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Populism: reconceptualising a multifaceted concept

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Résumé. Le populisme est un sujet interdisciplinaire en constante évolution. Il a suscité d'innombrables controverses. Les chercheurs sont confus dans leur conceptualisation. Nous avons une variété de populisme avec des versions plus ou moins radicales. Néanmoins, je sais que le populisme n'est pas seulement européen. Il s'est répandu dans le monde entier. La montée du populisme a donné naissance à une explosion de nombreuses études conceptuelles. Les partis politiques populistes émergent, qu'ils soient de droite ou de gauche. Cet article étudie la revue littéraire du populisme, et en particulier du populisme de la droite radicale, en Europe, notamment au Royaume-Uni. Les citoyens marginalisés ont tendance à voter pour les partis politiques populistes. Les partis politiques populistes bénéficient d'un soutien croissant en Europe. Le discours populiste affirme que l'élite politique riche gouverne par conspiration contre le peuple et que sa gouvernance n'est pas au service du bien commun. En outre, les populistes s'autoproclament 'les véritables représentants du peuple'. S'appuyant sur la base des recherches antérieures, cet article vise à explorer le populisme en tant qu'idéologie et les nouveaux concepts tels que le populisme stratégique et identitaire, outil permettant d'élargir l'électorat populiste en Europe, en particulier les partis populistes radicaux de droite.

Abstract. Populism is an interdisciplinary ever-changing topic. It has generated endless controversies. Scholars are confused in their conceptualisation. We have varieties of populism with more or less radical versions. Nevertheless, I know that populism is not just a European phenomenon. It spread throughout the world. The rising of populism has produced an explosion of many conceptual studies. The populist political parties emerge whether on the right or the left wing. This paper examines the literature facets of populism, and in particular radical right wing populism, in Europe particularly in the United Kingdom. It shows that the left-behinds citizens tend to vote for populist parties. There is a rising support for radical populist political parties in Europe. Populist discourse asserts that the rich political elite govern by conspiracy against the people, and their governance is not for the common good. Moreover, they are 'true representation of the people'. Based on academic, this article literature wants to explore populism as an ideology and new concepts of populism such as strategic and an identity-based populism tool to widen the populist electorate in Europe, in particular right-wing populism,.

Mots-clés : populisme, radicalisme de droite, contre l'establishment, le peuple, pensée unique

Keywords: populism, right wing radicalism, anti-establishment, people; single-mindedness

Introduction

In Western European Politics, there is a wind of change spreading in this part of the European continent. A new wave of political parties are making electoral success instead of traditional parties. Most of these new political parties are populists. These political parties are on *the Radical right, the extreme right* and *the far-right* or on *the Left wing*. It is difficult to define *populist radical right*. I suppose these new parties are no a clear positioning. They are catchall parties. For instance, Cas Mudde claims that *extreme right, radical right, or right-wing populist in most academic and media accounts*¹. Moreover, these *populist radical right parties share a core ideology that combines (at least) three features: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism*.² In these family parties, *the populist radical right* and *the extreme right* are electorally successful³. This inconstant position of the term populism causes difficulties in its reconceptualization. In other words, there is no static position. I can assert that it is the fact many scholars or academics have tried to theorise and others from one another according their need. Populism is one of the most debatable and contested concept⁴ in the last decade. For instance, in UK, there is the Reform UK United Kingdom Independence Party. They are the radical right-wing challenger of the traditional parties.

Populism is a multifaceted concept⁵ which movements, anti-establishment political leaders bear to acquire power. On this attitude, populism can be seen as an ideology. It is sometimes considered to be only a tactical device, a mere form of rhetoric or style of communication (Jagers and Walgrave 2003). We argue that it is more fruitful to perceive of populism as an ideology⁶, which incorporates a specific form of democracy-critique.

¹ Cas Mudde, «Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe Today. » Transformations of Populism in Europe and the Americas: History and Recent Tendencies. London: *Bloomsbury Academic*, 2016. 295–307. Bloomsbury Collections. Web. 3 Feb. 2016, p. 295.

² Cas Mudde, «Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe Today. » Transformations of Populism in Europe and the Americas: History and Recent Tendencies, *Op Cit.*, p. 296.

³ Cas Mudde, *Populist radical right parties in Europe*, Cambridge: UK, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 1.

⁴ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: New York, Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 2.

⁵ Davide Vittori, «Re-conceptualizing populism: Bringing a multifaceted concept within stricter borders», *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 44, 2017, p. 43-65.

⁶ Jan-Werner Mueller, *What Is Populism?* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. See Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, «Studying Populism in

For more than a decade, Western European countries have faced a *climate of resentment and alienation* where most of citizens *no longer trust political institutions that they consider to be largely self-centered and self-serving, unresponsive to the ideas and wishes of the average person, and incapable of adopting viable solutions for society's most pressing problems*⁷. Indeed, this lack of confidence in political institutions is because traditional political parties are only in power to satisfy their political agenda. Thus, populist political parties use this idea, which they characterize as disadvantageous to citizens, to win over the electorate of political parties. In this category of populism, we find a heightened egocentricity.

According to Jan-Werner Müller, *The term is thus also primarily associated with particular moods and emotions: populists are angry; their voters are frustrated or suffer from resentment*⁸. As the deceived or frustrated citizens, populist leaders can be seen as frustrated or has pique before these established political parties leaders. All their programmatic agenda is to denigrate by criticizing these parties and their leaders of the mainstream or establishment who are considered as corrupt and deceitful.

Consequently, Jan-Werner Müller asserted that followers of populist leaders are whether *frustrated or suffer from resentment*. We have a *non-cooperative (us vs. them) politics*⁹. In fact, these frustrated citizens can move towards populist political which give them some promises that they appreciate. On this stage, populism has a negative connotation. It is against plural democracy where political leaders are corrupt because of the democratic system implemented. It advocates a homogenous society where political leaders are against this corrupt plurality elite most particularly in Western European democracies. In effect, Margaret Canovan argues that: *there is a good deal of agreement on which political phenomena fall into this category but less clarity about what is it that makes them populist*¹⁰. Jeremy

Comparative Perspective: Reflections on the Contemporary and Future Research Agenda», *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 51(13), 2018, p. 1667-1693.

⁷ Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*, Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS and London, 1994, p. 37.

⁸ Jan-Werner Mueller, *What Is Populism?* Op. Cit., 2016.

⁹ Axel Mueller, «The meaning of ‘populism’», *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 45(9-10) 1025–1057, 2019, p. 1026.

¹⁰ Jasper de Raadt, David Hollanders, André Krouwel, «Varieties of Populism: An Analysis of the Programmatic Character of Six European Parties», *Working Papers Political Science*; Vol. 04, No. 4, p. 1-23, 2004, p. 2.

Webber states *Populism is currently almost always invoked with a negative valence to single out political conduct for criticism*¹¹.

Therefore, the success of populist parties has given rise to the production of many books, articles... As a result, the electoral success of populist political parties from the radical right and left has aroused a great deal of interest among political and social scientists. This has given rise to numerous conceptual studies of the term populism. Many scholars, social scientists, political thinkers are trying to circumscribe conceptually the word populism. Nevertheless, the concept seems to be characterised by vagueness and ambiguousness.

In a political position, in order to overthrow power-wielding elites, populist leaders *promise to Taking Back Control or Take Our Country Back*¹². For instance, Axel Mueller claims that these two means of political opportunity are two important notions for populist leaders. Political discourse of populist leaders can be seen as a threat to the establishment. As a result, it is an anti-establishment policy, which allows these populist to gain. It is a vehicle in which they wield to *woo* most of electoral voters. As a result, it allows them to widen their electorate.

We apply this consensus definition of populism with recent studies such as Paul Taggart (2000), Cas Mudde, 2004 opposing *people* against *establishment*, in which the narrative is laid upon opposition *people* versus *elite*. It is the dominant definition of populism. Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), etc. Therefore, my point is simple; it is not to agree or disagree about previous definitions of the populism given by scholars, academics; our purpose is to find out the lack of their conceptualization.

We draw from previous studies of populism to fit other conceptual definitions. Therefore, what do we mean by ideological-strategic and political theory? Recently, the concept has received more attention with the rise of authoritarian populist political leaders. In politics and sociological studies, many academics such as Cas Mudde (2007), Hans-Georg Betz, (1994), Jan-Werner Müller, (2016), Mark Tushnet (2019), Vittori, D. (2017), have attempted to define populism in different ways.

We reveal some uncertainties with their definitions. One of them, Cas Mudde attempted to define it as an ideology, the pure people and the general will... All these terms was right because we find some correctness.

¹¹ Jeremy Webber, «Understanding Populism», *Social & Legal Studies*, 2023, p. 2.

¹² Axel Mueller, 2019, *op cit.*, p. 1026.

Nevertheless, we need to widen the conceptual definition of populism. This article will help to understand and know when we must categorise a political leader or movement as populist.

First, we deal with a conceptual literary review of populism. Second, we study populism as a strategic and political force across the world. Third, we offer a conceptualisation of ideological populism as an opportunistic populism and at last, we finish with a new concept that is *identity-based populism*. We need further and in-depth analysis of populism phenomenon.

1. The State of the Art. 13

In public debate, there are many definitions of the concept of populism. It is a dominant term with many interpretations. Populism is a political force power throughout the world particularly in Europe, Asia, USA, and Latin America. It has been portrayed as a negative aspect of liberal democracies. Some scholars have seen it as a political revolution. Our hypothesis about populism is that it is more than an attractive means of communication to widen the electorate of populist parties. Previous authors limited themselves in conceptualising the term. Few of them tried to deepen researches on it. This article seeks to deepen our researches in the ideological and strategic strength of the concept.

Moreover, there is *much confusion and ambiguity about the nature and character of populism*¹⁴. Thus, many features have been attributed to populism by academics, scholars, etc. For Cas Mudde *Populism is a difficult, slippery concept*¹⁵, and consequently, (...) *it is profoundly difficult to construct a generalized description, let alone a universal and comprehensive definition, of populism as an idea or as a political movement*¹⁶. It seems difficult to find a unified definition of populism. It is an ever-changing concept. The scientific burgeoning of the term populism is caused by the fact that many commentators, academics or scholars try to get the best conceptualization to meet the requirements of the attitude towards liberal democracy. We draw from studies which were done by some authors such as Cas Mudde (2007), Jan-Werner Müller (2016), Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), Hans-Georg Betz (1994). With its contextual

¹³ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, 2017.

¹⁴ Jasper de Raadt, David Hollanders, André Krouwel, «Varieties of Populism: An Analysis of the Programmatic Character of Six European Parties», 2004, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1.

¹⁵ Paul Taggart, *Populism*, 2000, p. 2

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

defining, Edward Shils claims that populism *exists wherever there is an ideology of popular resentment against the order imposed on society by a long established, differentiated ruling class which is believed to have a monopoly of power, property, breeding and culture*¹⁷.

The concept of populism is an elusive term in contemporary political analysis. We already know its meaning when we are going to deal with it as a populist ideology and strategic discourse to win the electorate. All around the globe, in many democracies, populist leaders are emerging on any political stage. Populist Parties are on either the right, far right, extreme right, left or far left... but this way of thinking is challenging mainstream politics. They state that corrupt, self-centred, and out-of-touch elites threaten people. Thus, these parties are xenophobic towards foreigners who come to work in their country, where these populists are based on.

The term populism is a buzzword. The fact is that it was used for the first time in journalism. Thus, it was floating from one sphere to another. Nevertheless, it is more used in the political debate than any other sphere. There was no serious studies at its beginning. In their book entitled *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* published in 2017, Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser describe populism as an ideology which divide society into two homogenous and antagonistics camps *the pure peope* versus *the corrupt elite* and privileged *the general will*.¹⁸ In general, populist movement or parties make a mixture of corruption with the elite political class. The political presents the establishment. This category is considered as corrupt and deceitful. They are depicted as selfish politicians who believe in the fulfilment of their needs.

Besides, Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser claim that (...) *populism often refers to anti-immigration and xenophobia* (...)¹⁹. This definition seems to be preoccupied by the fight against uncontrolled immigration. In-depth analysis, I claim a juxtaposition of the three concepts: populism, xenophobia and anti-immigration is fruitful because all people who are favourable to these terms are for the protection of the interests of native-born citizens but reject others *them*. European populist leaders can be

¹⁷ Paul Taggart, *Populism*, 2000, *Op. Cit.*, p. 11. In (Shils 1956: 100-1). Shils, E. (1956), *The Torment of Secrecy: The Background and Consequences of American Security Policies*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

¹⁸ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, *Op Cit.*, 2017.

¹⁹ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, *Op., Cit*, p. 2.

seen as nativists. In other words, populists are against strangers in their European countries²⁰. Radical populist political parties have pledged to end with uncontrolled mass immigration. This phenomenon of migration is considered as a threat to their countries.

Furthermore, Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser *et al.*, argue that populism is considered to be an *essentially contested concept*²¹. For their last book, Rovira Kaltwasser, Taggart, Ochoa Espejo, & Ostiguy, (2017) have tried to deal with three conceptual approaches, which are *ideational, political-strategic, and sociocultural*²².

Daron Acemoglu, Georgy Egorov and Konstantin Sonin portray populism as *A political theory*²³. Populism is against the privileged elite who are in power for their selfish interest but populist leaders are for the protection of the interest of the ordinary citizens. Populist political parties work out their programmatic tactic in which accuse the political privileged elite of bribery, therefore of economic deficit. In fact, there are some populist political parties most particularly in UK who use an anti-immigration policy in order to widen its electorate. This attitude allows radical right-wing populist parties to remain in the political arena. In last European elections, the United Kingdom Party cast most of the votes. After these elections, other political parties such as Brexit Party which changed its name to Reform UK Party recently and become a challenger to the United Kingdom establishment. Daron Acemoglu, Georgy Egorov and Konstantin Sonin the antagonistic sphere between populist leaders and the elite as noted above with Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser in which the *honest* leaders are populist but *corrupt elite* are from the establishment²⁴.

²⁰ For more information, check «Introduction», In Sabella Ogbobode Abidde Emmanuel Kasonde Matambo, *Xenophobia, Nativism and Pan-Africanism in 21st Century Africa: History, Concepts, Practice and Case Study*, Springer Nature, Switzerland AG, xi-xii, 2021.

²¹ Jeremy Webber, «Understanding Populism», *Social & Legal Studies*, 2023, p. 3; Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 2-5.

²² Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, «Studying Populism in Comparative Perspective: Reflections on the Contemporary and Future Research Agenda», *Comparative Political Studies*, 2018, p. 1669.

²³ Daron Acemoglu, Georgy Egorov, Konstantin Sonin, «A Political theory of Populism», Oxford University Press, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, p. 771-805, 2013.

²⁴ Daron Acemoglu, Georgy Egorov, Konstantin Sonin, «A Political theory of Populism», Oxford University Press, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2013, *Op. Cit.*, p. 773.

As noted above, populism is one of the most contested concept in the field of European studies. In many theoretical scholars' approaches, we find three core concepts such as *the people* who are sovereign, *the elite* who is corrupt and the *general will* who is the community²⁵. In their book, Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser studied populism as

A thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite," and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people²⁶.

From this definition, there is a clear opposition between the *pure people* and the *corrupt elite*²⁷. Cas Mudde has studied populism as an ideational approach. He claims that politics should be the expression of the general will of the people.²⁸ This conceptual ideational approach suggests that we can find much kind of subtypes ideologies such as socialism, nativism... Furthermore, Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser 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*²⁹.

For populist political leaders, power is by the people for the people. Donald J Trump stated *We are transferring power from Washington, DC and giving it back to you, the American People ... The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer*³⁰. This statement is linked with that of the former USA President, Abraham Lincoln who stated *a government of the people, by the people, and for the people*³¹. Populists assert that the true voice comes from "people" and they are the representation of this *people*.

²⁵ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2017, *Op. Cit.*

²⁶ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2017, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6

²⁷ Cas Mudde, «The Populist Zeitgeist», Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK and, Malden, USA, *Government and Opposition*, 2004, p. 543.

²⁸ Cas Mudde, *Populist radical right parties in Europe*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004; Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press, 2017.

²⁹ Cas Mudde, «The Populist Zeitgeist», *Government and Opposition*, 39:4, 541-563, 2004, *Ibid.*, p. 543

³⁰ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and the rise of authoritarian-populism*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019, p. 5.

³¹ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2017, *Op. Cit.*, p. 10.

Unfortunately, some demagogic rich political elite leaders are deceitful and seek the best fulfilment of their needs without that of the people. The people must not anymore undergo the political leadership of the establishment. These populist leaders portray the establishment as primarily at the basis of all social and economic problems. Populism can be labeled as *anti-establishment*. The aim of populist leaders is to overthrow the establishment power for the advent of a new popular power.

In a laborious way, Jaspert de Raadt *et al* define *populism as a political ideology critical of representative democracy but not necessarily anti-democratic, claiming that populism is more than mere political tactics or style of political communication*³². Thus, it a tool to widen electorate in order to remain or to succeed in power. Populist tactic is used as a political tool to attract new voters.

The breakthrough of many populist parties or new political movements are witnessed is the recent events in many European countries. Thus, we can state that, some charismatic leaders influence many voters. Electoral voters of radical populist political parties believe the idea that this political elite class is corrupt.

In a common framework, populism is portrayed as an ideational approach. Composed of the *people* who is morally good and the *elite* who is seen as corrupt and self-serving. The concept of populism is being used as a catch-all term by many academics in the wake of Brexit, the victory of Donald Trump and that of the right Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in Hungary during the 2009 European elections with his party Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union. His populist policies have won the hearts of the people of Hungary. A right-wing populist, Orban has won almost everything in his political career when it comes to national and European elections.

Pundits start making some researches on the concept of populism. Among them, we find those who use it as a buzzword. We have the Brexiteers who won the last referendum in UK³³. These academics and pundits use populism concept to explain contemporary politics changing in Europe precisely in the UK. Their political tasks are based on political disclosure precisely portraying that the elites are corrupt.

³² Jasper de Raadt, David Hollanders, André Krouwel, «Varieties of Populism: An Analysis of the Programmatic Character of Six European Parties», *Op. Cit.*

³³ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, «Studying Populism in Comparative Perspective: Reflections on the Contemporary and Future Research Agenda», 2018, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1668.

In Europe, we find many populist political parties most particularly in France with Front National led by Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders in Netherlands, the Alternative of Germany (AFD), and a far-right German political party led by Alice Elisabeth Weidel. New Social Contract is a political party in the Netherlands launched and led by Pieter Omtzigt. The party focuses on the themes of good governance and social security. Populism seems to adapt to all forms of government.

Nowadays, the resurgence of populist parties is obvious. Their main task is to defend common or ordinary *people* against the *elites*. Many countries face development inequalities. In its core meaning, populism is a strategic and ideological discourse against the elites. The key aspect of populism is an appeal to the *people* against the *elites*. It is an opposition between the established powers and the *people*. Populism can be seen as a synonym of anti-establishment. For John

The term is regularly used as a synonym for “anti-establishment,” irrespective, it seems, of any particular political ideas; content, as opposed to attitude, simply doesn’t seem to matter. The term is thus also primarily associated with particular moods and emotions: populists are “angry”; their voters are “frustrated” or suffer from “resentment”³⁴.

According to populists, the rich political elites morally deceive the People. In other words, Populist Party leaders claim to represent the *People*. These parties designed common people and ordinary as morally good and oppressed. For them, elites are corrupt. Concisely, it is a voice carried by an audacious leader to make ordinary people understand that the elites are corrupt and lie to them in their policies.

The rise of populism in Britain is caused by the failure of traditional political parties to change their political agenda in order to respond adequately to electorate needs. In other words, this performance is because traditional deal always with ancient issues and forget that time has changed and they must change as these populists do. These latter use new issues such as immigration, economy and law to supersede the political establishment³⁵. Populism survive in the boundaries of existing democratic countries. In the UK, this rise is portrayed as a failure of the traditional political parties³⁶ among them the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democratic Party (Lib-Dem). The rise and continuing success of Populist

³⁴ Jan-Werner Mueller, *What Is Populism? Op Cit.*, 2016, p. 1.

³⁵ Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, Basingstoke, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Parties such as the UK Independence Party has meant that the establishment parties have begun to redirect their policies towards populist issues.

According to UK Independence Party, the parties of the *statu quo* have failed to control economic matters, cultural globalisation, the evolution of European integration, control of immigration and elite corruption... These allegations give considerable voters to UKIP. Therefore, their success is multidimensional. The *people* believe in some of their populist ideas towards of the establishment. That is why we face a lack of interest in politics and politicians. Thus, ordinary citizens show no interest in politics.

This literary review argues that populism is an ideological and strategic political force issued to widen to widen the electorate of radical populist political parties. To explain how, I suggest that populism has, at its core, as a discourse that can gather these political parties cannot ignore the 'people' on their main concern. Theirs discourse is well received by this *people*. Now populist political parties are making many breakthroughs in liberal world democracies most particularly in Western Europe. Nevertheless, all forms of populism include some kind of appeal to *the people* and a denunciation of *the elite*³⁷. While populism is one of the most widely studied scientific concepts, we can also get other conceptualisations.

Finally, Cas Mudde asserts that nativism is at the heart of populist radical right parties. Thus, he combines the three concepts such as nativism, authoritarianism, populism because they are interrelated in their program. There is a juxtaposition of nativism with populism³⁸ for citizens who yearn for these populist political radical right parties.

2 Strategic Populism

Scholars have upsurge conceptualisation on populism. I bear in mind that most of social science concepts are contested. Cas Mudde states *Populism is undoubtedly an essentially contested concept, given that scholars even contest the essence and usefulness of the concept*. Nevertheless, as an ideational concept, ... *others have defined populism as a type of political discourse, ideology, leadership, movement, phenomenon, strategy, style,*

³⁷ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2017, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5.

³⁸ Sabella Ogbobode Abidde Emmanuel Kasonde Matambo, *Xenophobia, Nativism and Pan-Africanism in 21st Century Africa: History, Concepts, Practice and Case Study*, Springer Nature, Switzerland AG, 2021.

syndrome, et cetera (e.g. Ionescu and Gellner, 1969)³⁹. Clearly, in his PhD, Cas Mudde 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*⁴⁰. It is a political field in eternal dichotomy, a political battle between the bottom and the top.

It is not a new phenomenon. It is an ideological tactic to ascend to power. As a movement at the beginning, UKIP British Populist Party emerged as a challenger of the traditional parties such as the conservative and labour parties. UK Independence Party was a political movement at its early stage. Along the years, it became a political party. The main task of UKIP was UK exit from the European Union. It is a single-issue party. But how did its single issue party successfully unfold along years of doing politics. It was done by this following way:

*Our programme will not therefore be one of turning the clock back to the 1950's or any other period in the mythical history of Merrie England. On the contrary, we shall have to develop policies, which meet the challenges of tomorrow, and we shall have to seek votes not merely from former Conservatives (this is not a Conservative rejects party) but from Labour and Liberal Party members and from anyone else who has a vote. This is a serious party and it will only deserve to be taken seriously if it can appeal to all sections of British society*⁴¹.

Voluntarily, Dr. Sked did not waste time in his way. Bluntly, he announced the ideology and strategy in which his party is going to gain more electoral voters.

Furthermore, we have many interpretations of the concept of populism. Populism can be seen as a means of political leaders to woo their population. In this way, populism is a strategic means to attract its future electoral voters. Populist political parties try to build identity-based programs in which the people recognize their inclusion in the running of their country. The simplistic discourse these populist leaders engage with the ordinary citizens will embroil them in the will of these populist parties. Citizens will respond

³⁹ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, *Op. Cit.*, 2017.

⁴⁰ Cas Mudde, «The Populist Zeitgeist», *Ibid.* 2004, p. 543.

⁴¹ Daniel T. Dye, «Britain's Nationalist Moment: The Claims-Making of the SNP and UKIP», Paper prepared for the 2015 Political Studies Association Annual International Conference Sheffield, England – 30 March-1 April, p. 20.

favourably to the political will of these parties. Clearly, it is this fact of wooing the *people* that allows these politicians to widen their electorate.

At any time, corruption is one of the core elements that allow this practice to keep on working properly. These populist leaders self-style themselves as the true representation of the pure people. With political strategies, they succeed in wooing the whole population. Consequently, we notice fearful citizens ahead the political elite, which is characterized as corrupted.

Populism is against established political order by the 'elites'. As a political expression, populism acts as a great force, which has allowed the UK Independence Party to overcome, established British Political parties and won those European elections of 2016, which was the referendum about Brexit. Opposing the people and the establishment is their main tactics. This strategy used by populist political parties allow them to widen their electorate. Thanks to its *identity-based programs*, it has managed to maintain and occupy an important place on the British political scene. Even if populist political parties use a strategic populist stance, the fact remains that this strategy could become a political opportunity to extend their political bases.

3. Populism as an Opportunistic Electoral Strategy

I claim that populism is characterized by its single-mindedness. It has only a single-minded purpose which to overthrow the establishment and replace it by the people in which the true voice is the populists. One of their overriding purpose or goal is to come in power. Thus, it has affected electoral behaviour of the rich political elites. This ideational attitude allow them to attract more voters. Their main tactic is to denounce political establishment which is portrayed as a political class elite who has failed to deliver a better future to the people who are represented by populists as they claim.

Moreover, party programmes are laid three stances such as Populist leaders attract many voters of the traditional parties: establishment is composed of corrupt professional politicians, these elite are deceitful, and they are characterized by the embezzlement of government spending. Radical Populist Party has its main strategy in order to gain more voters. In this sense, populism is a political activity or a practice that seek support by appealing to the desires and prejudices of ordinary people rather than by using rational arguments. Any populist, who lacks this demagogy, is rapidly being exposed as worthless. Populism can be seen as a means of exploiting immediate opportunities, especially out of principles. These populist opportunistic

parties are critical towards established parties. Populist opportunistic parties do not care about whether their actions are good or wrong. Their want is to take advantage of each situation in the political area. In this way, they thrive to gather to their will. In doing so, they have power on the political landscape.

For Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell populism is an ideological policy to get rid of the mass migration from the Third World to European democracies. Immigration is one of the major issues of European integration. The political discourse of populist parties is against this phenomenon. In this way, these populist leaders state that political establishment leaders are corrupt and incompetent to settle this issue. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (2008) stated that:

The rise of populism in Western Europe is, in large part, a reaction to the failure of traditional parties to respond adequately in the eyes of the electorate to a series of phenomena such as economic and cultural globalization, the speed and direction of European integration, immigration, the decline of ideologies and class politics, exposure of elite corruption, etc. It is also the product of a much-cited, but rarely defined, political malaise⁴², manifested in steadily falling turnouts across Western Europe, declining party memberships, and ever-greater numbers of citizens in surveys citing a lack of interest and distrust in politics and politicians. Fostered by the media, an antipolitical climate is said to have grown throughout Western European societies in which people perceive politics to be more convoluted, distant and irrelevant to people's lives and politicians to be more incapable, impotent, self-serving and similar to one another than in the past⁴².

Immigration that causes social discontent experienced by the population is one of the themes that allow populist parties to gain more support so that these parties are supposed to win any election. This populist attitude is national populism. It is a mixture between nationalism and populism. Concisely, populism and nationalism claim the same thing. Sometimes, these two concepts are attitudes are linked.

Charismatic leaders tend to personalize debates. This opportunistic approach can have significant benefits for any leader. Populist leaders tend to idealise their party. Populist ideology seeks to seduce voters in order to win their votes. This allows them to accumulate more supporters who will become future voters.

Populism is among the most contested concepts in the last decade in European studies. Populist parties have many strategies to attract voters.

⁴² Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

Most of them use denouncement to fulfil their opportunistic will. Many political parties use it to appeal to the people self-styling themselves as the true representation of this people. Populists portray themselves as denominators of people's will or their general interests. Populist parties are likely to enlarge their electoral sphere by one of their tactics, which is their ideological program. This ideological strategy is one of the main factors that allows them to contest or win elections. This participates in their success in any electoral system mainly in democratic European countries.

Unfortunately, their position is not clear. Some of them are on the extreme right, the right wing, the far right, the left...⁴³. They have many programmatic issues. In the UK, we have the example of right wing populism. The UK Independence creates an antagonism between "us" versus "them". Indeed, national issues as unemployment are a common interest to the whole population. This party uses identity-based populism to enlarge its electorate. A clear political communication that is more beneficial for right wing populist parties. Briefly, these populist parties are more flexible than any other parties particularly those of the establishment.

Populism is important for the rising of populist parties. While it is true is that populism is opportunistic, it is also peppered with populism based on identity or identity-based populism.

4. Identity-based Populism

Populism is a political attitude that sets the people against the political, economic or media elites⁴⁴. We have multidimensional type of populism in which many *cleavages between left-right, populist-pluralist divisions in orientations toward the legitimate source of governance, left-right divisions over economic values, and authoritarian-libertarian on cultural values*⁴⁵ operate. Nowadays, this positioning is found in many democracies precisely in the UK political system with the UK Independence.

⁴³ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and the rise of authoritarian-populism*, New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2019, p. 65

⁴⁴ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2017, *Op. Cit.*, p. 29.

⁴⁵ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and the rise of authoritarian-populism*, *op. cit.*, p. 65

Even if this party is on the right, it advocates left wing ideologies so that it is not easy to classify it. They claim that authority comes from the people who are inalienable. This people gain the legitimate democratic power⁴⁶.

Philosophical thinkers state that nationalism and political government are interrelated. Consequently, any political organisation bears a strong sentiment of nationalism. For the bearer of sovereignty, the central object of loyalty and the basis of collective solidarity. The true people is the mass of the population whose boundaries are in the nation, and they are identify with the image of nationalism. Nationalism and populism are somewhat related concept. Ernest Gellner claims that *Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent*⁴⁷. As nationalism related populism can be a political idea to fulfil political populist leaders which is to access to the power. Populism is a representation of the true people. This people have inalienable sovereignty. They are above any political leaders. Populist political parties act as guarantors or representatives of the people. For them, it is up to the populist political parties to decide the destiny of the people. This ideology is an *Identity-based populism* is linked with *national populism*, which is the fact of being hostile to anything that comes from outside national borders. This type of populism is wrapped up in a deep sense of national sentiment.

Besides, they are against mass migration or the free movement of people from one country to another. These populist parties want to break with a migration policy that is not properly regularized. One of their issues is immigration. Indeed, the fight against uncontrolled immigration is one of their favourites issue for these populists. We argue that this attitude is *rejectionist populism*. This populism is embedded with anti-immigrants attitudes. We find cultural anxieties between nativists and strangers. Populist leaders portray the social instability.

At last, these populists are against the elites precisely the establishment. All populist political parties believe that the government must rigorously approve all the ideas they advocate because they represent the people. They are against strangers. The only recognised people are native speakers. Nativism is a radical nationalism. According to their analyses, foreigners are the causes of unemployment, insecurity... According to Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart,

⁴⁶ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and the rise of authoritarian-populism*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 66

⁴⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford: England, 1983, p. 1.

The political debate about immigration policies is framed in terms of their threats to jobs and wages when counterbalanced against the economic gains from admitting skilled professionals, software engineers, scientists, and entrepreneurs, as well as unskilled laborers to do the hard manual jobs that many native-born workers avoid, like harvesting crops, providing home services for the elderly, and food preparation and packing⁴⁸.

The development this way of thinking will lead to authoritarian populism because populism is about pacific commitment in politics. It is not threat against the elites of the establishment in liberal democracy but it pushes these elites to readjust their policies or populists will come and occupy the government because they are the representation of the pure people. Authoritarian populism is a kind of revolution in its way of portraying its political ideology. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart conceptualized this type of populism with some varieties⁴⁹. This conceptual populism is styled as a threat to liberal democracies.

Conclusion

Populism is among the most heated debated topic. In our article, we deal with the academic literature of populism in which we have many ambiguities and confusions. Specialists are speculating about the concept by opposing the *pure people* and the *corrupt elite*. In this way, two set of ideas have emerged such as *monism* and *moralism*. Along the literary review, populist political parties portray as the honest politicians by the way representing the *pure people*. The rich political elite class that is considered as deceitful are dishonest politicians. This *corrupt elite* is considered by populists as morally bad.

Moreover, based on the literary review, this paper shows that populism is an appeal to the *people* against the *elites*. In other words, it is an opposition between the established power and the *people*. Our article motivated by the new conceptualizing of populism. Scholars are confused in their conceptualisation. It considers society as divided into two homogenous and antagonistic camp: *the pure people* against *the corrupt elites*. The populist leaders stated that the people must be ruled by the *volonté générale* (general will). Our analysis of populism as an opportunistic shows populist tactic is used as a tool to widen the electoral success. In an ideational approach, this

⁴⁸ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and the rise of authoritarian-populism*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 188.

⁴⁹ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and the rise of authoritarian-populism*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 65-79.

paper shows that populism divides society into two homogenous antagonistic in which the *people* are considered as morally good and the 'elite' who is seen as corrupt and self-serving.

Along our study, populism is as an ideology, a strategic and an identity-based populism tool to win more electorate. Its rhetoric attract many voters. Its aim is to find out how this thinking is so far important in political terms. Most of the time, political leaders use this weapon to fill their needs. Around the world, we see many populist leaders who are cutting in their roots the established political parties. Populist Party leaders and movements of national populist are considered as their challenger in many democracies, in United Kingdom and in many parts in Europe. Surprisingly, populism has moved from the margins to the heart of many governments around the world. In the UK, we have the UKIP and recently the Brexit Party, which is a newly born party after the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union. Populism is used as a tool to attract many citizens owing to its discourse, which can capture many voters. The populist discourse woo the electorate so much, so that any populist can win voters. Its discourse is as attractive as we have already studied it in our previous papers.

Concisely, populist or ideological discourse operates from the people against the elite. In other words, populism is a bottom-up ideology. More clearly, it is a concept that pits the real people against the establishment. For populist political parties, the political elites have betrayed the people. The rich political elite class is considered such as deceitful professional politicians. In addition, these political elites are the most corrupt segment of the population.

Throughout our argument, we have noted that populists have a very precise goal, which is nothing other than to discredit political elites in order to seize decision-making power. In this way, the populist ideology is an opportunistic discourse in order wider its electoral votes.

Definitely, we have suggested other different types of populism such as *strategic populism*, *opportunistic populism*, *identity-based populism*. These three types of populism are some similarities but differ on some specific points. The concept is ambiguous that is why we find many conceptualisations. This is also because many academics, in an interdisciplinary study, have attempted to conceptualise populism.

The *strategic populism* is a means of populist political leaders to woo their population. This attitude towards elites is important it is the core element

to allow populist political parties to attract their future electoral voters. Strategic populism is a political ideology that enables new populist political parties to become a challenge to traditional political parties of any position. The *opportunistic populism* is a means of exploiting immediate opportunities, especially regardless of planning or principle. The *Identity-based populism* type of populism is full of national sentiment. The populist that are positioned on this scale are against strangers. Nativists are radical nationalists. Identity-based populists reject foreigners and prefer nativists. It is a type of rejectionist populism.

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