Cas Mudde[1]

The Populist Zeitgeist

Populism seems to become stronger the more intellectuals criticize it.[2]

SINCE THE 1980S THE RISE OF SO-CALLED 'POPULIST PARTIES' HAS GIVEN rise to thousands of books, articles, columns and editorials. Most of them are of an alarming nature, as these 'new populists' are generally seen as a threat to liberal democracy. Though authors are not always sure what exactly characterizes these parties, they do agree that parties like the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the French National Front (FN), or the Dutch List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) are 'populist'. Another point on which most commentators agree is that 'populism is understood as a pathological form, pseudo- and post-democratic, produced by the corruption of democratic ideals.'[3] German scholars in particular consider right-wing populists, in line with the theory of Erwin K. Scheuch and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, to be a 'normal pathology' of western democracies.[4]

[2] Pierre-André Taguieff, 'Political Science Confronts Populism: From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem', *Telos*, 103 (1995), p. 43.
[3] Ibid., p. 9.
[4] Erwin K. Scheuch and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, 'Theorie des Rechtsradikalismus in westlichen Industriegesellschaften', *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik*, 12 (1967), pp. 11–19. While they used this terminology for right-wing *radicalism*, recent authors have also applied it to right-wing *populism*. See, most notably, Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1994.

The aim of this article is to make a threefold contribution to the current debate on populism in liberal democracies. First, a clear and new definition of populism is presented. Second, the normal-pathology thesis is rejected; instead it is argued that today populist discourse has become mainstream in the politics of western democracies. Indeed, one can even speak of a populist Zeitgeist.[5] Third, it is argued that the explanations of and reactions to the current populist Zeitgeist are seriously flawed and might actually strengthen rather than weaken it.

DEFINING THE UNDEFINABLE

In the public debate there are two dominant interpretations of the term populism, both are highly charged and negative. In the first, populism refers to the politics of the *Stammtisch* (the pub), i.e. a highly emotional and simplistic discourse that is directed at the 'gut feelings' of the people. In more prosaic terminology, '(p)opulists aim to crush the Gordian knots of modern politics with the sword of alleged simple solutions.'[6] Though this definition seems to have instinctive value, it is highly problematic to put into operation in empirical studies. When is something 'emotional' rather than 'rational', or 'simplistic' rather than 'serious'? Moreover, sloganesque politics constitute the core of political campaigning, left, right and centre.

In the second meaning, populism is used to describe opportunistic policies with the aim of (quickly) pleasing the people/voters – and so 'buying' their support – rather than looking (rationally) for the 'best option'. Examples are lowering taxes just before elections, or promising financial advantages to all people without any

additional costs. But who decides whether policies are 'sound' or 'honest', rather than 'populist' or 'opportunistic'? As Ralf Dahrendorf perceptively noted, 'the one's populism, is the other one's democracy, and vice versa.'[7]

Despite the fact that both interpretations of populism are widespread, and seem to have some intrinsic value, they do not go to the core of what is generally considered as populism in the academic literature. In fact, both phenomena are better covered by other terms: demagogy and opportunism, respectively. While conceptual clarity and definitional consensus are not much closer within the academic community, most definitions of populism have at least two points of reference in common: 'the elite' and 'the people'.[8] In other words, populism says something about the relationship between 'the elite' and 'the people'. John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira have summarized this key relationship clearly and forcefully: 'the people versus the powerful'.[9] But this still leaves the question of what populism *is*: an ideology, a syndrome, a political movement or a political style?[10]

I define populism 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*.[11] Populism, so defined, has two opposites: elitism and pluralism. Elitism is populism's mirror-image: it shares its Manichean worldview, but wants politics to be an expression of the views of the moral elite, instead

[7] Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Acht Anmerkungen zum Populismus', *Transit. Europäische Revue*, 25 (2003), p. 156.

[8] See, *inter alia*, Werner W. Ernst, 'Zu einer Theorie des Populismus', in Anton Pelinka (ed.), *Populismus in Österreich*, Vienna, Junius, 1987, pp. 10–25; Margaret Canovan, *Populism*, London, Junction, 1981.

[9] John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, New York, Scribner, 2002.

[10] See on the first three, respectively, the contributions by Donald MacRae, Peter Wiles, and Kenneth Minogue in Ghiţa Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds), *Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969. On the latter see, *inter alia*, Pierre-André Taguieff, *L'illusion populiste*, Paris, Berg International, 2002; Armin Pfahl-Traughber, *Volkes Stimme? Rechtspopulismus in Europa*, Bonn, Dietz, 1994.

[11] This definition is the result of continuous and stimulating debates with Jan Jagers; see also his forthcoming PhD, provisionally entitled 'De Stem van het Volk? Een Onderzoek naar Populistische Retoriek bÿ de Vlaamse Politieke Partÿen' (University of Antwerp).

of the amoral people.[12] Pluralism, on the other hand, rejects the homogeneity of both populism and elitism, seeing society as a heterogeneous collection of groups and individuals with often fundamentally different views and wishes.

Though populism is a distinct ideology, it does not possess 'the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency' as, for example, socialism or liberalism.[13] Populism is only a 'thin-centred ideology', exhibiting 'a restricted core attached to a narrower range of political concepts'.[14] The core concept of populism is obviously 'the people'; in a sense, even the concept of 'the elite' takes its identity from it (being its opposite, its nemesis). As a thin-centred ideology, populism can be easily combined with very different (thin and full) other ideologies, including communism, ecologism, nationalism or socialism.[15]

Populism is moralistic rather than programmatic.[16] Essential to the discourse of the populist is the *normative* distinction between 'the elite' and 'the people', not the empirical difference in behaviour or attitudes. Populism presents a Manichean outlook, in which there are only friends and foes. Opponents are not just people with different priorities and values, they are *evil*! Consequently, compromise is impossible, as it 'corrupts' the purity.[17]

Contrary to other definitions,[18] populism is here not defined on the basis of a special type of organization, i.e. charismatic leadership,

[12] However, according to many negative accounts of populism, 'Élitism seems to be the hidden logic of populism', Nadia Urbinati, 'Democracy and Populism', *Constellations*, 5: 1 (1998), p. 113.

[13] A. E. van Niekerk, *Populisme en Politieke Ontwikkeling in Latijns-Amerika*, Rotterdam, Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, 1972, p. 37.

[14] Michael Freeden, 'Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?', *Political Studies*, 46: 4 (1998), p. 750.

[15] Cf. Frank Decker, *Parteien unter Druck. Der neue Rechtspopulismus in den westlichen Demokratien*, Opladen, Westdeutscher, 2000; Paul Taggart, *Populism*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 2000; Taguieff, 'Political Science Confronts Populism', op. cit., pp. 9–43.

[16] Peter Wiles, 'A Syndrome, Not a Doctrine: Some Elementary Theses on Populism', in Ionescu and Gellner, *Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, op. cit., p. 167.

[17] Note, ironically, the similarity with much of the anti-right-wing populist discourse, which opposes in biological terms any compromise or cooperation because 'the populist virus' will 'contaminate' the democratic 'body'.

[18] See, *inter alia*, Kurt Weyland, 'Clarifying a Contested Concept. Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics', *Comparative Politics*, 34: 1 (2001), pp. 1–22; Taggart, *Populism*, op. cit.; van Niekerk, *Populisme en Politieke Ontwikkeling in Latijns-Amerika*, op. cit.

or as a special style of communication, i.e. without intermediaries. While charismatic leadership and direct communication between the leader and 'the people' are common among populists, these features *facilitate* rather than define populism. Indeed, the current success of populist actors cannot be separated from the general trend towards strong party leaders and more direct communication between party leadership and party supporters, which has developed over the past decades.[19]

It is important to note that although this definition is broad, and open to many usages, this does not mean that all political actors are (at every time) populist. Despite the move towards a more catch-all profile, the ideological programmes of most mainstream parties still accept the pluralist worldview of liberal democracy. In fact, many of the quintessential contemporary 'populists' do not always use a populist discourse. For example, the Flemish Block (VB), which now claims to say what the people think, initially referred to the people as the 'intellectual proletariat',[20] while the late Pim Fortuyn openly acknowledged that his lifestyle and some of his views were far too progressive for his supporters, i.e. 'the people'.

A lot has been written about the vagueness of the term 'the people' in the usage of populists. Some commentators have argued that the term is nothing more than a rhetorical tool that does not truly refer to any existing group of people. Others have given a class interpretation to it, arguing that populists mean not all the people but only a certain class segment.[21] Paul Taggart rightfully rejects the class interpretation, and tries to clarify the use of the term 'the people' by introducing an alternative term, 'the heartland'. According to him, the heartland is a place 'in which, in the populist imagination, a virtuous and unified population resides'.[22]

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[19] On this development, which takes place in virtually all political parties (populist or not), see Klaus von Beyme, 'Party Leadership and Change in Party Systems: Towards a Postmodern Party State?', *Government and Opposition*, 31: 2 (1996), pp. 135–59.

[20] See Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 112.

[21] E.g. Torcuato S. Di Tella, 'Populism into the Twenty-First Century', *Government and Opposition*, 32: 2, 1997, pp. 187–200; Peter Worsley, 'Populism', in Joel Krieger (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 730–1; Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, London, New Left Books, 1977.

[22] Taggart, *Populism*, op. cit., p. 95.

The concept of the heartland helps to emphasize that the people in the populist propaganda are neither real nor all-inclusive, but are in fact a mythical and constructed sub-set of the whole population. In other words, the people of the populists are an 'imagined community', much like the nation of the nationalists.[23] At the same time, the notion of the heartland does not overcome the main problem of the people, its vagueness. It is as unclear, and has consequently been used differently from populist to populist, even within one country. For example, for the British Conservatives the British heartland used to be 'Middle England', while the extreme right British National Party refers to 'the native British people'.

What is often clearer is who and what populists are *against*. In liberal democratic systems, where political parties are the main actors in the process of representation, it comes as no surprise that in the propaganda of populists, anti-party sentiments play a prominent role.[24] In an often implicitly Rousseauian fashion, populists argue that political parties corrupt the link between leaders and supporters, create artificial divisions within the homogeneous people, and put their own interests above those of the people. However, as populists are reformist rather than revolutionary,[25] they do not oppose political parties per se. Rather, they oppose the established parties, call for (or claim to be) a new kind of party; i.e. they express populist anti-party sentiments rather than extremist anti-party sentiments.[26]

To clarify the concept further, let's briefly look at various misunderstandings about populism. Although populists can be emancipatory, they do *not* want to change the people themselves, but rather their status within the political system. Populists (claim to) speak in the name of the 'oppressed people', and they want to emancipate them by making them aware of their oppression. However, they do not want to change their values or their 'way of life.' This is

[23] On the latter, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983.

[24] Cf. Susan Scarrow and Thomas Poguntke (eds), *European Journal of Political Research*, 29: 3 (1996), special issue on anti-party sentiments.

[25] Cf. Taggart, *Populism*, op. cit. The fact that populists, like Northern League leader Umberto Bossi, claim to strive for 'a revolution' does not take away the fact that they look, at best, for radical changes *within* the existing democratic system.

[26] For a discussion of anti-party sentiments within national populist parties, and the distinction between populist and extremist anti-party sentiments, see Cas Mudde, 'The Paradox of the Anti-Party Party: Insights from the Extreme Right', *Party Politics*, 2: 2 (1996), pp. 265–76.

fundamentally different from, for example, the (early) socialists, who want(ed) to 'uplift the workers' by re-educating them, thereby liberating them from their 'false consciousness'. For populists, on the other hand, the consciousness of the people, generally referred to as *common sense*, is the basis of all good (politics).

Populism is not necessarily opposed to technocratic measures, particularly if they can help to do away with (established) politicians. Indeed, one of the most successful populist movements, Social Credit in Canada, argued for a largely technocratic regime. In their view, 'the people should be consulted about the broad parameters of policy while experts should produce mechanisms to bring this policy about.'[27] What is central to this view is that the experts do not *alter* the wishes of the people; they should just ensure that the people's wishes are implemented in the best possible way. This trust in 'experts', and the simultaneous distrust of politicians, can also be found in the ideas of contemporary populists, most notably Silvio Berlusconi and Pim Fortuyn.

Finally, some popular views in the literature need nuance rather than rejection. Firstly, various authors have argued that populism is 'reluctantly political'.[28] I believe that this statement needs further qualification to be fully accurate. If one looks at certain populist *actors*, such as Filip Dewinter (VB) or Jörg Haider (FPÖ), one cannot seriously argue that they are reluctantly political. They don't even necessarily claim this themselves. Rather, the *heartland* of the populist leaders is reluctantly political (see below).

Secondly, much of the literature argues that populism is a phenomenon of (social) crises. With respect to the recent 'populist movement', the alleged crisis is the result of the transformation to a post-industrial society, as well as the inadequate way in which social democracy has tried to deal with it.[29] Perhaps crisis is too harsh a term, but the populist heartland becomes active only when there are special circumstances: most notably, the combination of persisting political resentment, a (perceived) serious challenge to 'our way of life', and the presence of an attractive populist leader. However, what sets the populist heartland apart from other protest-prone groups is

[27] Taggart, *Populism*, op. cit., p. 68.

[28] Ibid., p. 3.

[29] René Cuperus, 'The Populist Deficiency of European Social Democracy', *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, 3 (2003), pp. 83–109; Michael Ehrke, *Rechtspopulismus in Europa: die Meuterei der Besitzstandswahrer*, Bonn, FES Library, 2002.

their *reactiveness*; they generally have to be mobilized by a populist actor, rather than taking the initiative themselves.

In the following analysis I will focus primarily on the populist Zeitgeist that has been characteristic of liberal democracies since the early 1990s. Examples will be drawn mostly from political parties in Western Europe, and at times also from Australia, New Zealand and North America.[30]

CONTEMPORARY POPULISM

Obviously, the phenomenon of populism is hardly new to politics in liberal democracies. Indeed, the US People's Party of the late nineteenth century is considered to be one of the defining populist movements. Even in post-war Europe there have been various populist phenomena: most notably the Italian Common Man's Front of Guglielmo Giannini (late 1940s), the French Union for the Defence of Merchants and Artisan of Pierre Poujade (late 1950s), the Dutch Farmers Party of 'Boer (Farmer) Koekoek' (1960s), or the Danish Progress Party of Mogens Glistrup (1970s).

While all these parties are generally categorized at the right of the political spectrum – though they are far from identical in ideological terms – in the period between the late 1960s and the early 1980s the populist critique came mainly from the (new) left. The main actors were the militant students in 1968, the New Left and New Social Movements in the 1970s, and the Green or New Politics parties in the early 1980s. In classic populist fashion, the early Greens despised politics and 'the political elite'. In all ways – ideological, organizational, and participatory – they presented themselves as the exact opposites of the established parties. At the same time, Green parties represented the people as a whole, often championing the common sense and decent values of 'the people'.[31]

[30] Eastern Europe, on the other hand, will feature only scarcely in this article. Though similar forms of populism are prevalent in the eastern part of Europe too, discussing their specific roots and solutions would obscure more than it would enlighten. For a discussion of populism in Eastern Europe, see Cas Mudde, 'In Name of the Peasantry, the Proletariat, and the People: Populisms in Eastern Europe', *East European Politics and Societies*, 15: 1 (2001), pp. 33–53.

[31] See Paul Taggart, *The New Populism and the New Politics. New Protest Parties in Sweden in a Comparative Perspective*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, pp. 24–5; Patrick

Today, populism is again mainly associated with the (radical) right. The most noted examples of contemporary populists in academic and media articles are radical right parties like Jörg Haider's FPÖ, Jean-Marie Le Pen's FN, or Pauline Hanson's One Nation.[32] Increasingly, non-radical right parties are also included in the category of 'right-wing populism', most notably Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia or Pim Fortuyn's LPF.[33] This is not entirely illogical, because of the right's focus on the nation and the radical right's nationalism. The step from 'the nation' to 'the people' is easily taken, and the distinction between the two is often far from clear.[34]

However, populism can also be found on the (radical) left.[35] One of the most (in)famous left-wing populists in post-war Europe is the French former businessman Bernard Tapie, who had a scandal-ridden political career in both the mainstream Socialist Party and the outsider Radical Party. Left-wing populism is generally strongest among outsider parties, such as the (East) German Party of Democratic Socialism, the Scottish Socialist Party, or the Dutch Socialist Party.[36] These left-wing populist parties combine a democratic socialist ideology with a strong populist discourse. They present themselves

Hassenteufel, 'Structures de représentation et "appel au peuple". Le populisme en Autriche', *Politix*, 14: 2 (1991), pp. 95–101.

[32] See, *inter alia*, Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall (eds), *The New Politics of the Right. Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1998; Pfahl-Traughber, *Volkes Stimme? Rechtspopulismus in Europa*, op. cit.

[33] Cf. Reinhard Heinisch, 'Success in Opposition – Failure in Government: Explaining the Performance of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Public Office', *West European Politics*, 26: 3 (2003), pp. 91–130; Michael Jungwirth (ed.), *Haider, Le Pen & Co. Europas Rechtspopulisten*, Graz, Styria, 2002; Decker, *Parteien unter Druck*, op. cit.

[34] On the link between nationalism and populism, and the concept of 'national populism,' see Taguieff, 'Political Science Confronts Populism', op. cit., pp. 9–43; Angus Stewart, 'The Social Roots', in Ionescu and Gellner, *Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, op. cit., pp. 183–5.

[35] Indeed, Simon Clarke has argued that Marxism–Leninism is essentially populist, while Ernesto Laclau called socialism 'the highest form of populism'. See Simon Clarke, 'Was Lenin a Marxist? The Populist Roots of Marxism-Leninism', in Werner Bonefeld and Sergio Tischler (eds), *What is to Be Done? Leninism, Anti-Leninist Marxism and the Question of Revolution Today*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002, pp. 44–75; Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism–Fascism–Populism*, London, New Left Books, 1977, p. 196.

[36] See Cas Mudde, 'Extremist Movements', in Paul Heywood et al. (eds), *Developments in West European Politics 2*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002, pp. 135–48; also Amir Abedi, *Anti-Political Establishment Parties*, London, Routledge, 2004.

no longer as the vanguard of the proletariat, but as the *vox populi* (voice of the people).

In the United States populism has deep roots in mainstream politics, going back to the nineteenth century.[37] While populism has traditionally been associated most strongly with the Democratic Party, Republicans have been known to use it as well. In the last decades various observers have claimed the importance of populism in both the victory and the defeat of American presidential candidates, ranging from Reagan to Clinton and from Bush Jr to Gore.[38] In addition, various third-party candidates have run successful populist campaigns, most recently Ross Perot, Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan.

While populism has been less prominent in mainstream politics in Western Europe, the last decade or so has seen a significant change in this. Various mainstream opposition parties have challenged the government using familiar populist arguments. For example, during the 2001 UK parliamentary election campaign, Tory leader William Hague referred to the New Labour leadership as 'the condescending liberal elite'. He also frequently used the term 'metropolitan', arguing that the New Labour elite in London was completely out of touch with the feelings and concerns of the English people in the country (i.e. 'Middle England').[39] This is similar to the classic populist distinction between the corrupt, metropolitan, urban elite and the pure, indigenous, rural people.[40]

That populism is neither reserved for the right-wing nor for the opposition can be seen, among other places, in Great Britain. As Peter Mair has forcefully argued, Tony Blair's New Labour has been

[37] See, *inter alia*, Alan Ware, 'The United States: Populism as Political Strategy', in Yves Mény and Yves Surel (eds), *Democracies and the Populist Challenge,* Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002, pp. 101–19; John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828–1996*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, New York, Basic Books, 1995.

[38] For example, Terri Bimes, 'Ronald Reagan and the New Conservative Populism', paper presented at the annual APSA meeting, Boston, 29 August–1 September 2002; Judis and Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, op. cit.; Scott D. Wells et al., 'Al Gore and Election 2000: Populist Discourse and Strategies', paper presented at the annual APSA meeting, Boston, 29 August–1 September 2002.

[39] See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1999/02/99/e-cyclopedia/1070504.stm.

[40] See, for example, Miklós Lackó, 'Populism in Hungary: Yesterday and Today', in Joseph Held (ed.), *Populism in Eastern Europe. Racism, Nationalism, and Society*, Boulder, CO, East European Monographs, pp. 107–28.

a champion of mainstream populism, both before and after taking power.[41] Indeed, an interesting example of the broad and varied use of populism can be found in the struggle between the Labour government and the Countryside Alliance. Both use strong populist rhetoric: While the Alliance argues, similarly to former Tory leader Hague, that the Labour government are an alien(ated) elite that threatens the way of life of the (real) English people, Labour presents itself as the champion of the (true) English people against the privileges of the (upper class) elite.

Another prime exponent of left-wing government populism is Steve Stevaert, former vice-premier of Flanders and current leader of the Flemish Socialist Party. After having been criticized for his 'gratis politics' by Flemish-nationalist leader Geert Bourgeois, who quoted an American legal scholar in support, Stevaert answered: 'I understand that Geert Bourgeois likes to support his standpoints by authority arguments, but I rather base myself upon the wisdom of the people.'[42] His party colleague Frank Vandenbroucke, then minister of social affairs and pensions, even openly called for a 'left-wing populism with foundations.'[43]

In conclusion then, at least since the early 1990s populism has become a regular feature of politics in western democracies. While populism is still mostly used by outsider or challenger parties, mainstream politicians, both in government and in opposition, have been using it as well – generally in an attempt to counter the populist challengers. Indeed, leading left-wing (vice) prime ministers, like Tony Blair or Steve Stevaert, have voiced some of the most pure examples of contemporary populism. This raises the question why western democracies are faced with this populist Zeitgeist now.

[41] See Peter Mair, 'Populist Democracy vs. Party Democracy', in Mény and Surel, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, op. cit., pp. 81–98; Peter Mair, 'Partyless Democracy and the "Paradox" of New Labour', *New Left Review*, 2 (2000), pp. 21–35.

[42] *De Standaard*, 2 December 2002.

[43] *De Morgen*, 21 May 2002. Similarly, René Cuperus, senior research fellow at the scientific bureau of the Dutch Labour Party, argues that 'social democracy should dare to be more "populist" in a leftist way.' See Cuperus, 'The Populist Deficiency of European Social Democracy', op. cit., p. 108.

THE CAUSES OF THE CURRENT POPULIST ZEITGEIST

In finding the answer to the question of why so many people support populist ideas and politicians today, a first avenue to take is so obvious that it is often ignored: 'we should not a priori dismiss the charges anti-political establishment actors formulate.'[44] Maybe the arguments of the populists are true and that could explain why they are so successful.

First of all, are the elites today more corrupt than they were before the 1990s? Obviously, this is a difficult question to answer, given that corruption is not just a contentious concept, it is also by definition a shady affair on which it is hard to get reliable, comparative data. According to most experts, 'the existence of party-related corruption is hardly new. . . . What may be new, however, is the likelihood that a scandal will be produced once the evidence of corruption has been exposed.'[45]

Secondly, is it true that 'the people' and 'the elite' today stand further apart than they used to do in the past? According to Klaus von Beyme, '(t)here are many tendencies in modern democracies which strengthen the separation of a political class from its basis, such as public financing of parties, monopolization of political activities, the co-operation of government and opposition.'[46] It is particularly the latter aspect, i.e. the process of cartelization within European party systems, that has received a lot of attention from both academics and populists.[47]

[44] Andreas Schedler, 'Anti-Political-Establishment Parties', *Party Politics*, 2: 3 (1996), p. 297.

[45] Paul Heywood et al., 'Political Corruption, Democracy, and Governance in Western Europe', in Heywood et al., *Developments in West European Politics 2*, op. cit., pp. 196–7. See also F. F. Ridley and Alan Doig (eds), *Sleaze: Politicians, Private Interests & Public Reaction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.

[46] See Klaus von Beyme, 'The Concept of Political Class: A New Dimension of Research on Elites?', *West European Politics*, 19: 1 (1996), p. 84.

[47] For the original thesis, see Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, 'Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party', *Party Politics*, 1: 1 (1995), pp. 5–28. For an overview of the debate, see Ludger Helms, 'Die "Kartellparteien"-These und ihre Kritiker', *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 42: 4 (2001), pp. 698–708.

It is also true that 'politicians of all parties have become more similar sociologically (middle class) and politically (moderate).'[48] At the same time, this can be said of the electorate too, though to a somewhat lesser extent. So, while accepting the continued social biases of legislative elites, it seems unlikely that the 'social distance' between the bulk of the elites and the bulk of the citizens has increased significantly over the past decades.[49] In conclusion, though there is certainly some truth to the claims of the populists, *perceptions* seem to be more important than *facts.*

This change in perception is undoubtedly closely related to the changed role of the media in western democracies. Even if we only limit ourselves to the post-war period, we can note significant changes in the importance, role and range of the media. In short, more important than the actual increase in sleaze and corruption in politics, is the different way in which politics is reported upon in the media (i.e. a focus on the negative and sensationalist elements of news). There are two main reasons for the change in the way (much of) the media report upon politics today: independence and commercialization.[50]

Traditionally, most of the western media were tightly controlled by political parties; often newspapers were part of the individual sub-cultures. This already changed somewhat with the introduction of radio and, most notably, television – even though in many countries the established parties originally held a tight grip on public broad-casting. Since the late 1960s most media have gained increasing if not total independence from political parties. At the same time, public media (most notably television) has been challenged by private media, which has led to a struggle for readers and viewers and, consequently, a focus on the more extreme and scandalous aspects of politics (not just by the 'tabloid media'). This development not only strengthened anti-elite sentiments within the population, it also provided the perfect stage for populist actors, who found not

[48] Richard S. Katz, 'Party Organizations and Finance', in Lawrence LeDuc et al. (eds), *Comparing Democracies. Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1996, p. 132.

[49] Cf. Pippa Norris, 'Legislative Recruitment', in LeDuc et al., *Comparing Democracies*, op. cit., pp. 184–215.

[50] See, *inter alia*, Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Spiral of Cynicism. The Press and the Public Good*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997; Holli A. Semetko, 'The Media', in LeDuc et al., *Comparing Democracies*, op. cit., pp. 254–79.

just a receptive audience, but also a highly receptive medium.[51] As one commentator noted with reference to the Austrian case: '*Haider* needed the media and they needed him.'[52]

More positively, and perhaps paradoxically, another reason why people have become more receptive to populism is that they have become better educated and more emancipated.[53] As a consequence of the egalitarianism of the 1960s, citizens today expect more from politicians, and feel more competent to judge their actions.[54] This 'cognitive mobilization'[55] has led citizens to stop accepting that the elites think for them, and to no longer blindly swallow what the elites tell them.

This also explains why contemporary populists profit so much from their role as taboo breakers and fighters against political correctness.[56] Political correctness and taboos are hardly new phenomena in liberal democracies, although one might argue that they have been more strictly enforced in recent years (most notably with reference to 'racism'). But because of the emancipation of the citizens, they have become contentious issues.

[51] On the relationship between the media and populism, see, most notably, Mazzoleni et al., *The Media and Neo-Populism: A Contemporary Comparative Analysis*, op. cit. On the particular role of the new media, see Barrie Axford and Richard Huggins, 'Anti-Politics or the Triumph of Postmodern Populism in Promotional Cultures', *Telematics and Informatics*, 15: 3 (1998), pp. 181–202.

[52] Charles E. Ritterband, 'Kärtner Chamäleon. Jörg Haiders Auf- und Abstieg in Österreich', *Internationale Politik*, 4 (2003), p. 28. Complete symbiosis between populism and the media has been achieved in Italy. See Paul Statham, 'Berlusconi, the Media, and the New Right in Italy', *Press/Politics*, 1: 1 (1996), pp. 87–105.

[53] In the words of Klaus von Beyme: 'The universalization of education has diminished the distance between the political elite and the average educational experience of the elector.' von Beyme, 'Party Leadership and Change in Party Systems: Towards a Postmodern Party State?', op. cit., p. 146.

[54] See, *inter alia*, Susan J. Pharr and Robert D. Putnam (eds), *Disaffected Democracies. What's Troubling the Trilateral Democracies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000; Pippa Norris (ed.), *Critical Citizens. Global Support for Democratic Governance*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999.

[55] Russell J. Dalton, *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, Chatham, Chatham House, 1996.

[56] Cf. Hajo Funke and Lars Rensmann, 'Wir sind so frei. Zum rechtspopulistischen Kurswechsel der FDP', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 7 (2002), pp. 822–8; Kees van Kersbergen, 'Is Nederland een democratie?', *De Helling*, 15: 3 (2002), pp. 23–5.

For decades, authors have noted a development towards apolitical or non-ideological politics in western democracies.[57] This development has been most pronounced in the former consociational democracies (e.g. Austria, Belgium, Switzerland), which have given rise to some of the strongest populist challenge(r)s. As these countries have become largely depillarized since the late 1960s, they transformed into 'depoliticized democracies',[58] in which administration has replaced politics (in modern parlance: governance instead of government). Not surprisingly, it is here that the populist call for the 'repoliticization of the public realm'[59] and their role as taboo breaker have found the most receptive audience.

Finally, there are a variety of broad developments that have altered societies and politics in western democracies, and often beyond, which have also had an effect on the fate of populism. As these are well-documented, I will only shortly note their relationship to populism. First, the development toward a post-industrial society has dealigned many voters, increased the importance of divisions, and thereby created space for new, less ideological parties.[60] Secondly, the end of the cold war has changed the political relationships both *within* and *towards* liberal democracies. Most importantly, democracy has lost its arch-enemy, to which it was always compared favourably, and 'real existing democracies' are now being increasingly compared unfavourably to the theoretical models. Thirdly, globalization, whether actual or perceived, has become presented as a serious limitation to the power of national elites.[61] Moreover, while mainstream

[57] For example, John Clayton Thomas, 'Ideological Trends in Western Political Parties', in Peter H. Merkl (ed.), *Western European Party Systems*, New York, Free Press, 1980, pp. 348–66; Mostefa Rejai (ed.), *Decline of Ideology?*, Chicago, Aldine/Atherton, 1971.

[58] Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1968.

[59] Lothar Probst, 'Die Erzeugung "vorwärtsgerichteter Unruhe". Überlegungen zum Charisma von Jörg Haider', *Vorgänge*, 41: 4 (2002), p. 39.

[60] See, *inter alia*, Herbert Kitschelt (in collaboration with Anthony McGann), *The Radical Right in Western Europe. A Comparative Analysis*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995; Russell J. Dalton et al. (eds), *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994.

[61] For example, Mark Blyth, 'Globalization and the Limits of Democratic Choice. Social Democracy and the Rise of Political Cartelization', *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, 3 (2003), pp. 60–82; Philippe C. Schmitter, 'The Future of Democracy: Could It Be a Matter of Scale?', *Social Research*, 66: 3 (1999), pp. 933–58.

politicians tend to explain the negative economic developments as inevitable consequences of globalization on the one hand, they also claim the positive economic conditions as the results of their own economic policies, on the other. They thereby weaken their main argument against the populist challenge, i.e. that a complete 'primacy of politics' is unrealistic.

Several of these factors combined, most notably the changed role of the media and the emancipation of the citizens, have also led to a demystification of the 'political office'. More and more citizens think they have a good understanding of what politicians do, and think they can do it better. While this does not necessarily mean that many people also actually want to *do* it better, by actively participating in various aspects of political life (see below), it does mean that the relationship between the elites and the citizens has changed significantly, and possibly irrevocably, over the past decades.

Max Weber has famously distinguished three types of authority: traditional, legal and charismatic.[62] Liberal democracies have overcome the traditional type – with the notable exception of constitutional monarchies – and real, i.e. legal, authority is meant to be based on competence. Indeed, it was on the basis of their presumed competence that politicians (most notably ministers) used to be held in quite high esteem in western democracies.

The emancipation of the citizens, as well as other factors mentioned above, has undermined the elite's competence, or at least the citizens' perception of it,[63] and thereby also their (legal) authority. Consequently, more space for the third type of authority emerges: charisma. And while charismatic leadership is not the same as populist leadership, there are important similarities, and it should not be surprising that populists will be among the main winners of this shift to charismatic authority (see also below).[64]

[62] Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf*, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 8th edn, 1987.

[63] On the importance of expertise and the changing relationship between elites and citizens in this respect, see Cuperus, 'The Populist Deficiency of European Social Democracy', op. cit., pp. 83–109; Milo Anstadt, 'Vrijheid der onvolwassenen', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 126: 49 (2002), pp. 30–3.

[64] On right-wing populism and charismatic leadership, see Roger Eatwell, 'The Rebirth of Right-Wing Charisma? The Cases of Jean-Marie Le Pen and Vladimir Zhirinovsky', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 3: 3 (2002), pp. 1–23; Ami Pedahzur and Avraham Brichta, 'The Institutionalization of Extreme Right-Wing Charismatic Parties', *Party Politics*, 8: 1 (2002), pp. 31–49.

REACTIONS TO THE POPULIST CHALLENGE

Much of the academic and political reactions to the populist chal-
lenges have involved calls for 'more' or 'real' democracy. Just look
at the burgeoning literature on all kinds of more or less new types
of democracy, such as deliberative democracy, digital democracy,
e-democracy.[65] At the political level, the following statement by
Romano Prodi, the EU Commission president, is exemplary: 'People
want a much more participatory, 'hands on' democracy. They . . .
[want to be] fully involved in setting goals, making policy and eval-
uating progress. And they are right.'[66]

At a conference on democratic disillusion in Paris, on 11 October
2002, Philippe Schmitter pointed to the schizophrenia among the
elites of the established parties, who try to both close and open the
political system. Indeed, one sees a combination of cartelization, i.e.
closing of the party system by cooptation of challengers, and demo-
cratization, e.g. the opening of the political system through the in-
troduction of elements of direct democracy (e.g. referendums) or
e-governance.

However, 'deliberative democracy' or a 'participation revolution'
were the answers to the populist demands of the New Left, the New
Social Movements, and the Green and New Politics parties. But there
is a fundamental difference between these populists and the current
populist Zeitgeist. This can best be illustrated by the heartland, i.e.
the interpretation of the people, that the populists refer to. The
populism of the New Left referred to an active, self-confident, well-
educated, progressive people. In sharp contrast, the current pop-
ulism is the rebellion of the 'silent majority'. The heartland of
populists like Berlusconi or Haider is the hard-working, slightly con-
servative, law-abiding citizen, who, in silence but with growing anger,
sees his world being 'perverted' by progressives, criminals, and aliens.

In short, the contemporary populist revolt is in many ways the
opposite to that of 1968 and further. While the populists of the 'silent

[65] Among many more, see Barry N. Hague and Brian D. Loader (eds), *Digital
Democracy: Discourse and Decision Making in the Information Age*, London, Routledge,
1999; Jon Elster, *Deliberative Democracy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998;
Ian Budge, *The New Challenge of Direct Democracy*, Cambridge, Polity, 1996.

[66] Romano Prodi, 'Shaping the New Europe', speech to the European Parliament,
Strasbourg, 15 February 2000; available at: http://www.ecnais.org/html/pages/
Bulletin/Prodi.htm.

revolution' wanted more participation and less leadership, the populists of the 'silent counter-revolution' want more leadership and less participation.[67] As Robert Dahl has argued

> . . . it is an all too common mistake to . . . see democracy simply as a matter of political participation, and to assume that if some people in democratic countries say they value democracy it must be because they receive enjoyment or satisfaction from actually participating in political life. And if it turns out that they do not particularly enjoy participating in political life and do not engage much in it, then it might seem to follow that they do not care much about democracy.[68]

The current heartland of the populists does support democracy, but they do not want to be bothered with politics all the time. Indeed, 'nearly a half-century of surveys provides overwhelming evidence that citizens do not put much value on actually participating themselves in political life.'[69] True, they want to be heard in the case of fundamental decisions, but first and foremost they want *leadership*. They want politicians who *know* (rather than 'listen to') the people, and who make their wishes come true.

The heartland of contemporary populism is thus focused primarily on the *out*put and not on the *in*put of democracy. What they demand is *responsive* government, i.e. a government that implements policies that are in line with their wishes. However, they want the politicians to come up with these policies without bothering them, i.e. without much participation from them.

In contrast to popular misperceptions, the populist voters do not strongly favour any form of participatory democracy, be it deliberative or plebiscitary. Indeed, one of the few empirical analyses into the democratic views of supporters of populist parties concludes: 'supporters of populist parties . . . are not systematically supportive of

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[67] See, respectively Roland Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977; Piero Ignazi, 'The Silent Counter-Revolution. Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe', *European Journal of Political Research*, 22: 1–2 (1992), pp. 3–34.

[68] Robert Dahl, 'A Democratic Paradox', *Political Science Quarterly*, 115: 1 (2000), p. 38.

[69] Ibid.; see also John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy. Americans' Beliefs About How Government Should Work*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

expanding democratic processes.'[70] Indeed, one could argue that populists (both leaders and followers) support referendums mainly as an instrument to overcome the power of 'the elite'. They see it as the only possibility left to ensure that the wishes of 'the people' are reflected in the government's policies.

But the current 'plebiscitary transformation of democracy'[71] does not only fail to solve the perceived crisis of democracy, i.e. the populist challenge, it can actually strengthen it. By using a similar, popular democratic discourse to justify the changes, the critique of the populist actors is legitimized.[72] More importantly, these actions raise the expectations of the populist heartland. And when these expectations are not met, which has been the case in most instances,[73] the populist protest will be even stronger. Consequently, dissatisfied voters will prefer the original over the copy, as Le Pen has famously remarked, given that the copy has already proved to be untrustworthy.

Another misperception is that populist voters resent the establishment because they are different. Populism is neither about class, except perhaps the rejection of the 'political class',[74] nor about social representation or paritary democracy. Supporters of populist parties do not want to be ruled by 'the man in the street' in socio-demographic terms. Just look at the flamboyant individuals that lead most of these movements; one can hardly say that Pim Fortuyn was

[70] Shaun Bowler et al., 'Populist Parties and Support for Direct Democracy', paper presented at the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, Hobart, Tasmania, 29 September–1 October 2003, p. 36.

[71] Frank Decker in 'Konjunkturen des Populismus. "Blätter"-Gespräch mit Frank Decker', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, 10 (2002), p. 1185.

[72] Cf. Yves Mény and Yves Surel, 'The Constitutive Ambiguity of Populism' in Mény and Surel, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, op. cit., pp. 1–21; Margaret Canovan, 'Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy' in Mény and Surel, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, op. cit., pp. 25–44; Darin David Barney and David Laylock, 'Right-Populists and Plebiscitary Politics in Canada', *Party Politics*, 5: 3 (1999), pp. 317–39.

[73] On the contradictory results of democratization of candidate selection in political parties, for example, see Paul Pennings and Reuven Y. Hazan (eds), *Party Politics*, 7: 3 (2001), special issue. On the problematic relationship between party democracy and direct democracy, Scarrow and Seyd, *Party Politics*, 5: 3 (1999) special issue.

[74] See von Beyme, 'The Concept of Political Class', op. cit., pp. 68–87; Schedler, 'Anti-Political-Establishment Parties', op. cit., pp. 291–312.

an average Dutch citizen![75] What the populist supporter wants is the problems of 'the common man' to be solved, according to their own values (often referred to as 'common sense'), and they accept that this will have to be done by a remarkable leader. Or, in the words of Paul Taggart, populism 'requires the most extraordinary individuals to lead the most ordinary of people'.[76] Incidentally, it is in this exceptional character of the leader of some, but definitely not all, populist movements that charismatic leadership plays a role.[77]

Interestingly, the populist leader is not necessarily a true outsider. People like Berlusconi, Fortuyn, or Haider were, already before their political career took off, well connected with sections within the economic and political elites, without being truly part of them. But rather than a 'counter-elite',[78] which better fits the textbook populist, they would be best described as outsider-elites: *connected to* the elites, but not *part of* them.

Many observers have noted that populism is inherent to representative democracy; after all, do populists not juxtapose 'the pure people' against 'the corrupt elite'?[79] As argued above, I disagree with this view, and believe that both the populist masses and the populist elites support 'true' representation. In other words, they reject neither representation per se, nor the lack of social representation. What they oppose is being represented by an 'alien' elite, whose policies do not reflect their own wishes and concerns.[80]

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[75] There are many historic examples of populist leaders who came from completely different social circles from the people they claimed to lead. The most striking example were the *narodniki*, who were young urban intellectuals defending the virtues of the Russian peasantry. See Andrzej Walicki, 'Eastern Europe', in Ionescu and Gellner, *Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, op. cit., pp. 62–96.

[76] Taggart, *Populism*, op. cit., p. 1.

[77] See Sandra Seubert, 'Paradoxien des Charisma. Max Weber und die Politik des Vertrauens', *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, 12: 3 (2002), pp. 1123–48; Ron van Dooren, *Messengers from the Promised Land. An Interactive Theory of Charisma*, Leiden, DSWO-Press, 1994.

[78] C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1957.

[79] See, *inter alia*, Yves Mény and Yves Surel, *Par le people, pour le people. Le populisme et les démocraties*, Paris, Fayard, 2000; Taggart, *Populism*, op. cit.; Urbinati, 'Democracy and Populism', op. cit., pp. 110–24.

[80] For a more philosophical and elaborate argumentation about the compatibility of populism and representative democracy, see Benjamín Arditi, 'Populism as a Spectre of Democracy: A Response to Canovan', *Political Studies*, 52: 1 (2004), pp. 135–43.

In the populist mind, the elite are the henchmen of 'special interests'. Historically, these powerful, shady forces were bankers and international financiers (often alleged to be Jewish). But in contemporary populism a 'new class' has been identified, that of the 'progressives' and the 'politically correct'. This 'new class theory' originated within North American neo-conservative circles of the 1980s.[81] In the following decades populists from all ideological persuasions would attack the dictatorship of the progressives, or in Fortuynist terms 'the Church of the Left'.

Rather than representative democracy, populism is inherently hostile to the idea and institutions of *liberal* democracy or *constitutional* democracy.[82] Populism is one form of what Fareed Zakaria[83] has recently popularized as 'illiberal democracy', but which could also be called democratic extremism. Despite all democratic rhetoric, liberal democracy is a complex compromise of popular democracy and liberal elitism, which is therefore only partly democratic. As Margaret Canovan has brilliantly argued, populism is a biting critique of the democratic limitations within liberal democracies.[84] In its extremist interpretation of majoritarian democracy, it rejects all limitations on the expression of the general will, most notably the constitutional protection of minorities and the independence (from politics, and therefore from democratic control) of key state institutions (e.g. the judiciary, the central bank).[85]

To a large extent, populism draws its strength from the confused and often opportunistic democratic promises of the political elites. In this age of egalitarianism the defence of the elitist aspects of liberal democracy becomes more and more like political suicide. Consequently, politicians left, right and centre are emphasizing almost exclusively the importance of the popular aspects, i.e. the democratic

[81] On the origins of 'new class theory', and the contemporary populist interpretations of it, see Barry Hindess and Marian Sawer (eds), *Us and Them: Anti-Elitism in Australia*, Bentley, API Network, 2004.

[82] Cf. Tjitske Akkerman, 'Populism and Democracy', *Acta Politica*, 38: 2 (2003), pp. 147–59; Mény and Surel, 'The Constitutive Ambiguity of Populism', op. cit., pp. 1–21.

[83] Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2003.

[84] Margaret Canovan, 'Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy', *Political Studies*, 47: 1 (1999), pp. 2–16.

[85] For an insight into populism-in-practice, see Michael Braun, 'Populismus an der Macht. Das Phänomen Berlusconi', *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, 3 (2003), pp. 110–33.

side. Typical are the debates about the (alleged) 'gap between the citizen and politics' (note the homogeneous categorizations) or the 'democratic deficit' in the European Union.

In most countries these debates started among the political elites, without any indication that the masses were much concerned about them. However, after years of reading and hearing about dysfunctional national and supranational democracies, more and more people have become both sensitized to the problem, and convinced that things can and should be better. The problem is, can they be 'better' (i.e. more democratic) within the system of liberal democracy? As soon as more radical demands are made, the answer from the mainstream politicians is often that they are not feasible because of constitutional provisions or international commitments. Thus, a vicious circle is created, which can only be broken by either giving in to the populists, and creating a more populist (and less liberal!) democratic system, or by resisting them, and instead explaining and defending the democratic limitations of the liberal democratic system.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article has been to make a threefold contribution to the current debate on populism in liberal democracies. The first contribution has been a clear and original definition of populism, which can also be employed in empirical research. I have defined populism 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.*

Secondly, the normal-pathology thesis was rejected, and instead it was shown that populist discourse has become mainstream in the politics of contemporary western democracies. I have called this the populist Zeitgeist. True, most mainstream parties mainly use populist *rhetoric*, but some also call for populist amendments to the liberal democratic system (most notably through the introduction of plebiscitary instruments).

Thirdly, I have argued that the explanations of and the reactions to the current populist Zeitgeist are seriously flawed. Much of the recently proposed solutions have been inspired by the populist

critique of the New Left in the 1970s and 1980s, which differs fundamentally from that of the 1990s (in supply and demand). In sharp contrast to the earlier period, contemporary populists favour output over input and leadership over participation. Consequently, these reactions are not just flawed, they can become counter-productive, i.e. strengthening the populist challenge rather than weakening it.

So, are politics in liberal democracies destined to stay populist for ever? Hardly! True, there are some structural tensions within liberal democracy upon which populists can feed. But populism is also episodic;[86] not just the individual movements, but the whole dynamic. When explicitly populist outsider groups gain prominence, parts of the establishment will react by a combined strategy of exclusion and inclusion; while trying to exclude the populist actor(s) from political power, they will include populist themes and rhetoric to try and fight off the challenge. This dynamic will bring about a populist Zeitgeist, like the one we are facing today, which will dissipate as soon as the populist challenger seems to be over its top.

However, because of the structural changes, and the consequent move away from legal authority and toward charismatic authority, as well as the demystification of politics in Western liberal democracies, populism will be a more regular feature of future democratic politics, erupting whenever significant sections of 'the silent majority' feels that 'the elite' no longer represents them.

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[86] Taggart, *Populism*, op. cit., p. 1.