

# Latin America, the Middle East & North Africa, and Europe: Present Inclusionary and Exclusionary Forms of Rightist and Leftist Populism

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## Abstract

The study examines current left-wing and right-wing political behaviour and inclusionary and exclusionary practices in MENA, Latin America, and Europe and its outcomes on political developments and changes in comparative method. This study investigates the evolution and transition of contemporary rightism and leftism in these dissimilar Regions and the diverse degrees of inclusionary and inclusionary populism features of the political parties. First, it questions political conditions, behavioralism, and transitions of populism. Second, in which forms of inclusions and exclusions populism arrive on the political scene. Thus, the focus is on the latest decade from the cross-continental and cross-regional perspective. Although there is scholarly debate about contemporary populism in the European Continent (in general) and, lately, some in Latin America and MENA (Middle East and North Africa), cross-continental and regional research is lacking.

**Keywords:** Latin America, left-wing populism, right-wing populism, inclusions, exclusions, political behaviour, Europe, MENA

## Introduction

Interestingly, in its beginnings, populism was exclusively linked to the left-wing political movement, particularly in the USA, where it embodied the struggle for the rights of peasants and workers and criticised a system favouring the elites' interests. Populism spread throughout Europe after the Second World War (WW2), and the systematic treatment of this term only began in the 1960s. Interest in the populism concept continued in the 1990s when political movements that analysts labelled as right-wing populism grew in several European countries. At the same time, some researchers continue the tradition started in the 1960s and focus on detailed descriptions of individual populist movements, which results in case studies, but without any attempt to make the knowledge gained by them theoretical at all. On the contrary, the second part of the researchers builds on Margaret Canovan's study from

the 1980s, starting from the thesis that populism as a phenomenon is not a universal concept and does not contain a common core. The best researchers have been doing is creating a typology of populist movements. Populism is characterised by faith in popular wisdom and virtue, rejection of traditional political elites and their institutions, and preference for direct forms of democracy. It is an ideology that opposes a unique and moral people to elites and dangerous others who, with joint forces, take away (or try to) the sovereign people's rights and values. Thus, populism as an ideology which emerged and grew in Western Europe is primarily a reaction to the failure of traditional parties to adequately respond in the eyes of voters to several different phenomena, such as economic and cultural globalisation, the speed of European integration, immigration, and elite corruption. (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008) However, I maintain that populism is not necessarily only an anti-establishment movement. Also, populism contains socio-political and cultural elements that differ between various types of populism. Francis Fukuyama noted that the rise of populism is fueled by globalisation and the consequent increase in inequality in rich countries (Fukuyama, 2019).

Populism, globally, whether right-wing or left-wing, exclusionary or inclusionary, represents the genesis of a multi-layered phenomenon. Although populism today has a negative connotation and is placed on the right side of the political spectrum, populist policies can be both right and left. Philippe Roger points out that populism encompasses a set of complex ideas, experiences and practices that do not fit into any typology. Populist leaders often propose "common sense" solutions and stigmatise minority groups (political, financial, and sometimes ethnic) that monopolise power. Populism combines the themes of nationalism and xenophobia, advocates for the protection of vulnerable sections of the people and often encourages reflexes that should bring about the security of the nation and the state. Michel Winock points out that "populism is not a specific phenomenon of the extreme right". The word "populism" primarily means "trust in the people", a concept we find in Robespierre and Michelet. In South America, populism denoted some political regimes such as Peronism in Argentina, then the regimes of Getúli Vargas in Brazil and Lázár Cárdenas in Mexico. What the media superficially calls right-wing or xenophobic populism belongs to the family of "national populism". Namely, this term often appears in journalistic jargon and was introduced in the 70s of the 20th century by the Argentine sociologist Gino Germani, who thus denotes the nationalist and populist regimes of South America between 1930 and 1950. The term was later adopted by a French political scientist and historian, Pierre-André Taguieff, who calls it a form of populism of the National Front in France. According to Taguieff's opinion, populism is first of all - before being defined as left or right - a political discourse that is articulated around the central term "appeal to the people". Populism tends to stigmatise the dominant establishment and corrupt elites, rising above the traditional left-right dichotomy. Taguieff, however, points out that some far-right political parties have somewhat turned into national populist movements that combine old right-wing themes with

new populist themes such as security, social protection, immigration and Islamophobia. (Vujic, 2018)

What are the ideologues of left populism? Chantal Mouffe contributed significantly with the book *Pour un populisme de Gauche* and Ernesto Laclau, who ideologically and politically articulated left populism. Namely, once reserved for initiated university circles of social sciences, their theories of critical populism and radical democracy found a place in public and political life and the mainstream media. Their theory, which Antonio Gramsci significantly influenced, is defined as post-Marxist because they distanced themselves from the economic determinism and class essentialism characteristic of Marx's thought. Articulating three key concepts (discourse, antagonism and hegemony), Laclau and Chantal Mouffe present a social emancipation theory, depriving the working class of its privileged historical status in classical Marxist theory, especially within infrastructures and production relations. In other words, contemporary conflicts and political struggles are no longer the product of infrastructures and production relations but rather the result of the contingent articulation of heterogeneous wills in society. Their concept of radical democracy and populism is based on such theoretical postulates. Within such a perspective of radical democracy, it is essential to accept the inevitability of conflict in the democratic arena. Radical democracy is more a practice than a regime or an institutional arrangement, and it assumes a "continuous process of construction; deconstruction; reconstruction". In this direction, populism is nothing but the very logic inherent in the phenomenon of political conflict. In the field of political ideas, along with Mouffe and Laclau, there are theorists of heterodox post-Marxism who try to influence the ideological profiling of left-wing populism, such as Robert Kurz, Moishe Postone, Anselm Jappe, Cornelius Castoriadis and Enzo Travers. They contrast "exoteric Marx" (classical Marxism, theories of industrial modernisation, labor-centered theories and superficial market analysis) with "esoteric Marx" (which is less well known in the form of value and commodity criticism). (Vujic, 2018)

Populist actors worldwide have gradually evolved into influential political forces in various countries and regions. According to Huber and Schimpf (2017), independent of the region, they share the ideas of anti-elitism and people centrism. On this basis, they can challenge standard democratic rules, including those of liberal democracy (Plattner, 2010), according to which power must be restrained and individual rights protected. Through the populist lens, features of liberal democracy, such as systems of checks and balances, undermine the proper implementation of the general will, which they claim to be the only true representative of. Thus, their presence can hurt the quality of democracy if populist parties challenge these institutions, mainly when they are in government. Populist parties, however, are not only characterised by their populist element but also by their host ideology. Thus, they can be right-wing populist parties, left-wing, or centrist. In other words, populist parties differ on wide-ranging issues, such as promoting exclusive (right-wing populist parties) or inclusive (left-wing populist parties) societies. These differences have been shown to manifest

themselves in the behaviour of populist parties, for instance, in parliamentary voting, where the populist element plays little to no role. Despite these well-known differences, there is little debate in the literature about whether the postulated relationship between populist parties and democracy is a function of their host ideology, their populist element, or both. (Huber & Schimpf, 2017)

Populism, regardless of whether it is left or right, contains the practical and political behaviour forms (as well as dichotomies) of inclusion, exclusion, authoritarianism, non-authoritarianism, intense nativism, weak nativism, radical democratic populism, conspiratorial populism and others. The qualitative analysis of populist parties (in Europe) usually shows that right-wing populist parties are characterised as exclusive and authoritarian with intense nativism and conspiratorial populism. They always tend to oppose immigration and, thus, multiculturalisation. Also, besides migration, recently, rightists have adopted more extreme rhetoric and policy positions on climate change and LGBTQ rights. Left populist parties are characterised as inclusive and non-authoritarian, with weak nativism and a radical democratic approach. Illiberal populist parties are characterised as exclusive parties with intense nativism and conspiratorial populism. Anti-establishment parties are characterised as non-authoritarian with weak nativism and a radical democratic approach. Worryingly, an analysis by more than 100 political scientists in 31 countries found that in European national elections in 2022, 32 per cent of European voters voted for anti-establishment parties, compared with 20 per cent in the early 2000s and 12 per cent in the early 1990s. (Henley, 2023)

The Brexit referendum and Donald Trump's election in 2016 marked the breakthrough of right-wing populism in the West. Opposition to immigration has arguably been central to both events. There is a relationship between populist radical-right parties and immigration, comparing differences across the Atlantic. Immigration has been central to nationalist populist discourse in Europe for many years. This has been accentuated by the immigration crisis on Europe's Eastern border that began around July 2021. Definitions are relevant to the debate, so it is first necessary to differentiate the discourse from the actual level of immigration. Immigrants are a population already within the country, whereas immigration designates the "flow" from point A to B. As the flow increases, the presumption is that PRR support also increases. Nevertheless, a counterexample to this was the burkini ban issue in France. The ban had little to do with immigration and border crossing but rather with immigrants already present coming from different cultural backgrounds. For the PRR, immigration has not only translated into control by the state over its borders but subsequently also into a danger to the "nation".

Immigration has become highly nationalistic - a contradiction in the European Union (EU) context. Immigration encounters resistance from those who have immigrated from outside the EU and from those who have migrated within it. Incidents of Islamic terrorism have sometimes involved first and second-generation immigrants and have

been used by the PRR to mobilise political support. For instance, anti-immigrant attitudes in the UK have to do with immigrants coming from other parts of the Union (Polish plumbers). Immigrants (whether Muslims from the Middle East and North Africa, Romani from Eastern Europe in France, or Caribbeans in the UK) represent "the Other" for the PRR. This, in turn, ties into the question of identity, which bears significant political importance. The immigration question shapes the way nations view themselves; it was notably at the core of the Brexit vote. The immigration debate also differs from country to country. In France, the focus has always been on North African immigration and much less on immigration from Syria (a country of concern for others).

Two dynamics limit the prospect for growth of PRR parties. First, ambition for power is often linked to deradicalisation (as the Italian Lega and the French National Front (FN) tried a decade ago), which can unsuccessfully lead to party splits. Even when this reorientation is successful, participation in governing power has tended to reduce, not increase, their electoral support (as with the Freedom Party of Austria, FPÖ). Second, as this electoral support grows, so does the strength of electoral opposition that seeks to block them from gaining seats or forming coalitions. Electoral support for Rassemblement National (RN) in France peaked between 2017 and 2019 and is likely to diminish in 2022, with a challenge from its right in Eric Zemmour. Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany has not increased its electoral support since 2017; Vox in Spain has not increased its support since 2019. Electoral support for radical right parties in Denmark, Norway and Greece has declined recently. Structure matters. As the case of the US demonstrates, federalism and localism can sustain radical right parties in local fiefs and protect them even if their support at the national level does not grow or even diminishes. (Shain, 2021)

Dani Filc argues that populism is too complex to fit easily into the conventional political dimensions of left and right. Mattia Zulianello and Petra Guasti argue that populism is either left-wing or right-wing is a myth. They support their claim by describing two sub-groups of populism that do not fit the left-right dichotomy: valence and agrarian populism. Their conceptualisation of valence populism as a non-ideological populism is also enlightening! Their argument is important because it stresses the complexity and variety of populist movements. There are, after all, populist movements that are both left- and right-wing. Peronism is one of the most longstanding populist movements, reaching government in five different historical periods after 1945. It had strong right and left wings, making it difficult to classify as either. Technopopulism, as Christopher Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi-Accetti analysed, is yet another phenomenon that cannot be easily classified as left or right. More generally, considering populism as either left-wing or right-wing is problematic because the differentiation between left and right is less straightforward now than in the past. Norberto Bobbio offers us a way to differentiate between left and right based on each approach to equality. He argued that leftists believe that human beings are equal, that inequalities are a social product, and that social practices and policies

should aim to increase equality. Those on the right, meanwhile, believe that social inequalities are the unavoidable result of natural inequalities concerning gender, ethnicity, race, nationality, or class. However, when discussing whether specific political parties are left-wing or right-wing, we should consider their stands along three axes. These are economic structure and policies, cultural and identity issues, and the conceptualisation of democracy. There certainly are political parties that are wholly left or wholly right wing, but many, including populist parties, mix characteristics. The crux of inclusion or exclusion among populist parties seems to be how they define 'the people', but populist inclusion can never be absolute. (Filc, 2023)

The host ideology, focusing on left- and right-wing populism, has consequences for how these parties relate to the dimension of political inclusion and minority rights. However, we expected the host ideology to be irrelevant to a populist party's association with mutual constraints. The empirical findings support an argument that populism should not be examined in isolation from its host ideology when considering the relationship between populist actors and democracy. This finding should not diminish populism's role in this relationship, particularly in the wake of temporary developments in cases such as Poland and Hungary. In some cases, however, populism may matter less or even only constitute an additional qualifier of radical right parties rather than being a steady feature. Future studies thus could explore under which conditions ideology and populism may play a more significant role for populist parties and how they relate to specific aspects of democracy, an issue in which fundamental differences in historical legacies between East- and West-Europe may well play into (Gherghina & Soare, 2013). Also, right-wing populist parties have been shown to mobilise certain voter groups neglected by other political parties, such as citizens who are less educated or poor (e.g., Huber & Ruth, 2017; Rooduijn, 2017). At the same time, they may also discourage sure voters from turning out in elections (Immerzeel & Pickup, 2015). By focusing on the dimension of political participation, future research may explore whether left-wing populist parties exert similar effects or whether mobilisation and de-mobilization effects depend on a populist party's host ideology. (Huber and Scimpf, 2017)

There is a significant difference between the two types of populism. Left-wing movements usually express inclusionary populism. It is combined with progressive patriotism, while exclusionary populism is expressed by extreme right-wing parties and is associated with nationalism. Inclusionary populism also allows for the political integration of marginalised and excluded people, thus expanding the boundaries of democracy. Exclusionary populism understands the people as an ethnically or culturally homogeneous unit and excludes people (migrants, minorities, etc.) on the grounds of racist and nativist reasons. Latin-American and South European populism are mostly inclusive and egalitarian (socioeconomic dimension), while North American and North European populism are principally exclusionary and hierarchical in profile (sociocultural dimension). (Markou, 2016) Applied to practical politics, extreme or radical nationalists believe that the country should be a culturally

homogenous entity and that the state should reflect the cultural values of its people. As such, radical nationalism is often against universal international law.

Regions, where Colonialism occurred are very often strongholds of the development of either form of populism. Inclusionary populism allows for the political integration of excluded social groups and people, thus enlarging the boundaries of democracy. It is crucial to note that Latin-American and South European populisms are mostly inclusive and egalitarian. In contrast, North American and North European populisms are principally exclusionary and hierarchical in profile. Inclusive populism appears mostly in colonised countries and regions (such as Latin America) where the people are constituted by including different ethnic and social groups.

On the contrary, exclusionary populism appears mainly in former colonialist countries (such as North Europe) because its nativism is that of the coloniser (and its ethnocentrism produces a racist discourse). Left-wing populist movements do not necessarily involve nationalism and xenophobia, as is demonstrated by their anti-racist orientation. However, it is possible to utilise progressive patriotism, a sense of pride in a culturally or territorially defined community. Patriotism is usually defined as the persistence of love or loyalty to a country and is distinguished from xenophobia or hatred of others. Patriotism taps the affective component of one's feelings toward one's country, while nationalism reflects a perception of national superiority and an orientation toward national dominance. (Markou, 2017)

### **Aim and Methodology**

Thus, the study examines right-wing and left-wing in various Continents and Regions: MENA, Latin America, and Europe. First, it questions political conditions, behavioralism, and transitions of populism. Second, in which forms of inclusions and exclusions populism arrive on the political scene. Thus, the focus is the latest decade of the contemporary world (diverse Continents and Regions: MENA, Latin America, and Europe). Although there is scholarly debate about contemporary populism in the European Continent (in general) and, lately, some in Latin America and MENA (Middle East and North Africa), cross-continental and regional research is lacking. This research review incorporated the scientific methodology of meta-analysis, content analysis, a descriptive method, and an in-depth literature review. It included examining various scientific, professional, and expert-based data formats.

### **Discussion and Results**

#### **Europe**

The financial crisis of 2008 caused growing frustrations about the failure to solve social problems, creating fertile ground for reconfiguring the political scene. New non-systemic movements criticise the sterile policy of economic reforms, emerging like the Greek Aganaktismenoi movement, the Spanish Movimiento 15-M or the French Nuit. On the other hand, the traditional lines of division and political antagonism between the right and the left are becoming weaker in the face of new

political configurations, where there is a confrontation between the "radical centre", which seeks to defend the neoliberal agenda through pragmatic reformism, and "populism" with ideologically different inspirations is a common feature in that, in a certain sense, they dualise the social space into members of the people and elite-oligarchy. For example, in Greece, the popularity of the social democratic PASOK was significantly reduced in favour of the left-wing populist party Syriza. In Spain, the demise of the social-democratic PSOE opened the way for a new configuration with a new triangular distribution of power between the centre-right, left-wing populism Podemos and PSOE. In Italy, a triangular scheme is also at work between the fragmented right, the left centre and the populist party Five Star Movement, which is vaguely defined from an ideological point of view but with a clear anti-migration mood. In France, Macron's movement seeks to unite the centre-left and centre-right against Marine Le Pen's populist National Front. Today, in addition to the criticism of the dominant corrupt elites, the migration crisis has also become a powerful lever of the cultural-identity discourse of national populism, but also, by the back door, of left-wing populism. (Vujic, 2018)

In Europe, there is no general association between populist parties and democracy, independent of their status (government or opposition). While the anticipated direction of correlation is negative for populists in government and favourable for those actors in opposition, they are not statistically significant. However, a different picture emerges when distinguishing populist parties according to their host ideology:

The rightwing populist parties are associated with lower-quality liberal democracy.

Centre and left-wing populist parties are associated with a higher quality of liberal democracy.

While the centre and left-wing populist parties are statistically different from right-wing populist parties, there is no significant difference between those two categories.

These findings provide a first idea about potential differences in the association between populist parties and liberal democracy due to varying host ideologies. (Huber and Scimpf, 2017)

European populist parties in government are not associated with any particular direction regarding minority rights. In contrast, populist opposition parties are associated with a positive development. However, considering host ideology, we find this does not apply to all populists equally. For minority rights, we expected a more negative effect of right-wing populist parties and a positive influence of left-wing populist parties compared to the absence of populist parties. The empirical results lend support to our argument. First, on average, we observe a substantial positive relationship between left-wing populist parties and minority rights, whereas we find adverse effects for right-wing populist parties. The presence of centrist populist

parties is neither negatively nor positively correlated with minority rights. (Huber and Schimpf, 2017)

Migrations are central to Europe's future, security, and identity. The EU's cultural integrity remains unclear, and the migrant crisis opens up a multiculturalism discourse. The nation-state model has undergone significant globalised world changes, becoming less sustainable and less critical for cultural, political, and economic processes. Due to the growing economic insecurity and the fear of losing national identities in an environment of globalised culture, some have perceived multiculturalism as a threat. The humanitarian and security discourse reflects the micro-level of the situation on the ground and the mass media's macro levels and political action. Acceptance of ethno-religious or political diversity does not relieve immigrants of the duty to recognise all the rules necessary to conduct productive coexistence. Migrants' participation in socio-economic and political systems means realising the preconditions for the beginning of cultural integration. The crisis triggered an avalanche of anti-Islam sentiments that became a reference matrix for radical populism. The sense of identification with the housing society - Bosniaks, where Islamic regulations on the matrix are legitimised by recognising a universal theological pattern, is a symbolic moment and a participative approach to understanding religion and integration. Constructing immigrants as a group, whether they are migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers, tends to encourage the perception that "their" interests, values, and traditions are competing with "ours," stimulating negative emotions in the form of prejudice. (Hadzic, 2020)

Matthijs Rooduijn and Tjitske Akkerman showed how populism is distributed over the political spectrum and questioned whether right-wing parties are more populist than left-wing parties. The analysis of 32 parties in five Western European countries between 1989 and 2008 showed that radical parties on both the left and the right are inclined to employ a populist discourse. This is a striking finding because populism in Western Europe has typically been associated with the radical right; only some particular radical left parties have been labelled populist as well. This article suggests that the contemporary extreme left in Western Europe is generally populist. Many contemporary radical left parties are not traditionally communist or socialist (anymore). They do not focus on the 'proletariat' but glorify a more general category: the 'good people'. Moreover, they accept the system of liberal democracy as such but only criticise the political and economic elites within that system. (Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2015)

Right-wing populists share the characteristics of authoritarianism, nativism and populism, but the comparison revealed significant differences on the economic dimension and in determining "dangerous others". The French National Rally (RN) party has left-wing socio-economic views and advocates for the protection of gender equality and sexual minorities who, according to them, are threatened by Islamist fundamentalism. Therefore, they include the Muslim religious minority and Muslim

immigrants in the "dangerous others". The Norwegian right-wing populists gathered in the Progressive Party (FrP) are positioned to the right on the economic dimension, meaning they are neoliberal. Still, just like the National Front, they emphasise that they protect sexual minorities from Muslims as "dangerous others". In addition, they oppose positive discrimination against the Sami (Laps). Right-wing populists in the new democracies exclude sexual minorities and ethnic minorities from their concept of the people. Consequently, sexual minorities, ethnic minorities and Muslim immigrants appear as "dangerous others". The Polish Law and Justice Party (PiS) is also against abortion. While for the Czech party Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), the EU represents "dangerous others", which is why they propose a referendum on membership in the Union, Law and Justice (PiS) shows soft Euroscepticism and a reluctance to cooperate with the Russians, unlike Freedom and Direct Democracy (SDP). The National Gathering (RN) opposes the current European integration processes. It proposes a referendum on membership or at least fundamental changes in the functioning of the EU. In addition, they agree with Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) on the need for cooperation with the Russian authorities. (Maravic, 2019)

Thus, in recent years, Europe has seen a steady growth of populism, which should be seen as a symptom of the very crisis of the legitimacy of representative democracy and the disruption of relations between the people and the political elites, who are moving away and settling comfortably in distant structures of political and economic power. The populist political phenomenon is flatly classified as far right, even though the sources and forms of populist thought can also be found on the left. However, there should be the shifting of new political divisions and the necessity of reinterpreting outdated binary political paradigms and typologies. The emergence of left-wing populism maintains the deficit and defeat of the systemic left, that is, social democracy, which failed the original goals of defending workers and fighting against capital. By embracing the rules of the market game and the ideology of "individual desire", the civil left has separated itself from the people. It does not share their true aspirations and needs. The emergence of left-wing populism could signify the rebirth of socialism that would be faithful to its original principles. It should also not be forgotten that Karl Marx condemned unfair competition and saw how dangerous immigration was for the survival of the "indigenous proletariat." According to him, immigration is a "reserve army of capital". In conclusion, it should be said that left populism is possible only by distancing oneself from the dogmatic historical determinism of Marx but also from abstract internationalism and globalism as the legitimising discourse of the ideology of the neoliberal market. In this regard, the left-wing critic of Jean-Claude Miché points out that "globalisation is nothing but the planetary extension of deterritorialised and speculative capitalism, which costs the most and endangers nations." (Vujic, 2018)

Populism implies a constant conflict between elite, establishment, and alienated structures linked to interests contrary to the public or members of other

ethnoreligious backgrounds. Both left and right populism aim at a particular political and social homogeneity. The phenomenon of increased countries with developed democratic institutions and standards with authoritarianism leads to a closed circle of global "legitimate-democratic" violence, in which democratic institutions and standards, human and minority rights, and freedoms will be in danger. The Balkan's lessons in dealing with similar individuals and movements that promote the "cleansing" of Europe and preserving an "identity" artificially tailored to others' hatred are proactivity. The Balkans' (un)-successful fight against the historical forms of right-wing extremism in more current circumstances has become like an overflowing foundation of global right-wing networks. Humankind's great concern stems from the increasingly aggressive foreign policy, xenophobic sentiment, and the growing inclination of the autocratic populist government to stop the transition of violence to democracy in the scientifically-technologically and culturally-spiritually objectively connected global community. Solutions based on opportunism and manipulation do not offer anything concrete that could improve the socio-political-security-economic situation. When a liberal sees that certain elements use coercion to regulate social relations according to their desire, to force the whole of society on acceptable socio-economic behaviour, the liberal should feel a personal responsibility to stand up for freedom. (Hadzic, 2020)

There are also some radical left parties with inclusionary populism in Europe, e.g., Greece. In Greece, inclusionary populism, whether led by Andreas Papandreou's PASOK or Tsipras' Syriza, has dominated the populist political landscape since the fall of the Greek dictatorship. Greece was not a colony of a powerful Western European country, but it has always been economically and culturally dependent on the West. As a result, this shadowy dependence on the West (that we can call crypto-colonialism) might explain the dominance of an anti-imperialist discourse and an inclusionary populism flourishing among the 'lower orders' of Greek politics. Syriza's populism in opposition indeed managed to improve the quality of democracy through its struggles against a neoliberal and technocratic EU. The radical left party became Greece's most important political movement and the "voice" of the marginalised people (the silent majority). However, SYRIZA's inclusive populist promise for a different Europe – beyond austerity policies and neoliberalism – and for the radical transformation of the political and economic system is still in limbo. (Markou, 2016)

In some post-socialist European countries, neoliberal democracy is hindered by the exposed or conditioned ethnic symbolic radical populism, particularly in the post-Yugoslav ethnonationalism political behaviour. Moreover, the approach towards the fascist ideology symbols disregards the communist social memory of stability and human security and a collectivism-oriented community. Neoliberal globalisation has strengthened national identities, supported by the war-related creation of ethnic homogenous territories. Consequently, former Yugoslavia's historical conflicting memory cultures from WW2 to the Yugoslav wars present enduring processes within sociopolitical ethnic-religious traditions. The collective historical and social memory

that forms people's identities is manipulated, falsified, reduced, and politically instrumentalised. Contemporary ethnic-symbolic politics communicate through conservative political orientations: re-traditionalism behaviour (including some left-wingers) advocates public acceptance. Historical anti-fascism actors have been stigmatised within attitudes toward the fascist ideology symbolism and traditional Balkan sociopolitical mythologies. Frequent use of (often) antagonistic ethnic symbolism in textual, rhetorical and visual forms expresses it. Various methods of conducting historical revisionism in the symbolic and ideological vocations decreased Yugoslavia's social memory. Institutional and non-institutional engagement is normatively needed in a battle for correct memory. Citizens' participation in political decision-making outside the ethnoreligious paradigm is crucial. The consequence of populist political orders in ethnoreligious partitioned post-socialism is ethnic-symbolic collectivism. It oppresses individual identity and excludes the possibility of distinct classification. Adapted to modern society, contemporary notions of autonomy and mind provide a theoretical framework for formulating political strategies in a post-national context. Acquisitive components of civil society and the society's stagnation due to slow consolidation can abruptly transform into political apathy motivating violent disorder. Accordingly, many sociopolitical realities symbolise and indicate that "democratised" post-socialist and post-Yugoslav states are more "inadequate" and "ineffective" than Yugoslavia. (Hadzic, 2023) "In Bosnia and Herzegovina's (B&H) recent elections, voters put on their Seven-League Boots twice over. Not only did they elect the leftists to the state presidency, but women candidates dominated the October election day. This really should not be seen as a laughing matter because the new members of the Presidency of B&H are Ms Željka Cvijanović from the SNSD, Mr Denis Bećirović from the SDP, and Mr Željko Komšić, from the Democratic Front. However, there certainly is wry amusement to be found in the track record of the SNSD, the party owned by Mr Milorad Dodik. In post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina, since this party set about developing its absolutism over ten years, it has renounced its leftist outlook and turned to nationalism. This nationalist stance has provided a political banner to obscure and hide all kinds of criminal activities to cover up the mismanagement of public resources and widespread nepotism. (Selimbegovic, 2022)

Thus, populism, right or left, in B&H goes in line with a defensive mechanism to retain power regarding systemic corruption. According to the 2023 Corruption Perception Index, B&H is the worst in South SouthEast Europe and is entirely devastated by corruption – the situation is worsening. B&H once again fell behind in this year's survey of the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) published by Transparency International (TI) and ranks by far the lowest in the region and third worst in Europe when it comes to the state of corruption in the country. Only Russia and Ukraine achieved a result worse than B&H, which, with a score of 34 on a scale of 0 to 100, is among the countries where corruption is worsening the most. While numerous countries in the region are moving forward, B&H has fallen as many as eight index

points since 2012 and, along with Turkey, in this year's TI global report, was singled out as an example of the most significant decline compared to 2012 in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. B&H records the worst trend of all surrounding countries, which is best illustrated by the example of Kosovo, which, from 2012 to 2022, progressed from a score of 34 to 41 index points, while in the same ten years, B&H fell from 45 to 34 points. In the key findings for the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, it is stated that the Western Balkans countries cannot suppress organised crime due to the deterioration of the rule of law and a captive judiciary. (Transparency International, 2023)

In B&H, the phenomenon is that the most radical party is a socialist-democratic party in the name and centre-left position, as in the case of the SNSD. SNSD has been the leading party of the B&H Serbs for several decades. The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata; SNSD) is the centre left-wing party but simultaneously extremely radical right-wing. Its leader, Milorad Dodik, a close ally of Hungarian right-wing President Victor Orban, has been on the USA blocklist and sanctioned for many years. The SNSD's first real electoral success was recorded in 2006, when it won 41 of the 83 seats in the National Assembly of Republika Srpska, attracting 44.95% of the popular vote. Since then, the party has gradually abandoned its reformist ideology for a more aggressive advocacy of Serbian nationalism, threatening the secession of Republika Srpska from the rest of B&H numerous times. The party was expelled from the Socialist International in 2012 for continuing to "espouse a nationalist and extremist" line. (Jukic, 2012) "Milorad Dodik has regularly been calling Bosniaks "Muslims" in Balkan media, including the speech at the European (EU) Parliament (2022). Does Dodik want to articulate that Bosniaks are not a people like Serbs and Croats but a religious group? According to Dodik, the Serbian people cannot be represented by a Serb married to a Muslim. Whether Dodik is courting the "European right" with such rhetoric from Islamic threat and capitalising on global Islamophobia? Mainly because of the ethnoreligious antagonism in B&H and Western Balkans. During the inauguration ceremony in 2022, Hungarian president Orban referred to a conspiracy theory popularised by the far right. "This program wants to replace "Christian children" who are on the way to disappearing with Muslim migrants from other civilisations. Dodik stated to numerous media: "The migrant crisis is a civilisational occupation of Christianity, and B&H has been offered as a refugee parking lot. We in B&H have a serious problem. They do not see it in (Muslim) Sarajevo. Our people are afraid of migrants." Thus, he aims to benefit from the right-wing policies and growing radical populism in Europe that is anti-immigrant and anti-Islam. Dodik undoubtedly follows these sociopolitical and ideological matrices. His politics are proximate to political networks (i.e., Hungarian Viktor Orban and French far-right politician Thierry Mariani). "Is the cosmopolitan European republic closer to the horizon of human desires? Or Orban's and Zemmour's replica of the Third Reich? (...) However, in post-war and highly fragile B&H, jingoism and ethnoreligious nationalism persisted, creating "three"

prospective antagonistic collectivities generated by three (Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs) ethnopolitics. (Hadzic, 2022)

Populism and nationalism are often combined. Scholars give numerous reasons for the rise of nationalism and populism in society. The general population of the Balkans region are susceptible to the negative connotations of both populism and nationalism. Whenever we talk about conflict, especially genocides, the Holocaust has become synonymous with it. One of the most disturbing questions that has over the years arisen while studying the Holocaust is how the common public became a part of such an evil objective. A very similar issue arises in the case of Balkan as well. It is genocidal (historically) and post-genocidal region (latest wars). Only a couple of decades ago, this region witnessed fear and fighting that sabotaged their peace and harmony for years. These happenings nearly resulted in questioning (and still do: the latest, most dangerous political crisis in 2022) of B&H's existence as a country.

Due to its democratic stagnation, political and economic crises, and the exodus of the population, especially the young, the Western Balkans are fertile ground for populist rhetoric, for example, in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Populism is a massive challenge for all the countries of the Western Balkans. It does not help that populist movements are growing across Europe and the world. What is clear is that the populists benefit the most from what is currently happening, and the citizens of the countries where the populists rule have the most minor benefit. Some of these leaders have been active for more than ten years, which shows the continuity of populism. So far, the only certainty that can help reduce populism relates to building strong institutions. However, the question is whether it is possible to do that, understanding that there is a need for more EU support, i.e., EU integration is long ahead. Populists are taking advantage of the current situation and continue to strengthen while preventing the development of sound institutions – all this leads to a vicious circle of populism in the Western Balkans. The only long-term solution is to speed up the EU integration process and ultimately integrate these countries into the EU. In the meantime, it is also possible to work on trying to build regional institutions through the Open Balkans initiative or upgrading the CEFTA agreement (Central European Free Trade Agreement). The goal is to reduce the influence of populism in Balkan politics and to emphasise those policies that contribute to concrete changes – primarily through increasing the living standards of the citizens of this region. For example, in a report entitled "Political Propaganda: All Serbs in a State: The Consequences of the Instrumentalization of the Media for Ultra-Nationalist Purposes", De la Brosse (2003) cites several reasons why the population of Serbia at the time was easy prey for nationalists:

- Disoriented population in the context of the general crisis (abandonment of the system of values and ideology of communism, difficult economic, political, and social situation, a lost population whose ideals have disappeared),

- Support for the regime by the leading creators of public opinion (such as "Politika", "Radio-Television of Serbia", the Orthodox Church),
- State media is the primary source of information for 90% of the population (lack of independent media)
- Impossibility of democratic change of government (under the monopoly of state power in all spheres of social, political, and media life, the opposition had no chance to win the election)
- Absence of critical spirit. (Cavalic & Delic, 2022)

The non-existence of any alternative to the reality created by the government and the control of the media kept Slobodan Milošević and his ideology in power. As one of the soldiers of that ideology, at the end of the 1990s, Aleksandar Vučić appeared. He became the Minister of Information of Serbia in the government formed by Milošević's Socialist Party of Yugoslavia with the Serbian Radical Party of which he was a member. According to Kovačević (2020), this evident delay of Serbia in the process of democratisation is caused by various factors that are fertile ground for populists and their ideas, which in recent years, especially with the coming to power and strengthening of Aleksandar Vučić's policy, has become an integral part of political discourse in Serbia. The authors used Taggart's (2004) model, which explains the emergence of populism through clearly defined characteristics that need to be checked, emphasising that the following characteristics characterise populist movements, parties and individuals:

- Hostility towards representative democracy.
- The concept of serving the "fatherland" and the "people".
- Lack of fundamental values and principles and chameleon character.
- Spreading the atmosphere of extreme crisis.
- The vital role of the charismatic leader.

According to Salaj (2012), the central idea of populism is that society is divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: honest people and a corrupt elite. Populists emphasise the idea of good and honest people who have been deceived and manipulated by corrupt, incompetent, and interconnected elites. (Cavalic & Delic, 2023)

In recent years, several contributions have argued that right-wing populist voting is interrelated with individuals being negatively affected by globalisation. While there is merit to this argument, it cannot explain why voters unconcerned by globalisation vote for right-wing populist parties. The ontological insecurity or, the way we frame it, existential anxieties are a previously overlooked determinant of right-wing populist voting, as these anxieties make people vulnerable to right-wing populist crisis narratives even when they are not affected by the crises. Using European Social Survey data for 12 Western European countries between 2004 and 2018, Metten and Bayerlein (2023) constructed a novel index that measures existential anxieties on the individual level. Their index shows (1) that existential anxieties increase the

likelihood of right-wing populist voting and (2) that the fear fuelling narratives of these parties significantly mobilise individuals with moderate globalisation attitudes. (Metten & Bayerlein, 2023)

## **Latin America**

In Latin America, populism is not restricted to political affiliation, social class, or origin. It has been a defining feature of Latin American politics for decades. From Argentina's Juan Perón to Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, charismatic leaders have mobilised their electoral base with fiery rhetoric, promises of economic prosperity, and appeals to the masses. However, while populism may have provided a path to power for these leaders, it has also contributed to a cycle of political instability, economic turmoil, and social unrest in the region. In recent years, the populist wave in Latin America has shown signs of receding. Left-wing populist movements, predominant in the early 2000s, have pushed back Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro and Colombia's Iván Duque. Others, like Argentina's Alberto Fernández, have taken a more moderate approach to governance. However, can this break in the populist cycle truly lead to long-lasting political stability and economic growth for Latin America? Many factors have contributed to the rise of populist leaders and movements in the region, and we have the consequences of their policies. The first wave of Latin American populism emerged in the 1940s and 1950s, with the rise of Juan Perón in Argentina and Getúlio Vargas in Brazil. They promoted policies favouring the working classes, such as wage increases, social security, and labour rights. However, they also centralised power, restricted civil liberties, and adopted protectionist economic policies. The second wave of Latin American populism emerged in the 1990s and 2000s in the wake of the debt crisis and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This wave was characterised by left-wing movements that challenged the neoliberal policies promoted by the US and international financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF. Leaders such as Venezuela's Hugo Chávez (1999-2013), Bolivia's Evo Morales (2006-2019), and Ecuador's Rafael Correa (2007-2017) pursued policies of nationalisation, land reform, and social welfare programs that aimed to reduce poverty and inequality. While populist leaders succeeded in mobilising their supporters and implementing policies that addressed social inequalities, they equally contributed to the cycle of political instability, economic turmoil, and social unrest in Latin America. Populism contributes to social unrest and polarisation. Populist leaders often use divisive rhetoric that pits different groups against each other, such as the rich against the poor or the urban elites against the rural masses. It creates a climate of intolerance, social conflict, violence, economic instability, democratic erosion, and social polarisation, as elucidated above. Breaking the cycle of populism necessitates addressing its root causes and implementing concrete policy measures. (O'Ryan, 2023) Left-wing populist forces in Latin America, such as those led by Morales in Bolivia and Kirchner in Argentina, have managed to fulfil many popular demands and to create the conditions for a new "pluralistic" and more democratic society. (Markou, 2017)

Regarding populism and nationalism in Peronism and Chavism, despite their inclusionary policies, wealth redistribution, and the expansion of social and political rights, Perón and Chávez built authoritarian governments. These national populist leaders concentrated power in the executive, used laws instrumentally to repress dissent and used the state apparatus to colonise the public sphere and civil society. A combination of four factors explains their autocratic drift. First, the logic of populism transformed democratic rivals into enemies. Second, these leaders constructed the people as one and, once in power, enacted policies to transform diverse and pluralistic populations into homogeneous peoples embodied in their leaderships. Third, even though these former military officers promoted national sovereignty, they acted as the only interpreters of national interests, excluding rivals from the national community. Fourth, Perón and Chávez closed institutional spaces to process dissent and conflict, exacerbating the autocratic impulses of their opponents who used any means necessary, including military coups, to try to get rid of populist presidents. (De La Torre, 2017)

Strengthening democratic institutions by promoting transparency, accountability, and electoral participation can create resilient, democratic systems, enabling Latin America to withstand the populist pressure better. Implementing comprehensive electoral reforms – strictly regulating campaign finance, instituting monitoring mechanisms, investing in voter education programs, and strengthening the independence of electoral management bodies can pave the way for solid institutions. Promoting economic stability is significant to combat populism. Investing in infrastructure, fostering innovation, and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises are some policies that promote long-term economic growth. By creating a stable and prosperous economic environment, Latin America can reduce the appeal of populist promises and create a more sustainable path to prosperity. Policymakers must take steps to promote social inclusion and reduce inequality since populism often perpetuates in societies suffering from inequality and exclusion. According to the World Bank 2022 data, Latin America's average Gini coefficient stood at around 0.50, far from the global average of 0.39, indicating pronounced inequality challenges. Policies promoting education, healthcare, social welfare, diversity, tolerance, and multiculturalism can help create a more stable and harmonious society. Populism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon posing significant challenges to Latin America's stability. Addressing the root causes and implementing policies to promote democratic institutions, economic stability, social inclusion, and regional cooperation can help the region break the cycle of populism and pave the way for a more stable and prosperous future. By working together and committing to the long-term goal of building a more resilient and inclusive society, Latin America can overcome the challenges of populism and build a brighter tomorrow. (O Rayan, 2023) I maintain that the politics in the postcolonialism conditions (Latin America) more often contain populist populism interwoven with the effects of colonialism. It sees populism as a

contemporary and collective political response to the global crisis of nation-state approaches due to globalisation and the stronghold of capitalism.

### **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**

Even before the conflict in Ukraine, the liberal state model looked much less attractive for the broader Middle East region than it had only a decade earlier, at the height of the Arab Spring. MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries have had to resist political liberalism for a long time, shifting between exclusionary and inclusionary non-democratic states. After the failed Arab Spring, there are many challenges to inclusionary countries in the MENA countries. We have authoritarianism, the reality or threat of political violence, disputable human rights, gender inequality, and ongoing protest movements.

Populism in the Middle East has a relatively long history—for example, Iran, Turkey, and Israel. Moreover, as argued in the specific cases, the study of populism in the Middle East illuminates another sub-family: religious populism. A tension between inclusion and exclusion characterises religious populism since religion defines the boundaries of belonging, and as a consequence, it has a fundamental exclusionary dimension. While Ernesto Laclau considers the chain of equivalences as symbolical, the chapter finds three different dimensions around which populist movements are constituted: symbolical, distributive or material, and political. The Turkish and Israeli cases highlight the characteristics of populism in non-liberal (or semi-liberal) democracies and the exclusionary potential of populism in societies characterised by ethno-national conflicts. (Filc, 2018)

Although public opinion research has gained prominence in the Middle East and North Africa region since 2011, data on electoral behaviour and political attitudes are scarce and rarely have a comparative focus. In its 26-year history, no country other than Israel was ever part of the CSES from the Middle East and North Africa region—such datasets and how they contribute to a specific topic: understanding populism across multiple contexts. Tunisia is the first Arab country to be covered in the CSES. People who score high on the populist attitudes measures do not necessarily have a higher preference for populist parties or candidates. Contrary to consistent results from advanced industrial democracies, we also find that people who endorse nativism are more likely to support left-wing parties. (Mahrez et al, 2023)

In 2018, they featured critical parliamentary elections in Iraq and Lebanon. In both countries, formerly controversial populist figures performed far better than expected and are playing central roles in the scramble to form governments. In Iraq, the Saeroon coalition led by Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, the notorious former leader of the Mahdi Army militia, won the plurality of seats. In Lebanon, the Samir Geagea-led Lebanese Forces, a former militia traditionally seen as a right-wing Christian party, doubled its seats in parliament. At first glance, the two outliers, Sadr and Geagea, may appear diametrical opposites, but their surprising victories reveal an emerging form of populism sweeping the Middle East. While Iraq and Lebanon are often compared

for their ethnic and sectarian power-sharing agreements, these elections also show that ideology is the wrong lens to understand political nuance. Another feature of these populist movements is their attempt at internal reform.

Both leaders have made anti-corruption changes to their movements or state offices that their party members have held. For the 2018 elections, Sadr decided to run with a slate of new candidates, telling many of his seasoned political colleagues to step aside. He has also come down hard against members of his movement accused of corruption, including former deputy prime minister Baha Araj. In Lebanon, the protests led by independent civil society activists in 2015, sparked by a crisis about garbage collection, failed to cause governmental change as many protesters had hoped. Although many independents ran in the 2018 election, only one independent candidate won. Iraq's protest movement similarly failed to bring about systemic change. Only when the Sadrists joined did it offer glimpses of dramatic change. As a result, several prominent civil society activists decided to join forces with the Sadrist movement for the elections. Unlike the other elite who suffered from the turnout, Sadr's party of newcomer candidates maintained its electoral base. Geagea's party managed to snatch votes formerly given to establishing the Free Patriotic Movement. Their populist combination of elitism with a reform agenda appears to have given voters more confidence in the ability of Sadr and Geagea to implement reform than in the prospect of independent voices to change the system. (Mansour & Khatib, 2018)

The failures of Western efforts in Iraq, Libya, and above all in Afghanistan, where there had been the most significant international attempt to create a state that could combine local traditions and liberal ideals, contributed to this shift in sentiment. A plurality of other factors played a role, too. These include the political and economic crisis in Europe, which provoked the rise of populist movements; the tensions within the United States that erupted with the 2020 elections and the ensuing attack on the US Capitol on 6 January 2021; and the growing influence and popularity in the Middle East, of a China-like political model that appears to promise stability with economic growth at the expense of democratic values. Finally, the substantial failure of the Arab Spring, with the return of autocratic regimes or the outbreak of civil and proxy wars, further weakened the fading hopes of liberal movements in the region. For a long time, Tunisia had been seen as an exception in this geopolitical panorama.

Nevertheless, recent events have shown the fragility of the Tunisian democratic model and the deep contradictions in a post-2011 scenario. Against this background, the war in Ukraine has exacerbated international tensions, further polarising the "democracy vs autocracy" dichotomy. It has also highlighted Western contradictions and the differential attention the West pays to Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Therefore, limited Middle Eastern support for the West's positions in what appears to be simply a "European war" is understandable; in a multipolar context, regional powers are trying to navigate between two competing blocs. Above all, the West's concentrated attention to the war in Ukraine has left local actors in other regions

ample room to manoeuvre boldly, as demonstrated by the recent moves made by Tunisian President Kais Saied. Saied's 2019 election as president of Tunisia represented the victory of an anti-system, anti-elite rhetoric used by the candidate throughout his electoral campaign. His project was presented more like a messianic mission than a political or party agenda, had a simple set of slogans: "Purge" the country of the old political party system that had ruled Tunisia since the 1980s and is accused of being corrupt, elite-oriented and representative of feckless governance. Saied promised to erase the gap between citizens and decision-makers by reversing the power pyramid through an institutional reform inspired by a vague, populist concept of sovereignty. The idea was to give more power to local representatives and himself as a guarantor of the interests of the people and the nation. However, to "correct the revolutionary process", a phrase that the post-2011 revolts' regimes had sinisterly used. The principal scapegoat of Saied's rhetoric was the Islamist party Ennahda, guilty of failing to solve Tunisia's social and economic problems despite holding the most significant number of parliamentary seats for much of the decade after the 2011 uprising. However, the other parties were also in the dock, accused of not being able to create a stable economy and credible institutions. The economic and health consequences of COVID-19 pushed the country to the brink of collapse, leading the president to implement his project quickly. On 25 July 2021, with the support of the military and security forces, Saied declared a state of emergency, suspended parliament, and dismissed the prime minister. Parliament was later dissolved on 30 March 2022, when the effects of the current war in Ukraine had compounded Tunisia's crisis. (Melcangi, 2022)

Often named the only Middle Eastern Democracy, Israel is largely overlooked in the literature. However, it provides a rare example of what an entire decade of twenty-first-century populism in power looks like. Based on an examination of rhetoric and policymaking between 2009 and 2019, this article brings the writing on the subject up to date and highlights the unique traits of Israeli populism. In so doing, it establishes that Israeli populism has been mainstreamed remarkably and currently encompasses almost all right-wing parties in the country's legislature. Moreover, it shows that the Israeli case embodies a variety of populism which has yet to be acknowledged in the literature – neither economic nor cultural, but rather based on national security issues. The concept of 'security-driven populism', introduced here, could be helpful to researchers studying other populist regimes that do not fit neatly into the 'culture versus economy' debate, which has dominated the field for years. (Levi & Agmon, 2020) Such populism, by its character, is, of course, exclusionary towards Palestinians. However, Israeli democracy is under unprecedented attack from within. The radical right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu applies the recipes of authoritarian regimes similar to Hungary, Poland and other forms of illiberal states. The issue in Israel is the goal of subjecting the judiciary and independent media to state control in the name of the people.

Populism can be considered a political communication technique or an ideology, a phenomenon by which politicians can mobilise people through rhetoric capable of triggering powerful collective emotions and stressing the gap between "us" and "them". In the Israeli political arena, the dynamic of populism is very interesting to analyse because the society is fragmented, polarised and divided by "cross-cutting cleavages" (such as ethnicity, religion and ideology), which can determine voters' political affiliation. Israeli political discourse has always relied on strategies that would have been able to conquer the most profound emotions of affiliated voters, shaping the public debate in a way that could reinforce strong voting patterns and the existence of two opposite ideological camps: the Left, led by Labor Party and the Right, headed by the Likud. While populism in Europe is linked both to the economic crisis and identity concerns regarding immigration within the Israeli arena, it seems to be related chiefly (if not only) to the identity dimension of the political discourse and, therefore, ultimately, to the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians. Thus, Anna Bargaini (2019) analysed the case of today's populism in Israel (it does not matter if it is conceived as a strategy or an ideology. As a phenomenon, populism originated from the right-wing narrative that peace is unattainable; indeed, rightist coalitions have dominated Israeli politics in the last 20 years since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995: this significant event not only started the decline of the Oslo process but also paralysed the Left which has not been able to formulate a new viable alternative regarding the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, giving to the nationalist camp the occasion to impose its view in the formulation of the security agenda. Of course, during these years of the Netanyahu era, the discourse adopted by the prime minister and his government has been radicalizing on many issues and has been increasing populist attitudes regarding, for example, the judicial system, the media and the police, but the rule of right wing-populism has stemmed from the overtaking of Left's traditional dominance in the security discourse. That element proved to be so fundamental because the Territories/Peace Issue is not only a political debate but involves deep collective emotions linked to the very definition of Israeli identity; this delineation polarises the electorate, showing that the "peace camp" and the "nationalist camp" are more than simple expressions of two different political opinions, but are instead powerful, opposite concepts regarding the nature of the State itself (Medinat Yisrael, envisioned by the Left, or Eretz Yisrael, supported by the Right). The rightward shift of the Israeli political arena, together with its values, can be re-balanced proposing an alternative to the positions given by the government coalition on the most crucial issues to the voters: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, from which the electorate derives the anxieties and the polarisation that fuel populist dynamics in Israel. (Bargaini, 2019)

A new form of Islamic populism has evolved in many parts of the Muslim world. Its emergence is part of the universal phenomenon of populist responses to the contradictions of globalised capitalism. It is also a consequence of the outcomes of Cold War-era social conflicts and social-structural transformations in Muslim

societies over the last half-century. Specifically, it articulates the rising ambitions and growing frustrations of urban middle classes across the Muslim world, the anxieties of growing urban poor populations and relatively peripheralised sections of the bourgeoisie. Thus, representing cross-class coalitions, the New Islamic Populism aims to provide access to power and tangible resources to an ummah conceived to be both downtrodden and homogeneous, though, in actuality, increasingly differentiated. This is evident in Indonesia (not MENA), Egypt and Turkey. (Hadiz, 2014)

Central to understanding political Islam and light on populist forms of politics beyond Western democracies is the exploration of whether this recent tide of Islamic populism (Egypt, Turkey, and Indonesia) acts as a corrective that empowers the people or as a threat that capitalises on the ill-informed masses to garner support for charismatic leaders. The cases under scrutiny demonstrate that by weakening the authoritarian structures, producing doctrinally flexible politicians, and incorporating marginalised groups into politics, this new form of populism facilitates democratic transitions in authoritarian and competitive severe settings. However, the very characteristics of populism that prove successful against the establishment also create significant impediments to democratic consolidation later on. By rejecting plurality and failing to re-establish the formal and informal institutions necessary for democratic governance, these movements often replace one form of authoritarianism with another. Broken promises of inclusion leave a bitter legacy of populism in the political arena, making citizens much more cynical about political processes in the long run. (Oztas, 2020)

Populism and misogyny very often silence women journalists in the Middle East and North Africa. Thirty per cent of the women journalists in MENA surveyed by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) answered that they self-censor on social media. In another ICFJ survey, 20 per cent of female journalists said they withdrew from all online interaction due to harassment and threats. (Erhain, 2023)

The conflict between Hamas and Israel reveals deep divisions within and among EU member states. These tensions are fueling both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. If the Russian invasion of Ukraine cemented a unity in European foreign policy that has taken more than a year to show cracks, the escalation of violence between Hamas and Israel needed only a few days to expose the geopolitical fragility of the union. Struggling to have a common position, the hard-to-get consensus for a "humanitarian pause" proves the deep divisions among member states. This crisis has aggravated the fracture lines between the West and the Global South and between the EU and its southern neighbourhood. The EU today is a secondary player in a diplomatic framework that has failed in the region. Europe is vulnerable to what happens in the Middle East, Ukraine, and China. And to the planet's climate change challenges.

Moreover, we have NATO matters and Donald Trump's potential presidential return to the White House. EU unity appears to be part of the collateral damage of the terrorist attack on Hamas. The cacophony of European messages following October 7

showed not only a deplorable failure of coordination among EU officials. It also brought to the surface the long-standing divisions between the member states that support Israel unconditionally and others that feel equal sympathy for the suffering of the Palestinians. However, this reminder of the EU's limitations as a geopolitical actor is probably one of these tragic events' less harmful consequences for Europe. Much more severe are the potential repercussions at the societal level. If the turmoil in the Middle East continues and spreads, it will turbo-charge the polarisation already affecting many parts of Europe. Both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia will surge. The threat of terrorism and other forms of violence will increase. Attitudes toward migration will harden further and create new obstacles to the integration of ethnic and religious minorities. Radical right parties will exploit the situation, and their nationalist agenda will impede the finding of European solutions. Realistically, the EU's ability to majorly contribute to managing this crisis is modest. Still, it must do whatever it can because the stakes for European societies and politics could not be higher. (Dempsey, 2023) Moreover, as a complex Region, MENA involves countries with (semi) democratic or authoritarian regimes and between parliamentary or presidential systems. Yet, alongside the politics of populism (including geopolitical aspirational frictions, e.g., EU, USA, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel), MENA retains internal political and military conflicts and external interventions.

### **Comparative Perspective**

The contemporary populists in both Europe and Latin America have made important innovations. The European populist radical right's emphasis on excluding Muslims is relatively recent and strongly related to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In contrast, the emphasis on including the indigenous population is a relatively new development within Latin American populism. Latin-American populism is mostly inclusive, and European populism is mostly exclusionary. Moreover, colonialism is an essential key to understanding the development of either form of populism. Following a characterisation of populism and the links between colonialism and the conceptualisation of the people, Filc (2015) analysed Peronism and Le Pen's Front National as case studies to support its claim. Among the most representative—and most studied—examples of Latin-American populism, Peronism has remained a significant force for almost 70 years. Le Pen's movement is among the first and most important European radical right populist movements. Thus, those crucial cases are part of a much broader picture in which the role within the colonial relationship shapes the development of either exclusionary or inclusive populism. (Filc, 2015)

While populism is a hotly debated topic worldwide, most scholarship suffers from conceptual confusion and regional singularity. Mude and Kaltwasser (2011) compared European and Latin American populism, based on a clear minimum definition, along three dimensions that dominate the scholarly literature: 1) economy vs. identity, 2) left-wing vs. rightwing, and 3) inclusion vs. exclusion. Empirically, their particular focus was on four prototypical cases of the predominant type of populism

in these regions in the 1990–2010 period: Jörg Haider and the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Austrian Freedom Party, FPÖ) and Jean-Marie Le Pen of the French Front National (National Front, FN) in Europe, and Bolivian President Evo Morales and his Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement for Socialism, MAS) and Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and his Movimiento V [Quinta] República (Fifth Republic Movement, MVR) in Latin America. Their findings confirm some generally held beliefs and challenge and clarify others. Among the more notable conclusions are:

Populism in Latin America is more ethnic than populism in Europe;

The difference between "rightwing" populists in Europe and "left-wing" populists in Latin America is mainly a consequence of their affiliated ideologies, not their populism;

In material, political, and symbolic terms, European populism is primarily exclusionary, while Latin American populism is predominantly inclusionary and

Populism is more important in Latin America than Europe in electoral, political, and ideological terms. (Mude and Kaltwasser, 2011)

Whether populism is inclusive or exclusive is at the core of much research and has led to strongly opposing conclusions. Given that the existing studies tend to use highly diverse definitions of populism and are regionally specific, we analysed the question by employing a single definition, a cross-regional perspective and a clear framework for exclusion/inclusion. Our analysis of the FN/Le Pen and the FPÖ/Haider vis-à-vis the PSUV/Chávez and the MAS/Morales shows that both aspects are present in all cases (see also Canovan Reference Canovan1999), but that in material, political and symbolic terms European populists can be labelled primarily as exclusionary. At the same time, Latin American populism is predominantly inclusionary. Moreover, Latin American populism predominantly has a socioeconomic dimension (including low-income people), while European populism has a primarily sociocultural dimension (excluding the 'aliens'). It can be partially explained by the different socioeconomic situations in the two regions. Following Ronald Inglehart (1977), Europe has reached a level of development where post-material politics are at least rivalling socioeconomic politics for importance. At the same time, Latin America is still a long way from this 'silent revolution' because of the continuing high levels of socioeconomic disparity and poverty. In this sense, the European populist radical right is a modern phenomenon, an example of the new politics that emerged due to the 'silent revolution'. While identity politics is usually associated exclusively with 'left-wing' or 'progressive' political actors such as the new social movements or the Green parties, the European populist radical right is a post-material phenomenon based first and foremost on identity rather than (material) interest. As some scholars have recently demonstrated, Western Europe is experiencing the emergence of a new political cleavage primarily centring on cultural issues and transforming the party system in many region countries. In contrast, while identity does play a role in contemporary Latin American populist movements, overall, they are still primarily

involved in materialist politics. Indeed, most Latin American countries have seen the formation of left-of-centre governments in recent years. Part of the explanation for this 'turn to the left' lies in the failure of the policies of the Washington Consensus to tackle the levels of inequality in the region, allowing leftist forces to develop a successful political platform centred on the socioeconomic realm in general and material redistribution in particular (Levitsky & Roberts, 2011)

The comparison of Latin American and European populism helps us further demonstrate that populism hardly ever emerges in a pure form. Consequently, populism is almost always attached to other ideological features related to particular grievances in different regional contexts. In the highly unequal Latin American world, this is predominantly Americanismo; in the post-material European world, it is mainly nativism. Whereas the former is a discourse that emphasises anti-imperialism and supposes a fraternal identity between the inhabitants of Latin America, the latter is a xenophobic version of nationalism, according to which the state should be inhabited only by members of the native group and non-native (alien) people and values are perceived as threatening to the nation-state. The associated ideological features partly explain why European populists are predominantly exclusive and Latin American populists chiefly inclusive. While the difference between a Latin American inclusionary populism and a European exclusionary populism has held at least since the 1990s, it is essential to note that in both regions, the conception of the groups that should be excluded from and included in society has varied over time. In this regard, the contemporary populists in Europe and Latin America have made important innovations. The European populist radical right's emphasis on excluding Muslims is relatively recent and strongly related to the terrorist attacks 9/11. In contrast, the emphasis on including the indigenous population is a relatively new development within Latin American populism. By arguing that European populism is predominantly exclusionary and Latin American populism is primarily inclusionary, we are not claiming that the former inevitably hurts democracy. At the same time, the latter exclusively embodies a positive force for democracy. We should be cautious about making normative judgements about populism since the latter can be both a threat to and a corrective for democracy. For instance, populist actors and parties usually give voice to groups that do not feel represented by the elites and obligate them to react and change the political agenda to include these marginalised voices. Nevertheless, populist forces might also refer to the idea of popular sovereignty to dismantle the checks and balances inherent to liberal democracy. In other words, the re-politicization of society fostered by all populist forces has an ambivalent impact on democracy. (Mude & Kaltwasser, 2011)

Regarding the Middle East and the possibility of comparison with European and Latin American populism (for example, Turkey), there has yet to be a consensus on categorising the Justice and Development Party (AKP). However, the lack of consensus is due to a selective focus on the attributes of AKP's populism. Indeed, when the party's features are examined holistically, it does not neatly conform to the

dominant typologies of populism, which were primarily conceived for European and Latin American examples. For historical reasons, AKP's populist discourse defines "the people" versus "the elite" in civilisational terms and combines this with strategies of neo-liberalism, strong party organisation and grassroots mobilisation. This blend of populism distinguishes the AKP case from the exclusionary/inclusionary and classical/neo-liberal/radical typologies previously identified by the literature. (Gursoy, 2021)

## **Conclusion**

Various facts suggest that populism differs. Some are tasks of regeneration or democratisation; others are movements that would weaken democracy by promoting the rebirth of nationalism and politics of exclusion (fascism, xenophobia, racism, radical nationalism). Thus, the former is left-wing populism, while the latter is right-wing populism.

Accordingly, the facts are the rise of exclusionary radical populism in Europe and inclusionary populism in Latin America. Regardless, some exceptions exist, including inclusionary radical left populism (e.g. Greece, or exclusionary left-wing populism (e.g. B&H, social-democratic by name and by position centre simultaneously left-wing and right-wing). Concerning MENA, as a complex Region, the Region involves countries with (semi) democratic or authoritarian regimes and between parliamentary or presidential systems. However, alongside the politics of populism (including geopolitically), MENA retains internal political and military conflicts and external interventions. MENA populism processes are broader and part of a complex global geopolitical context. Populism, be it right-wing or left-wing, and its inclusionary and exclusionary politics also treats international and regional human security, human rights and development, particularly in Africa, South East Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Even before the conflict in Ukraine, the liberal state model looked much less attractive for the broader Middle East region than it had only a decade earlier, at the height of the Arab Spring. Also, the failure of Western interventions - Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria has affected populism politics. Populism processes in MENA, a region within (semi) democratic or authoritarian regimes, between parliamentary or presidential systems and enforced by external geopolitical agents and aspirations, are broader and part of a complex global geopolitical context. However, alongside the politics of populism (including geopolitically), MENA retains internal political and military conflicts and external interventions. In MENA, populism varies between right-wing and left-wing, with a category of security populism in Israel and Islamic Populism in much of the Islamic world. The politics in the postcolonialism conditions (Latin America) more often contain populism. It sees populism as a contemporary and collective political response to the global crisis of nation-state approaches due to globalisation and the stronghold of capitalism.

There is a strong possibility that far-right parties (particularly in Europe) will broaden their voter base and create coalitions due to several global issues, such as continuous migrations, islamophobia or new views of anti-semitism mainly due to the current state of war between Israel and Palestine. Consequently, in the MENA, we can expect political populist changes locally, regionally, and internationally. The world is becoming increasingly characterised by populism, inclusionary or exclusionary.

Common sense voting behaviour worldwide is under populist invasion, left and right-wing. The motivating force and practice of the populists are the (self-proclaimed) protection of (ethnic) national identities, socio-cultural values, or religion. Populist often builds their programs on the suppression and denial of analytical facts and various exclusions (more nominal inclusions) by resurrecting the socio-political concepts and ideals of outdated nationwide sovereignty.

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