover from it. In 2012 output and employment where still at under pre-crisis levels. Unemployment was continuing to rise, and the country was losing positions to its international competitors (Bellone & Chiappni 2014). The Great Recession brought to light the structural weaknesses of the French economy: stagnating productivity, a deteriorating balance of trade, declining attractiveness for foreign investors, high number of annual bankruptcies, a dramatic increase of the national debt (from roughly 64 per cent of GDP in 2006 to more than 90 per cent in 2013), and rising socio-economic inequality (Boulhol and Sicari 2014; Mongereau 2013; Altares 2014; Clerc 2014). All of this contributed to highlight the competitiveness gap that was now evident with Germany, leading to a general sense of discouragement. INSEE's monthly consumer confidence index for example by mid-2013 was at the same level of 2008. In 2010 75% of German residents considered their country in a competitive position, in France instead in 2012 three out of four people continued to consider France in decline and for two thirds the country was in a crisis without precedents. In 2013 globalization was seen by 60% of French as a threat to the country.

The population was also worried of the political situation of the country. Most voters thought that their representatives are corrupt and that they lack the power to support ordinary people because of the constraints imposed on them by lobbies, globalization and the EU. This scenario, keeping in mind the characteristics we observed earlier, is perfect for the emergence of a populist party. Marine Le Pen understood this, but had to face the problem of the old image of her party. In order to represent a larger electorate and break with the past, she strongly opposes to the more extremist part of her party, especially the anti-Semitic circle, and heavily condemned them. The old obsession with immigrants was not completely abandoned but was put in the larger scheme of an anti-globalization policy. In this way the pillars of the Front National became two: to defend the parties laic and republican tradition, and to contrast the dominant free-market ideology by offering a credible alternative socio-economic program (Perrineau, 2014:77-82). Her aim was to gain consent in that part of the population that can be defined as "globalization losers", traditionally more left-orientated, but that didn't feel represented by the left that was perceived as more concerned with moral issues: gay rights, multiculturalism, gender equality, than with the everyday experiences and worries of ordinary people.

For Marine Le Pen globalization meant rising unemployment, declining standards of living, growing inequality and injustice for the many, astronomical salaries and bonuses, tax free capital gains, and unlimited wealth for the few. In her campaign against globalization she wanted to sustain the rights of what she defines as an invisible majority that is being crushed by the mad financial system dominating our world. In her opinion political parties, both right and left-winged, had abandoned the cause of the people to sustain the new globalist totalitarian ideology which aimed at subjugating the people to "consumption and production for the benefit of a few big enterprises and banks". Challenging those in power of having sold out French sovereignty she proposes an economic program which is a synthesis of traditional right-wing nationalist and left-wing socialist positions. On the nationalist side the accent was put on the necessity to regain national sovereignty in order to contrast the economic and social inequalities caused by globalization. On the socialist side the emphasis was put on reinforcing the role of the state by reviving the traditional policies of *dirigisme* and *etatisme.*

To restore national sovereignty Marine Le Pen proposes "economic patriotism" which consists in an "intelligent" form of protectionism against "disloyal competition" from abroad, and she encourages to abandon the Euro and the Eurozone and to reintroduce the Franc to restore independence on monetary policies. The Euro is described as " the instrument of our enslavement" and is held responsible for mass unemployment, for the stagnating economy, and for the crisis of the industrial sector, not only in France, but in all of Europe. She calls for a strong state that can lead to a reindustrialization of the country and for a welfare system that is "the only good" for who has nothing. The success of the welfare state on the other hand could be achieved only with a rigid policy on immigration, social services rested on national solidarity of tax payers who pay for who is in need. But solidarity can hold only until there is a "community of values, a strong cultural base, within which everyone recognizes him or herself". Permitting immigration is, from her point of view, to condemn those who are the bottom of the French society. By eliminating the incentives to migrants Le Pen's aim is to reduce the rate of immigrants from 200,000 to 10,000 per year.

These policies permitted Marine Le Pen to gain consent between the French population and to eliminate the general skepticisms that surrounded the Front National in the past. In 2014 50% of the respondents considered her to have understood the problems of the ordinary people, 40% found her likable and warm, and agreed she had new ideas to solve the countries problems (TNS-Sofres 2014b). Despite the fact that Marine Le Pen seized the opportunity given by the economic crisis to establish herself as a serious and professional politician, that she gave a new image to the Front National, and that she became a media star with which detractors started to confront publicly because of her increased credibility, this was not sufficient to bring her to convince the majority of the electorate, and she lost in the second ballot to Emmanuel Macron in the latest elections. As we said she did convince many skeptics and created a solid

base for the party but the old image given by her predecessors, combined with the fact that the French population is euro skeptical, but only a minority is willing to completely abandon the Union, have impeded her to become Prime Minister. After this defeat Marine Le Pen is promoting another revolution in the party and is considering to change the party's name. If the structural issues that seem to slow France's competition in the global market are not solved it seems unlikely that Le Pen's populist message will lose appeal. The mass immigrations and the terrorist attacks that have characterized the past years can serve as a fuel for her message in the years to come.
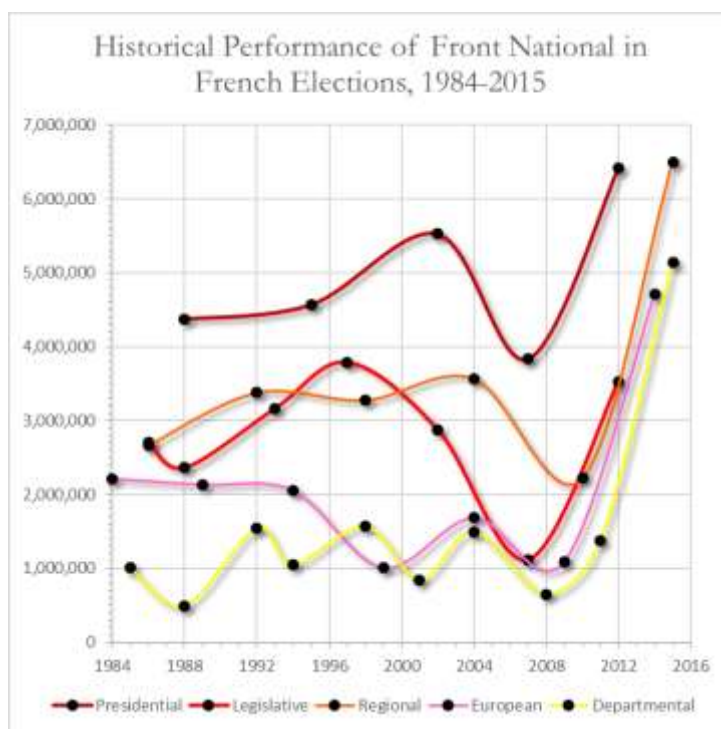
Source: Ministère de l'Intérieur (2016)

Graph 3

2.4 Case Study 2: Italy

Electoral results of populist parties in Italy (% vote chamber of deputies)

Year	1992	1994	1996	2001	2006	2008	2013
FI/PDL		21.1	20.6	29.4	23.6	37.2	21.4
LN	8.7	8.4	10.1	3.9	4.5	8.1	4.0
M5S							25.1
Total	8.7	29.5	30.7	33.3	28.1	45.3	50.5

Source: ECPR, Political Data Yearbook Interactive(2014)

Table 1

Italy's democratic system is characterized by the presence of various favorable structural conditions which have created in different occasions a fertile ground for the proliferation of populist parties. For this reason it offers one of the most interesting political scenarios in which to observe the spread of populism. The particularity of this case is also given by the ability that these parties have demonstrated in exploiting these structural conditions to their advantage. In the last parliamentary election in 2013 more than 50% of votes have been shared by three parties that can be defined populist: Popolo della Libertà(Pdl), Lega Nord(LN), and Movimento Cinque Stelle(M5S). (Table1)

Lega Nord was founded in 1989 as a movement and was officially transformed into a party by the merger of various regional parties. Umberto Bossi has been the historic leader of the party until he was hit by a corruption scandal in 2012, and had to resign. His successor was Roberto Maroni who sustained Matteo Salvini as new leader at the internal "primary" elections. Salvini won in 2013 and became new leader of the party. The Lega Nord can be defined as an ethnoregionalist party (McDonnell 2006) because it endorses a nationalism whose core is ethnic distinctiveness, and territorial claims. In the LN discourse the "corrupt elites" in Rome and Brussels from above, and the southern Italians and immigrants from the bottom, are all a threat to the democratic rights and to the economic wellbeing of the hard-working northern Italians. From 2000 onwards, in the attempt to achieve a major national representation, the negative accent was put mostly on the "invasion" of immigrants that are considered to be a threat because they could be possible authors of terrorist attacks.

Forza Italia was founded by Silvio Berlusconi in 1994 in a moment of incredible political agitation due to the corruption scandals that involved the Italian political system. In 2009 the party merged into the PDL with Gianfranco Fini's Alleanza Nazionale. In 2013 the PDL was dissolved and Berlusconi started a new Forza Italia. He offered the image of the self-made successful man that was able to solve the problems of the country as he did with his companies. Being the owner of various media including television channels he made an extensive use of them, and is a perfect example of the tele-populist proposed by Taguieff. FI is considered to be more moderate than the LN, and has been labelled as a neoliberal populism (Mudde 2007:47). Although the party's message lacks a strong emphasis on anti-immigrant and nativist arguments, the liberal label can be problematic because of the attacks to media freedom, the judiciary, the Constitution, and to the President of the Republic. The main arguments of the party was to reduce taxes, cut bureaucracy, and to promote public works. Berlusconi can be considered as the prototype of the strong populist leader which is able to catch the attention of the electorate through the media.

Movimento Cinque Stelle was founded in 2009 by the comedian Beppe Grillo and the web entrepreneur Gianroberto Casaleggio. It developed from the success of Beppe Grillo's political blog and the 'Beppe Grillo meet-up' groups which came into existence in 2005 and 2006 respectively (Bartlett, Froio and McDonnell 2013: 21–22). The M5S is hard to classify ideologically due to its short history, its eclectic mix of policies and its unique organizational characteristics. Similarly to its electorate, the ideology behind the M5S can't be defined as right or left-winged, they borrow from all sides. Nevertheless, particularly because of the statements of its founder, the M5S has been classified by scholars as populist (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013; Fabbrini and Lazar 2013). The parties constant appeal to a "corrupt elite" exploiting the "normal citizens", and a frequent request for a direct democracy through the web fit perfectly in the characteristics we identified as populist. The M5S sustains that all the Italian political system is to blame for the crisis and the citizens are now called to repair for their mistakes through taxes. No one is spared from their attacks: the European elites, existing parties, president Napolitano, media, and business leaders are all accused of the decline of the economy, and of the malfunctioning of the Italian democratic system. As the political communiqué no. 50 on 6 May 2012 says: "We have never had democracy in Italy. We went from a monarchy to fascism to partyocracy". After the incredible results at the 2013 parliamentary elections, the M5S achieved some important victories like in Turin and in Rome, but are now called to demonstrate their capacity to govern. Their success has been possible also thanks to the intelligent use of new possibilities given by internet, and by the creation of a blog on which people could confront and discuss. In the 2018 parliamentary elections they are presenting as a candidate for prime minister Luigi di Maio after he has been voted on the party's blog, and are hoping to be the first party for number of votes.

During the 1994-2011 period Italy witnesses four coalition governments dominated by the populist parties Lega Nord, Pdl and his predecessor/successor Forza Italia(FI). The Italian democratic system has often been described as fragile both by its members and by outsiders. This justifies the important presence of populist parties even before the Great Recession of 2008. The political crisis of the beginning of the 1990s was characterized by the corruption scandals that brought to the end of the Christian democratic rule in Italy and paved the way for the rise of populist parties like Lega Nord, and Forza Italia after. Populism may have actually contributed to the transition to the so-called Second Republic.

As populists started to consolidate their positions, their opponents had two different reactions: one was to accommodate them, and the other was to react strongly against this phenomenon. The institutionalization of populist parties, and the passage of their members to traditional ones, brought to another populist reaction that generated the amazing rise of the M5S that was able to achieve one of the most surprising electoral debuts in recent years in Europe. All three parties became successful in a period of crisis presenting themselves as the saviors of the "ordinary people" from the corrupt "elite". Forza Italia and Lega Nord have been elected in the 1990s during the economic and political crisis. The first was caused by the high public debt and the need to fulfill the Maastricht criteria for eventual entry in the euro. The political crisis instead was caused by a series of corruption scandals that involved the main parties that had governed Italy after WWII, Christian Democrats and Socialists, along with the collapse of the former Communist party. This created a vacuum of representation that FI and LN were able to fill.

For the M5S the scenario was the same since the parties of the second republic, despite their promises, haven't solved the structural problems that favored a political crisis, and the Great Recession of 2008 aggravated an economic crisis that was already present in the country since the beginning of the new millennium. The Italian GDP went from above the European average to just below it from 2002 to 2012. Over these ten years Italy has had a growth rate of 12.5%, which is the lowest of all members of the EU. The crisis caused the public debt to rise of 21 points and to reach 127% of GDP by 2012. GDP greatly declined after 2008 and unemployment increased from 7.8% in 2009 to 12.2 in 2013, an increase of 4.4 points, much more than the European average of 1.9.

Although the economic crisis had already hit the country in 2008, a financial crisis exploded in 2011 causing a worsening of the economic crisis, and bringing the country in a political crisis. During the summer the markets lost confidence in the ability of the PDL/LN government to make the necessary reforms to bring down the countries public debt. The stock Market in Milan suffered several significant losses, and the spread between Italian and German ten year government bonds widened rapidly from 268 points on 17 August 2011 to 575 on 9 November. The response of the Berlusconi government wasn't adequate despite the precise requests and indications of the European institutions, so he resigns on the 12th of November, and Mario Monti is nominated as his successor.

Trust in political institutions, taken as a whole, fell from 41 per cent in 2005 to 24 per cent in 2013 demonstrating how the crisis wasn't just economic. The continuous scandals that have struck all political parties and national institutions contributed to the demand for a new political representative. A response was given by the rise of the M5S that, like all populists, sustains this situation had been caused by the corrupt elite. For the first time we have the particular situation in which a populist party like PDL is accused of being part of the elite by another populist party. These new populists are now attacked by the other political forces, which include other populist parties, and have formed a sort of third pole opposed to the center-left PD, born from the ashes of several left-winged parties, to the center-right composed by Lega Nord and Forza Italia, who returned to the original name after the parenthesis as PDL.

Italy's political instability in this period is testified by the several unelected governments that have taken office since the fall of Berlusconi in 2011. This has been used as a political argument by all populist forces who sustained that, especially the Monti government, had adopted a devastating austerity policy that had been dictated to favor a more Germanocentric Europe. There is a general turmoil in the Italian political system and citizens have rarely had so many doubts. According to Pederson's index of electoral volatility, there was an increase from 9.5 and 9.7 at the 2006 and 2008 Italian general elections to 41.3 in 2013 (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2013; Pedersen 1979). In this scenario the only party that can be considered to have gained a sufficient result is the M5S who received 25% of total votes. PD, PDL and LN were all incapable of improving the results of the previous elections. The PDL was in one of its worst moments because of multiple gossip scandals that damaged the image of their leader Berlusconi, and also because he was seen by part of the population as one of the main actors of the 2011 financial crisis. The Lega Nord also was suffering because of a scandal that involved Umberto Bossi who was under investigation for misappropriation of party funds. The PD was seen as the party of an elite that addressed to the people given their left-wing ideology, but was seen far from the real needs of the electorate. This permitted to the M5S to receive votes from various electors of different political backgrounds. ITANES data shows that 29.8 per cent of M5S voters had supported the PD in 2008, 30.4 per cent of them had backed the PDL and 6 per cent had cast their ballots for the LN.

Grillo was able to exploit the discontent generated by the political and economic crisis better than the other populist parties. In reality the M5S has exploited the same structural conditions that permitted the rise of the LN and of FI in the past, but using fresh contents. It is worth noting that at the European elections in 2014 Matteo Renzi's PD, at the first test as party leader and Prime Minister, achieved an unexpected 40.8% partially resized the rise of the M5S who nevertheless were able of achieving a 21.2% demonstrating that, even if the votes have reduced, their appeal is still great. The PDL achieved a low 16.8% caused also by internal divisions in the party that brought to the return of FI. The Lega Nord under the new leader Matteo Salvini gained an encouraging 6.2% after the big loss at the 2013 elections.

The 2018 parliamentary elections seem very uncertain while in 2016 another crisis hit the country, a humanitarian crisis caused by the mass migrations from Africa. The credibility of the various parties policies on this issue will have a decisive role for the electoral results. The risk is that as in all crisis a populist message can easily became successful. So even if after the 2008 crisis two populist parties, the Lega Nord and Forza Italia, lost part of their votes, the general trend was a rise of the populist presence in the democratic institutions of the country because of the success of the Movimento Cinque Stelle, that has been able to converge the votes from all sides.(Table1)

2.5 Case study 3: United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has been a difficult territory for the spread of populist parties before the 2008 crisis. After the end of the Second World War populist parties continually failed to achieve a position of electoral significance in the UK. An explanation to this lack of populist presence can be found in the countries electoral system. The majoritarian electoral system has favored the emergence of a two party system dominated by the Conservative and Labour parties. Until 2015 these two parties were able to catalyze 70% of total votes. The remaining space for the possible emergence of a populist party was occupied by Liberal Democrats that, from the 1990's, appealed to the dissatisfied voters of the other two parties. Another explanation can be given by the tendency of the two mainstream parties to adopt a populistic attitude regarding some issues. This had happened in the past with Tony Blair and Margaret Thatcher, and is happening now with Theresa May.

Immigration and the EU have frequently been addressed by the party leaders as a threat to the interests of native Britons (Ford and Goodwin 2014). Studies demonstrate that from the beginning of the first decade of the new millennium in the Uk, like in the rest of Europe, there has been a spread of positive sentiment towards nativist and authoritarian populist policies (Mudde 2010). This highlights how there was a fertile ground for the spread of populism, but as we said the democratic structure of the Uk, and the strong competition of the mainstream parties, made it difficult for populist parties to gain a large consensus. It is worth noting that even if at the time populist parties weren't successful yet, the general trust in traditional politics was shrinking.

The two main populist cultures in the Uk were Euroscepticism and concerns on immigration. This two issues are the pillars of a populist party that had been founded in 1993 by professor Alan Sked, the UKIP.

In 1993 a group of members of the Conservative party decided to leave the party as a response to the ratification of the Maastricht treaty, and form the UKIP. This testifies how from the very beginning an anti-EU policy is a central issue for this new movement. Like other populist parties, the members of the UKIP attack the "technocrats" in Brussels, denounce their attempt to steal the sovereignty from the British people, and accuse them of favoring mass migrations from eastern Europe. In 2005 the party's motto was: "Say no to uncontrollable EU immigration. Say no to the EU spending your money, and say no to this country being governed by Brussels".

After years of bad electoral results the UKIP manages to receive 6.7% votes at the 1999 European elections thanks to its anti-Eu approach. In the occasion of the parliamentary elections in 2001 the party manages to win only 1,5% of votes demonstrating how it was seen by Britons as a positive alternative in the Eu parliament because of its Euroscepticism, but didn't consider it capable of governing in the UK. In 2004 this trend is confirmed, the UKIP receives 16.1% of votes at the European elections, and just 2,2 at the political ones. These data also confirm how in a majoritarian system like the British one, candidates who are not seen as possible winners, are penalized by voters who fear the risk of wasting their vote and so go for mainstream candidates. The Crisis of 2008, like in the other European countries, gave a huge opportunity to the UKIP to broaden its consensus. At the successive European elections the party confirms it's strength receiving 16,6% of votes in 2009, and achieving an incredible result of 27,5% of votes in 2014, which made it the most voted British party in this election. Another incredible result was the rise at the general elections. In 2010 UKIP managed to receive 3,1% of the votes improving its precedent results, but in 2015 they gained 12,9% of votes indicating that their presence isn't limited anymore to the European parliament.

These results brought David Cameron to the decision to call for a referendum on the permanence of Britain in the Eu in the attempt to strengthen his position over UKIP's leader Nigel Farage. The referendum was held on 23 June 2016 and with the incredible result of 51.9% in favor of abandoning the EU, the so called "Brexit" starts. This was probably UKIP's greatest achievement and started a new era for Europe and Britain. The campaign was held in a tense climate, and "leave" sustainers have been frequently accused of reporting wrong information and of exaggerating in their populist methods. Various surveys issued by the media highlighted how one of the major motivations for the "leave" vote was the fear of mass migrations from the EU. In a survey issued by The Independent 52% of all respondents thought immigration would be better controlled outside the EU, and only 3% thought it would be worse. The other main argument that led to "Brexit" ,so, is another pillar of the UKIP: the immense cost of staying in the Union sustained by British citizens. The red bus with the quote stating that 350 million pounds could be assigned to the National Health Service became the image of the party's Brexit

campaign. After the referendum Farage resigns opening the crisis for the party that performed terribly in the sequent elections.

Britain was hardly hit by the 2008 crisis and officially entered recession in January 2009. It was the first time since 1991 that the UK has been in recession. Data on GDP, public debt and unemployment testify that it was one of the countries that had been hit the hardest by the crisis in Europe. In particular the percentage growth in GDP declined from 1.2 per cent in the third quarter of 2007 to -0.9 per cent in the second quarter of 2008, and to its lowest of -2.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2009, making this the sharpest contraction of output since 1958 (Vaitilingam 2009). GDP did not turn to consecutive growth until the first quarter of 2013.

 Government debt as a percentage of GDP more than doubled, increasing from 44 per cent in 2007 to 91 per cent in 2013. Only Portugal, Italy, Greece and Ireland reached higher levels of indebtedness. The rate of unemployment went from about 5% in the pre-crisis period to a maximum of 8.4% in October 2011. Britain's unemployment rate didn't rise sensibly as in other European countries like Greece or Spain in which it reached over 20%. This limited rise in unemployment is probably why Britain did not experience major social unrest (Pappas & O'Malley 2014). Despite the relative rise in unemployment the downturn in macroeconomic conditions offered new opportunities for those populist parties who see in the EU, in immigrants, and in the incompetent elites in Westminster a threat for the native British citizens.

Like in other European countries the advent of the crisis cost the loss of government to the party in power. The Labour party who had been governing since 1997 lost the elections in 2010, and had been behind conservatives in the polls since 2007. Net agreement with the Labour's economic policies fell from +3% at the beginning of September 2007 to -7% in September, and to -35% by September 2008 highlighting how voters held the Labour government as responsible of this situation of crisis.

In a scenario of economic crisis in 2009 a parliamentary expenses scandal brought the trust in political parties to a record low leading to a political crisis. According to the 2010 British Election Study pre-election survey, 93 per cent of voters were aware of the scandal, over 90 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that the expenses scandal had made them angry, and over 80 per cent of voters agreed or strongly agreed that MPs who were implicated in the scandal should resign (Vivyan, Wagner & Tarlov 2012). Although there is little evidence that the traditional parties have been punished by voters for this scandal, and the political crisis never reached the alarming levels of other European countries, the general trust in the party system has dropped creating the conditions for the rise of a populist anti-establishment movement. Data from the British Social Attitudes survey reveal that in the period between 2007 and 2009 the proportion of voters who had "trust in the government to put the needs of the nation first" went

from 30% to 16%. As a result the 2010 general elections obliged the winner, conservative David Cameron, to form a coalition government for the first time in seventy years.

In the same year Nigel Farage became UKIP's leader starting a period of prosperity for the party. The central message of the party didn't change because of the crisis. Rather than push the economic downturn to the forefront of its campaign, UKIP remained heavily focused on its founding goal of withdrawing the UK from the EU, incorporating the crisis into its hard Eurosceptic narrative, but not focusing specifically on the crisis as a possible driver of its support. Rather than target specific public anxieties over the economic downturn or fiscal austerity, UKIP continued to associate the withdrawal from the Eu as a source of a wide range of benefits, arguing that "[w]ithdrawal from the EU can benefit the UK right across the spectrum, from immigration to crime, tax, jobs and the economy, pensions, public services, and even through to animal welfare and the Post Offices" (UKIP 2010: 2).

Their policy on immigration also wasn't harshened by the crisis. Their attitude towards this issue had become softer throughout the end of the 1990's and the first years of 2000's, but with the decline of the right-winged British National Party, and with the rising public concern over this issue, UKIP started to encourage an anti-immigration policy especially towards immigrant workers from Central and Eastern Europe. This permitted to UKIP to achieve the incredible results we talked about before from 2010 to 2016.

Unlike in other European countries the economic crisis wasn't followed by a severe political crisis. There wasn't the rise of a new anti-establishment party like the M5S in Italy, in fact, contrary to many other European countries, the extreme-right collapsed in the UK after the crisis. Even at the height of the crisis, UKIP did not particularly change its discourse to address crisis-related themes, instead they preferred to focus on its core pillars of hard Euroscepticism, immigration and political dissatisfaction. So while some evidence suggests that the crisis has created a fertile ground for the success of populism in Uk, it is worth noting that the general sentiment of support for Euroscepticism has been driven by concerns on immigration and on the state of domestic politics, with concerns over the crisis itself playing a secondary role. The way UKIP collapsed after the victory of the "leave" vote can indicate that the rise in British populism was strictly related to concerns on the EU more than on the British economic scenario.

Support for populists in general and European Parliament elections in the UK (1992–2014)
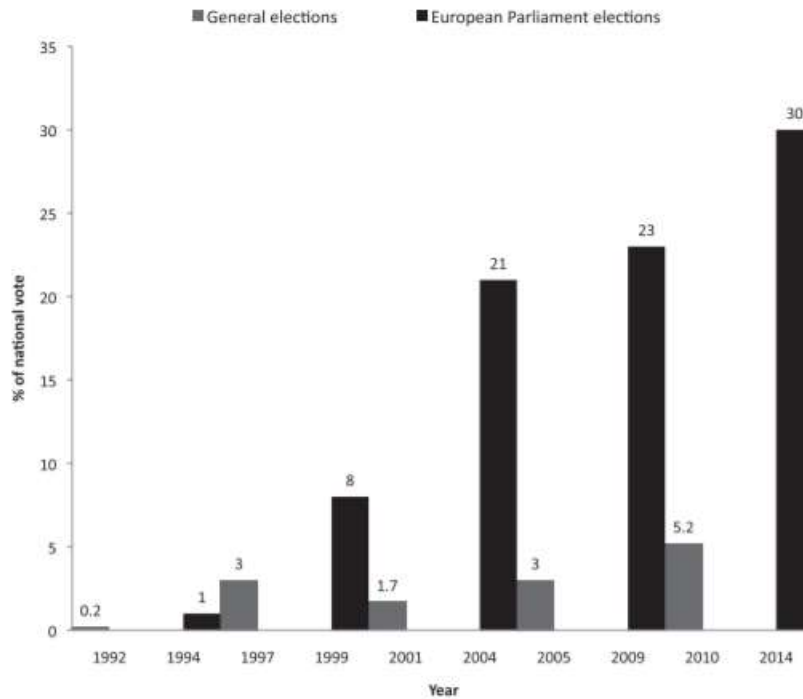
Source: The Electoral Commission (2014), https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/our-research/electoral-data

Table 2

Conclusion

We have observed the spread of populist movements throughout Europe in the aftermath of the 2008 Great Recession. In the first place we have searched for an appropriate definition that could be suitable with all the modern manifestations of populism in a representative democracy. Then with the help of Pappas we have arrived to the conclusion that democratic illiberalism was the best possible minimal definition we could find, and we have identified the characteristics of a modern populist party like the presence of a strong leader, or the dichotomy between "us" and "the others". This characteristic in many cases brought to the association of the "us" with the nation and "the others" with the immigrants, giving birth to nationalistic right-winged populisms. Left- winged populisms instead associated "the others" mainly to the financial and political institutions that are favoring the free market at the expense of the ordinary people("us").

From what we have seen most of the European political system presented some elements of instability even before 2008. Only in some isolated cases the political crisis was triggered by the economic crisis. For the others the already present political crisis contributed to worsen the economic one because of an inadequate political response, and at the same time the economic crisis contributed to worsen the political one in a circular relation. In our case studies we have analyzed three different realities: Italy which was in a political crisis since 1990's, Great Britain who's political system seemed pretty solid before the Great Recession, and France who stands in the middle having a political system that was not in crisis but neither solid. As we saw the three countries reacted differently to the 2008 economic crisis.

After the nation was harshly hit by the economic crisis, and also demonstrated to be unable to react, Italy's already problematic politic scenario saw the emergence of another populist party, the Movimento Cinque Stelle. This new party attacks the institutions that have already suffered from a populist influence since the fall of the so called First Republic. So we have a case of populists who are against other populists because in time they became part of the establishment. After having achieved some important results the M5S has now the hard task to demonstrate it is capable of governing, and it is preparing for the 2018 parliamentary elections.

The economic crisis had huge repercussions on the United Kingdom's economy. GDP drastically fell and government debt as percentage of GDP more than doubled. Unemployment instead didn't rise drastically probably diminishing social unrest. The populist message that captured the attention of the voters was the one of the UKIP who had strong anti-EU and anti-immigration policies. As we saw those where the key issues for the British population after the economic crisis, and in fact after the "leave" vote won, UKIP disappeared.

 France, as we said, wasn't particularly hit by the economic crisis. What brought the nation to a critical point was the inability of politics to form a concrete plan for recovery. This alimented distrust in the French population especially when they confronted their nation to the fast recovery of Germany and the competiveness gap between the two nations expands. The socio-economic structure of France favored the emergence of populist parties, but only after the crisis, the Front National had the sufficient electorate to confront the mainstream parties. Marine Le Pen worked mainly at the credibility of the party and eliminated some right-winged elements in favor of a more social policy. This permitted her to achieve very good results, but she wasn't able to win the second ballot at the presidential elections in 2017.

The political outcomes in these three countries, but also in the rest of Europe in the last years, have shown a new trend in the political message. Although it had been a component of the success of populism even before, the various terrorist attacks on one side, and a general recovery from the crisis on the other, have increased the attention of the public towards the issue of mass migrations. This has caused the various

political actors to react and to shift the general policies of both traditional and populist parties towards a more right-winged approach to the phenomenon . This has been caused by the pressure of far-right parties for a more rigid policy on immigration. Even if not in government, because of their organized presence, and of an increased political representation, these parties have been able to condition and shape the common sense bringing the principal political parties to adopt a more rigid approach on immigration. This has brought the establishment to adopt measures like the reintroduction of national borders, more intense police controls, and to the ratification of special laws limiting personal freedom.

The traditional parties have lost their appeal on the public and have a hard time finding valid arguments to bring the electorate to their side. The only ways to legitimize themselves is to attack the populist parties stating that a victory by them corresponds to a catastrophe, or to "steal" some arguments from them like we said for immigration. The way out for the establishment is to be open to a revolution of the status quo, accepting those populist requests in favor of a more egalitarian and inclusive democracy with a clear program at regional, national, and European level to avoid the extremism of the free market, and those of nationalism (Marsili & Varoufakis 2017).

As we said before not all populist arguments are negative for the sake of liberal democracy. Many of the issues raised by populists are legitimate, although the solutions they propose can be quite controversial (Rovira Kaltwasser 2013). Populism is not only about leaders and the use of a particular discourse that can be appealing in determinate situations, but it is also about sectors of society that are having a hard time, and don't find an adequate representation in the establishment. This constitutes a rational and emotional motive to adhere to the Manichean view of populists. The tension between the parts frequently made the detractors of populism insensitive to the demands arriving by them. The populist message is born from a sense of discomfort. It is a call of help. The solutions proposed may be inadequate if not totally negative, but they are usually advanced by people in a desperate situation that found themselves impoverished by the crisis.

The economic crisis has generated a social crisis that is constituting the base for populism. The peripheries of Europe have been particularly hit by the crisis and their inhabitants have been forced to go towards the "central" nations in order to find work, causing a reaction in the locals. This virtuous circle can have the only outcome of leaving some areas abandoned and concentrating the majority of the population in specific areas. The best scenario would be to help the economies in difficulty to restart and to give the natives the possibility to stay in their country. This would require important investments to grant European citizens the basic standard of living. If a real European welfare system is created it could contribute to help many of those in need, and at the same time it would help build a European sentiment. It could be done on the model of the American food stamps managed by the Fed, citizens would so receive a check directly from the BCE that would create a sense of proximity of institutions.

Unemployment is another issue that needs to be seriously treated, every European citizen should have a job. This might seem an extraordinary expensive task, but the costs of high unemployment on society are much higher. There are direct costs like subsidies, lower tax revenue, lower consumption and money in circulation. The indirect costs instead are destruction of human capital because of inactivity, psychological damage, damage to families and communities, and on long term unemployment can transform into irreversible unemployment. With the incredible progress we are achieving in robotics this issue has to be addressed as soon as possible to avoid another economic and social crisis. The solution is not to oppose technological progress, but politics needs to be strong and creative enough to make it sustainable.(Marsili&Varoufakis 2017).

The 2008 Great Recession has so created the fertile ground for the spread of a populist sentiment. The economic losses suffered by citizens and the austerity policy adopted after the crisis created a net division between the population and the establishment. The slow recovery especially in the periphery of Europe, and the subsequent migrations have generated a social crisis from which it will be hard to recover. The fact that after the crisis populist parties have greatly enlarged the number of votes received, and made them capable of an important opposition, has made the work of the establishment even harder, ending up in finding in the denigration of populism their only argument. All of this brought to a net separation in society that can bring no good. It may appear naïve but the establishment forces, being open to receive the social requests of populists, need to reinvent the European political system and decide a credible program that address the new issues brought by globalization.

The way to fight European populism is the hear what populists have to say. We have arrived to a point in which important decisions need to be made and the only way is to offer a credible establishment that is sensitive to the social issues, able to control extreme deviations of the free market, and that promotes a true European integration. An alternative to populism and to an establishment that has demonstrated to be outdated and too often distant from the real needs of the average citizens. Traditional parties continue to think in the old-fashioned way that in the end the status quo will remain the same. In reality after the crisis we have seen that western democracies are not as stable and anchored to the status quo as it used to be. The election of Donald Trump in U.S.A, the victory of the "leave" vote and the general advancement of right-winged populist movements should all be signals that the "politically correct" mantra doesn't exist anymore, and that the status quo can be changed in very little time. The utopia today is not to think that a revolution is possible, but to think that the status quo is sustainable and that with minor concessions it can all stay the same. The 2008 economic crisis so has permitted the mass entrance of populisms in our society because of the people's need of an immediate reaction, but now bases most of its consent on the social crisis that has been generated by economic and political instability.

"Recent victories for European centrists offer a chance to reflect on the phenomenon of populism – and draw some crucial lessons for the future. The electoral victories of Emmanuel Macron in France and Mark Rutte in the Netherlands have significantly changed the discourse on European politics. The international media has gone from "populism is unbeatable" to "populism is dead". Obviously, neither is or was true. In fact, populist parties are still doing better in elections, on average, than ever before during the postwar era. Various European countries have populists in their government – including Finland, Greece, Hungary, Norway, and Slovakia – while the most powerful country in the world is at the mercy of a billionaire president who has wholeheartedly embraced the populism of some of his main advisers, notably Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller." (Cas Mudde, 2017)

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Riassunto

Il contributo della Grande Recessione alla diffusione del populismo nel sistema politico Europeo

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Introduzione

La crisi economica del 2008 ha contribuito enormemente a creare un sentimento di distanza tra la popolazione e le istituzioni. I cittadini non si sono più sentiti rappresentati dai propri parlamenti che li avevano condotti a una situazione del genere. La distanza tra le parti è aumentata a maggior ragione dopo l'introduzione delle politiche di austerity che hanno contribuito alla diffusione del pensiero che sarebbero stati i cittadini a dover pagare per la crisi. Questa dicotomia tra il popolo e l'elite è alla base del pensiero populista e per questo è facile comprendere come il populismo possa aver ricevuto un importante seguito in tutta Europa in questo particolare momento storico.

L'obiettivo di questo elaborato è quello di analizzare l'espandersi dei movimenti populisti in Europa dopo la crisi economica del 2008 e sarà diviso in tre parti: nella prima daremo una definizione di populismo e ne individueremo le principali caratteristiche nel contesto di una democrazia liberale. Osserveremo in un secondo momento lo sviluppo della crisi politica che ha vissuto e sta vivendo l'Europa e lo stesso faremo con la contemporanea crisi economica facendo un parallelo tra le due e analizzeremo l'avanzata populista in 3 paesi Europei. Infine nell'ultima parte tireremo le nostre conclusioni e proveremo a faremo delle considerazioni su possibili scenari futuri per l'Europa.

Significato e Caratteristiche

Oggi si sente spesso dire che il populismo è una grande minaccia per la sopravvivenza della democrazia rappresentativa e che ci sta conducendo verso un mondo più illiberale. I partiti tradizionali non sono più in grado di attirare i voti dei cittadini come un tempo e spesso si sentono più vicini alla novità presentata dai populismi. Questi partiti populisti però possono essere molto diversi tra loro, ce ne sono di destra come il Front National, di sinistra come Podemos in Spagna, o anche di centro come il Movimento

Cinque Stelle in Italia. Proveremo allora a trovare una definizione e delle caratteristiche che uniscano realtà tanto diverse.

La ricerca di una definizione di populismo in un contesto democratiche è un processo che dura da anni e che ha messo in difficoltà molti studiosi. Nel 1967 ci fu un primo tentativo di analizzare il fenomeno e di formulare una definizione, ma gli studiosi non furono in grado di trovarne una che potesse accomunare tutti i diversi movimenti. Successivamente ci furono altri tentativi soprattutto in America Latina, ma ognuno presentava delle criticità. Pappas allora nel tentativo di trovare una definizione adeguata parte dagli errori compiuti nel passato per evitare di ripeterli. Una volta individuati questi ultimi, arriva alla conclusione che la migliore definizione possibile è quella di illiberalismo democratico. Questa definizione non presenta gli errori del passato ed è applicabile a tutti i moderni populismi in un contesto democratico.

Con l'ausilio di Vittori abbiamo poi individuato sette caratteristiche presenti nei fenomeni populisti moderni: (1) ostilità nei confronti della democrazia rappresentativa, (2) Appartenenza al "popolo" nella lotta conto "l'élite corrotta", (3) reazione vigorosa nei confronti della crisi sia essa politica, economica o sociale, (4) approccio che punta ad un cambio radicale facendo promesse utopiche e rigettando il gradualismo, (5) personificazione dell' ultima possibilità per il popolo di essere ascoltato, (6) Leader forte che è la personificazione dell' unità del partito in contrasto a quelli tradizionali i cui membri sono sempre in guerra tra loro, (7)enfasi posta su teoria di cospirazioni e riferimento costante a interessi oscuri e influenze di lobby.

Crisi Politica

La crisi da cui la nostra politica non sembra in grado di uscire ha radici lontane che vanno ricercate nella profonda mutazione che il sistema partitico ha subito a partire dal 1970. La professionalizzazione della politica ha reso i partiti delle mere strutture per svolgere campagne elettorali eliminando tutti i servizi che un tempo i partiti svolgevano. In questo modo si è perso il dibattito interno al partito e con il contemporaneo avvento dei media la televisione è diventata l'arena in cui esso si svolge. Questo ha causato una diminuzione della militanza e quindi i partiti non hanno più la base solida di sostegno di cui godevano un tempo. In questo scenario è stato facile per i partiti populisti attaccare tutto l'establishment senza distinzioni indicandoli come un sistema colluso che punto solo al proprio autosostentamento.

La creazione dell' Unione Europea ha contribuito all' aggravarsi di questa crisi per via della governance multilivello. Molte decisioni vengono prese all' interno delle istituzioni europee e vengono successivamente solo ratificate dai parlamenti nazionali. I populisti sfruttano questa situazione per ribadire che le decisioni vengono prese da organi non-democratici lontani dai cittadini. Un esempio di ciò sono le quattro libertà all' interno della comunità: libertà di spostarsi per persone, capitali, servizi, e beni di consumo. Le critiche sono arrivate sia dai partiti populisti di destra che indicano nella prima libertà la causa delle migrazioni, del conseguente aumento di reati e violenza e delle perdita di posti di lavoro. Le altre libertà invece sono criticate dai populismi di sinistra perché favoriscono le multinazionali a discapito dei cittadini.

L'espansione dei media inoltre ha agevolato maggiormente i partiti populisti. Essendo i tempi televisivi brevi, il dibattito deve essere conciso ed efficace. Questo si sposa perfettamente con la presenza del leader forte nei partiti populisti. Il leader populista è carismatico per definizione ed è in grado di presentare le

proprie proposte in maniera sintetica e accattivante. Come abbiamo detto ciò si sposa perfettamente con la retorica populista e infatti, da questo punto di vista, sono i partiti tradizionali che si sono adeguati. Questo ha causato un generale abbassamento del livello del dibattito politico.

Crisi economica

L'avvento della crisi economica nel 2008 ha accelerato il processo di crisi del sistema partitico tradizionale favorendo l'ascesa dei partiti populisti. I partiti di establishment non erano pronti ad affrontare una crisi del genere distratti dalle dinamiche interne di un sistema partitico in crisi. L'enorme danno economico subito dalla società e aggravato dall' incapacità di molti governi di trovare una soluzione efficace e immediata, hanno portato la fiducia dei cittadini nei confronti delle istituzioni a livelli bassissimi. A partire dal 2008 il sostegno nei partiti tradizionali inizia a scendere e contemporaneamente si nota l'innalzamento del gradimento nei confronti dei partiti anti-establishment, aumentato anche dalla sensazione che i reali responsabili della crisi siano rimasti impuniti. Andremo ora ad analizzare l'ascesa del populismo in tre paesi europei: Francia, Italia e Regno Unito.

Francia

In Francia la crisi economica non ha colpito in maniera devastante, ma alcuni problemi socio-economici hanno impedito una veloce ripresa generando sconforto nella popolazione e favorendo l'ascesa del Front National. Questo partito fu fondato da Jean-Marie Le Pen nel 1972 con una forte ideologia di destra. Per anni è stato il terzo partito di Francia finche nel 2007 ha perso molti consensi aprendo una crisi interna al partito. Nel 2011 sua figlia Marine è stata eletta a capo del partito e ha iniziato una rivoluzione interna che ha portato il Front National ad un successo mai raggiunto in precedenza arrivando a sfidare Macron per le presidenziali del 2017 e perdendo solo al ballottaggio. I suoi argomenti contro l'immigrazione, l'establishment e la comunità europea e la contemporanea esaltazione del nazionalismo francese, in uno scenario come quello dell' Europa post-crisi, le hanno permesso di attirare un gran numero di voti.

Come abbiamo detto, più che la crisi, ciò che ha indebolita la Francia è stata la mancata reazione ad essa. La perdita di competitività nei confronti della Germania ha causato un grande sconforto nel popolo Francese portandolo a cercare qualcuno che potesse dare una scossa. La Le Pen è stata capace di fornire un programma abbastanza credibile, con forti componenti populiste, ma avvicinando il partito a posizioni sociali di sinistra e eliminando la componente ideologica di estrema-destra.

Italia

La fragilità del sistema democratico italiano favorisce da tempo l'ascesa di movimenti populisti. Alle ultime elezioni nazionali nel 2013, tre partiti anti-establishment hanno ricevuto più della metà dei voti

totali. Questi tre partiti sono Forza Italia/PDL, la Lega Nord e il Movimento Cinque stelle. Tutti e tre sono caratterizzati da una forte componente populista ed hanno approfittato di un momento di crisi per guadagnare consenso.

I primi due partiti hanno costruito la loro fortuna in un momento di profonda crisi di rappresentanza. I processi giudiziari che anno coinvolto la maggior parte delle forze politiche hanno portato alla fine della Prima Repubblica. In questo scenario la Lega prima, e Forza Italia dopo, con una retorica populista che accusava l'establishment, sono riusciti a ricevere un grande supporto. In questo modo sono andati al potere segnando l'avvento del populismo nelle istituzioni italiane. Nonostante le promesse questi partiti non riuscirono a risolvere i problemi strutturali del paese che sono riaffiorati con prepotenza a causa della crisi economica del 2008. In questo caso è stato il movimento cinque stelle, attaccando anche altri populisti orami parte dell'establishment, ad approfittare della situazione e a crescere in maniera esponenziale.

La retorica usata dal M5S è molto simile a quella degli inizi della Lega e di Forza Italia, ma sfruttando in maniera intelligente le nuove tecnologie sono riusciti a creare un fronte popolare unito diffuso in tutto il paese. La Lega e Forza Italia inoltre hanno perso consensi dopo la crisi perché ormai erano visti come parte dell' establishment da "punire". In vista delle elezioni del 2018 entrambi i tre partiti hanno la possibilità di dire la loro, il M5S punta a governare da solo, invece un' alleanza tra Lega e Forza Italia potrebbe garantire i voti necessari per la vittoria.

Regno Unito

Il Regno Unito non è stato un territorio semplice per la diffusione del populismo prima della crisi economica. Vari partiti dai connotati populisti sono nati nel dopoguerra, ma nessuno ha mai avuto particolare successo. Le cause di questo fenomeno sono da ricercare nel sistema elettorale maggioritario che ha favorito la creazione di un sistema bi-partitico e nella tendenza dei partiti tradizionali a inglobare politiche populiste all' loro interno come è stato fatto dalla Thatcher e da Blair. Nonostante non ci fosse una chiara rappresentanza politica, l'ideologia populista era già presenta tra la popolazione. Alcuni sondaggi evidenziano come la fiducia nei partiti tradizionali fosse in discesa già prima della crisi a causa della permanenza all' interno della Comunità Europea e alla paura per le migrazioni di massa.

Questi due timori costituiscono i capisaldi dell'ideologia dell' UKIP, l'unico partito populista che in Inghilterra ha vissuto un momento di importante seguito. Questo partito fu fondato nel 1993 dal professor Alan Sked. I capisaldi del movimento come abbiamo detto sono un forte sentimento antieuropeo e la paura per le migrazioni. E facile capire quindi il motivo di un importante sostegno dopo la crisi. I risultati dell' UKIP sono buoni soprattutto nelle elezioni europee, mentre a livello nazionale non sono soddisfacenti. Il forte impatto che ha avuto la crisi nel paese ha aumentato le paure che erano già presenti all' interno della popolazione permettendo all' UKIP sotto la nuova guida di Nigel Farage di ottenere risultati incredibili come il 27.5% di voti ricevuto alle elezioni europee del 2014. Nonostante la decrescente fiducia nell' establishment a livello nazionale, l'UKIP continua a non avere risultati eccellenti tranne l'aver portato David Cameron a indire un referendum sulla permanenza del Regno Unito all' interno della Comunità Europea. Incredibilmente è il "leave" a vincere causando la cosiddetta "Brexit". Dopo questa incredibile vittoria che dovrebbe segnare l'inizio dell'ascesa del partito, l'UKIP invece perde

consensi e Farage si dimette creando una crisi interna che ha portato quasi alla sparizione del partito. Questo testimonia come in realtà ciò che alimentava il populismo britannico erano i capisaldi dell' UKIP, uscita dall' Europa e maggiore controllo sulle immigrazioni. Raggiunti questi risultati non serviva più sostenere l'UKIP.

Conclusione

Nel nostro elaborato abbiamo osservato la propagazione dei partiti populisti in Europa dopo la crisi. In primo luogo abbiamo dato una definizione di populismo e abbiamo elencato le caratteristiche dei populismi moderni in un contesto democratico come la presenza del leader carismatico e la dicotomia tra "noi" e "loro".

Da quello che abbiamo visto il sistema politico europeo spesso presentava delle criticità già prima della crisi economica del 2008, ma quest'ultima è stata fondamentale per garantire ai populismi le migliori condizioni possibili per trasmettere e rendere accattivante il loro messaggio. Nei casi analizzati abbiamo visto come la crisi abbia avuto un ruolo fondamentale per la crescita del populismo. In Italia ha permesso l'ascesa del Movimento Cinque Stelle perché è andata ad aggravare una situazione già precaria, in Gran Bretagna ha contribuito ad aumentare la preoccupazione nei confronti della Comunità Europea e delle migrazioni aumentando esponenzialmente la fiducia nell' UKIP, In Francia invece è stata fondamentale per l'ascesa della Le Pen perché ha causato un enorme senso di sfiducia nei partiti tradizionali e ha generato la richiesta per una risposta forte e decisa.

I risultati politici degli ultimi anni hanno evidenziato come a causa degli attacchi terroristici e delle migrazioni di massa ci sia una maggiore attenzione al tema dell'immigrazione. Questo tema è sempre stato parte della retorica populista, ma sta diventando fonte di preoccupazione pubblica. Questo ha portato sia i partiti populisti che i partiti tradizionali ad un approccio più duro sulle politiche migratorie.

Il populismo non è sempre del tutto negativo. Troppo spesso i suoi detrattori dimenticano che nasce dalle esigenze di una parte della popolazione che non si sente rappresentata nell' attuale sistema democratico. Le soluzioni che vengono presentate spesso sono inadeguate, ma la richiesta di aiuto deve essere ascoltata e indirizzata verso soluzioni più efficaci.

La crisi ha ingrandito le differenze economiche tra la periferia e il centro dell' Europa causando migrazioni di persone alla ricerca di un lavoro. La risposta a questo fenomeno non può e non deve essere di chiudere i confini, ma di creare una maggiore coesione e solidarietà tra stati. Per fare ciò andrebbe rivoluzionato il sistema democratico e partitico che ormai è diventato inattuale per poter contrastare concretamente i venti populisti. La crisi quindi ha portato vari populismi all' interno dei nostri parlamenti, e ora questi si alimentano grazie alla crisi sociale in cui è caduta l'Europa, spesso proponendo però soluzioni alla lunga inefficaci e poco umane.