

Populism as a diversified phenomenon: a comparative analysis

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Introduction

Populism is a term that, according to many scholars, was first employed around the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century in Russia and the United States to describe those political forces that defended the interests of rising social classes that were the majority in society, such as the middle class in the US and the farmers in Russia. An example of the phenomenon's appearance was the election of Andrew Jackson, the 7th president of the United States, which has been historically considered the first populist president of the United States and the first governing populist in the occidental world. Indeed, he presented himself as "a man of the people" with the goal to talk directly and proposing policies favorable to a strong majority of the population (raising middle class), as well as challenging the elite; and, thanks to his strategy, he was elected twice as the president (1829-1837). Over time, this phenomenon has spread around other regions of the world; usually, along with the implementation of democracy in parts of the world where was absent before. For example, Latin America, after its decolonization phase and an attempt to implement democratic practices, experienced a first wave of populism, like in Brazil and Argentina with the election of Getulio Vargas and Juan Domingo Perón respectively.

Initially, regions of the globe with long established democratic practices, like Europe, have largely been not affected by populist movement or practices during the 20th century. However, at the end of last century, populism has been starting to gain political prominence even in those countries with a lengthy history of democratic government, like France or Italy, thanks to its division of society in 2 groups, "the people" and the corrupt elite, with the goal to follow the general will of the former.

As stated above, populist forces exalt the "people" as the legitimate source of power, which cause them to disregard an institutional path of expressing power, such as parliamentary majorities. In governmental context, this is usually taken a step further by attempting to change the constitutional order of a country with the goal, in their opinion, to implement people's participation in the national politics, like in Hungary. However, in many cases this is done to further centralized their power without any, or a small, opposition. By disregarding the institutional approach of politics, populism has many critics inside the press and other national parties. Indeed, these critics challenge it by underlying the oversimplification of complicated issues that are reduced to a scapegoat for the masses to express their anger and dissatisfaction towards the elite. However, this approach is counterproductive, since it will damage not only the public good in general, but also that of the interests of those who are attracted to such simplification.

By influencing politics so significantly, it has become a matter of study by many scholars and researcher. However, the main focus has been what is the best-suited definition of the term and how does affect the democratic process in each country, ignoring the cross-regional differences of the phenomenon. Indeed, even though, populism has some essential common characteristics worldwide, it does take different forms in various regions of the world. For example, *americanismo* in Latin America and nativism in Europe greatly influence populism respectively in these regions. In addition, populism has entered the political scene in different times across the globe. For example, it has entered the Latin America context almost one hundred years ago, while

it started the European political scene recently, but, over time, it has gained a tremendous importance in the continent polity. Nowadays, many European countries are governed by populist political forces, such as Fidesz in Hungary and Law and Justice in Poland, which, in turn, is affecting the continental polity through the election of different populist forces in the European Parliaments' elections. Furthermore, populism is affecting not just politics, but society as a whole. Indeed, populist ideals are becoming tremendously present in the European context. This spread of populist ideas is caused by different reasons, such as immigration, the financial crisis and many others. Usually, populist forces use a sense of nativism and anti-globalization feelings of the citizens to gain a strong consensus nationally.

At the same time, the South American continent has experienced various waves of populism in the last 100 years, from Perón in Argentina and Vargas in Brazil to Chávez in Venezuela. So, it has a strong history of populist leaders, as well as political parties that over time became mainstream in the national polity, such as the Justicialist party in Argentina. For example, the latter has been a constant presence in the Argentine governments in the last century since it was founded by Juan Domingo Perón in 1947. However, differently from Europe, Latin America is characterized by other ideals surrounding the populist regime.

Thus, despite possessing the same denomination as a political phenom and some similarities, populism in has some fundamental differences between its European and Latin American form. So, why they have different characteristics? Are these two completely different phenomenons or are they two faces of the same coin?

In this paper, it will be argued the latter, that is, populism is a diversified phenomenon across the world. In doing so, there will be an in-depth analysis of 2 case studies concerning 2 of the major populist forces in each continent. For Europe, the focus will be on Fidesz and the Orbán government in Hungary since 2010, while for Latin America the spotlight will be on Perón and Peronism, in general, in Argentina. Although these 2 instances occurred in different times and apparently have not much in common culturally and historically, both represent an exemplary case of (governing) populism for each continent and how they had affected future populism in other countries. Indeed, both experiences have some common characteristics and differences, that will be shown in the paper, which are useful and fundamental in explaining the phenomenon in Latin America and Europe and in demonstrating the study's hypothesis, that is, populism as a diversified reality across the globe.

The organization of the chapters will be as follows. The first chapter will define populism according to Mudde's minimal definition and it will demonstrate why it is the best-suited to analyze populism for the purpose of this paper. Then, there will be an overview of populism in the 2 continents with also a look at the main systemic differences between the two regions.

The second chapter will look in depth the Hungarian case focusing mainly on the preconditions for the rise of the regime, the principal ideology, Orbán leadership and the impact of the party in the national and international polity. The third chapter will focus on Argentina, in particular, on Peronism. It will be analyzed how did Peronism rise to power in the country, its main ideology and policies, the impact on Argentina and

on Latin America overall and the evolution of Argentine politics after Perón regime. In the Conclusion, it will be discussed the implications of the findings and pose questions for further research.

Chapter 1: Populism in the world

1.1 Defining populism

Many scholars have attempted to outline the main characteristics of populism and to establish a complete definition of the term. However, it has proved a demanding task for many reasons. Firstly, populism is a term that unfolds different components which can vary across the globe. So, there is a need of a definition capable to embrace all this diversity and, at the same time, give a relevant answer for the appearance of all these specific cases. Secondly, the term has in its inside a considerable number of different features that compose it, such as the relationship with the “people” or the ideologies that set it up. Indeed, it is a difficult task to design a definition of this phenomenon without considering all these aspects, but it is as just challenging to consider all these facets in one definition with the same relevance.

Since it has been demanding to spell out populism, there have been a lot of different theories analyzing and outlining its main characteristics. In doing so, the academic world has followed 3 main guidelines: a political-strategic, a socio-cultural and an ideological approach. All of these theories have their strengths and weaknesses, and have been used more during some period of time than in others. This paper will follow the ideational approach and, in particular, it will use Cas Mudde’s minimal definition of populism throughout this study. However, before explaining the reason for this choice, there will be outlined the main 3 approaches in general, and why the political-strategic and socio-cultural are not best-suited for this paper.

The political strategic approach considers, as the most important characteristics of populism, the indirect or direct support of a large component of the population, the concept of “the people”, and how to gain their support. Many scholars have used this approach to define the phenomenon. For example, Kurt Weyland defines populism “as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, noninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers” (Weyland, 2017). So, according to this vision of the term, populism sees power derive directly from “the people”. However, it is necessary that an outstanding leader provides a direction for this movement and mobilizes the followers towards the goals identified as “the will of the people”. It is important to underline that this kind of personalistic leadership, which is present in both populism and authoritarian regimes, is a flexible, opportunistic variant, rather than being rooted in ideological terms. So, according to this academic theory, populism is a political strategy that revolves around an individual politician. In particular, this leader seeks to boost its autonomy and power, dominate other types of actors (i.e. combat the elite and mainstream parties). To do so, s/he receives a general support by a large number of citizens, thanks to her/his attempt to enforce the, so called, “will of the people”. However, to be able to maintain or even strengthen such backing from, ideally, the people as a whole, leaders rely on almost direct appeals towards citizens. Thus, leaders promote a direct identification with their followers, which bypasses all forms of intermediation, such as clientelism and party organization. A mean which allows the identification leader-people is looking out for

enemies. Indeed, the absence of challenges deflates their leadership and risks eroding their following. So, the political-strategic approach analyzes populism as a strategy game where an actor (i.e. the leader), thanks to his ability to mobilize and gain the support of large masses, is able to use this following to become a relevant figure in the political scene and, in some cases, rise to power.

Contrariwise, the socio-cultural approach considers populism as a phenomenon fundamentally relational, emphasizing its socio-cultural dimension, along with the idea of populism being part of the, so called, “low” politics. Indeed, the basic idea is the dichotomy between the “high” and the “low” politics. Populism is characterized by a particular form of political relationship between political leaders and a social basis, one established and articulated through “low” appeals which resonate and receive positive reception within particular sectors of society for social-cultural historical reasons. So, it has led to “define populism, in very few words, as the “flaunting of the ‘low’” (Pierre Ostiguy, 2017). Although it is recognized the centrality of leadership as in the political-strategic approach, populism is not analyzed as a top-down phenomenon. “Instead, it regards it as a two-way phenomenon, centrally defined by the claims articulated and the connection established between the leader and supporters, a relation that displays both a socio-cultural and a politico-cultural component” (Pierre Ostiguy, 2017). As seen already with the previous approach, there are 2 important elements in this relationship between the leader and the supporters: the leader as an identification of the people; and the second one is the antagonistic, transgressive and improper in the sense that they are intended to shock or provoke society. However, the main difference between the socio-cultural approach and the political-strategic one is that the latter considers populism more as a strategy, while the former more as a “style”. Consequently, this approach is identity-centered and focused on the discursive side of politics rather than the strategic side. It is possible to see this in both components, namely the socio-cultural and political-cultural, of the leader-supporters relationship by following the idea of “low” politics. Indeed, populist leaders tend to use a language and a behavior less institutional and “rawer” with the use of popular expression and a demonstrative demeanor, at the same time they emphasize personalistic political appeals with a strong leadership. This is the complete opposite to what it is defined as “high” politics which is characterized by a well-behaved presence and the use of political appeals with impersonal and institutionally mediated authority. A demonstration of this “flaunting of the low” can be seen in the way populist leaders clash against the “high” by creating an “unpresentable Other” (Ostiguy, 2017) which is speaking in the name of the repressed truth by the elites. “Betrayed” by a current or previous well-educated and proper elite, the populist politicians and parties claim, loudly, politically incorrectly, and often vulgarly, to be that (truly) authentic people’s “fighting hero” (Ostiguy, 2017).

As we have seen already, populism is a contested concept in the social sciences. At the same time, the increase of appearances of this phenomenon throughout the world has made even more challenging to find a uniform definition for it. To achieve this goal, scholars have used 2 types of categorization: radial and classical. Both categorizations are shaped in Sartori’s (1970) dilemma of the inversely proportional relation between intension and extension of concepts, which can be summarized in the sentence: the more defining attributes a concept

has (i.e. greater intension), the fewer instances it encompasses (i.e. more limited extension). However, the difference between the 2 definition is that the radial categorization assumes that a phenomenon can be conceptualized on the basis of a pool of defining attributes, not shared by all cases; while, the classical categorization asserts that these attributes of a concept must be shared by all cases. So, the former wants to create a family of cases to outline a definition, whilst the latter wants to identify a lowest common denominator between all cases.

As said before, since populism is a contested concept, it is arduous to delineate all the defining attributes to build a family of instances. Thus, “classical categorization is the best way to enhance conceptual clarity and foster cumulative knowledge, particularly when it comes to studying populism from a comparative perspective” (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012). Following this classical categorization, Cas Mudde developed a minimal definition of populism in ideological terms, which defines it as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2017). The core concepts of this definition, which are both central to and constitutive of populism as an ideology, are: ideology, the people, the elite, and general will.

Although today the organizational definitions outlined above remain popular particularly for Latin American populism, ideational approaches to populism have gained a strong approval from the academic world, particularly within studies of comparative politics of European and also Latin America populisms. Although several ideologies are rooted on the opposition between people and the elite, such as nationalism and socialism, in populism the opposition is based on the concept of morality. The essence of the people is their purity, in the sense that they are “authentic,” while the elite are corrupt, because they are not authentic. Since “the people” are pure, populism has the goal of “doing the right thing”, which means doing what is right for all the people. This is possible, because populism considers “the people” to be a homogeneous category, and anybody who stands against the will of the people is an enemy. In this sense, the elite comes from the same group as the people, but have willingly chosen to betray them, by putting their special interests and inauthentic morals over those of the people.

The term ideology is used here in an inclusive way, as to consider norms and behaviors related to ideas about nature, organization and purposes of society. Specifically, populism is a thin-centered ideology, that is, exhibit “a restricted core attached to a narrower range of political concepts” (Freeden, 1998). Consequently, thin ideologies have a more limited ambition and scope than thick ideologies; they do not contribute to solve issues in politics and society. Indeed, as a thin-centered ideology, it can be associated with many different ideologies, be they thick (i.e. liberalism, socialism) or thin (i.e. environmentalism, nationalism).

Although the concept of “the people” is a key concept in populism, it is considered by many scholars as an empty concept (Laclau’s people as empty signifiers). However, in Mudde’s ideological approach it is not completely empty: first of all, as stated in the moral divide above, the people are “pure”; and while this is a vague term, and the specific understanding is undoubtedly culturally determined as well as subjective, it does

provide some content to the signifier. Furthermore, the concept of people refers to a sort of idealized conception of the community. Thus, to become politically relevant, populists will have to define the people in terms of some of the key features of the self-identification of the targeted community. In other words, the populist's perception of the people is usually related to the self-perception (or self-idealization) of the targeted people. However, since populism is a thin ideology, in the real world most populists combine it with (features of) one or more other ideologies. So, the accompanying "host" ideology can add an additional dimension. Many scholars seem to imply that the elite is simply defined in negative terms. While this is true in theory, it does not always hold in practice. Since populism bases itself on the moral divide between people and elite, the elite are seen as corrupt while the people as pure. In practice, by combining populism with other ideologies, other groups are excluded which cannot be placed in the classical definition of elite, such as immigrants (when is combined with nativism).

Essential to populist politics is the concept of a general will. Indeed, populists argue that politics should follow the general will of the people. Since the people are pure and homogeneous group, and all internal divisions are rejected as artificial or irrelevant, they have the same interests and preferences. The belief in a general will of the people is linked to two important concepts in the populist ideology: common sense and special interests, which is a continuance of the dichotomy between the "pure" people and the "corrupt" elite.

Common sense can be summarized as the honest and logical priorities of the people. For this reason, populists base their policies on it, since it is the best representation of the general will. So, these solutions are neither ideological nor political, they just follow the will of the people. Anyone who opposes to this common sense is, by definition, part of the corrupt elite. Furthermore, any opposer is seen as an endorser of special interests, which are defined by populists as the elite's proposed solution. Thus, since "the people" are a homogenous group, any proposed policies that benefits just a small percentage of citizen, even if it is to remove existing inequalities in society, is denounced as part of the elite's "special interest politics".

After this digression about the main academic approaches on populism, it will be shown why the ideational is the better-suited of them to study populism, specifically, for this research and the main strengths of the ideational approach.

As stated before, the political strategic approach considers as the most important factor of populism the unmediated relationship between a (charismatic) leader and followers. While charismatic leadership is, virtually by definition, an important part of the explanation of popular support for populist actors, it is neither a necessary condition for electoral breakthrough nor a sufficient condition for electoral persistence (Mudde, 2007). Indeed, these features facilitate rather than define populism (Mudde, 2004). Furthermore, there have been different forms of populism without a leader such as the Tea Party, as well as well-developed political parties with populist leaders (mediated relationship leader-followers).

At the same time, the socio-cultural approach considers populism as part of the low axis of politics in both socio-cultural (manners and demeanors) and political-cultural (forms of leadership and decision making) components. Although there is no doubt that populist actors defined by the ideational approach most often fit

the low pole of politics on both sub-dimensions, there some cases that prove otherwise (e.g. U.S. People's Party and Pim Fortuyn).

Lastly, the ideational approach's main strengths in general, and of the specific definition of populism in particular, are: (1) distinguishability; (2) categorizability; (3) travelability; and (4) versatility.

Firstly, Mudde's definition is able to distinguish populism and non-populism, in particular elitism and pluralism. For example, elitism uses similar concepts (division people-elite) to populism, but it looks the other side of the dichotomy people-elite, since considers the elite as the pure and virtuous. Even more fundamentally, pluralism is a direct opposite of populism. Indeed, pluralism believes them to be internally divided in different groups, while populism regards people as a homogenous group. Furthermore, pluralism appreciates societal divisions and sees politics as "the art of compromise," which is in sharp contrast to populism (and elitism) idea of rejecting compromise, since it will lead to bend towards elite's special interest. Moreover, distinguishability also plays a role at a more concrete level. The ideational approach of populism has proven to be measurable and able to distinguish populism and non-populism in various empirical studies. In particular, it helps in differentiate between populist and non-populist actors as well as parties. In short, the ideational approach to populism meets one of the most important rules of conceptualization, i.e. being able to distinguish between populism and non-populism (Sartori, 1970).

Secondly, the ideational approach is particularly suited to construct typologies of populism. For example, the one most often used in academic literature, distinguishes between left-wing populism and right-wing populism, which is a distinction of purely ideological nature. Another explicitly ideological typology distinguishes exclusionary and inclusionary populism, which also be analyzed later in this chapter. This typology is based on the main effects of the particular ideologies of populist actors, which are often combinations of populism and other ideological features.

Thirdly, the ideational approach has been able to surpass the, so called, "travelling problem", which is that many definitions are geographically or temporally specific. Indeed, this populism's field of study has been successfully applied in studies of populism all across the globe. First and foremost, it is increasingly dominating studies of European populism, particularly in empirical political science and a growing group of studies of Latin American populism. Most importantly, from the perspective of travelability, the ideational approach has been used effectively in the few truly comparative cross-regional studies in the field.

Finally, versatility is the last major strength of the ideational approach. Most approaches of populism can only be applied to a limited group of political actors, i.e. political elites. Whereas, the ideational approach has been applied in a broad variety of empirical studies of populism at the elite and the mass level. Importantly, the ideational approach of populism is (so far) unique in its applicability to quantitative studies at the mass level. The important advantage of this versatility is that it enables the integration of very different types of populism studies. For example, we can now study whether people with populist attitudes disproportionately support populist parties, whether countries with more successful populist parties also have more populist citizens, or

whether populist attitudes relate strongly to nationalist and socialist attitudes. “In other words, the ideational approach allows us to study both the supply-side and the demand-side of populist politics” (Mudde, 2017).

1.2 Populism in Europe: An Overview

After this digression about the various definitions of populism and, in particular, the one used in this research, it will be outlined the main characteristic of the phenomenon in the 2 continents under study (Europe and Latin America). The starting point of this analysis will be to analyze the populist phenomenon in the “Old Continent”.

Although today populism in contemporary Europe is manifested in the form of a multitude of political parties, there was no sign of this phenomenon in any country of the continent (at least the western part) about 30/40 years ago. Furthermore, many scholars taught that (Western) Europe would have never been affected by any populist forces, mainly because of its strong history of democratic practices. However, this prediction proved completely inaccurate. Indeed, it is impossible to undertake any comparative study of populism without analyzing also Europe. So, how did it change so considerably?

Many of these political forces were born as insurgent forces. However, over time “some of these have moved into being established parts of their respective party systems” (Taggart, 2017). At the same time, in recent decades, there has been a growing trend in terms of rising support and a growing heterogeneity in the forms of these forces. Thanks to this growth in their consensus, some of these parties have gained greater importance in the democratic process and have been included in governments or their support has been vital to survival of governments.

As stated before, populism is a thin-centered ideology. Which means that, in practice, populists do not articulate the dichotomy people-elite just per se, but “in terms of positions and issues that are more tangible and more focused around issues that mobilize voters and citizens” (Taggart, 2017). Specifically, there are four issues that are touchstones for contemporary European populism: immigration, regionalism, corruption, and European integration. Furthermore, populism thin-centered nature means that in contrasting contexts, even within the same macro-region, it could emerge with different issue bases. Indeed, these four issues can be expressed differently and subject to change in different political environment. Moreover, these political topics are worded in populist terms because these are not inherently populist themes. For example, the immigration issue emphasizes on the concept of people as a homogeneous entity; while, when corruption is the primary subject, it uses a strong distaste for politics and the sneaking suspicion that politics inherently corrupts the virtue of the ordinary people. So, these political matters are taken and transformed at the populist’s own intent. The focus on immigration is the clearest and most widespread of the four different issues. “Indeed, there has been an almost universal tendency to treat the parties that focus on this issue as being synonymous with populist parties in Western Europe” (Taggart, 2017). However, this consideration is erroneous. Indeed, there are some European populist parties, such as the Fiver Star Movement in Italy and Podemos in Spain, which do not have immigration as a primary issue of their agenda. Moreover, the focus on immigration has led many

to characterize European populism as right-wing. Although there is no doubt that the vast majority of these parties are on the right, there are some populist parties that have immigration as a primary issue, which can be considered left-wing. Furthermore, to say that there is a group of populist parties focusing on immigration is not to say the same thing concerns them. For instance, immigration means different things across parties and their politics of immigration differ across states.

In recent years, European populism has endorsed the claim of sub-national identities in various countries. Indeed, the cases of parties asserting different identities against larger national identities and structures are becoming more common. Nevertheless, not every party that rejects centralization and support the establishment of regional identities can be considered as a populist actor. Instead, those regionalist forces that frame their demands for regional autonomy in the ideological terms of the rejection of the elite and the wider rejection of the rules of the game are those that we consider populist. For populists, the politics of regional identity have served as a vehicle for the expression of a more diffuse frustration with the wider functioning of politics in general, rather than the assertion of an alternative sub-national identity. In fact, the overwhelming majority of regionalist parties are not populist, unless it is combined with the wider rejection of the functioning of politics. An example of the latter was the former Northern League.

There is very often a link between populists and a view of the world that focuses on the corrupt nature of politics. This emphasis on corruption can be drawn to a fundamental feature of populism and this is the view of politics. Although seeing politics as necessary, populism implicitly views corruption as an almost endemic and inevitable consequence of politics. For populist, corruption is not just the use of public office for private gain, but it entails a process of deterioration, in particular it implies a loss of purity. In this sense, populism has a strong theme of antagonism to the process of politics which it sees as inherently corrupting. For this reason, the elites cannot be trusted because they are part of this corrupted system, and they have not properly represented the people. So, corruption that European populists focus on is two-fold. First, there is the corruption of the elites themselves. The second way that corruption manifests itself for Western European populists is that the institutions are seen as corrupting people.

For parties motivated by their opposition to domestic elites, such as the populist ones, portrayed as disconnected from the concerns of their citizens and corrupted by the process of politics, the distant and complex architecture of the EU makes it a natural extension for such sentiments. For this reason, European Populist parties have nearly always had opposition to the EU as part of their ideological weaponry. In particular, two developments have increased the importance of Euroscepticism to European populists. The first is the influence of European issues in the domestic politics of member states. The second occurrence that increased the politicization of the issue of the EU has been the crisis of the Euro unfolding since 2009. The paradox is that Euroscepticism emerges in both donor states where a common sentiment may be frustration at providing the means for other states, as well as in recipient states where the conditions of the bailout are perceived as austere. At both extremes, populist parties advocating hostility towards aspects of European integration have prospered electorally.

Before beginning to analyze populism in Latin America, the overview of the phenomenon in Europe has to be completed and, by stating this, it is meant that there is a need to consider the phenomenon specifically in Central and Eastern Europe. The reason for this particular analysis is that almost every country of this region was under the control of the Soviet Union until 1990, which means that they had experienced different institutions, regimes and political participation process in comparison to the rest of Europe. Since then there has been a period of influence from the Western world, which lead to a period of transition towards a democratic regime and a capitalist economy, with its pros and cons for citizens.

Although there was, at first, consent for liberal-democratic and capitalist reforms after the downfall of communism, there has been a backlash against the technocratic elites of transition when the citizens experienced the hard price of transition to a democratic model. This has helped the spread of populism in the region. Although the history of former communist countries was different from the rest of Europe, the main populist issues are almost the same. Indeed, as the transition model was imitative of globalization processes in the Western world (i.e. capitalist economy, democratic institutions, individual rights, etc.), it was logical to expect that it would exert a similar impact on social divides and their politicization by elites. For example, the integration with international institutions, such as the European Union, has been one of the key elements of post-communist transition, radical populists would also have an incentive to articulate Eurosceptic appeals, thereby differentiating themselves from main-stream acceptance of integration. Furthermore, the pathologies of communist-era economies, such as an undeveloped civil society under communism, led to corruption becoming a significant problem for the newly democratized post-communist states. In these circumstances, the fight against corruption has assumed a tremendous salience.

Populism in Central and Eastern Europe is characterized by two theories: radical (ideological) and centrist supply-side (political-strategic) populism. According to the former, populism in Central and Eastern Europe would consist in a backlash against the liberal politics of post-communist transition and the elites responsible for implementing these reforms. According to the centrist theory, populists would largely exploit dissatisfaction with corrupt and incompetent leaders, rather than rejecting the politics of transition. Moreover, the theory of radical populism assumes that Central and Eastern European party politics will become more ideologically structured over time, and that populism will play an important role in the coalescence of this structure (Stanley, 2017). In contrast, the “centrist populism” theory is founded in the contention that Central and Eastern European party politics is ideologically isolated in comparison to its European counterpart, with parties competing over claims to competence and moral probity rather than distinct policy platforms.

Yet although disenchantment with the outcomes of (the first decade of) transition and mainstream political elites persisted, radical populists who maintained a narrow focus on the hardships of transition tended to have limited electoral appeal. In fact, many of these parties remained at the margins or disappeared entirely; in others cases, mainstream parties built on the anti-establishment rhetoric of these parties to develop a radical critique of liberal democracy which had wider appeal. The second decade of transition saw the emergence of a new wave of radical populists who benefited from the “transition fatigue” of the electorate and their

disenchantment with mainstream parties. For example, in Hungary, Fidesz and the Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz with Magyar Polgári Szövetség, Fidesz) underwent a similar shift. As will be analyzed in more detail later, after losing power in 2002, the party embarked on an increasingly radical shift in programmatic priorities and rhetoric, competing with Jobbik (a nationalist Hungarian party) on the terrain of ethnic nationalism while openly rejecting liberal constitutionalism. On regaining power in 2010, Fidesz used its supermajority in the Hungarian parliament to promulgate a new constitution and implement a series of controversial reforms to the media, electoral system, and state institutions. The success of parties such as Fidesz pointed to a dynamic not initially envisaged by the theory of radical populism: the radicalization of mainstream parties. Although radical populists failed to consolidate a strong electoral position in post-communist party systems, they nevertheless cleared a path for parties which had previously been more moderate in character and which were seen by the electorate as more credible and trustworthy. In these manner, radical populism remained an important element of many party systems in the region, despite the churn of radical populist parties (Stanley, 2017).

Conversely, the theory of centrist populism was based on the expectation that populists would be best placed to exploit the dissatisfaction of voters with the corruption and incompetence of incumbent elites. This form of populism became much more significant in the second decade of transition, after the rotation of parties in successive elections provided justification for the argument that “they have had their turn”. These parties were also able to have a considerable electoral success without developing much their policies. Indeed, centrist populists could appeal to a range of voters purely on the basis of their dissatisfaction with the elite, rather than with reference to the specific nature of that dissatisfaction. When centrist populists became part of the establishment, whether as parties of opposition or parties of power, it is increasingly difficult for them to act as if they remained outside it.

Apart from the different historical path, populism in post-communist countries has developed with the same characteristics as the phenomenon in the rest of Europe. Indeed, the issues implemented by the populist parties have become the same, such as Euroscepticism or the fight against a corrupting politics. This has happened mainly thanks to the transition of the former communists’ countries to a liberal-democratic model, which has leveled the differences between regions in general (institutional, economic model) and in particular with populism.

1.3 Populism in Latin America: an overview

Contrary to Europe, Latin America has had a rich history of populist movements, parties and leaders since the beginning of the twentieth century. For this reason, it is considered by many scholars “the land” of populism. From the 1930s and 1940s until the present, populist leaders have dominated the region’s political landscapes. Their dominance has started with the emergence of mass politics with populist challenges to the rule of elites who used fraud to remain in power and excluded a great part of the population from the political and social process. The rise to power of these populist movements produced deep lasting political loyalties and cleavages. In particular, the phenomenon in Latin America is characterized by 3 waves: classical of the 1940s and 1960s

(for example, Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina and Getulio Vargas in Brazil), neoliberal during the 1990s (for example, Alberto Fujimori in Peru and Carlos Menem in Argentina) and radical since the 2000s (for example, Chávez in Venezuela and Morales in Bolivia).

Latin America in the 1930s and 1940s was characterized by a crisis of the oligarchical social order that combined liberal-inspired constitutions (division of powers, and elections) with patrimonial practices and values in predominantly rural societies. These estate-based societies had relations of domination and subordination characterized by unequal reciprocity, which excluded the majority of the population from politics and from the public sphere, keeping those roles in the hands of elites. For this reason, populism in Latin America manifested an anti-elitist approach that was, and still is, mostly inclusive. Processes of urbanization, industrialization, and a generalized crisis of paternal authority allowed populist leaders to emerge. To allow the inclusion of a large part of the population into the public sphere, classical populist leaders of the 1930s and 1940s, such as Juan Perón and José María Velasco, “fought against electoral fraud, expanded the franchise, and were exalted as the embodiment of the nation’s true, uncorrupted traditions and values against those of foreign-oriented elites” (de la Torre, 2017). They did so in different ways across the continent. For example, in economically developed such as Argentina and Brazil, “populist presidents pursued nationalist and redistributive social policies that coincided with the period of import substitution industrialization (ISI)” (de la Torre, 2017). In these cases, populist leaders adopted economic models that emphasized the role of the state in the economy, which became a major player through either direct investment or nationalization of foreign-owned companies. Populist socio-economic policies led to a partial redistribution of income and wealth that benefited the excluded masses. However, the phenomenon also emerged in agrarian contexts, where there were carried out reform that favored the impoverished peasants.

At the same time, in some countries populist leaders built enduring political organizations like Argentina’s Peronist party (now called Justicialist party), while in others such as Ecuador, populist leaders did not create or institutionalize formal parties, and electoral coalitions were assembled for different electoral contests. Kenneth Roberts (2006) has explained these different approaches to institution building in terms of the levels of polarization and confrontation provoked by different populist experiences. For example, in cases such as Argentina and Peru, “the polarized construction of politics ended in a total and fundamental struggle or cleavage between “the people” and “the oligarchy”” (de la Torre, 2017). To be able to bolster this conflict with the elite, leaders needed to organize followers in political parties and in civil society organizations. In other experiences, there was political but not social polarization, like in Ecuador. A peculiarity of classical populism is that exalted workers as the “soul” of the nation, while simultaneously repressing or nationalized existing labor groups. However, this suppression of unions was rarely challenged by worker because they saw, through endorsing populism, a way to be heard and be able to express their demands in general and, in particular, against the elites (industrialists). For example, Juan Perón implemented measures, such as minimum wage, paid vacations and the recognition of trade unions as legitimate partners, that benefited the new working class.

Another ability of Latin American populists to gain support was turning the stigmas of the poor into virtues. For example, in the 1930s and 1940s the elites of Buenos Aires referred to the internal migrants using the term “*cabecita negra*” to refer to “the subject’s dark skin and black hair”. Juan and his wife Eva Perón were capable to transform the stigmas of these terms and to exalt them as pure. Furthermore, classical populism had, also, as their goal the implementation of open and free elections, to incorporate the previously excluded majorities, which helped them gain a huge success in the elections. For example, Peronism expanded the franchise, and voter turnout during Perón’s first government grew from 18 to 50 percent of the population, he also expanded also the right to vote to women (64% of them voted for him in the following election). Latin American populists privileged notions of democracy based on the aesthetic and liturgical incorporation of common people in mass rallies more than the institutionalization of popular participation through the rule of law (de la Torre, 2017). However, as critics of populism have been arguing for a long time, mobilization and participation in mass rallies did not entail autonomy (Germani, 1971). The real reason why populists were able to gain electoral support was their authoritarian appropriation of the people’s will. Because populist politicians claimed to embody the people, and the people’s will be not given institutional channels to express itself, populist regimes replaced rational deliberation with plebiscitary acclamation (de la Torre, 2017). One of the principal legacies of classical populism was its deep ambivalence toward liberal democracy. Indeed, classical populism was democratizing to the extent that previously excluded groups were brought into the political system; but, at the same time, populist leaders refused to accept the constraints and limitations of liberal constitutional principles that served to constrain state power, guarantee the political autonomy of civil society, and assure pluralism.

Differently from classical populism, which brought marginalized people into the political community, neoliberal populism took place in the 1990s in nations where the democratic process developed totally and, so, people had the right to vote and their preferences were organized by political parties. The success of this form of populism was due to the failure of import substitution industrialization which led to economic catastrophes. The blame was against traditional politicians, which had appropriated the people’s sovereignty and led their countries into economic chaos. Political parties were portrayed as not interested with the needs and desires of the electorate, and, so, they were enemies of “the people”. Their goal was to dismantle the nationalist and statist policies of their classical predecessors and to open their economies to the world. Indeed, in many instances they privatized what their populist predecessors had nationalized. However, their policies failed miserably as many neoliberal populist countries experienced hard recession.

This helped the rise and establishment of radical populism. This form of the phenomenon has been studied deeply in the last years as it took turn towards the left side of the political spectrum. An example of this was Hugo Chavez regime in Venezuela. According to many scholars, the rebirth of radical populism in Latin America agrees that the emergence of the governments of these kind of governments (such as Chavez’s one) was explained by three factors. The first was a crisis of political representation. Parties were perceived as instruments of local and foreign elites that implemented neoliberal policies that increased social inequality.

So, these new movements promised to tackle corruption, experiment new forms of political participations and to implement policies to redistribute income. The second reason was widespread popular resistance to neoliberalism, as demonstrated by the many mass insurrection and riots in the region. A third cause was that citizens perceived that politicians and neoliberal elites had surrendered national sovereignty to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the US government. Despite important differences across countries, these radical populist governments represent a new and distinct phase of populism in the region. First, these leaders engaged in permanent political campaigns, using the convening of frequent elections to rally supporters, and consolidate their hegemony. Second, they claimed to be the embodiment of superior forms of democracy that would solve the participatory and representative deficits of liberal democracy. Third, constituent assemblies were set to draft new constitutions to “refund” the nation. Fourth, in emphasizing substantive democracy, all these regimes relied on state intervention in the economy in the name of distributing wealth and reducing poverty and inequality.

Another aspect that researchers of Latin America populism have analyzed is the linkages between leaders and followers. They have distinguished four kinds connection between them in the three subtypes of Latin America populism: populist organization, clientelism, the mass media and populist discourse.

First, populist organizations are based on low levels of institutionalization. Indeed, leaders set their agendas and strategies with an idea of people as a homogenous; in fact, it is arduous to build identities that differ from the image of the people as constructed by leaders. Furthermore, these organization have the goal to organize supporters within movements, but they do not promote solidarity with similar civil society organizations. An example is the populist support for workers and, at the same time, an antagonism towards unions. Hence “the people” can only be organized under organizations that are loyal to the leaders, or the party.

Second, Latin American populist parties and movements are organized through formal bureaucratic party networks and clientelist and informal networks that distribute resources, information, and jobs to the poor, or an excluded majority. In this way, these parties receive votes by these groups for their capacity to deliver these goods and services to the excluded. As will be analyzed more in depth in the next section, populists do not exchange just material rewards, but also a symbolic and political of inclusion, for example by representing them as the essence of the nation. In addition, populist networks also generate political identities. For instance, the resilience of Peronism among the poor was partially explained by the informal and clientelist networks of the Justicialist Party, which in addition to delivering material resources to the poor recreated political and cultural identities.

Third, Latin American populists are considered by many scholars as innovators in the use of media for political aim. For example, Eva Perón used the radio to communicate directly with her followers, transforming politics into a show where she staged her love to the poor. So, radio and, later, television became one of the main venues used by populists to win elections, and to govern, jointly to traditional mechanisms of vote gathering, like mass rallies and clientelist networks. In addition, many populist leaders formed state-owned media venues, which were, and still are, used as tools of government propaganda in the hands of the executive. They created,

also, laws and state institutions to control what the private media could publish, and to sanction any violation of journalists and media owners, which has led to the deterioration of public debates.

Throughout the world, populism constructs the struggle between the people and the oligarchy as an ethical and moral confrontation between good and evil, pure and corrupt. This is not different in Latin America. Indeed, the populist rhetoric of the region historically constructed the people as urban and *mestizo* (ethnically and culturally mixed folk) who had an antagonistic relationship with the oligarchy. They had as their intent the symbolic exaltation of the poor and the previously excluded as the essence of the nation. However, “the degree of social and political polarization produced by populist discourse allows for a differentiation between experiences” (de la Torre, 2017). For example, during Chavismo as well as in classical populism, the struggle between the people and the elite, as social and political categories, was total and fundamental; while, in other cases, like the Fujimori regime in Peru, these terms had just political meanings. Despite that the populist creation of a virtuous and *mestizo* nation “were used in Latin America to exclude indigenous people while simultaneously inviting them to belong to the nation on the condition that they abandoned their cultural specificity” (de la Torre, 2015). Indeed, the concept of the people employed in Latin America is related to the ideology of *Americanismo*. The latter originated in the battles between the Latin American colonies and the Spanish Empire that took place in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and ended up in the creation of several new republics in the continent. This anticolonial struggle led to the identification of different social groups living in a common identity as natives of Spanish America in opposition to the Spanish imperial power. “In other words, by defining a common enemy, the ideology of *Americanismo* permitted not only the unification of very dissimilar and, to a great extent, rival groups (for example, American-born whites, mixed-race and indigenous people), but also the shaping of a regional identity based on a simple principle: Latin America for the Latin Americans” (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014). So, as stated before, since *Americanismo* tends to develop an essentialist approach, it fosters a concept of “we, the people” in which there is little space for the support of a pluralist imaginary of the inhabitants of Latin America.

Although Latin America is regarded as the land of populism, there are some countries that have never experienced the phenomenon or it was never capable to gain strong support. Such countries are Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile and Uruguay. The 2 most common explanations for the absence of populism in some nations of Latin America are: a strong party system and a functioning liberal democracy that guarantees the rule of law.

As Kenneth Roberts (2015) argues, populism is the result of a crisis of political representation. As said before, it tends to emerge when excluded people without partisan loyalty were enfranchised for the first time, such as in Argentina with the Peronist party. In some Latin American countries, like Uruguay and Chile, the previously excluded were included by traditional parties, so, there was no necessity for a populist challenge. A second crisis of political representation was produced by political systems that become unresponsive and unaccountable. An example is Venezuela’s two party’s system in the 1990s. A third scenario for a crisis of political representation occurs when politics become highly personalized, that is, voters support and identify

with leaders rather than party organizations or platforms. Under such conditions, politics become a rivalry between 2 or more candidates on who better represents the true will of the people.

Another explanation of the attraction to populism in Latin America is the duality between the recognition of rights in the constitution and the weak implementation of these in the everyday life. Since these rights are rarely completely protected by the institutions, the populists are able to gain support through the promise to change this unlawful situation. Usually, they attempt to achieve it thanks to rhetorical appeals to, and mobilization of, the people. In other cases, it is written a new constitution to guarantee the protection of fundamental rights. However, in the majority of the cases the situation does not really change.

Before turning to the next section, it will be shown briefly why, of the many approaches that have tried to conceptualize populism in Latin America, the ideological one is the best suited. According to Rovira Kaltwasser (2014), it is possible to identify four approaches that have sought to achieve this task. The first approach is considered as structuralist, since assumes that the emergence of the populist phenomenon is the output of transformations at the socio-structural level. The second approach to the is an economic one, stating populist leaders promote a disastrous type of macroeconomic development. The third is a political-strategic approach, which considers personalist leaders as the expression of a governmental power, based on direct, unmediated, noninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers. The fourth and last approach is an ideological one, which, as seen before, is based on a Manichean distinction between the pure people and the corrupt elite, whereby the former is seen as a virtuous entity and the latter as the source of all badness.

This last approach has 3 main advantages over the other ones. Firstly, it considers that people and elite are constructed categories and may vary overtime and across cases (travelability factor). Secondly, this approach conceives populism as an ideology, not just employed by able political entrepreneurs, but might also be shared by large social groups, who have emotional and rational motives for adhering to the Manichean worldview (people vs elite) inherent in populism. Thirdly, by conceptualizing it in ideological terms, populism fall and rise is related to both supply-side and demand-side factors. In short, “the conceptualization of populism as an ideology or discourse is helpful for avoiding the temptation of explaining populism as merely the strategic outcome of extraordinary leaders” (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014). For example, the ideological approach helps explain the persistence of Peronism in Argentina even without Perón, while many scholars have struggled with this question. Indeed, the very rise of Perón ended up establishing an ideological divide in Argentine society that is more powerful than any other ideological struggle, such as the left-right cleavage. This means that certain populist experiences can be path-breaking in the sense that they can foster the formation of durable cultural and political identities.

1.4 Systemic differences in the two continents

Before analyzing the 2 case studies in depth, this section will focus on the main differences between populism in Europe and Latin America. Although there is not a wide number of cross-sectional studies, one of the key

aspects discussed in the literature is whether populism is exclusive or inclusive and if this difference is geographically dependent. Interestingly, the findings seem largely regionally determined, as most studies on Latin American populism emphasize its inclusive character, while almost all scholars of European populism stress its exclusive nature.

Two factors are crucial for understanding these different regional patterns: on the one hand, the way in which populist actors define who belongs to 'the people' vis-a`-vis 'the elite', and on the other hand, the ideological features that are attached to the particular populist ideology of the actors. In addition, as underlined before, despite the differences between the two types of populism, both share a problematic relationship with liberal democracy and strive for the re-politicization of specific issues, that is, topics that intentionally or unintentionally are not being addressed by the establishment. European political systems are mostly parliamentary regimes that center on more or less well-organized political parties, while Latin American political systems are predominantly presidential, centered on strong individual leaders with often weakly organized movements or parties tied to them.

There are 3 dimensions of exclusion/inclusion: material, symbolic and political. Firstly, the material dimension refers to the distribution of state resources, both monetary and non-monetary, to specific groups in society. In the case of material exclusion, particular groups are specifically excluded from access to state resources. Regarding material inclusion, groups are specifically targeted to receive (more) state resources; sometimes to overcome long-established patterns of discrimination. Secondly, exclusion and inclusion refer, in political terms, essentially to the two key dimensions of democracy identified by Robert Dahl (1971, 1989): political participation and public contestation. Political exclusion means that specific groups are prevented from participating (fully) in the democratic system and they are consciously not represented in the arena of public contestation. In contrast, political inclusion specifically targets certain groups to increase their participation and representation. In most cases these groups legal right to full political participation and representation, but were ignored and marginalized by the political establishment. Thirdly, the symbolic dimension alludes to setting the boundaries of 'the people' and, ex negativo, 'the elite'. When populists define 'the people', in their rhetoric and symbols without referring to (characteristics and values of) certain groups, the latter are symbolically excluded (for example, Roma in Eastern Europe). Similarly, when particular groups are linked to 'the elite', they are implicitly excluded from 'the people'. At the same time, when groups are explicitly included in the definition of 'the people', these groups are symbolically included (for example, the so-called 'shirtless' (*descamisados*) in Perón's Argentina). Inclusion, however, is always partial, first of all because populist movements do not structurally modify the unequal distribution of resources, and second, because the claim for inclusion is based on a particularistic statement ('we are the people, too') and not on a universal one. In contrast, exclusionary populism conceptualizes the people from a nativist perspective, promoting the belief that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the nation widely held to be the native group, and that non-native persons and ideas represent a threat. However, exclusion is partial too, since many of the social

groups that support exclusionary populism see in those movements a protection of their own exclusion (i.e. welfare chauvinism).

Furthermore, symbolic inclusion takes place when the excluded group becomes part of the common 'we' through its symbolic inclusion in the collective affected by the polysemic articulation of the signifier people. The rhetoric and usual characteristic of inclusive populist movements—mass rallies, identification with the leader, the rhetoric of 'us' vs. 'them,' and the appeal to a mythical common past—are all strategies that instill a sense of belonging. Inclusive populist leaders and movements develop a narrative in which some of the excluded social groups are presented as a central part of 'we, the people'. When inclusive populist movements gain government, their presence usually improves the material conditions of subordinate groups in two ways. First, its participation in the distribution of income and wealth increases. Second, many inclusive populist movements implemented economic policies that promote economic growth, full employment, and income redistribution. In addition, inclusive populist movements promote and support the active political participation of previously excluded groups via three mechanisms. First, as participation in the populist movement grants members of the formerly excluded group access to political power, they become part of the populist movement leadership. Second, the excluded group undergoes a process of subjectivation as it becomes an active collective political subject that cannot be ignored. Third, populism re-politicizes issues that had been depoliticized and transformed into 'professional' or technocratic questions.

Contrariwise, symbolic exclusion is grounded in an exclusionary understanding of the people. Exclusionary movements appeal to a common past in which immigrants or ethnic minorities do not belong, and they resort to historical symbols that are irrelevant to certain groups. In time, xenophobia and racism develop out of, and help propagate, exclusionary nativism. Immigrants and other subordinate groups suffer from material exclusion, for example access to welfare services and entitlements. 'Welfare chauvinism' can be exploited to protect those social sectors belonging to the majority that are threatened by the transformations associated with globalization processes. On the political dimension, exclusion involves limiting immigrant access to citizenship, hindering the ability of subordinate groups to organize, and criminalizing excluded social groups. In addition, some scholars have tried to explain the reason behind an inclusive or exclusive development for populism. For example, Dani Flic suggests that colonialism constitutes a main parameter for explaining this progress. "The phenomenon of colonialism helps to explain this notable difference between the Western European and Latin American expressions of populism" (Flic, 2015). This claim is based on the empirical evidence that inclusive populism appears mostly in colonized countries and exclusionary populism in former colonialist ones. This process has been dragged from colonial times. Indeed, research has shown that colonialism was based on the systematic exclusion of the colonized, which were distinguished as irreducible different based on many factors (i.e. race, level of education). Both in the colonialist institutions and in the setting of roles in society, racism fixed the expressions of the relationship between colonizer and colonized as a rigid hierarchy of difference that established and perpetuated economic, cultural and social inequalities. Thus, Colonial racism, played, and still plays, a role in the way in which people in Europe defined themselves

and constructed a common ‘we’ that overcame class differences and discrepant interests. As such, the forging of ‘*Homo Europaeus*’ as a racial category signifying the colonizer—distinct and superior to the other racial groups of the colonized—was related to notions of national belonging and cultural criteria for citizenship in the European countries. Not unexpectedly, the colonial relationship indelibly influenced the constitutions of European nation states and the modern ideas of demos and citizenship, which rested on the unequal relationship between the center and its peripheral colonies. Colonialism established two differentiated worlds, the metropolitan polity; and an external sphere. Its hierarchic and exclusionary traits will continue to influence the conceptualization of the people, and the effect of this influence on populist movements depends on the position of such movements vis-à-vis the colonial relationship. The coloniality of power grounds the national narratives—of who does and does not belong to the people—of the metropolitan nation-state.

Such a heterogeneous conceptualization of the identity of Latin American peoples framed the inclusive character of populism in Latin America. Thus, in Latin America, populist discourse blended nationalism and an anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist nativism, the latter of which emphasized pride in the indigenous past and in the indigenous/non-white roots of the ‘true’ people. Examples include the Peronist claim that they stood for the *cabecitas negras* (the derogatory term for working-class internal migrants) and the *descamisados* (another derogatory term applied to workers). This is an inclusive nativism, in which the people are ‘indo-American.’ Insofar as they represented the positive term of the dichotomy, the absolute nature of this opposition contributed to the integration of the excluded groups. The people and the nation were one, and the excluded groups were its core. The oligarchy, imperialism and colonialism are the absolute Other.

Finally, another fundamental difference in the phenomenon between the 2 regions is the main goal of these populist movements. Indeed, Latin America populism predominantly has a socio-economic dimension (including the poor), while Europe populism has a primarily sociocultural dimension (excluding the ‘aliens’). The reason behind this is that Europe has, on average, a high level of development which does not create a lot of poverty. Conversely, Latin America has experienced low level of development and a considerable percentage of poverty among citizens, thanks to the failure of various development plans like the Washington consensus. It is important to clarify that, by arguing that European populism is predominantly exclusionary and Latin American populism is primarily inclusionary, we are not claiming that the former inevitably has a negative impact on democracy, while the latter exclusively embodies a positive force for democracy. Indeed, as Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser assert, “the repoliticization of society that is fostered by all types of populism has an ambivalent impact on democracy” (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012).

Chapter 2: A case study: Hungary

2.1 Preconditions for the rise of populism

As many other former communist countries, Hungary had to start from scratch in 1989. In particular, it was needed a 2-level transformation, namely, from a nationalized economy to a capitalist one and from a communist satellite state to an independent liberal democracy. Although both transitions were peaceful, the impact on society was arduous, at least at first. Indeed, the economy remained stagnant for many years, private businesses had difficulties in establishing themselves in the national economy and the GDP was one of the lowest in the European continent. Later, the establishment of the Visegrád group (a political and cultural alliance between Hungary, Czechoslovakia [today Czech Republic and Slovakia] and Poland) in 1991 helped in the improvement of the economic conditions for each country by cooperating in various policies areas, such as the economy, the military and later the integration into the EU. But, the real shock had to be at the national level by the newly created political class.

Throughout the 1990s, Hungary's nascent party system had seemed fairly uncomplicated and relatively well crystallized in a moderate multi-party format (6 parties, 3 political-ideological camps). The three camps were: the national-conservative right (MDF, FKGP and the Christian democrats), the liberal center (Fidesz and the alliance of free democrats) and the social left (socialist party). In such a pluralist party arrangement, where each camp was characterized "by the very similar socio-cultural composition of their core political elites and electoral bases" (Körösényi 1999: 32), early post-communist Hungary was effectively divided by several cleavages along class, territorial, and ideological lines.

However, this situation changed rather abruptly once Fidesz, an initially youth-based party formed in 1988 to fight against communism and promote liberalism, decided in 1993 to convert to populist ideology. This was the result of the tactical (rather than ideological) struggle between the party's two strong men, Gábor Fodor and Viktor Orbán, in which the former remained committed to their party's liberal values, the latter was determined to distance the party from the liberal center and, relying on a combination of personalistic leadership and increased party organizational capacity, to pursue a populist electoral strategy. "Besides overhauling the party structure," writes Tamas (2007: 185), Orbán resolved "to abandon the two key aspects of FIDESZ's front: That it was an organization of young people and that it was a liberal party". The turning point was the 1993 party congress. It was decided during these proceedings that Fidesz would abandon collective leadership and become a centralized and leader-centric party placing emphasis on building a stronger party organization for future political battles. "Orbán defined the new Fidesz as a "national-liberal" party "committed to the nation" (nemzeti elkötelezettség) and having a "national responsibility" towards the Hungarian polgár (patriotic citizens and middle class)" (Pappas, 2019). Furthermore, Orbán had a very defined strategy in mind which was an open confrontation with the conservative-liberal parties in an attempt to

dominate them. To do so, Fidesz endorsed a new political discourse built on the metaphorical polarization between the communist past and present, the clash of national and international interests, and, most importantly, the opposing interests of the ruling “elites” and the “people”.

Although the elections of 1994 were a failure (7% of national consensus), Orbán held to his strategy of polarization for the major advantages it offered him. First, it kept Fidesz cohesive while also reducing internal organizational costs. Second, it helped his initiative to forge a broad right-wing anti-liberal alliance. Finally, it effectively demarcated the frontier with liberal political opponents on the center and left. More specifically, Orbán aimed to solidify the intraparty forces that had supported his rise to party leadership while at the same time preventing party opponents from regaining legitimacy. At the same time, he used polarization to compel voters from the smaller and ideologically closer parties to vote for Fidesz lest their leftist opponents win power. It was not after long that Orbán’s strategy of populism would pay off. Indeed, his polarizing tactics soon resulted in the collapse of the liberal center in the political spectrum and, at the same time, the complete reshaping of the party system from a moderate multiparty to a polarized two-party setup composed by the conservative Fidesz on one side and the socialist MSzP on the other. Furthermore, this party polarization had important repercussions for political perceptions in society by reshaping the values and perceptions of the electorate. Indeed, since the political offer diminished overtime, the electorate changed its perceptions of how should politics be performed and the value they should represent. As public opinion data show, by 2002 its electorate had moved to an authoritarian stance. In the meantime, Fidesz got elected to government through a coalition government in 1998 together with the Independent Smallholders Party (FKgP) and the Hungarian Democratic Forum. However, this electoral victory is not considered by many at the same level as Orbán’s rule from 2010 onwards for many reasons. First, since it was a coalition government, Fidesz could not govern by itself and had to settle many ideas with its allies, differently from the freedom of action of today’s government. Second, the party did not fully transform yet towards a populist ideology, it had still a strong liberal base. Finally, it did not have the most electoral support, in fact, the socialist party got actually the most total votes in the 2002 elections (32.2), but was unable to find a coalition partner.

In the aftermath of the 2002 elections, with Fidesz still in full dominance of the right, Hungary’s party system kept on becoming a two-party format with the two major parties running head-to-head. For example, the Democratic forum and the FKgP did not gain another after 2002, with the former ceasing to exist in 2011. Polarization remained the staple of Hungarian politics and was quite visible in the 2006 electoral campaign during which negative campaigning centered around arguments that one side was nationalist and the other opposed to the nation. Similarly, both sides argued that the other focused only on favoring the elite, while they fought the corrupt establishment in the true interest of the people.

Party	1990	1994	2002	2010
MDF	24.7	11.7	-	2.7
FKGP	11.8	8.8	0.8	-
KDNP	6.5	7.0	3.9	-
SzDSz	21.4	19.7	5.6	-
Fidesz	8.9	7.0	41.1	52.7
Jobbik	-	-	-	16.7
MSzP	10.9	33.0	42.1	19.3
Others	15.8	12.8	6.5	8.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

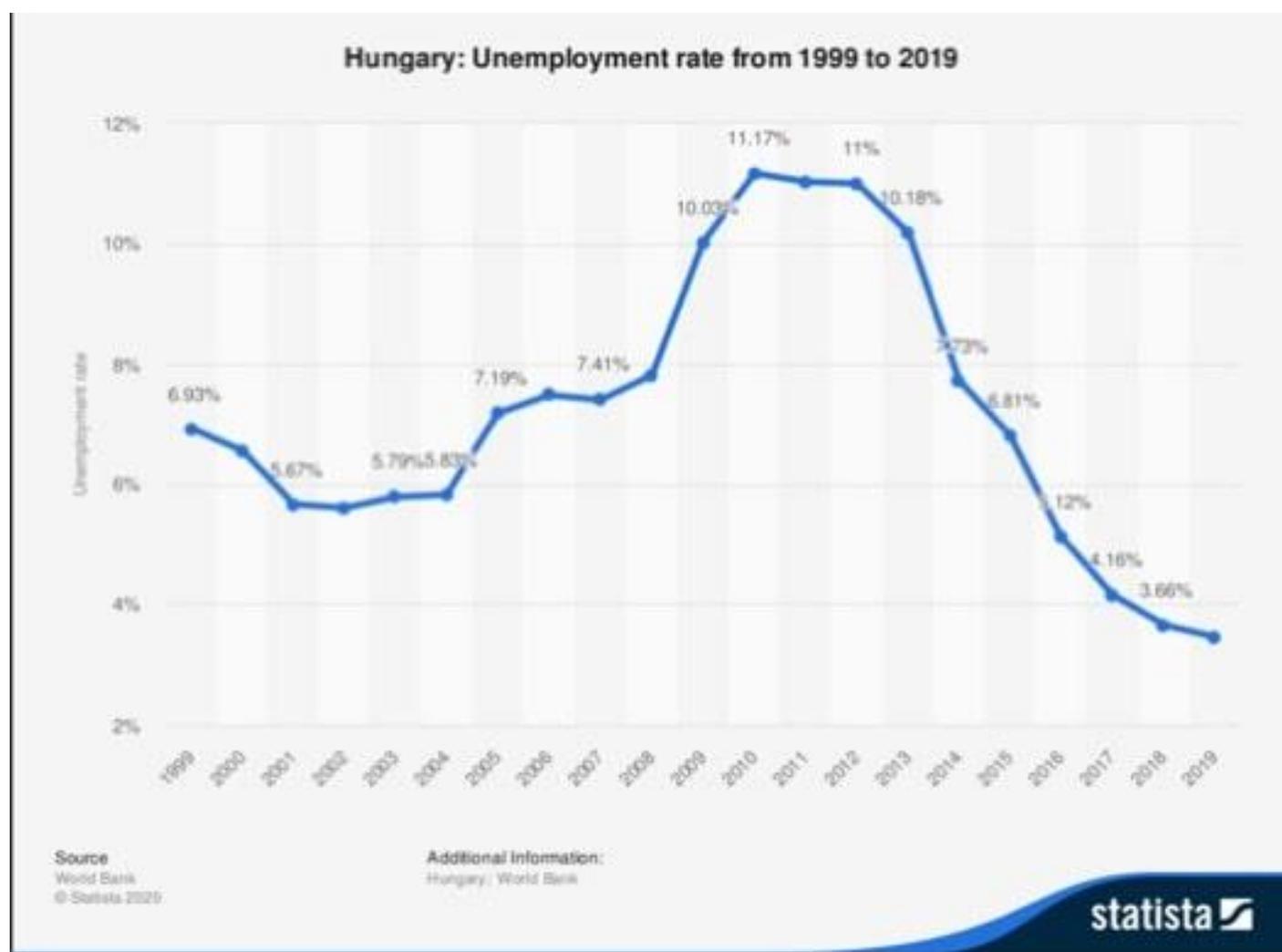
Source: Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov):
www.parlgov.org.

After the 2006 elections (with the victory of the socialist coalition), Hungary fell into political turmoil for 2 main reasons. Firstly, Hungary, as many other countries of Europe, was dramatically affected by the economic crisis of 2008 with a huge increase in unemployment and a strong decrease of the GDP. Secondly, it became known publicly that socialist Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány admitted in front of his party cadres (Őszöd speech) that he and the socialist party implemented systemic lying towards voters during the previous elections. These discoveries lead to various anti-government demonstrations, mostly, organized by Fidesz which became an everyday occurrence. Indeed, it was now firmly in Orbán's and Fidesz's interests to step up polarization while also counter-proposing his own populist agenda. Eventually, in 2008, the government broke down. There would follow another two years of massive social dissatisfaction with politics, further loss of legitimacy, a deepening crisis of representation, and more political instability. All these factors contributed to the overwhelming victory Fidesz in the 2010 general elections. In particular, Fidesz won more than half of the possible seats in the first round (52,3%), and its coalition with Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) was able to gain enough seats to reach the two thirds majority which helped them later to modify major laws and the country's overall constitution. The 2010 elections have proven to be a turning point in Hungary's politics, since Fidesz and its leader Viktor Orbán have won all the following elections (general and European) often by an impressive gap. In addition, the situation does not appear to change in the near future, since Fidesz has a strong electoral support from "the people" and it has changed irretrievably Hungary. In the rest of the chapter, it will be analyzed the characteristics of this form of populism and why it has been so successful in Hungary for almost a decade, without showing signs of stopping.

Before turning to the next section, it will be examined the Hungarian economy after its independence, since the following events have deeply affected the future economic policy of Fidesz. As mentioned above, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Hungary had an effect also on the national economy. The transition from communism to capitalism, from a command economy to a market economy and into an integrated global economy, was immensely brutal. Firstly, the communist's full employment policies were

dismantled. This led to millions of people becoming unemployed within a few years. Secondly, Hungary's economy was subjected to World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) shock treatment. Indeed, the Magyar country needed to rely heavily on foreign capital inflows and remittances from expatriate labor to finance large deficits to match the conditions set up by these capitalist's institutions. Finally, many sectors became owned or deeply influenced by foreign companies. For example, the banking system was dominated by different European banks.

All these changes created terrible consequences to the Hungarian economy, when the economic crisis hit former communist country in 2008. As a result of the withdrawal of many foreign companies, including banks, investment in Hungary, the national government had no more capital flows to maintain their large deficit. Moreover, the main consequences were the decisive increase in the unemployment rate from 7,41% in 2008 to 10,03% in 2009 (source: World Bank), the failure of many economic sectors that relied on foreign capitals and the, subsequent, measures of austerity adopted by the socialist government.



The latter measures, dictated by the EU, further ruined the average condition of the Hungarian citizens and, consequently, attracted the grudge against the Socialist party, which Fidesz was masterfully able to exploit, by denouncing the MSzP for overshadowing the Hungarian interest for the foreign elites' ones. Furthermore, the economic crisis did not just help Fidesz in getting elected by weakening the image of its opponent, but also shaped Orbán's economic policies (low budget and heavy nationalization) to avoid any future setback.

2.2 Main ideology and policies

The transition that transformed Fidesz, from an anti-communist youth movement based on liberal ideals to a conservative populist party, was a lengthy and thorough process. Firstly, the party changed its organizational scheme. Indeed, it became a highly centralized political movement around its charismatic leader, Viktor Orbán, who set the overall political agenda and the ideology of the party. Furthermore, all the other prominent figures in the organization are filled by the leader's yes-men.

Secondly, as many other populist political movements, it adopted a thin-centered ideology with the idea of pursuing the general will of "the people". Since Fidesz decided to embrace this path, it needed a major or minor ideology to set their political agenda. Consequently, Fidesz, through the input of Orbán and his various counselors (mostly his main adviser Gyula Tellér), transformed its overall ideology. In doing so, Orbán shaped the party, and later his government, in terms of a conservative-traditionalist dogma, with deep references (also in the writing of the country's new constitution) to the Christian heritage of Hungary. In particular, the key notion is the one of a "Christian-national ideal" (*keresztény-nemzeti eszme*), that is the term through which is created the subset of "the people". As many other populist phenomena throughout Europe, this identification is done in exclusive terms. Indeed, Fidesz endorses an exclusion at all levels (symbolic, political and material) towards the groups that do not enter in these paradigms, in particular Roma people, immigrants and poor people. These groups are targeted for different reasons. The Roma and immigrants are excluded because they are seen as a threat to the Christian base of Hungary. So, to be fully included, they need to reject their beliefs and traditions and conform to the people. Instead, the poor are analyzed through a Calvinist lens, which considers them to have the fault of being poor. For this reason, it would be a mistake giving them aid through a welfare system, since it will be against the "will of God".

As said above, the religious connotation is central in defining Fidesz. Indeed, the Hungarian party defines itself as a Christian nationalist party, but Orbán has endorsed a Christianity that despises liberal values, including internationalism and welfare. "He emphasized, instead, order and responsibility as the foundational values of a patriarchal Christianity, one that starts from the protection of kith and kin and proceeds to love of country and culture" (Fekete, 2016). This centrality of Christianity has been the main cause for the introduction of the Church Law in 2011, which removed legal recognition for 200-religious communities (after pressure from the EU, these were received second-class 'religious association' status), as well as favoring the Catholic, Lateran and Calvinist church more than any of the 31 certified religious cults. A governmental aspect where religion has become central is the national educational system. For example, Orbán has appointed a Calvinist minister, Zoltán Balog, as his Minister for Human Resources, which is a figure that is in charge of education, culture and health, as well as Roma issues. This has led to the revision of the educational curriculum to focus on the nationalist and irredentist history of 'Greater Hungary'.

Since its development towards a populist discourse, “Fidesz considers majoritarianism as the assertion of the dominance of the values and norms of the majority or as a type of decision-making procedure” (Enyedi, 2016). In other words, the collective interests of the national community outdo the interests of individuals and of minorities. Moreover, their idea of governing is a complete rejection of multiculturalism, which leads to just representing the values and the will of the majority, as well as restricting the presence of non-conventional subcultures (e.g. sexual and religious minorities) in the public space. This belief in strong majoritarianism paved the way to an implicitly rejection of pluralism. For example, since their election in 2010 with a strong majority, Fidesz has performed a systematic exclusion of the opposition from decision-making (e.g. from the nomination of Constitutional Court justices, from the writing of the new constitution and its amendments, or from the regulation of constituency boundaries), mainly because they had the necessary seats to achieve those reforms. The party’s anti-pluralist position is due to the belief that it can just tackle short term problems and it makes impossible to find long-term solutions, which is what Orbán has been professing since his election. Similarly, Orbán’s party disregards state neutrality. The main reason is that, since the state has the duty to protect citizens and the interests of the national community, it needs to be present and active in many sectors of the public life, as well as being sovereign, unitary and a nation-state. For example, one of the principal justifications given for replacing the previous constitution was that it came down on the side of individual rights as opposed to the interests of the national community, and was, therefore, unable to express forcefully enough ‘Hungarian values. “The solution is a new constitution that narrows the field of the political game, prescribes a certain set of values and creates institutions that are to advance the interests of the national community” (Enyedi, 2016). Furthermore, in Fidesz and Orban’s opinion, this state’s protection is not just at the national, but also, if not even more, at the international level. Particularly, it is against the greed of the multinationals, the dominance of internationally owned media outlets and the interference of international NGOs.

As a populist party, Fidesz fits squarely into the anti-elitist box. However, it has evolved from an anti-elitism at national level towards an international one. Particularly in the 2006–2010 period, the party’s rhetoric was directed against ‘new aristocrats,’ ‘opulent millionaires,’ ‘loafers’ and ‘swindlers,’ who exploit ordinary Hungarians. But these attacks were not firmly grounded in a direct establishment vs. people dichotomy. Indeed, Fidesz was, and still is, typically not contrasted with the Hungarian elite per se, but rather with the international economic and cultural establishment and their local representatives: the ‘foreign-minded,’ cosmopolitan leftists and liberals. Although this anti-elitist sentiment was more developed at the international level, local elites, in Orbán and his party’s opinion, had the fault of endorsing these foreign elite interests rather than the national ones. To this extent, Fidesz represents itself as the true representative of the national interest (will of the people) against the international establishment which wants to undermine the Hungarian value. “By focusing its criticism on Brussels, on Washington or on the various international agencies, compared to which the government of Hungary was presented as an underdog, the party could continue to

voice anti-establishment feelings even after it became the de facto political elite and even after it enlisted among its supporters the largest oligarchs” (Enyedi, 2016).

Although Fidesz professes to be the incarnation of the will of the people, it also relates to ‘its own people’ in a highly paternalistic way. In other words, the party interpreted its mandate as one that allows the government to educate and discipline citizens. The reasoning behind this idea is the belief that citizenship’s rights cannot exist without social responsibilities and duties. They consider fulfilled duties as precondition for full membership in the national community. This implies that membership rights are not conditional on something given, like citizenship or ethnicity, but on performance. For example, parents who do not send their children to school or unemployed workers who refuse communal works (which will be explained later in depth), both cannot benefit the citizenship experience because they have failed in their obligations. For this reason, poor people are one of the excluded groups because they are seen as a social group which do not add anything to society because they do not perform their citizenship duties. So, Fidesz has decided to substitute a welfare society, which it sees as a liberal degradation, with a “workfare” society.

A ‘workfare’ society is a society that replaces social benefits with the possibility to work. This national solution was supported by the majority, partly because it was regarded more just than the unconditional support of the least well-off and partly because it seemed to offer a solution to the very low employment rate. So, the base of this type of society is that the state, thanks to the nationalization of many economic sectors or just its influence, is able to find jobs to unemployed. “This state interference in the economy, which not only seeks to mitigate misery, but also to generate new inequalities, is embedded in an ideology that evaluates individuals against vaguely defined communitarian moral standards” (Enyedi, 2016). According to Fidesz and its leader, the community needs to reward individuals proportionately to their performance. Although this is a way to tackle unemployment, these jobs are usually more vocational than managerial. Furthermore, the employees on average receive a wage 70% lower than the medium wage in the country. In addition, some social group are still excluded even from this employment opportunities, like the Roma and immigrants.

As said before, Fidesz believes that the state needs to be a key player in the national economy to really protect the national interest. Indeed, it has the duty to protect the interests of domestic producers and consumers. Therefore, it is permissible to discriminate against foreigners, regulate prices, support specific enterprises, nationalize certain properties and industries, and to intervene if private financial institutions treat consumers unfairly. The main reason for this discrimination of foreigner investors is the belief that the government has the legitimate task to create a domestic and patriotic middle-class, through social engineering. The prioritization of Hungarian entrepreneurs, the support for large (but morally decent) families and patriotic education are all part of this ultimate goal. Furthermore, Fidesz’ governments have shown this will through highly publicized political signs, like suspending foreclosures, the extra-taxation on banks and on multinational companies in the retail, energy and telecommunication sectors, make utility companies reduce prices (for electricity, water use, gas, waste collection, etc.), and force banks to forego part of their loans. This

satisfied the public's sense for justice, not through automatic, impersonal social benefits, but via highly publicized state interventions that inflicted visible harm on the most hated elite institutions.

Lastly, it will be analyzed an area where Fidesz has been ambivalent, that is, its stance towards the European Union. Differently from other European populist parties, it could not be classified as being totally Eurosceptic, since Orbán's party believes that the future of Hungary is to remain a member of the EU. This belief has always been expressed by Fidesz. For instance, "it was under his [Orbán's] premiership that Hungary joined NATO in 1999 and signed the bulk of the agreements that formed the necessary frameworks for EU accession in 2004" (Rogers, 2019). Furthermore, it was a strong supporter for Hungary's annexation in the EU and it carried out an energetic electoral campaign for the "yes" in the 2003 European Union membership referendum. However, the relationship has not been idyllic, since Fidesz has been elected to govern Hungary. Indeed, Orbán has never been shy in criticizing European policies (Dublin regulation and its leftist and elitist approach) and, at the same time, the EU has condemned several laws emanated by his government, like the Church before mentioned, the media law and the fourth amendment of the new constitution, because these were against EU law. For example, the European commission has even threatened to start an infringement procedure towards Hungary for the breaching of an EU directive. At the same time, Orbán has been vocal about the need to look for cooperation not just with European partners, but also with other international partners (i.e. China), by saying that "there is life outside the EU" made after the Brexit. However, it is important to note that this statement was about the proudness of Hungary to be a member of the EU.

Probably the greatest point of collision between Hungary and the EU has been the handling of immigrants in general and, in particular, of the refugee's crisis of 2016. Particularly, the reason for conflict was that this problem was seen in two different ways. According the European Union, it is a humanitarian problem that needs the help of all member states to be solved. Whereas, "for Orbán, the worst refugee crisis in Europe since the second world war was not a humanitarian challenge but a Muslim 'invasion' that necessitated a military response to close down the migrants' Balkan land route to the EU" (Fekete, 2016). To stop this, so called, "invasion, Hungary has enacted different norms. First, it militarized the south border with Serbia and Croatia, building fortification to create a "refugee protection free zone" around the country. Second, it amended the Criminal Code and created the Asylum law, which made the entering of Hungary through a border fence punishable with up to three years of imprisonment. Third, the army was authorized to help local police department in avoiding the trespassing of the border. In addition, Hungary has been a strong opposer of the Dublin regulation and, in general, of the distribution of refugees among the state members.

Although Orbán's comments and actions against the EU and its law were sometimes harsh, Fidesz has never thought, and has no future plan, about Hungary exiting the Union. The main reason is that Hungary has had an immense economic benefit in being an EU member, in fact, it has been one of the countries with the most incoming from the EU and the least European expenses. Furthermore, Hungary has been able to boost its exports, since its membership started, thanks to the European regulations on trading and exporting. For this reason, Orbán has been always pro-European integration. "By and large, Fidesz cannot be considered as

Eurosceptic but rather pragmatist due to its clear pro-European policy in practice, i.e. it has always supported the deepening of the European integration” (Duro, 2016).

2.3 Fidesz’s impact on the national and European polity

As underlined in the previous section, since its electoral triumph in May 2010, Fidesz has endorsed a political plan with the intent to alter Hungarian society from a liberal and leftist base towards nationalist and Christian fundamentals, by affecting various policy areas (economy, politics and the welfare system). Its governmental policies and actions confirm this ultimate end. The goal of this section is to highlight the specific impact of Orbán’s government on all these various levels in the national context. Furthermore, it will be shown how this regime model has impacted the whole Continent, by becoming an inspiration for many right-wing populist parties throughout Europe and by influencing European policies and legislation through the European Parliament.

After its election in 2010, Fidesz followed a, so called, “populist blueprint” which can be defined as a well-scripted project of democratic illiberalism, which is common in all cases of ruling populism, whether in the Americas or in Europe” (Pappas, 2019). This model includes taking total control of the state, with an expansion of executive power, an onslaught on liberal institutions, and the implementation of patronage politics. Some actions that can have these effects are: empowering the executive at the expense of other branches of state power; control over the media, judiciary and the educational system; appointing party loyalists at all level of the bureaucratic system; dismantling state neutrality in some sectors of society; crony capitalism; and constitutional reforms for governmental purposes. As it will be shown below, Fidesz has executed, more or less, all this power grabs, with the intent to consolidate its power through this means. Indeed, once in power, it has used these arrangements that allowed its consolidation in office for long periods of time at the expense of liberal institutions and political moderation. A proof of this intent is Orbán statement: “We have only to win once, but then properly” (Orbán, quoted in Lendvai 2018: 94).

As many other populist leaders, Orbán interpreted the plebiscitary victory of 2010 as a “revolution in the ballot box” that kicked off a “new social contract” with the Hungarian citizens. In other words, he considered it as a mandate from “the people” to carry out their, before unheard, general will.

To perform this, it was certainly helpful to have gained two thirds of the seats in the Parliament, which gave them the necessary means to, for example, execute major modification in the constitutional system without consulting with the opposition. Then, Fidesz and Viktor Orbán became explicitly intent on using that majority to radically change Hungary’s political system.

Once in office, the first Fidesz’s achievement was its ability to enlarge the state power over society. This was done to gain control over crucial political institutions at the expense of the opposition. In other words, to avoid any check on their exercise of the executive power. To do so, the majority of state’s institutions, if not every, needed to be “Fideszized”, which means that all leading positions in previously state oriented and state neutral

institutions needed to be filled by Fidesz party personnel. Through this process, the state became, as András Bozóki puts it, “fully captured and centralized. ... Central and local public administration became heavily politicized, and the former colonized the latter” (Bozóki, 2012:16).

To achieve the total grab of the Hungarian state and its institutions, Orbán’s party used its massive parliamentary majority to change the country’s constitutional order, by, first, passing an extensive quantity of new laws and, consequently, by changing the constitution as a whole. For instance, in its first year in office the Fidesz government underwent a “constitutional revolution” passing about 350 new laws, including twenty-five so-called “fundamental”. “Many of these changes were designed to weaken institutions that might have checked what the government was going to do next, which was to impose upon Hungary a wholly new constitutional order using only ideas and votes from Fidesz” (Bánkuti, Halmai and Scheppele, 2012/).

The official constitutional change was the writing of a new constitution starting in 2011 and enacted in 2012. However, before it was possible to be able to draft a new constitution, Fidesz needed, first, to address some main issues which could have checked and, then, stopped their attempt to a constitutional revolution. In particular, these challenging areas/actors were 4: the constitutional court, referendum process, the media, and the president of the Republic. All these organs were handled differently by the Fidesz government.

Firstly, Fidesz needed to dismantle the Constitutional court, since this institution was for more than 20 years the guardian of the constitutional order and primary check on the executive actions. So, it could have declared Fidesz initiatives unconstitutional, if it was not dismantled first. To tackle this problem, the Orban’s executive used its two thirds majority to amend the constitution in changing the nature of the constitutional court. Specifically, it changed the procedure for the nomination of new judges, by giving to the executive the power to propose the nominee and then it was just necessary a two thirds majority in Parliament (which Fidesz already had). Then, it also amended the constitution to restrict the Constitutional Court’s jurisdiction over fiscal matter (unless it infringed basic human rights), in particular budgetary law. Finally, to further weaken the Constitutional Court independence, the government increased the number of judges, giving to the executive the power to name 7 of the 15 judges on the Court. So, even though the Court still existed, its guarding power over the political landscape largely disappeared.

Secondly, Fidesz brought under its control the National Election Commission (NVB), by terminating the mandates of the members who were elected to serve through 2014. It also changed the composition of the commission, which before was formed by 5 party delegates and 5 members agreed between the government’s party and the opposition, by filling all these nondelegates seats with its own party members and giving to itself a dominant majority inside the commission. This power position mattered not only on electoral matters, but also because the NVB has the right to rule on referendums proposal. In this way, Fidesz was able to control any possible referendum which could target any aspect of the party’s agenda.

Another early target of Orbán’s program was the mass media, which was accused “of failing to achieve balanced news coverage”. For this reason, there were passed 2 major laws which altered the already existing National Media and Info-communications Authority (NMHH), a state regulatory agency, by creating an

independent Media Council with powers to impose heavy fines on media outlets, which did not covered news in a “balanced” manner. The 5 members of this council were appointed by the Parliament, which chose all Fidesz affiliates. Although these reforms were slightly changed after these were criticized by the EU with the risk of an infringement procedure against Hungary, the key feature of this council were left in place, that is, the power to freely interpret the term “balanced” in terms of the government will. The measures are particularly severe against broadcasting media, while newspaper and outline medias are still able to have a sort of content independency.

Finally, as in many other republics, the Hungarian president of the republic has the role as guarantor of constitutionality and the well running of all 3 state powers. For example, it could decide to not sign laws of questionable constitutionality by placing a veto on it or sending it to the Constitutional court. To avoid any possible stoppage, Fidesz decided to bend the already existing laws on its will by electing a new President of the Republic through its overwhelming parliamentary majority. Indeed, the parliament firstly elected Pál Schmitt in 2010 and then, after the resignation of the latter, János Áder in May 2012. Both have never hesitated to sign any Fidesz’s legislation proposal. So, they have never been any check on their constitutionality process. After these matters were taken care of, the process for a new constitution officially started. The drafting of the new constitution took place behind closed doors and without any attempt at seeking consensus with the opposition. For example, the 2-stage process for constitutional drafting, which required the adoption of constitutional principles by a parliamentary committee and then the drafting of the constitution following these principles, was completely bypassed. “Instead, a March 2011 parliamentary resolution gave all MPs one week to come up with proposed draft constitutions with or without taking the principles into account” (Bánkuti, Halmai and Scheppele, 2012). Subsequently, from the proposed drafts, it was chosen the one from a Fidesz influenced extra-parliamentary group. Their proposal was presented in Parliament as a private member’s bill, which gave Fidesz the opportunity to avoid any discussion with the opposition and interested Civil society groups. Through this procedure, Fidesz was the only political force to discuss this new constitution as it was being drafted. Although this new constitution had a proposed 180 amendments, in the rarely times discussed in Parliament sessions (9), the only alteration possible to pass where the ones proposed by the governing party with its immense majority. As largely expected, the new constitution was passed by Parliament with the two thirds voting in favor (this majority was composed just by Fidesz members as the other parties either boycotted or voted against) and signed by the President of the Republic on April 25 2011. Finally, on January 1 2012, the new Hungarian constitution went into effect, without even any public referendum to ratify the parliamentary results.

Most certainly, as seen throughout the preparation and in the drafting process, the new constitution served the populist government’s majoritarian ethos. Although both the old and the new constitution have at their center a unicameral parliamentary system, the new constitution had removed or weakened the many checks on the executive power (present in the old) which avoided any possible abuse of majoritarianism by the government

in power. As a matter of fact, the new constitution reduced the power and the scope of many previous “checking” institutions.

The Constitutional Court, for example, was further limited in their guarding duties on government majority. Despite it had already restricted its jurisdiction after the amendments made by Orbán’s government between 2010 and 2011, the new constitution went a step ahead by abolishing the *actio popularis*, which permitted citizens to challenge the constitutionality of any law before the Constitutional Court, and replacing it with a norm (inspired by the German model), which allowed the possibility of a review only if affected them personally.

Furthermore, the ordinary judiciary lost a great deal of its independence. For instance, the new constitution changed the selection process of lower-court judges, which before were chosen by panels of fellow judges. Instead, it was created the National Judicial Office (KIH), with its leader (elected with a nine-year term) chosen by a two thirds majority by the Parliament. Consequently, the Parliament has always elected as president a person close to Fidesz (Tünde Handó and Gyorgy Barna Senyei). This new body, in particular the President, has the power to select new judges, to promote or demote any judge, to start any disciplinary proceedings against them, to appoint the leaders of each court, and to reassign cases from one court to another. So, this figure has enormous powers, in fact, s/he can control the entire judiciary and the only figure that is able to control this person is the President of the Republic, which is in turn a Fidesz’s ally. This weakening of the judiciary independence has been heavily criticized by the EU, which it also started an infringement procedure in 2012 against Hungary for violating EU law (in particular, Directive 2000/78/EC) by arbitrarily lowering the judicial retirement age.

Moreover, many other institutions, that were before independent, were changed with the new constitution taking effect, becoming directly influenced by Fidesz’s officials. For example, the Ombudsman (the system for monitoring human rights) was reduced from 4 offices to one controlled by one parliamentary commissioner with a much-reduced staff. Most importantly, the area of data protection of the Ombudsman was eliminated and transferred to a governmental office (so being no more independent), which generated a European response with a new infringement procedure (case C-288/12). At the same time, it was modified the state audit office, which before was one of the most independent offices, received the additional powers to begin investigation into misuse of public funds. It was also created a Budget Council with the power to veto any budget produced by the parliament that increases the national debt. This council can trigger new elections if it vetoes the budget at the deadline. As other previous independent bodies, these 2 offices were headed by Fidesz members or affiliates, so managed directly or indirectly by the government.

The new constitution has also many other controversial norms: the manipulation of electoral districts by the NVB, which makes it challenging for another political party to win the elections in the near future; the, already seen in the previous section, Church Law; the constitutional preamble that gives constituent power to ethnic Hungarians at home and abroad, excluding all other citizens (i.e. immigrants, Roma people); the setting of a large number of cardinal laws (i.e. laws requiring two thirds of parliamentary votes) that cover various policy

issues such as taxes, pensions and family protections; and the penetration in the management of the Hungarian National Bank by government officials. These norms, together with the ones already analyzed, makes it difficult for any other political force to win any election and govern without being stopped or controlled by Fidesz. Indeed, the new constitutional order, in addition to having few checks on the executive, permits the governing party to lodge its loyalists in crucial long-term positions with veto power over what future governments might do. As a result, the Fidesz government has achieved a remarkable constitutional feat: giving themselves maximum room for maneuver while simultaneously entrenching their power, their policies and their people for the foreseeable future.

In addition to shaping the Hungarian institutional and political arena, Fidesz wanted also to have a decisive control over the national economy. To achieve so, “whether through nationalizations or other regulatory mechanisms, the state increased in size and importance in many sectors of the economy, which in turn led to the expansion of political patronage, especially in rural regions” (Pappas, 2019). In addition to the rural areas, patronage politics is a practice also used in the business sector. Indeed, Fidesz has the ideal of “the establishment of a group of domestic entrepreneurs” (Lendvai, 2018), which is considered by the Hungarian party as the pillars of a strong economy. Although with the term domestic entrepreneurs there is no explicit special consideration for anybody, usually these figures are regime-friendly oligarchs. Furthermore, they are often directly close to high level party officials or, even, Orbán himself. Obviously, this leads to an unfair advantage for people close to the regime in many public contracts and public tenders. Furthermore, many other economic sectors, before owned or managed by foreign actors, are now controlled by these Fidesz loyalists, thanks to the nationalization measures cited above. As affirmed by Samuel Rogers, “a more succinct approach to understanding these developments is the term prebendalism” (Rogers, 2019), which is a system where the government takes over, partly, the management of material property. Furthermore, “in the Hungarian case, this term describes the relationship between ruler (Orbán) and staff (Fidesz and Fidesz-loyal actors) and importantly, how ‘rogue’ or anti-Fidesz oligarchs cannot effectively operate their businesses or work towards their interests of accumulation because it has become antithesis to the interests of the top levels of the Fidesz hierarchy” (Rogers, 2019). By developing a culture of prebendalism, Fidesz is strengthened as it becomes able to proliferate its success on a nationwide level through a network of steadfast guardians of capital who are rewarded with contracts in return for political devoutness. Such ownership readjustment to national capital is in harmony with the post-2010 importance Fidesz has placed on national sovereignty.

A clear consequence of these practices is that the corruption in the Magyar country has reached an extremely high level since the election of Fidesz in 2010. Furthermore, it had such an increase that citizens can directly perceive as a serious problem. Indeed, as reported by Transparency International Hungary in their Global corruption barometer, 57% of Hungarians citizens feel that corruption has worsened since Fidesz election, while 22% consider themselves powerless against this phenomenon (Transparency International Hungary, 2016), which are a much higher figures compared to the other Visegrád countries. The main reason for this increment is that, today, corruption has become highly institutionalized and dominant within domestic

business, while before it was more a “dysfunction of the system” (Goldston, 2018). This institutionalization of corrupted practices is indirectly justified by Fidesz, with their goal of creating the class of domestic entrepreneurs, that will become the strong base of the Hungarian economy.

In the economic context, the Fidesz government needed also to tackle one of the main issues of the country, that is, unemployment, which at the time of their election was one of the highest in Europe. To achieve this, Orbán and his cabinet planned the creation of new ‘jobs’ through a ‘workfare society’ (*munka alapú társadalom*). The latter was shaped “on the Fundamental Law’s reference to the ‘usefulness of citizens’ work’ as a determinant of social rights, announced his intention to do away with unemployment benefits altogether, declaring that in future the only option available to the unemployed would be public works” (Fekete, 2016). In particular, the basis for this program were set in the Hungarian Work Plan (HWP), which had in its rationale the opportunity for the unemployed to find a workplace directly offered by the state or local authorities. Although this program has been able to tackle partly unemployment, it has been heavily criticized nationally and internationally. For example, Liz Fekete states that “the purpose of the HWP was never to extend the body of those in work but to deliver up to local authorities (responsible for its implementation) a cheap super-exploitable labor force for public works, with the new benefits regime rendering those in that workforce all the easier to discipline, given the choice either to work or to starve” (Fekete, 2016). There are many reasons for this harsh criticism towards HWP. Firstly, in the selection process it does not count any past occupation of the unemployed, but it offers just manual work, mostly based on hard labor in forestry, waterworks and local renovation. Secondly, this work has been set as a super exploitable work source option for local authorities. Indeed, it was created for these jobs a new public works minimum wage, which is at 70 percent of the standard national minimum wage. Finally, local authorities have the power to exclude some groups, usually Roma people, for arbitrary reasons.

To sum up, Orbán has been able to complete his vision for a “Fideszied” Hungary, a country in which his political party occupies and controls the center stage of all society’s aspects (politics, economy, etc.), without almost any opposition. Moreover, this domination is now entrenched in law, thanks to the 2012 constitution. Within only a few years, a “pyramid-like hierarchy emerged and solidified, with Orbán at its summit. Below him, ready to obey his every command, are handpicked henchmen. As we move down the pyramid, people in every position are chosen for their loyalty to the regime” (Bánkuti, Halmai and Scheppele, 2012: 141). Furthermore, as stated above, this system has been set in such a way that it makes extremely unlikely for any other party to be elected or govern without being influenced by Fidesz.

Finally, it will be analyzed how Fidesz with its ideology and policies has affected not only Hungary, but also the European scene. Specifically, it will be shown how it has influenced European Union legislation, in particular in the field of refugee’s asylum, and how the Hungarian party and its leader have become an inspiration for many right-wing populists across Europe.

Since its inception at the helm of the Magyar country, Fidesz has never been shy of criticizing the EU for various policy measures. The primary criticism towards the EU is that it is trying to destroy the European

culture by becoming influenced from foreigners. In particular, Fidesz considers itself as the true protector of Europe and of its culture. Indeed, the biggest field of conflict has been with the management of the refugee crisis of 2016. Indeed, the Hungarian government was at the time critical of the Dublin regulation and even more adverse to the EU proposal of introducing a refugee quota for each country. Despite having just 1,297 asylum seekers allocated to Hungary, this last proposition stirred up much controversy in Hungary, mainly led by the right extremist party Jobbik. Later, it triggered also a Fidesz-sponsored referendum in the country, which received 98% of yes votes, but failed by missing the required turnout. Although this referendum did not pass, it had the effect of re-enforcing and strengthening Fidesz's position in the country and in the European scene. Indeed, "Fidesz successfully used the referendum as a potent international political card" (van Eeden, 2019), by campaigning on a more abstract, general level against the EU at large and "accepting" its role of enemy of the EU "liberal babble".

Furthermore, this "fight" against the EU in the handling of the 2016 refugee crisis cemented Fidesz in the eyes of right-wing populists around Europe as a model to follow. However, this recognition started first with the other Visegrád countries. Indeed, after Orbán's cabinet election in 2010, other nationalist populist parties of Czech Republic (ANO 2011) and Poland (Law and Justice), which saw it as an example to pursue. Subsequently, using a similar ideology and dialectic, both were able to be elected at the helm of their countries, respectively in 2018 and 2015. This created a compact Visegrád inside the European Parliament in the majority of the matters. In addition to the Visegrád countries, other populist parties in Europe see Orbán's party as a successful model. For example, both Matteo Salvini and Marine Le Pen are using a similar ideological and dialectic model as the Hungarian leader. In the next section, it will be examined the figure of Viktor Orbán as well as his leadership style, and it will be explained why it has been so successful and why many other populist parties are attracted to it as a model.

2.4 Orbán's leadership

In analyzing Fidesz political success, it would be an enormous mistake to rule out its leader Viktor Orbán from this evaluation. Without much dispute, it can be stated that he is the incarnation of Fidesz. Every aspect of the party, in fact, revolves around his figure, from party decisions to governmental actions, as well as nomination in any state controlled, or influenced, institution. As Bankuti, Halmai and Scheppele stated, it has been created "pyramid-like hierarchy emerged and solidified, with Orbán at its summit. Below him, ready to obey his every command, are handpicked henchmen. As we move down the pyramid, people in every position are chosen for their loyalty" (Bánkuti, Halmai and Scheppele, 2012: 141). Many scholars justify this control over any Fidesz's affair, as well as the national ones, through the political leadership of Mr. Orbán.

As stated by András Körösényi and Veronika Patkós (2017: 613), "political leadership might be defined as an unmistakable personal impact on politics, policies and polities". Furthermore, contemporary literature differentiates leadership styles between transactional and transformational leaders, mainly analyzed by James MacGregor Burns (1978, pp.4, 19-20). The former typology "approach followers with an eye to exchanging

one thing to another: jobs for votes, or subsidies for campaign contributions” (Burns, 1978, p. 20). So, transactional leaders are responsive just to citizen’s needs and demands. In contrast, the latter “occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to [a] higher level of motivation and morality” (Burns, 1978, p. 4). Thus, transformational leaders are responsive even to their followers’ unarticulated needs and aspirations. Furthermore, “they attempt to shape public preferences, change the existing system and produce a new pattern of governance” (Körösi and Patkós, 2017: 614).

Despite the success of these definitions in the academic literature, Joseph Nye criticizes Burns’ concept of transformational leadership, stating that there is no clear distinction between the leader’s objectives and his/her style. To tackle these issues, he suggests a two-dimensional model to handle styles and objectives, while distinguishing the problem of outcome from them (Nye, 2008, pp. 65–66; Nye, 2014, p. 120). On the one hand, he differentiates leadership objectives as incremental or transformational based on the amount of change desired. While the former seeks minor change in office, the latter pursue more ambitious goals. On the other hand, he distinguishes between transactional and inspirational leadership styles, by how leaders use different kinds of resources. He uses the terms ‘transactional style’ to characterize the skills with which the leaders manage their hard power (organizational capacity and ability to build winning coalitions) resources, and ‘inspirational style’ to characterize leadership that rests more on soft power (ability to manage relationships and personal charisma) resources. Specifically, hard power rests on ‘inducements (carrots) and threats (sticks)’, whereas soft power is ‘getting the outcomes one wants by attracting others rather than manipulating their material incentives’ (Nye, 2008, p. 29).

After this segment about the literature on political leadership, it is now possible to take this knowledge and put it into the Hungarian context. Starting with “soft power”, Orbán has been able to shift the political language in the country. Indeed, he abandoned the technocratic language used in national politics since the late-communist period, and he began to use a vocabulary closer to the ordinary people. Furthermore, Fidesz’s leader uses also a populist rhetoric close to the people, which paints them as the pure compared to the corrupt elite. “These populist means, the emotional tone and the usage of a simple new language, easily intelligible to ordinary people, are important novelties of both politicians’ political image and appearances, which have all contributed to their charismatic and persuasive style” (Körösi and Patkós, 2017: 616). Furthermore, Orbán has also demonstrated a strong and clear political vision and ideology, mainly through the implementation of conservative values and the Christian National idea into public policy and the constitution, which has attracted many citizens to his side. So, Orbán can be characterized as inspirational leader who rely strongly on ‘soft power’ skills. Beyond any doubt, he demonstrated “personal charisma”, and an “ability to manage relationships” (Nye, 2014, p. 122). Moreover, as underlined before, he offered an attractive vision on the ideological level, as well as renewing the political language of public discourse and using a self-assured tone, which installed a persuasive and successful form of communication that contributed to his inspirational leadership style.

At the same time, the Hungarian leader has also displayed the ability to employ “hard power skills”, that is, organizational capacities and the capability to build (and dominate) winning coalitions. As highlighted in the previous sections, Orbán has been able to both reshape his party from a youth movement to a populist one, as well as successfully unifying the center-right of the Hungarian polity, and subsequently, dominating this coalition by establishing himself in front of the voters as the leader of right. However, these hard power skills are products of his inspirational style as much as results of his organizational capacity. Indeed, despite these outstanding skills, the peculiarity of Orbán’s leadership is the creative and extensive usage of soft power resources. Furthermore, he can be characterized as ‘charismatic’ leader who is able to manage relationships, to persuade followers and to offer an effective and attractive vision. Therefore, we conclude that according to Nye’s typology (Nye, 2014, p. 120), Viktor Orbán performs an inspirational leadership style.

In assessing Orbán’s objectives as a leader, it is sufficient to present what Fidesz has accomplished on the Hungarian politics, polity and policy dimension since its election in office and, then, analyze if Orbán objective are just incremental, implementing just minor changes, or transformational.

Starting with the politics dimension, “the emergence of Viktor Orbán as a political leader and prime minister in Hungary is closely connected to his successful reshaping of his own party, as well as the party system as a whole” (Köröseyi and Patkós, 2017: 620). Indeed, he was able to reposition Fidesz in the political vacuum left by the collapse of the center-right Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), by becoming the major party of the right and the principal opponent of the socialist party. The latter point also lead to the polarization of Hungarian politics in a clash between left and right with a vacuum in the center of the political spectrum. After its landslide victory of 2010 and the various reforms on the electoral system underlined in the previous section, Fidesz was able to present itself as the party of the political center, or the ‘central field of force’, becoming the dominant party in Hungarian politics.

In the polity dimension, Orbán carried out more ambitious and robust institutional engineering from the incumbent position, compared to other European leaders. For instance, the new constitution and the several constitutional amendments passed between 2010 and 2013 reshaped the whole institutional fabric of the political system and the state. Through the use of various means, the prime minister’s power in government has been strengthened to an unprecedented level, through the weakening of the check and balances system. Moreover, there has been a centralization of many public areas which increased the governmental control over, for example, public health and education system. In addition to these institutional changes, the Orbán era has also greatly weakened the position of the opposition in Parliament and restricted future governments’ ability to act according to their own public policy line, by adding many legislative areas as Cardinal acts (needing two thirds majority to be passed or amended). Thus, both the scope and the degree of changes Orbán has aimed at and carried out are absolutely substantial. For this reason, “it is not an overstatement to characterise Orbán as the founder of a new regime in Hungary” (Köröseyi and Patkós, 2017: 623).

As pointed out previously, Orbán has been highly critical of free-market liberalism, globalized capitalism and multinational corporations, especially since the 2008 financial crisis. Since its 2010 electoral success, he has

endorsed policies which gives a strong role to the state in the economy, including state ownership in various economic sectors. Moreover, he believes that both individuals and the state are responsible for people's well-being, as proved by the abolition of the welfare state for a workfare system. At the same time, Orbán was openly averse to the existing policy paradigms. For instance, he introduced extraordinary measures, but made them permanent as part of a larger goal to restructure social-economic redistribution in Hungary. So, it can be stated that, despite his policy objectives were ambitious, Orbán has been able to achieve, almost, every desired outcome.

To sum up, Orbán has been extraordinarily effective in transforming policy goals and priorities, compared to other European leaders, as his policy objectives and politics since 2010 have exceed normal or politics and his political methods recall times of 'extraordinary politics'. Thus, according to Nye typologies, Orbán can be characterized as a leader with transformational policy objectives and achievements. Indeed, his objectives transcend the party system and include the change of the whole political system, such as re-forming the constitution and the state, the system of government and public administration and changing the relationship between state and society. Not only has he merely launched a new era in Hungarian politics, but since 2010 he has become the founder of a new political regime.

Chapter 3: A case study: Argentina

3.1 Preconditions for the rise of populism

Despite the different continent and the temporal gap of almost 100 years, populism rose in Argentina with similar conditions and characteristics as in Hungary. Specifically, the South American country experienced a political and social crisis too and, in the same way, a political figure, Juan Domingo Perón, was able to exploit this situation to his advantage. Furthermore, his policies and ideology (Peronism) have had a long-lasting impact on Argentine politics and society, which is still visible today. Before analyzing the contents of Peronism, it will be pointed out the factors and proceedings that led to Perón's rise to power.

After the independence war against Spain and the civil war of the 19th century, Argentina started the 20th century as the strongest economic force of the continent and one of the few with a semi-developed democratic state. These achievements were fueled by the most productive industrial sector as well as the agricultural one in South America, as well as strong immigration waves of Europeans, mainly Italians and Spaniards, that increased the productivity of Argentina. In addition to these economic successes, Argentina was one of the first South American countries which installed the universal and secret male suffrage, precisely in 1912. The first president to be elected with this formula was Hipólito Yrigoyen, who was president for 2 mandates (1916-1922 and 1928-1930). He implemented a liberal economic policy, which further developed Argentina by opening even more to the West, in particular the US, as trade partners. Despite the expansion of the national GDP, Argentina began to suffer an economic crisis, which worsened with the Great Depression of 1929.

On the political side, Yrigoyen was overthrown by a military coup organized by General José Uriburu in 1930 (the first since the constitution of 1853). However, his time as the nation's leader lasted just 2 years, giving power to General Augustín Pedro Justo in 1932. The following period was more than a decade (11 years) of great political uncertainty called *Concordancia* (agreement) and spanned the presidency of 3 different figures (Justo, Ortiz and Castillo). The whole era was characterized by corruption and electoral fraud, for this reason is called, mainly by the opposition, the Decade of Infamy.

Despite this difficult political situation, Argentina continued its impressive economic expansion, cementing its position as Latin America's leading industrial nation. This was possible thanks to the import-substitution policies introduced in the 1930s by Argentina's authoritarian rulers, which were created to contrast the Yrigoyen's governments reliance on imports. These policies encouraged the formation of local industries to produce what formerly was imported, by introducing subsidies and tariff protections. In this way, there was an overall increase of the country's industrialization level, with the creation of a strong and unified working class with their demands, thanks to the formation of the General Confederation of Workers (GCW).

In addition, the economic situation of the industrial workers and other lower classes (*los descamisados*, the shirtless), improved considerably during the industrial boom years. Indeed, in this period there was almost full

employment, an increase in the average wages, and labor legislation improved significantly (introduction of the eight-hour working day).

Despite these successful economic measures, there was a strong feeling of alienation from the disenfranchised poor (*descamisados*) towards the political system, since their political rights were negated and they were socially excluded. For this reason, there was not much popular protest when a new coup d'état in June 1943 brought to power a group of nationalist military officers, including Colonel Juan Domingo Perón.

Although he was a military man and not a politician, Perón was one of the key players in the 1943 military coup, which granted him a governmental position after the successful revolution. Specifically, he was nominated, firstly, the Undersecretary of War, but then he was soon elevated to head of the National Department of Labor. It is fundamental to underline that, until that moment, Colonel Perón was almost unknown to the general public. Thus, he decided to meticulously use this agency “as a platform from which to win over the hearts and minds of much of the working class” (Horowitz 1999: 30). Indeed, Perón was capable to convert the previously insignificant agency into an independent Secretariat of Labor and Social Security with broad and nationwide jurisdiction. The main achievements of this renovated governmental body under Perón guide were: the establishment of a minimum wage, the support of labor demands against employers' claims, backing workers' strikes, and pushing for the organization of labor unions (only if they remained cooperative with the government). All these measures skyrocketed Perón's popularity among working classes, which saw in him, for the first time, a political figure who benefited their interests. Furthermore, they did not receive just material rewards, but also became a fundamental part of society at large.

Despite the great success of his reforms, Perón's popularity and his labor-friendly policies were disliked by some part of the government and by the national industrialists, which regarded him as a threat to the status quo. Worried of being ousted by Perón supporters, in early October 1945, anti-Peronist officers had him arrested and stripped of his government positions. However, this proved to be a huge mistake, since it angered his followers. Many workers understood the arrest of Perón as an attempt to stop the improvement of their conditions, and rebelled to it. Indeed, on October 17th 1945, union leaders organized a mass rally at Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires demanding his return to government. This protest was so massive and successful (with an estimated presence of 300,000 people) that the army had to relent on its previous decision, release Perón as well as calling for presidential elections. Historically, this day is called *Día de la Lealtad* and it is considered as the foundation day of Peronism.

To support the candidacy of Perón in the ensuing election, union activists founded the Labor Party (PL). Shortly after, in February 1946, Perón won the elections with 52.8 percent of the vote, becoming, according to many scholars, the first populist leader in the postwar new liberal world. Despite the electoral victory, Perón decided to dissolve the PL in 1947. In its place, he founded his populist party, the Justicialist Party (PJ), which is still today a prominent figure in Argentine politics. It is fundamental to note that, despite having mass working-class party components, the PJ is not the typical class-based socialist party, with an autonomous and solid party organization, collective decision-making bodies, and direct linkages between party and organized

labor. The PJ lacked an organized structure, instead, it was entirely subordinate to Perón's personal charisma. Furthermore, there were no formal mechanism of labor participation. Peronism relied, rather, on setting up local party branches throughout the country, "which served as hubs for the distribution of material benefits and [also] provided a space for political, social, and cultural interaction for hundreds of thousands of working-class Argentines" (Levitsky 2003: 40).

Although Perón was loved and supported by the working classes, this was not enough, number wise, to be elected as president. Indeed, working classes at the time were around 35% of the electorate. Furthermore, all other parties allied to support the Radical Party candidate. Thus, how was he able to gain this electoral majority? The answer is, simply, populism.

Indeed, the populist thin-centered ideology offered class-based Peronism a solution of maintaining its working-class politics, as well as spreading out its influence to middle classes. In short, Peronism utilized populism, rather than socialist ideology for instance, "to achieve three goals simultaneously: A cross-class appeal, which amplified its electoral base; an open critique of liberal institutions, which spoke of a state of democratic illiberalism; and an emphasis on selective incentives, which pointed to a promise of patronage politics" (Pappas, 2019). Moreover, Perón kept on furthering politicize workers' resentment against the old political class and sinister capitalists, and thus create his own "people". Thus, Argentina under Perón became highly polarized in Manichaeian struggle between the pure "people" and the corrupt "elite". The former feared a free market and free competition, resented the powerful and hoped in a caring and protective state. The latter was composed by the more socially privileged and economically better-off, powerful connections, and liberal political ideas. With the middle ground between "the people" and the "oligarchy" no longer existing, Argentine politics became a standoff and would remain that way for many decades to come.

3.2 Peronism: main ideology and policies

Before starting to analyze in depth the Peronist ideology and policies, it must be clarified its position in any broader ideological family. Indeed, it has been challenging to collocate Peronism in any ideology, since it is constructed by many facets of various ones. In particular, it has often been studied, mainly in the past, as a phenomenon characterized by some components of a Fascist and Socialist ideology. However, it will be demonstrated below that, despite sharing some common elements with these 2 dogmas, both are inaccurate frameworks for studying the Argentine phenomenon. Following this introductory part, it will be underlined how populism (following Mudde's definition) is, actually, the best-suited to interpret Peronism.

In analyzing Peronism, many scholars have regarded Peronism as a Latin American version of post-world war I European Fascism. Colonel Perón life experiences, before becoming Argentina's president, could support this belief. For instance, he visited prewar Italy and Nazi Germany to study their military techniques and, during this time, he also learned the organization of the fascist corporate state. However, despite being an important military and political experience, it seems a forced statement to label Peronism as a Fascist phenomenon for various reasons.

First, Peronism did not originate in Argentina with the same social and political conditions, as Fascism in Italy and Nazism Germany. 1940s Argentina does not share many similarities with 1920s Italy and 1930s Germany. While the European countries were experiencing a deep economic crisis and a social unease for the consequences of WWI as well as a tenacious anti-communist feeling with its growth in political influence, the South American country was experiencing an economic expansion started in the 1930s, it remained neutral in the Great War and there was no threatening mass-based Communist Party in Argentina between 1943 and 1945, or before. Second, Peronism and Fascism do not share the same social composition of their support. For example, Italian Fascism was sustained primarily by former veterans and middle classes, but, once in power, it allied with the upper classes and traditional institutions to control power. Instead, the Justicialist Party was mainly supported by the working classes and some parts of the middle class. Third, Peronist ideology has more differences than similarities to the Fascist one. Indeed, *Justicialismo* (the Peronist ideology) has “roots in Social Christianity and national populism of the FORJA (the *yrigoyenista*, the nationalist youth wing of the Radical Party in the 1930s), and in syndicalism” (Buchrucker, 1998). At the same time, it repudiates the Social Darwinism of Fascism. The only common point is the importance given to the concept of the leader, as well as some fundamentals of the corporatist state. Finally, despite sharing some similarities with the Fascist state regime like the propaganda machine, the Peronist government was less severe in oppressing opposing political groups unlike Fascism. For example, it created for the first time in Argentina’s history a real electoral system, stopping the electoral frauds happened in the, so called, Decade of infamy. Furthermore, the Peronist regime did not perform any militarization of society, on the contrary, it focused on distributive and industrializing policies.

On the other hand, Peronism has been associated in many studies with Socialism. However, this conception is erroneous. Indeed, even though Perón used in his political language the concept of state ownership, he never meant a complete state ownership of industry or agrarian collectivization. Instead, Peronism professed a variant of the European phenomenon called “national socialism”, which was composed by a mixed economy and a welfare state where union played a major role. Furthermore, Perón’s “socialist” policy was not influenced by Marxism, but instead by a Christian Ideology (Social Christianity), where the equality of social classes can be reached without social revolutions and state-control of the economic means of production.

Therefore, as underlined above, an explanation of Peronism as socialist or fascist phenomenon is both incomplete and erroneous at the same time, since it lacks some fundamental characteristic of the Argentine experience. On the contrary, the best suited ideological interpretation of Peronism is to place it in the family of Latin America populism. Specifically, Peronism fits perfectly in Mudde’s minimal definition of populism for various reasons.

First, the Manichean struggle between the pure people and the corrupt elite is clearly present in the Peronist ideology, as Perón himself, for example, stated that Argentine society had a clear struggle between the “*pueblo* and *antipueblo*, the former struggling for independence and the latter part of a historically colonialist tradition” (cited in Brennan, 1998). In this clash, Perón takes the side of “the people”, by affirming that “*Justicialismo*

is in essence popular” (Perón, 1950) in his 1950 speech about *las veinte verdades del justicialismo*. Thus, Peronism has, as its goal, to carry out the general will of the people. Additionally, Perón was able to go a step forward by affirming that those who are not Peronist are against the *pueblo*, creating in this way a major polarization between Peronist and non-Peronist, which is still present in today’s Argentina.

Second, the characterization of Peronism as a populism, following Mudde’s categorization, implies that the Argentine phenomenon is a thin-centered ideology, that is, it may be associated to other theoretical frameworks. As highlighted above, Peronism is composed and influenced, to some degree, by different dogmas at the same time as corporatism, socialism, nationalism and Christianity. Furthermore, it will be displayed in the next pages how Peronism is composed also by other ideals, which generate a totally unique phenomenon in both the populist and Latin American landscape.

To conclude, as underlined in the first chapter, Latin American populism advocates an inclusive character and Peronism is not an anomaly in this sense. Indeed, the Argentine populism endorses inclusivity on all 3 aspects: political, material and symbolic. The major beneficiary of this inclusive measures were the working classes and the extremely poor people. As it will be exposed in the following pages, the Peronist government targeted these 2 groups, which received receive state resources for material benefits, mainly through unions and Peronist organizations. In the same way, Peronism gave for the first time to the working classes and part of the middle class a mean to express their political will, which was mainly ignored by the previous political establishment. Finally, Peronism was able to give for the first time a symbolic prominence to the excluded classes of society. For example, Perón and his wife Evita were able to transform the derogatory word of *descamisados* and gave it a new positive meaning as term of pride. In this way, they were able to include them in the category of *pueblo*.

Terminated this ideological characterization of Peronism, it is now arrived the moment to focus on the particular aspects that composed the ideology of the Argentine phenomenon and its main policies. First, it is fundamental to remember how the world was shaping when Perón got to power. The Second World War just ended and there were the first signs of the dawn of the Cold War. In this sense, many countries started to choose side between the capitalist US and the communist Soviet Union in this political and ideological clash. Instead, Perón decided to pursue, what he called, a third way (*tercera posición*). He criticized both systems as against social solidarity, in fact, the Argentine leader thought that these systems “proposed inadequate social solutions for nations in general and particularly inapposite ones for the nation states of the Third world” (McLynn, 1984). Specifically, he believed that the Western model professed the abuse of private property, while the Soviet framework endorsed the total removal any private ownership. Furthermore, Perón believed that communism can be summed up as the exploitation of man by the state, while a capitalism can be summarized as the exploitation of man by his fellow man. Thus, the avowed object of Peronist ideology was to find a third position between capitalism and communism, forging a synthesis of preexisting elements that had never before been combined so as to produce a theory of social solidarity, that will help social collaboration and be beneficial for the nation. In his own words, “Another system must be sought, wherein the

exploitation of man does not exist, wherein we are all workers together, collaborating towards the happiness of the community with a doctrine that is essentially Christian, a doctrine for lack of which the world has groped in vain for a solution and without which it will find none in the future, capitalism has failed and so has communism” (cited in McLynn, 1984).

In the definition above, it is possible to identify all the main principles of the Justicialist doctrine: the central role of workers groups, of Christianity, as well as of “organized community” and “social justice”. Moreover, all these foundational points applied together produce a better and more functional society as a whole, according to Peronism. For the remainder of this section, it will be analyzed each aspect more in depth.

As asserted above, the electoral backbone of Peronism were the unions and organized workers, in fact, since the *Día de la Lealtad* and the following elections, Perón’s government cemented his commitment to the interests of the labor. The reason for this particular regard is the Peronist belief that a stable and functional society needs an employed population, without any kind of exploitation by the employer. In addition, Perón believed that class conflict “is an effect of social injustice and can only be overcome by granting the workers justice, not by repression or force” (Perón, 1947, p. 21). Thus, he wanted to include the labor groups into society as a whole to implement social collaboration. To achieve this, his first cabinet (1946-1955) implemented many policies, which directly affected the welfare of workers. Specifically, his cabinet improved the social security system and increased the average wages throughout the country. For instance, the pension system was extended to encompass workers, there were introduced paid holidays for the first time, the work schedule was reduced and the healthcare plan for workers was drastically improved. The effect of these policies was that by “1951, more than 70% of the labor force were included in the social security system” (Muno, 2019). In this way, working classes and union gained for the first time, thanks to Peronism, a centrality that they never experienced before in Argentine history.

Christianity is another fundamental element of the Peronist ideology. “According to Perón, Peronism was fundamentally rooted in spiritual values in the Catholic Christian sense, and religious imagery often permeated Peronist rhetoric” (Hammond, 2013). The reason for the use of Christianity in Peronism is that it was the perfect ideological background for the implementation of “social justice”, which will be analyzed shortly after. According to Perón, the Christian values, like compassion, equality and justice, were the better suited ideals than the capitalist and communist ones for the organization of a united and “organized” community. Indeed, he believed that both Communist and Capitalist states will produce a conflictual society, by generating struggle between various classes without seeking social collaboration. Instead, Catholic values would produce the opposite result, by endorsing social collaboration and social justice, they are the basis for a “good society”. However, the usage of a Catholic language and values had also a political-strategic advantage, beside defining Peronism’s ideology. It is, in fact, essential to underline that Argentina was, and still is today, inhabited by a strong majority of practicing Catholics, thanks to the Spanish colonization and the arrival of many Italian immigrants since the 19th century. Thus, Catholic values had a strong impact in people’s behavior and political affiliations, along with the Catholic Church’s power as a national institution. Furthermore, this impact on

people's decision making has been always used by the Catholic Church to shape people's political preference. For this reason, the introduction of a Catholic message helped the Peronist cause, by gaining the support of a large part of the Catholic Church and, in this way, also many voters' affiliation of different social classes. The final essential feature of the Peronist ideology is the belief of building an "organized community" and implementing a "social justice". By these definitions, Peronism meant to create a unified society where there was no struggle between social classes and everybody believed in the same principles. "In describing these concepts, Perón's favorite phrase was "spiritual unity"—the idea that all members of the movement share not only a common set of values but also, in his own phrasing, a common soul" (Hammond, 2013). To achieve so, Peronism deemed necessary the presence of the state's institutions in erecting this kind of society. For instance, there were created state-sponsored organizations to which all members of society would belong, such as labor organizations or the community organizations created by Perón's wife, Evita. These organizations had the goal of shaping people's sets of beliefs and gaining their political affiliation. As it will be outlined in the next section, this usually was done through the implementation of a patronage politics system, that benefited immensely working classes, and the development of an assertive propaganda. Both instruments were considered fundamental in the creation of a new unified society, by professing an inclusivity of formerly disenfranchised groups in the various dimensions of society. For example, Evita Perón performed a radio program, which became incredibly famous, where she dignified the *descamisados* (which were until that point seen as a stain in Argentine society), exalted the purity of the *mestizo* culture and professed the necessity of improving labor rights. In this way, it was underlined the necessity of their inclusion in society for creating a, so called, common soul and, at the same time, that those who were against were part of the anti-pueblo (corrupt elite).

According to the Peronist doctrine, the role of the state did not stop to these social organizations, instead, it had also a tremendous role in the national economy. For example, Perón believed that the state had to give a boost to the economy to be as productive as possible, by asserting that "It is not possible for a young and vigorous economy to wait patiently for private enterprise to reach the necessary maturity" (Perón, 1947, p. 22). On the contrary, he accepts that "the state should coordinate society for the common good and that it can do this without serving class interests" (Perón, 1973, pp. 34-5). Thus, the state had to be a necessary coordinating force in the Argentine economy to create an independent and industrious country with the ideals of social collaboration and social justice. To carry out this goal, Perón's cabinet implemented a vast redistributive policy among society and, at the same time, many sectors of the economy were nationalized. In the next section, it will be analyzed if the Peronist ideology has had a positive impact on Argentina and if it was actually adequate for evolving Argentina into a powerful industrial country.

3.3 Peronism impact on Argentina

Despite being a controversial phenomenon in Argentina, it is undeniable that Peronism has had an enormous effect on the Latin American country. Indeed, it is possible to divide Argentine history (as an independent country) in a pre-Peronist and a post-Peronist era, since the changes and the policies implemented by Perón's cabinets have altered Argentine trajectory irreversibly. Furthermore, the Argentine society has been strongly polarized between anti-Peronists and Peronists since 1945. In this section, it will be outlined how did Peronism impact Argentina in all its dimensions, such as the economy, politics and society as a whole. Moreover, it will be shown how the regime worked and how it polarized Argentine society still to this day.

As it was stated in the previous section, Peronism believed in a “participative” and “involved” state in public matters, from social aspects to economical ones, for the better organization of a community rooted in the concepts of social collaboration and social justice. A clear example of this belief is Perón's speech on the 17th of October 1945, while addressing himself in the third person, he stated: “In this historical hour for the Republic, let Colonel Perón be the link of union that would make indestructible the brotherhood between the people, the army and the police. Let this union be eternal and infinite so this people will grow in the spiritual unity of the true and authentic forces of nationality and order” (cited in Finchelstein 2014: 67). With this statement, he meant to underline the crucial role the state, through the incarnation in its President, has to have in coordinating people's life. Moreover, the measures taken by Perón's cabinet were accordingly rooted in this ideal. The size of the state expanded enormously, by expanding the civil service system, as well as the creation of numerous state-controlled agencies and organizations filled with regime loyalists. “One of the most visible of such entities was the Evita Perón Foundation, established in 1948 to provide social welfare to less privileged and more needy Argentines” (Pappas, 2019). This organizations received many state-paid funding that increased its organization and functioning at such level that it outperformed most of the national ministries. Another fundamental aspect is the support that it did receive. It was not, in fact, just the Justicialist party and the Peronist government to backup these initiatives, but also other crucial actors, like trade unions, individual patrons and the Catholic Church. The Evita Perón Foundation reached such enormous popularity and significance in Argentina that, in 1951, the parliament ruled that a proportion of all lottery tickets, cinema tickets, and gambling proceeds be given to the Foundation.

Perón's plan for a state as a guarantor of social justice was visible in his successful attempt to reform the Argentine constitution in 1949. Perón went on with his plans for constitutional reform shortly after the congressional elections on December 1948 in which he won almost complete control of the senate and a two-thirds majority in parliament, as well as in the constituent assembly. Many Argentine scholars have renamed this constitutional reform as a “Peronist Constitution” because it contained the main principle of Peronism and it also had many political profits for Perón himself.

Firstly, it is fundamental to state that this new constitutional reform went in the opposite ideological direction compared to the Argentine Constitution of 1853. The previous Charter was, in fact, shaped with a liberal prospective, by taking as a model the American Constitution of 1787. For instance, despite some differences

in the scheme for the organization of state powers, the Argentine charter focused just on individual rights, ignoring social rights as the American one. Instead, the constitutional reform of 1949 took a different direction on these aspects, entering into the judicial movement of *constitucionalismo social* (social constitutionalism). This faction defends and promotes the incorporation of social rights (mainly of workers) into constitutions, that started in Central and Latin America (Mexico 1917) and, then, became universally used (Constitution of the Weimar Republic 1919 and Spanish Constitution 1931) against the liberal model taken until that point. In this sense, the Argentine constitution became a clear example. Indeed, the scope of social rights rose exponentially in the 1949 Charter, by incorporating workers' rights (decatalogue of the worker), family rights, seniority rights, education and culture rights. Furthermore, there were other fundamental and revolutionary measures, such as the state protection for science and the art; free and compulsory primary education; university autonomy, the equality of men and women in family relationships and the social function of the property. All these measures were rooted in the Peronist view of social justice and social collaboration.

Although the Charter's social aspects are drawn directly from Peronism, there is also another reason why this constitution is defined as Peronist. The other motivation is the political benefit that Perón had with the adoption of the new constitutional reform. Indeed, there was an amplification of presidential powers which Perón justified as a way to secure Argentine economic independence from foreign influence and to protect workers. However, this expansion of presidential powers also meant the shift of the Argentine political system towards a presidential system. For instance, the new constitution allowed the possibility of presidential re-election (which before was not allowed), it also widened the president's powers of interference in parliament by granting the president a partial veto, in addition to his right to declare a state of siege. Finally, the constitution stipulated that "ministerial arrangements would be notified to the President before the Chambers, untying the institutional relationship that the ministers had maintained with Congress and reducing parliamentary control over the Executive" (Sebastiani, 2003). Thus, the constitutional reform revolutionized not only the social aspects of Argentina, but also its politics by giving huge powers to the president as the true and only incarnation of the State.

Although the 1949 Charter widened his powers, Perón still saw many enemies inside Argentina, which tried to stop his influence. One of them was the press, which the leader himself considered full of lies and against the national interests. For example, he denounced an Argentine major newspaper (*La Prensa*) as "fundamentally anti-Argentine as well as ideologically, culturally, politically, and economically beholden to foreign interests, [in fact,] the capitalist instrument of a small group of proprietors to become the patriotic dominion of five million Argentine workers" (Cane, 2011:2). Although this initial effort to boycott the newspaper failed, it was successful when the newsagents went on a strike against *La Prensa*, which was definitely closed in 1951 following the strong protests of the Peronists. However, this attempt to censorship was not just against this newspaper. Indeed, "through systematic censorship, the detention of journalists, controls over paper distribution, and the strategic allocation of government advertising, Perón was able to control the majority of newspapers in Argentina" (Pappas, 2019). Accordingly, the Peronist cabinet started to

nationalize many media outlets. For example, Evita bought a little known daily, called *Democracia*, in 1947, which was, along with four other papers, magazines, and a radio network, united in a company called Alea S.A. and managed by Perón's administrative secretary. In the same way, Perón's administration formed the Visca–Decker committee, which was originally formed to investigate “anti-Argentine activity”, instead it was used to perform an intimidatory campaign against independent media. By the beginning of the 1950s, Perón's cabinet was able to transform “the vast majority of one of the world's more extensive and developed newspaper industries into an enormous quasi-state media empire” (Cane 2011: 3). The clear consequence was that the Peronist party was the only one to have an outlet for political campaigning, since the other parties were deprived of the possibility of owning media outlets, and it used this advantage to broadcast a Justicialist message to the Argentine population for his intent of shaping their beliefs.

Although the press was considered as an enemy of national interests, it was not the only institution regarded with such hostility by Perón and his cabinet. For instance, the Argentine leader considered the judicial apparatus as deeply anti-Peronist, thus, anti-Argentine. In this sense, he acted accordingly with the appropriate measures to transform this situation. Backed by a strong Parliamentary majority in both chambers (Chamber of Deputies and Senate), Perón was able to impeach all but one of the federal Supreme Court judges on charges of “alleged malfeasance” in April 1947. Afterwards, there were appointed judges that were affiliates or sympathizers with the Justicialist party. In a similar fashion, this was done in provincial courts, when the majority of the state deputies were Peronists. The justification of this overall change of the judiciary can be found in the Peronist disdain of the courts, which was consistent with its typically populist belief in the people's righteousness and purity. This concept was expressed by Perón himself when he stated that: “Justice, besides being independent, should be efficacious, and it cannot be efficacious if its concepts are not in accordance with public sentiment. Justice must be dynamic in its doctrines. Otherwise it frustrates decent public expectations and slows down social development, with grave prejudice to the working classes” (Cited in Lewis 1990: 254, Alston and Gallo 2010: 192). Under such a populist mentality, the Peronist attack on the judiciary continued unstopped, until it produced a partisan judiciary.

After Perón, and his cabinet, succeeded in nationalizing the media sector and creating a Peronist judiciary, Peronism turned its attention to the reshaping of civil society with a Justicialist framework. In particular, these reforms targeted different aspects of people's life, from trade unions to schools and public education programs, as well as the other professional associations. Usually, these institutions became “Peronist”, or strongly influenced by Peronism, through their conversion, in some cases, from independent entities to state-controlled ones. A clear example is the transformation of trade unions' organizational scheme and powers, during Perón's rule in power.

Although the majority of Peronism support came from the labor groups and workers in general, one of Perón's earliest acts was to destroy the independence of Argentina's labor movement. Indeed, after Perón's rise to power many unionists were dislodged from position of influence in the party and the unions and ardent regime supporters replaced old union leaders almost everywhere. These measures were justified by the Peronist

government, in order to ensure that the real interest of workers was pursued by the union's leaders. Thus, "the surviving members of the old guard and the new trade union leaders had to adapt to a radically different new structure, one in which orders came from above" (Di Tella, 1998). Subsequently, it was also passed the Law of Professional Associations, which "forced all unions to acquire official state recognition and forbade employers from bargaining with unrecognized unions" (Horowitz, 1963). In addition, unions could be declared illegal and lose their economic benefits if they decided to oppose Peronism, even if they were already recognized by the state. Thus, the Peronist government permitted the existence of trade unions and improved their overall conditions, permitted that they were loyal to the Justicialist doctrine and the national government. In a similar fashion, the Peronist regime tried to control the national educational system in all its levels. Indeed, the Justicialist footprint in the education became clearly visible. For instance, Eva Perón's *La razón de mi vida* became a mandatory reading in every secondary school of Argentina. However, the measures were even more drastic for universities. Perón's administration, in fact, targeted those professors and deans, which were against Peronism, by forcing their resignations, resulting in the Peronist control of academic governance across the country. These reforms culminate with the University Law of 1947, which "abolished the universities' traditional autonomous status" (Crassweller 1987: 203).

Although the measures previously outlined were impactful and revolutionary for Argentina, the economy was the most altered aspect of the Latin American country by Peronism. Indeed, Perón shaped the national economy accordingly to the Justicialist doctrine, thus, in terms of social justice and organized community. In this sector, the Peronist government has had mixed results, since it benefited the country in the short run. However, it damaged it undoubtedly in the long run and the repercussions of these decisions by the Peronist government are still visible to this day.

As stated in the first section, Argentina was the strongest economy and most developed country in all Latin American in the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, it was one of the world's creditor nations and, unlike many other countries, was untouched by the economic effects of World War Two. The previous governments decided to implement a liberal economic policy, with few controls on the means of production, which increased the overall GDP of the country. However, these measures were ideologically against the Peronist belief. Thus, after Perón's election, his cabinet decided to implement more state-expansionist policies, in order to have a firm control on the means of production. Specifically, the 3 main measures were: the increase of state control on various economic sectors; redistributive policies and other measures that benefited the most impoverished; and the implementation of (selective) patronage politics system (especially for the benefit of the working classes).

As many other populist leaders of Latin America, Perón adopted an economic model that emphasized the role of the state in the economy. The state became a major player through either direct investment or nationalization of (previous) foreign-owned sectors. For example, the Argentine leader nationalized the railways, the central bank and created a national company for the management of electricity and telephonic services. The creation of these state agencies and enterprises led to the hiring of thousands of people in these new roles. Thus, Perón's

economic policies “were based on the growth of the public sector, active support of import substitution industrialization and an expansive fiscal policy” (Filc, 2015).

At the same time, the Peronist government professed the necessity for the implementation of redistributive policies inside Argentina. Indeed, their cabinet enforced a partial redistribution of income and wealth that benefited, primarily, the *descamisados* and other excluded masses. As outlined before, Perón also carried out other measures that benefited the “*pueblo*”, such as a minimum wage, paid vacations and, in general, the recognition of labor rights.

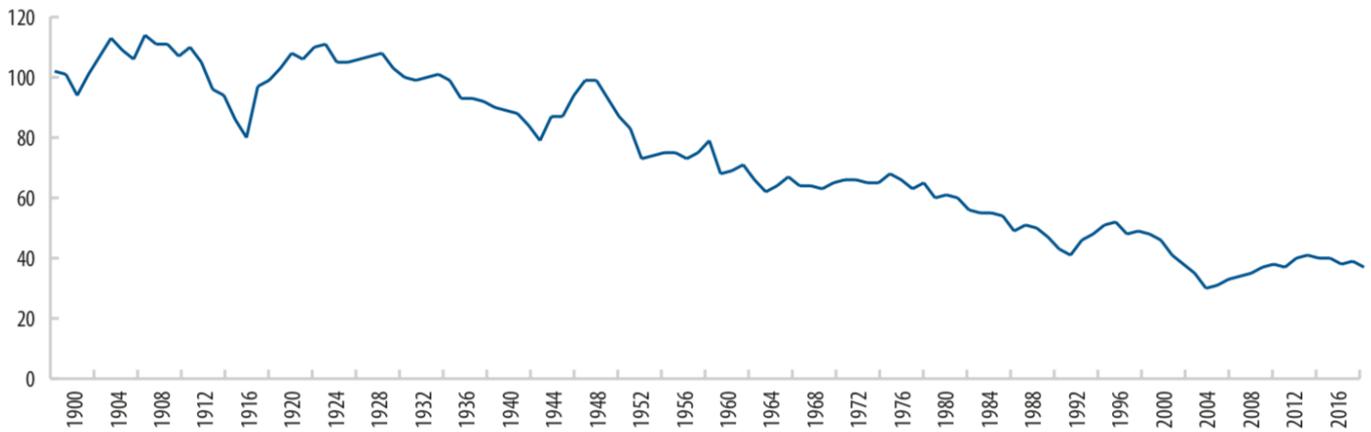
Despite the enormous number benefits that Peronism conceded to lower and working classes, it did not stop there. Indeed, Perón was a strong believer of (selective) patronage politics’ usage, in order to accomplish social justice. However, these means were also used to maintain the *pueblo* on his side. For instance, the Evita Perón foundation, through the use of over \$200 million, built twelve hospitals, a thousand new schools, and various types of housing for low-income Argentinians. Similarly, all those salaried people by the new state enterprises saw their wages rose, as well as their benefits (such as rent freezes, low-cost housing, even new holidays on the calendar). An example of these benefits was the Aguinaldo, “a bonus payment for each worker amounting to one-twelfth of their annual wage income” (McGuire, 1997:53).

However, it is important to note that the majority of these benefits were not administered directly by the government, instead they were given out by the (government-controlled) unions and the Peronist organizations, like the Evita Perón foundation. Thus, “only loyal members could get access, creating a closed shop and stewardship system which strengthened the position of the officials and paved the way for clientelism” (Muno, 2019). In this way, it was created a selective patronage politics, since it was necessary some level of participation to Peronism to utilize these benefits.

Despite these particular measures and the opposition’s fear of an Argentine economic collapse, Perón believed that his economic policy was going to create a high standard of life and keeping the development of Argentina stable. The confidence in his ideas was proven by the letter that he sent to the, newly elected, president of Chile Carlos Ibáñez del Campo containing the following advice: “My dear friend: Give to the people, especially to the workers, all that is possible. When it seems to you that already you are giving them too much, give them more. You will see the results. Everyone will try to scare you with the specter of an economic collapse. But all of this is a lie. There is nothing more elastic than the economy which everyone fears so much because no one understands it” (Cited in Hirschman 1979: 65).

Despite the confidence of his claims directed to his Chilean colleague, Perón’s economic policies proved to be wrong in the long run. Indeed, the economic conditions created by the Peronist government have had a terrible effect on Argentina’s GDP growth, which has kept lowering since 1950 (see Table below).

Argentina's GDP per capita as a percentage of the average of rich economies, 1950–2016



Source: Data from Maddison Project Database, version 2018. Bolt, Jutta, Robert Inklaar, Herman de Jong and Jan Luiten van Zanden (2018).

Note: Rich economies are Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The reasons of this substantial drop cannot be attributed entirely on Perón, but his government gave the first push to this decline. Moreover, as it will be explained in the next section, the strong persistence of Peronism, after Perón downfall, did not create the proper conditions to reverse this trend. However, before analyzing those circumstance, it must be outlined how this decreasing trend started.

Despite the great popularity of Perón's patronage policies among lower classes, those measures had a price. Indeed, Peronism spendthrift tactics, which sharply increased nominal wages, had the consequence of raising also prices, thus, creating an inflationary pressure in the economy. For instance, the exchange rate rose from 4 to 30 pesos per dollar and consumer prices had risen nearly fivefold. This inflationary pressure created many difficulties to various economic sectors, as well as to the citizens which struggled to afford many primary goods. Furthermore, the numerous benefits supplied to the working classes and the *pueblo* in general led to the vertiginous growth of the National Public debt, which has remained in the rest of its history one of the highest in all Latin America.

Although governments in these situations take counteractions to avoid further damage, the Peronist government did not take any. This disinterestedness to these numbers' nature could be seen in Perón's attitude and words. For example, he proclaimed in 1952 that: "Economic calculations don't interest us; we assert social rights for retired housewives; let the actuarial issues be settled by those who come in fifty years" (Cited in Mendoza et al. 1996: 216). This attitude towards the economic calculations ended up to hurt both Perón and, mostly, Argentina as a country. Indeed, "the country spent roughly one-third of the time since 1950 in recession" (World Bank group, 2018). Furthermore, the Argentine economic situation was also one of the reasons that generated the military coup d'état against Perón in 1955, which led to his downfall and exile.

In conclusion, it is undeniable the impact of Perón's regime on Argentina. As stated before, it could be asserted that Argentine history can be divided between a pre and post Perón era, since he is considered the most influential political figure in the country. Moreover, his ideology has had an enormous effect on the Latin American state, even after his overthrowing. In the next section, it will be highlighted the evolution of Argentine politics since 1955 and how Peronism has keeping on affecting Argentine politics enormously, even today.

3.4 The persistence of Peronism in Argentine politics

Despite the huge popularity of Perón among working classes, he was ousted by a military organized coup d'état in 1955. Although the coup was performed by the military, it was also supported by different social groups that precedingly were on Perón side. For instance, the Church, which was a promoter of Peronism in its beginnings for his Catholic message, changed its stance towards the Peronist government. In particular, after the Peronist cabinet tried to introduce some norms that were disliked by the Catholic community, that is, the legalization of prostitution and divorce. In addition, Perón's attempt to create a program of youth education (Catholic Action) was another source of conflict with the Church. All these disputes led to serious tensions with the Church, which escalated in 1954. "In response, Perón had several priests in Córdoba arrested, closed a Catholic newspaper, and placed restrictions on outdoor meetings" (Crassweller 1987: 272). In this way, Peronism lost the support of the National Catholic Church as an institution.

However, the greatest sign of an anti-Peronist wave inside Argentina was the attacks during Perón's rally of support on the Plaza de Mayo on the 16th of June 1955, in which Navy fighter jets flew overhead and dropped bombs into the crowded square, killing 364 people. This event proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back in the Argentine equilibrium, since the country became polarized as never before and started a wave of reprisals from both Peronist and anti-Peronist. All this escalated on 16 September 1955, when a nationalist Catholic group formed by high level officials from both the Army and Navy, led a revolt from Córdoba. This insurgency became a coup three days later, which was named *Revolución Libertadora* (the "Liberating Revolution"). In this process, Perón was able to escape, thanks to the help provided by the Paraguayan leader Alfredo Stroessner.

Although Perón's time at the helm of Argentina lasted less than ten years, Peronism had such an impact on Argentina that its message and devotees are still relevant to Argentine society even today. However, this belief in *Justicialismo* is not just symbolical, but it has also political ramifications. Indeed, the Justicialist party has remained still one of the most important parties of Argentina throughout the country's history. For example, "since its foundation in 1945 by Juan Perón, Peronists governed 35 out of 73 years as presidents, almost half of the whole period" (Muno, 2019). Thus, Peronism has maintained its status as a political force of the Latin American country throughout the 20th and 21st century. In analyzing this persistence of Peronism in Argentine, it is possible to identify 3 main reasons: the nostalgia of Perón's rule, which was considered a golden era compared to the following regimes; Peronism's deep relationship with the working and lower classes; and the identification of Juan Domingo and Evita Perón as protectors of the nation by the *pueblo*.

To understand how Peronism has remained at the center of Argentine politics, it must be outlined the events subsequent to Perón's exile. After the new military regime took power, they had one goal in mind, that is, to destroy Perón's reputation and image before the population. They started a propaganda campaign, which depicted Perón's lifestyle as an expensive and excessive lifestyle. It was even passed a decree (Decree Law 4161/56) that banned any form of Peronism, from the possibility of candidacy for the Justicialist party to the

mere mentioning of Juan Domingo and Evita Perón name. However, they did not stop just on dismantling Perón's image, but also his action as leader of the country. For instance, the constitutional reform of 1949 was suppressed and it was reinstated the original constitution of 1853. Furthermore, the benefits given to lower and working classes were revoked by the new regime. The new ruling power of Argentina wanted to depict, and also considered, Peronism as a pathology that deviates from Argentina's historical path. Peronism was seen as something beyond reality, as a pathology, and as an evil parenthesis in the history of the country. Thus, "with Peron gone, the task was now to resocialize the working class and incorporate it into a more democratic political system" (Plotkin, 1998). However, these attempts did not stop Peronism from affecting the political scene.

Despite this focus on destroying the Peronist rule, the new government, in fact, proved to be politically weak in various occasions. First, there was a continuous power struggle between various military figure, which resulted for the new regime in various changes at the top. Consequently, every government was unstable.

Second, the policy of destroying Perón's image did not help in making Argentina coexist, but it amplified the polarization between Peronists and anti-Peronists. For example, there were several coups attempt against the military regime organized by a Peronist resistance. Another peculiar case was the elections of 1962, where the moderate candidate Arturo Frondizi, supported by the Peronist resistance, won the elections against the favorite Radical Civic Union, but was forced to resign by the military.

Third, the military regime was not able to contrast the declining economic situation of Argentina. "Repeated cycles of short expansions and contractions, increasing inflation and institutional weakness dominated the period" (Alvaredo, Cruces and Gasparini, 2018). During those years, the country's GDP continued on its downward trend and without the benefits offered by the Peronist government the national level of poverty rose tremendously.

The country's general situation led to the spreading of the vision of Peronism as a genuinely liberating movement, which became fashionable in the 1960s and 1970s and helped in the reelection of Perón in 1973. For these reasons, the Peronist rule was admired by some part of the *pueblo*, even not direct supporters of Perón himself, as a nostalgic period. Furthermore, during those decades, the perception of Peronism's role in Argentina changed considerably as well. It was starting to be perceived as unifying phenomenon inside the country.

At the same time, Peronism was still a strongly supported ideology by the working and lower classes. As highlighted throughout the chapter, this loyalty to Peron, and Peronism, was, on the one hand, due to the fact that he made them self-conscious political actors, free from the traditional patterns of social behavior. This view challenges the idea exposed by many scholars of Peron as a manipulator of a passive working class.

On the other hand, Peronism was seen by those social classes as their only way to gain economic and political benefits. During Perón's rule, workers groups, in particular unions, gained for the first time a position of economic (through government's benefits) and political (through the Justicialist party) power. For these reasons, the majority of the working class had a positive opinion about Peronism since it improved their living

conditions through a redistribution of income, their incorporation into the political system and the state apparatus, as well as the reformulation of social relations with other social classes (for example, with the *descamisados*). Thus, Peronism represented the only available channel to the achievement of personal dignity and an improvement in their economic and social conditions for this part of the country. However, its impact and resilience cannot be explained solely in terms of improvements of their living conditions. Indeed, Peron gave the workers a new identity based on symbolic exchange between himself and the masses.

Lastly, the impact of Peronism on the working and lower classes was not just material, but also symbolical. Indeed, the Argentine ideology was able to take the essence of the poor and transform it as a sign of purity, mainly through a strong media propaganda performed by Perón himself and his wife Evita. For this reason, Peronism was able to maintain its popularity and its principal actors, Juan and Evita Perón, are still venerated today. For instance, Buenos Aires is full of murals with Juan and Evita's images and many stalls on the streets sell their photographs. This is not surprising, the impact of Peronism on the poor and working classes has been tremendous, since they were for the first time included into Argentine society as a fundamental member. Furthermore, Evita is regarded also as a Feminist heroine, since she pushed for the improvement of women's conditions and possibilities inside and outside the family in Argentina. For instance, she pushed for the inclusion of women in the workforce and the improvement of family laws. In the sense, Argentina was ahead of the other Latin American Countries and also some European ones. All this helped in creating an affectual narrative around Peronism and its main actors.

So, all these factors helped in the revival of Peronism. This persistence of Peronism does prove that the Argentine ideology did not just govern the country, but it also changed its political culture. For instance, perceptions about the role of the state, the relationship between the state and society, the role of political institutions and parties, the concept of citizenship, and the ways different social groups were regarded in society were reformulated during Peron's years.

Despite the attempt of the military regime to eradicate Peronism, it was not possible to achieve so because it already deeply permeated Argentine society. Indeed, almost every election during this military rule saw the victory of a Peronist supported candidate, which was then forced to resign. This formula lasted until in the election of 1973, in which the victory of a Peronist sponsored candidate was allowed and Perón was able to return from his exile. Moreover, the decree which banned Peronism from Argentina was abolished immediately. He was nominated President, but died one year later in 1974. As with his exile, Peronism did not end with Perón's death, but kept maintaining its status as the top party in Argentina. The proof are the governments of Carlos Menem and Nestor Kirchner, which ruled for long periods in the 90s and early 2000s. Furthermore, the Justicialist party has kept dominating on the turn of the century with the wife of Nestor Kirchner (Cristina Fernández de Kirchner), which has been the primary candidate for the party since the death of her husband.

Although classic Peronism has ended, this ideology has shaped, and is still shaping, Argentina's politics. Indeed, leaders, such as Carlos Menem and Nestor Kirchner, have implemented policies inspired to Peronism

with, obviously, some differences in particular aspects, but the core ideas are very similar. This proves that Peronism has become more than just the figure of Perón. Indeed, the Justicialist ideology has kept developing and transforming throughout the years, but, at the same time, it maintained the populist connotations of Perón's era.

Conclusion

As stated in the introductory section of this paper, populism has affirmed itself in the polity of various nations throughout the world. Despite the multiplicity of its manifestations, populism has some common distinctive elements.

First of all, the opposition between "pure people" and "corrupt elite", as well as the moral rectitude of the former, as highlighted by Mudde in his definition of populism (Mudde, 2004). Other peculiar characteristics of populism, which are a corollary of the one mentioned above, are: the identification with the people through the use of widespread popular values (like religion and general culture) and a common language; the attempt to influence the regularity of political pluralism; the will to control and dominate previously independent institutions; the transformation of the state apparatus to pursue its political objectives; the constant recourse to scapegoats such as all those considered to belong to the hated elites, foreign powers, banks, financial markets, the European Union, other supranational organizations; or simply anyone perceived as a potential or real enemy of the people and especially of their identity (immigrants, Muslims, Jews, Roma people and so on). It must also be said that the affirmation of a populist regime is often preceded by a situation of political and/or economic crisis in the country. In this way, populism uses people's economic and social uncertainties to deeply permeate society to the point of becoming a difficultly reversible condition. For example, as seen in the Argentine case study, Peronism was defined by the military government, after the fall of Perón, as a social "pathology".

In this research paper, it has been tried to prove practically how the definition of Mudde well represents the essential traits of populism and allows to connect also concrete cases like the two treated as case studies, even with all the distinctions, to a single matrix. In fact, his idea of populism as a thin-centred ideology, allows the two case studies, although far from a historical, geographical and ideological perspective, to be both classified as populist actors.

The study retraced the historical motivations that led to the rise of populist movements in the countries under examination, also highlighting the distances, especially from the point of view of the ideological content that characterized their essence. For example, the Argentine case focuses more on socio-economic aspects of society, such as the implementation of workers' rights, while the Hungarian case focuses more on socio-cultural aspects, such as informal discrimination against non-Hungarian minorities. Furthermore, Orbán and his party Fidesz have given through the selective definition of the concept of people (only those who are Hungarian, Catholic etc.) and the selective expansion of participation and social rights, an exclusive connotation to their ideology. On the contrary, Peronism has focused its policy on the need to create a Justicialist society, by professing the inclusiveness of groups previously excluded by the Argentine society, like the *descamisados*.

Finally, it is important to underline that both cases studied had or are having an immense impact on the national politics and society, not only through government reforms, but also thanks to their ability to communicate

their ideological message to the people. As we have seen in Argentina, the influence of these actions is difficult to unhinge in the short and long term, influencing the political and social scenario for several decades.

As already stated, populism is a diversified phenomenon that, due to its thin-centred ideology nature, is accompanied by a stronger ideology that defines its contours in a unique way. More generally, it is the result of the difficulties of liberal democracy to face the central problem of our age, the insecurity (not only economic) of individuals, a difficulty that leaves a legacy of disappointment and failure, and that drags society towards a desperate search for new representation and mobilization.

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Sintesi in Italiano

Introduzione

Il Populismo è un termine che, secondo molti studiosi, è stato impiegato per la prima volta verso la fine del XIX secolo e l'inizio del XX secolo in Russia e negli Stati Uniti per descrivere quelle forze politiche che difendevano gli interessi di classi sociali in ascesa o di gruppi che erano la maggioranza nella società, come la classe media negli Stati Uniti e i contadini in Russia. Nel tempo, questo fenomeno si è diffuso in altre regioni del mondo; di solito, insieme all'attuazione della democrazia in alcune parti del mondo dove prima era assente. Ad esempio, l'America Latina, dopo la fase di decolonizzazione e il tentativo di attuare pratiche democratiche, ha conosciuto una prima ondata di populismo, soprattutto in Brasile e in Argentina con l'elezione di leader populistici come Vargas e Perón rispettivamente.

Dalla fine del XX secolo anche l'Europa è stata travolta dagli ideali populistici dove l'ideologia populista ha acquisito un'importanza significativa nella politica nazionale e internazionale, anche in questi Paesi con una lunga storia di governo democratico, come la Francia o l'Italia.

La ricerca condotta, che si articola su tre capitoli, si pone l'obiettivo di evidenziare come con populismo sono stati nel tempo etichettati fenomeni politici ideologicamente estremamente differenti ma che sono caratterizzati da tratti distintivi comuni. In questo senso, nel primo capitolo della ricerca, si è inteso fornire, attraverso le diverse definizioni e metodologie utilizzate dagli studiosi per definire il fenomeno, le motivazioni alla base del fenomeno populismo nelle sue diverse sfaccettature inquadrando caratteristiche fondanti comuni in tutto il mondo e evidenziandone le differenti forme che esso assume in varie regioni del globo. Per meglio sostenere questa tesi vengono analizzati due casi del fenomeno che ben rappresentano il polimorfismo del populismo che evidenziano come, seppur sviluppandosi in contesti storici, socio politici diversi, il populismo mantiene intatte le sue caratteristiche distintive di base. Nei successivi capitoli quindi vengono approfonditi rispettivamente, un esempio di come questo movimento si sia sviluppato nell'Europa del XX secolo attraverso l'analisi del caso del partito Fidesz ungherese e le condizioni che hanno portato, all'inizio del XX secolo, alla nascita del Peronismo argentino.

Il populismo nel mondo

Prima di passare ad esaminare il fenomeno dell'affermazione del populismo nelle regioni del mondo, che saranno poi scenario dei casi di studio che sono stati analizzati in questo scritto, nel capitolo si è cercato di fornire una definizione del populismo andando ad esaminare le sue caratteristiche principali e gli approcci che sono stati utilizzati nel tempo per cercare di individuare gli elementi che, pur nella diversità delle situazioni, sono distintivi del fenomeno.

Nella ricerca si è proceduto a rappresentare il differente percorso dell'affermazione del fenomeno populismo in differenti contesti geografici. Nel testo infatti partendo da un'analisi delle motivazioni che hanno

determinato la formazione e l'ascesa al potere di partiti populistici in Europa e in America Latina, è stata condotta un'analisi comparativa dei differenti scenari e evoluzioni. Infine sono state approfondite sue manifestazioni del fenomeno per confermare le conclusioni del confronto

Molti studiosi hanno cercato di delineare le principali caratteristiche del populismo e di stabilire una definizione completa del termine. Tuttavia, si è rivelato un compito impegnativo per molte ragioni. In primo luogo, il populismo è un termine che sviluppa diverse componenti che possono variare da un paese all'altro del mondo. Quindi, era necessario trovare una definizione in grado di abbracciare tutte queste diversità e, allo stesso tempo, di dare una risposta pertinente alla comparsa di tutti questi casi specifici. In secondo luogo, il termine ha al suo interno un numero considerevole di caratteristiche diverse che lo compongono, come il rapporto con le "persone" o le ideologie che lo costituiscono. In effetti, è un compito difficile elaborare una definizione di questo fenomeno senza considerare tutti questi aspetti, ma è altrettanto impegnativo considerare tutte queste sfaccettature in un'unica definizione con la stessa rilevanza.

Per poter dare risposta all'esigenza di dare una definizione di populismo il mondo accademico ha seguito diverse linee di pensiero analizzando e delineando le sue caratteristiche principali e arrivando a definire delle teorie basate su tre metodi di studio: un approccio politico-strategico, un approccio socio-culturale e un approccio ideologico. Questo lavoro seguirà l'approccio ideologico e, in particolare, utilizzerà la definizione minima di populismo di Cas Mudde.

Secondo gli studi del politologo olandese Mudde (2004), il populismo è un'ideologia "thin-centered" che divide la società in due gruppi omogenei e contrapposti, il popolo onesto e l'élite corrotta, e che vede la politica come l'espressione della volontà generale del popolo. I concetti centrali di questa definizione, che sono al tempo stesso centrali e costitutivi del populismo come ideologia, sono: ideologia, il popolo, l'élite e la volontà generale. Questo comporta un approccio amico-nemico e l'uso di tutti i mezzi a disposizione per prevalere. Anche per questo motivo spesso l'affermazione di fenomeni populistici è caratterizzata dalla presenza di un leader carismatico che, evitando le strutture tipiche dei partiti tradizionali, instaura un rapporto diretto con i propri seguaci.

Pur essendo un'ideologia riconosciuta, il populismo non possiede lo stesso livello di coerenza e completezza di altri pensieri politici, ma come riportato da Mudde nel suo scritto è una "thin-centred ideology" ovvero un'ideologia dal centro sottile, che non fornisce una linea distintiva e netta utile per trovare le soluzioni ai maggiori problemi politici e sociologici e che, per questo motivo, spesso è compatibile con altre, tanto è vero che nel mondo reale la maggior parte dei populistici lo combina con una o più altre ideologie. Proprio a causa di questa sua caratteristica, il fenomeno del populismo può essere riscontrato sia a sinistra sia a destra dello scenario politico.

Un'ulteriore differenziazione che trova spazio all'interno dell'universo dell'ideologia populista è rappresentata dalla natura inclusiva o esclusiva del fenomeno. Sebbene non vi sia un ampio numero di studi trasversali, è interessante notare che i risultati sembrano in gran parte determinati a livello regionale. Infatti, la maggior parte degli studi sul populismo latinoamericano ne sottolinea il carattere inclusivo, mentre quasi

tutti gli studiosi del populismo europeo ne sottolineano la natura prevalentemente “esclusiva”, ossia la loro volontà di estraniare dei gruppi specifici (migranti, musulmani, minoranze) dal resto della società. Le dinamiche di inclusione ed esclusione costituiscono un aspetto fondamentale del populismo, che invariabilmente oppone chi è parte dell’unità del “popolo”, e quindi deve essere al centro del piano politico, economico e culturale, da quanti ne devono essere tenuti al di fuori.

Infine, un'altra differenza fondamentale nel fenomeno tra le 2 regioni è l'obiettivo principale di questi movimenti populistici. Infatti, il populismo in America Latina ha prevalentemente una dimensione socio-economica (compresi i poveri), mentre il populismo in Europa ha una dimensione principalmente socioculturale (esclusi gli "alieni"). La ragione di ciò è che l'Europa ha, in media, un alto livello di sviluppo che non crea molta povertà. Al contrario, l'America Latina ha registrato un basso livello di sviluppo e una considerevole percentuale di povertà tra i cittadini, grazie al fallimento di vari piani di sviluppo come il Washington consensus.

Per quanto riguarda per il populismo europeo contemporaneo ci sono quattro questioni che rappresentano pietre di paragone e sostengono ideologicamente il fenomeno pur non essendo temi intrinsecamente populistici: l'immigrazione, l'affermazione d'identità subnazionali, la corruzione e l'integrazione europea. Questi quattro temi possono essere espressi in modo diverso e possono essere soggetti a cambiamenti in contesti politici diversi. Per esempio, la questione dell'immigrazione enfatizza il concetto di persone come entità omogenea; mentre, quando la corruzione è il soggetto primario, utilizza un forte disgusto per la politica e il sospetto furtivo che la politica corrompa intrinsecamente la virtù della gente comune. Quindi, questi temi sono presi e trasformati nell'intento del populista.

Negli ultimi anni, il populismo europeo ha sostenuto la rivendicazione di identità subnazionali in vari paesi. In effetti, i casi di partiti che affermano identità diverse contro identità e strutture nazionali più grandi stanno diventando sempre più comuni. Per i populistici, la politica dell'identità regionale è servita da veicolo per l'espressione di una frustrazione più diffusa nei confronti del più ampio funzionamento della politica in generale, piuttosto che per l'affermazione di un'identità subnazionale alternativa. Per i partiti populistici europei motivati dalla loro opposizione alle élite ritratte come scollegate dalle preoccupazioni dei loro cittadini e corrotti dal processo politico, la lontana e complessa architettura dell'UE ne fa una naturale estensione per tali sentimenti. In particolare, due sviluppi hanno aumentato l'importanza dell'euroscetticismo per i populistici europei. Il primo è l'influenza delle questioni europee nella politica interna degli Stati membri. Il secondo evento che ha aumentato la politicizzazione della questione dell'UE è stata la crisi dell'euro che si sta verificando dal 2009. Il paradosso è che l'euroscetticismo emerge sia negli Stati donatori, dove un sentimento comune può essere la frustrazione nel fornire i mezzi per gli altri Stati, così come negli Stati beneficiari, dove le condizioni del salvataggio sono percepite come austere. In entrambi gli estremi, i partiti populistici che sostengono l'ostilità verso gli aspetti dell'integrazione europea hanno prosperato a livello elettorale.

Per completare il quadro europeo del fenomeno è necessario considerare il fenomeno in modo specifico nell'Europa centrale e orientale. La ragione di questa particolare analisi è che quasi tutti i paesi di questa

regione sono stati sotto il controllo dell'Unione Sovietica fino al 1990, il che significa che hanno vissuto istituzioni, regimi e processi di partecipazione politica diversi rispetto al resto d'Europa. Da allora c'è stato un periodo di influenza da parte del mondo occidentale, che ha portato a un periodo di transizione verso un regime democratico e un'economia capitalista, con i suoi pro e i suoi contro per i cittadini. Anche se all'inizio c'è stato il consenso per le riforme liberal-democratiche e capitalistiche dopo la caduta del comunismo, c'è stato un contraccolpo contro le élite tecnocratiche della transizione, quando i cittadini hanno vissuto il duro prezzo della transizione verso un modello democratico. Questo ha aiutato la diffusione del populismo nella regione. Contrariamente all'Europa, l'America Latina ha avuto una ricca storia di movimenti populistici, partiti e leader dall'inizio del ventesimo secolo. Per questo motivo, è considerata da molti studiosi "la terra" del populismo. Dagli anni Trenta e Quaranta ad oggi, i leader populistici hanno dominato i paesaggi politici della regione. Il loro dominio è iniziato con l'emergere della politica di massa con le sfide populiste al dominio delle élite che hanno usato la frode per rimanere al potere ed hanno escluso gran parte della popolazione dal processo politico e sociale. L'ascesa al potere di questi movimenti populistici ha prodotto profonde e durature lealtà politiche e scissioni. In particolare, il fenomeno in America Latina è caratterizzato da 3 ondate: classica degli anni '40 e '60 (ad esempio, Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina e Getulio Vargas in Brasile), neoliberale negli anni '90 (ad esempio, Alberto Fujimori in Perù e Carlos Menem in Argentina) e radicale a partire dagli anni 2000 (ad esempio, Chávez in Venezuela e Morales in Bolivia). Ognuna di queste ha avuto caratteristiche diverse fra di loro dovuto al proprio periodo storico di appartenenza.

Negli anni '30 e '40 la società Latino Americana era di tipo latifondista con rapporti di dominio e subordinazione caratterizzati da una reciprocità ineguale, che escludeva la maggioranza della popolazione dalla politica e dalla sfera pubblica, mantenendo quei ruoli nelle mani delle élite. Per questo motivo, il populismo in America Latina manifestava un approccio anti-elitario che era, ed è tuttora, per lo più inclusivo. Questo era professato per permettere l'inclusione di molti gruppi precedentemente esclusi nella società dell'epoca, come i *descamisados* in Argentina. Per consentire l'inclusione di gran parte della popolazione nella sfera pubblica, i leader populistici classici degli anni Trenta e Quaranta, come Juan Perón e José María Velasco, "hanno combattuto contro i brogli elettorali, hanno ampliato il franchising, e sono stati esaltati come l'incarnazione delle vere tradizioni e dei valori della nazione, non corrotti, contro quelli delle élite orientate all'estero" (de la Torre, 2017). Per fare ciò, i leader populistici hanno adottato modelli economici che sottolineavano il ruolo dello Stato nell'economia, che è diventato un attore principale attraverso l'investimento diretto o la nazionalizzazione delle imprese di proprietà straniera. Queste politiche socio-economiche populiste hanno portato a una parziale redistribuzione del reddito e della ricchezza a beneficio delle masse escluse. Un altro aspetto chiave del populismo latinoamericano è il legame tra i leader e i seguaci. Nel fare ciò, è possibile distinguere quattro tipi di collegamento: l'organizzazione populista, il clientelismo, i mass media e il discorso populista.

In primo luogo, le organizzazioni populiste si basano un'idea del popolo rispondente all'ideale che il Leader ha dello stesso e pertanto il popolo è considerato come un gruppo omogeneo.

In secondo luogo, i partiti e i movimenti populistici latinoamericani traggono la loro forza attraverso reti di clientele che distribuiscono risorse e posti di lavoro al popolo ovvero a una maggioranza esclusa. Inoltre i partiti di potere populistici esaltavano le coscienze attraverso il ricorso ad una forma di linguaggio che coalizzava il popolo attribuendo allo stesso il ruolo di essenza della nazione.

In terzo luogo, i populistici latinoamericani sono considerati da molti studiosi come innovatori nell'uso dei media a fini politici. Infatti, molti leader populistici hanno formato sedi mediatiche di proprietà dello Stato, che sono state e sono tuttora utilizzate come strumenti di propaganda governativa nelle mani dell'esecutivo.

Sebbene l'America Latina sia considerata la terra del populismo, ci sono alcuni Paesi che non hanno mai sperimentato il fenomeno o che non sono mai stati in grado di ottenere un forte sostegno. Tali Paesi sono la Colombia, il Costa Rica, il Cile e l'Uruguay. Le due spiegazioni più comuni per l'assenza di populismo in alcune nazioni dell'America Latina sono: un forte sistema di partiti e una democrazia liberale funzionante che garantisce lo stato di diritto.

Come sostiene Kenneth Roberts (2015), il populismo è il risultato di una crisi della rappresentanza politica. Per esempio, i partiti tradizionali dell'Uruguay e del Cile hanno incluso coloro che erano precedentemente esclusi, quindi non c'è stata la necessità di una sfida populista.

Il caso di studio Ungheria

Come già detto nella ricerca si è deciso di ripercorrere due casi di studio per meglio sostenere la tesi alla base dell'intero scritto il primo di questi è quello relativo all'affermazione del populismo in Ungheria.

Per poter meglio inquadrare il fenomeno ungherese è necessario prima comprendere gli eventi che hanno costituito i presupposti dell'affermazione del populismo in questo paese. Come molto spesso avviene sono avvenimenti connessi a uno stato di profonda crisi economica.

Come molti altri paesi ex comunisti, l'Ungheria ha dovuto ricominciare da zero nel 1989. In particolare, era necessaria una trasformazione su due livelli: da un'economia nazionalizzata a un'economia capitalista e da uno Stato satellite comunista a una democrazia liberale indipendente. Sebbene entrambe le transizioni siano state pacifiche, l'impatto sulla società è stato difficile, almeno all'inizio. L'economia è rimasta stagnante per molti anni, le imprese private hanno avuto difficoltà ad affermarsi nell'economia nazionale e il PIL è stato uno dei più bassi del continente europeo. In seguito, la costituzione del gruppo Visegrád (un'alleanza politica e culturale tra Ungheria, Cecoslovacchia [oggi Repubblica Ceca e Slovacchia] e Polonia) nel 1991 ha contribuito al miglioramento delle condizioni economiche di ogni paese cooperando in vari settori politici, come l'economia, l'esercito e più tardi l'integrazione nell'UE. Ma il vero shock doveva essere a livello nazionale da parte della classe politica appena creata.

In questo contesto e per tutti gli anni Novanta, il nascente sistema partitico ungherese sembrava ben cristallizzato in un moderato formato multipartitico (6 partiti, 3 campi politico-ideologici). I tre campi erano: la destra nazionale conservatrice (MDF, FKGP e i cristiano-democratici), il centro liberale (Fidesz e l'alleanza dei liberi democratici) e la sinistra sociale (partito socialista). In un partito così pluralista, dove ogni campo

era caratterizzato "dalla composizione socio-culturale molto simile delle loro élite politiche e delle loro basi elettorali" (Körösenyi 1999: 32), la prima Ungheria post-comunista era effettivamente divisa da diverse fenditure lungo linee di classe, territoriali e ideologiche.

Tuttavia, questa situazione è cambiata piuttosto bruscamente una volta che Fidesz, un partito inizialmente basato sulla gioventù, formatosi nel 1988 per combattere il comunismo e promuovere il liberalismo, ha deciso nel 1993 di convertirsi all'ideologia populista.

Contemporaneamente a queste trasformazioni politiche è avvenuta la transizione dal comunismo al capitalismo, da un'economia "chiusa" ad un'economia di mercato che si è rivelata immensamente brutale. In primo luogo, le politiche comuniste di piena occupazione sono state smantellate. Questo ha portato milioni di persone a diventare disoccupati nel giro di pochi anni. In secondo luogo, l'economia ungherese è stata sottoposta al trattamento d'urto della Banca Mondiale e del Fondo Monetario Internazionale (FMI). In effetti, il paese magiara aveva bisogno di dipendere fortemente dall'afflusso di capitale straniero e dalle rimesse del lavoro espatriato per finanziare grandi disavanzi per soddisfare le condizioni poste da queste istituzioni capitalistiche. Infine, molti settori sono diventati di proprietà o profondamente influenzati dalle imprese straniere. Ad esempio, il sistema bancario era dominato da diverse banche europee.

Tutti questi cambiamenti hanno creato conseguenze terribili per l'economia ungherese, quando la crisi economica ha colpito l'ex paese comunista nel 2008. Le principali conseguenze sono state il decisivo aumento del tasso di disoccupazione dal 7,41% nel 2008 al 10,03% nel 2009 (fonte: Banca Mondiale), il fallimento di molti settori economici che facevano affidamento su capitali stranieri e le conseguenti misure di austerità adottate dal governo socialista.

Queste ultime misure, dettate dall'UE, hanno ulteriormente rovinato la condizione media dei cittadini ungheresi e, di conseguenza, hanno attirato il rancore contro il partito socialista, che Fidesz è stato magistralmente in grado di sfruttare, denunciando il MSzP per aver messo in ombra l'interesse ungherese per l'élite straniera.

In questo scenario Fidesz, attraverso il suo leader Orbán, ha approvato un nuovo discorso politico costruito sulla metaforica polarizzazione tra passato e presente comunista, sullo scontro tra interessi nazionali e internazionali e, soprattutto, sugli interessi opposti delle "élite" al potere e del "popolo" utilizzando spesso per arringare la folla uno "stile paranoico" caratterizzato da accesa esagerazione, diffidenza e una forte visione complottista e apocalittica delle condizioni politiche e sociali del Paese. Fin dal suo sviluppo verso un discorso populista, "Fidesz ha considerato il maggioritarismo come l'affermazione del dominio dei valori e delle norme della maggioranza o come un tipo di procedura decisionale" (Enyedi, 2016). In altre parole, gli interessi collettivi della comunità nazionale superano gli interessi degli individui e delle minoranze. Inoltre, la loro idea di governare è un completo rifiuto del multiculturalismo, che porta a rappresentare solo i valori e la volontà della maggioranza, oltre a limitare la presenza di sottoculture non convenzionali (ad esempio minoranze sessuali e religiose) nello spazio pubblico. Dalle elezioni nel 2010 che hanno visto affermarsi con una forte maggioranza, Fidesz, la politica attuata dal partito di Orbán ha effettuato una sistematica esclusione

dell'opposizione dal processo decisionale (ad esempio, dalla nomina dei giudici della Corte costituzionale, dalla redazione della nuova costituzione e dei suoi emendamenti, o dalla regolamentazione dei confini delle circoscrizioni), utilizzando la supremazia che i seggi conquistati gli attribuivano per realizzare tali riforme.

Il caso di studio Argentina

In questo capitolo della ricerca è stato delineato il caso peronismo che ha condizionato e ancora condiziona lo scenario politico dell'Argentina. È interessante sottolineare che nonostante il diverso continente e il divario temporale di quasi 100 anni, il populismo è cresciuto in Argentina con condizioni e caratteristiche simili a quelle dell'Ungheria. Nello specifico, anche il Paese sudamericano ha vissuto una crisi politica e sociale e, allo stesso modo, una figura politica, Juan Domingo Perón, ha saputo sfruttare questa situazione a suo vantaggio. Inoltre, la sua politica e la sua ideologia (il Peronismo) hanno avuto un impatto duraturo sulla politica e sulla società argentina, che è ancora oggi visibile. Nel testo sono analizzati i contenuti del Peronismo, partendo dai fattori e i procedimenti che hanno portato all'ascesa al potere di Perón.

Dopo la guerra d'indipendenza contro la Spagna e la guerra civile del XIX secolo, l'Argentina ha iniziato il XX secolo come la forza economica più forte del continente e una delle poche con uno stato democratico semi-sviluppato. Queste conquiste sono state alimentate dal settore industriale più produttivo e da quello agricolo del Sud America, nonché dalle forti ondate migratorie di europei, soprattutto italiani e spagnoli, che hanno aumentato la produttività dell'Argentina. Oltre a questi successi economici, l'Argentina fu uno dei primi Paesi sudamericani ad installare il suffragio universale e segreto maschile, proprio nel 1912.

I primi decenni del XX secolo sono stati infatti caratterizzati in Argentina da instabilità politica alla quale si contrapponeva una forte espansione economica tanto da farle guadagnare il titolo di prima nazione industriale dell'America Latina.

Ciò è stato possibile grazie alle politiche di sostituzione delle importazioni che incoraggiarono la formazione di industrie locali, introducendo sussidi e protezioni tariffarie. In questo modo, si è avuto un aumento complessivo del livello di industrializzazione del Paese che ha favorito la quasi la piena occupazione, un aumento dei salari medi, determinando un miglioramento della legislazione del lavoro e la creazione di una classe operaia forte e unificata.

Ma contrapposta a questi provvedimenti economici di successo c'era la situazione dei poveri diseredati (*descamisados*) che erano esclusi da questa situazione di benessere generale e vedevano i loro diritti politici negati. In questo clima il nuovo colpo di Stato nel giugno 1943 che portò al potere un gruppo di ufficiali militari nazionalisti, tra cui il colonnello Juan Domingo Perón passò quasi sotto silenzio. Nei due anni successivi Peron riuscì a catalizzare il consenso dei lavoratori e del popolo attraverso la promozione di un piano di riforme che gli procurò l'avversione di una parte del governo e agli industriali nazionali che lo considerarono una minaccia per il loro status quo.

Nel febbraio del 1946, Perón vinse le elezioni con il 52,8% dei voti, diventando, secondo molti studiosi, il primo leader populista del nuovo mondo liberale del dopoguerra.

Il fenomeno del peronismo ben si colloca nel quadro della definizione di populismo di Muddle in ragione di ragione di sue diverse caratteristiche.

In primo luogo, la lotta manichea tra il popolo puro e l'élite corrotta è chiaramente presente nell'ideologia peronista, come lo stesso Perón, ad esempio, affermava che la società argentina aveva una chiara lotta tra "pueblo e antipueblo, il primo in lotta per l'indipendenza e il secondo parte di una tradizione storicamente colonialista" (citato in Brennan, 1998). In questo scontro, Perón si schiera dalla parte del "popolo", affermando che "il giustizialismo è in sostanza popolare" (Perón, 1950) nel suo discorso del 1950 sul "las veinte verdades del justicialismo". Così, il Peronismo ha come obiettivo quello di realizzare la volontà generale del popolo. In secondo luogo, la caratterizzazione del Peronismo come populismo, secondo la categorizzazione di Mudde, implica che il fenomeno argentino rappresenta a pieno il concetto di un'ideologia sottile, e in quanto tale può essere associato ad altri quadri teorici. Come evidenziato nel testo dello studio, il Peronismo è composto e influenzato, in una certa misura, da diversi dogmi contemporaneamente al corporativismo, al socialismo, al nazionalismo e al cristianesimo. Per concludere il populismo latinoamericano sostiene un carattere inclusivo e il Peronismo non è un'anomalia in questo senso. Anzi, il populismo argentino sostiene l'inclusività su tutti e tre gli aspetti: politico, materiale e simbolico. I maggiori beneficiari di queste misure inclusive sono state le classi lavoratrici e le persone estremamente povere. Allo stesso modo, il Peronismo ha dato per la prima volta alle classi lavoratrici e a parte della classe media un mezzo per esprimere la loro volontà politica, che è stata principalmente ignorata dall'establishment politico precedente.

L'ultima caratteristica essenziale dell'ideologia peronista è la convinzione di costruire una "comunità organizzata" e di attuare una "giustizia sociale". Con queste definizioni, il Peronismo intendeva creare una società unificata dove non ci fosse lotta tra le classi sociali e tutti credessero negli stessi principi. "Nel descrivere questi concetti, la frase preferita di Perón era "unità spirituale", l'idea che tutti i membri del movimento condividono non solo un insieme comune di valori ma anche, nella sua stessa frase, un'anima comune" (Hammond, 2013)

Anche se il Peronismo classico è finito, questa ideologia ha plasmato, e sta plasmando, la politica argentina. Infatti, leader come Carlos Menem e Nestor Kirchner hanno attuato politiche ispirate al Peronismo con, ovviamente, alcune differenze in aspetti particolari, ma le idee di fondo sono molto simili. Questo dimostra che il Peronismo è diventato qualcosa di più di una semplice figura di Perón. In effetti, l'ideologia giustizialista ha continuato a svilupparsi e a trasformarsi nel corso degli anni, ma, allo stesso tempo, ha mantenuto le connotazioni populiste dell'epoca peronista.

Conclusione

In questo lavoro di ricerca si è cercato di dimostrare concretamente come la definizione di Mudde rappresenti bene i tratti essenziali del populismo e permetta di collegare anche casi concreti come i due trattati come casi studio, pur con tutte le distinzioni, a un'unica matrice. Infatti, la sua idea di populismo come ideologia thin-

centered, permette di classificare i due casi studio, anche se lontani da una prospettiva storica, geografica e ideologica, come attori populistici.

Lo studio ha ripercorso le motivazioni storiche che hanno portato alla nascita dei movimenti populistici nei Paesi in esame, evidenziandone anche le distanze, soprattutto dal punto di vista del contenuto ideologico che ne caratterizzava l'essenza. Ad esempio, il caso argentino si concentra maggiormente sugli aspetti socio-economici della società, come l'attuazione dei diritti dei lavoratori, mentre il caso ungherese si concentra maggiormente sugli aspetti socio-culturali, come la discriminazione informale delle minoranze non ungheresi. Inoltre, Orbán e il suo partito Fidesz hanno dato attraverso la definizione selettiva del concetto di persone (solo quelle ungheresi, cattoliche, ecc.) e l'espansione selettiva della partecipazione e dei diritti sociali, una connotazione esclusiva della loro ideologia. Al contrario, il Peronismo ha focalizzato la sua politica sulla necessità di creare una società giustizialista, professando l'inclusività di gruppi precedentemente esclusi dalla società argentina, come i descamisados.

Infine, è importante sottolineare che entrambi i casi studiati hanno avuto o stanno avendo un grande impatto sulla politica e sulla società dei rispettivi Paesi, non solo attraverso le riforme governative, ma anche grazie alla loro capacità di comunicare il messaggio ideologico alla popolazione. Come abbiamo visto in Argentina, l'influenza di queste azioni è difficile da scardinare nel breve e nel lungo periodo, influenzando lo scenario politico e sociale per diversi decenni.