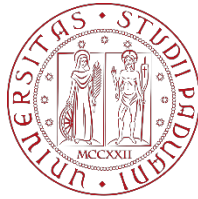


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Populism in Poland and in Italy and its influence on social perceptions of the European Union – comparative analysis.

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Abstract

Main goal of this thesis is to study the relation between Euroscepticism and populism in the European Union. It is based on the analysis of two countries – Poland and Italy. Additionally, it also contains explanation of different approaches when it comes to concepts of Euroscepticism and populism in researched countries. Answering research question - How has the link between populism and Euroscepticism been shaping? - allowed me to study how these two aspects are connected and how do they influence each other. To examine social perceptions of the EU I explored the phenomenon of Euroscepticism. I focused on populists in power in order to be able to see the process of their born and grow and what were the factors that allowed populist parties to win elections. Those two phenomena are not new, but in recent years they have attracted a lot of attention because of successes that populist parties achieved in many counties. I took under consideration time frame since 2015 in Poland and since 2018 in Italy, because those are the years when populists parties won elections in following countries, in recent history. Firstly, I characterized Polish and Italian cases separately and then I looked on their historical roots, how they are created nowadays, by whom and what is special for them. To do so I studied Law and Justice (PiS), the Five Star Movement (M5S), League (Lega) and Brothers of Italy (FdI) political manifestos. The outcome of this thesis is the comparative analysis of those two cases with a result that there are more differences according to populism and Euroscepticism between Poland and Italy.

Key words: populism, Euroscepticism, populists in power, right-wing populism

Table of contents

INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER 1	6
1.1 POPULISM.....	6
1.2 RIGHT WING POPULISM.....	16
1.3 POPULISM IN POWER.....	20
1.4 EUROSCEPTICISM	25
1.5 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN POPULISM AND EUROSCEPTICISM.....	29
CHAPTER 2	31
2.1 HISTORICAL ROOTS FOR POPULISM IN POLAND	31
2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF POLISH POPULISM	33
2.3 EUROSCEPTICISM IN POLAND	37
2.4 LAW AND JUSTICE – CASE OF POPULIST IN POWER	39
2.5 NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF 2015 AND 2019	45
2.6 SUMMARY	51
CHAPTER 3	53
3.1 HISTORICAL ROOTS FOR POPULISM IN ITALY	53
3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF ITALIAN POPULISM	55
3.3 EUROSCEPTICISM IN ITALY.....	59
3.4 POPULISTS IN POWER.....	62
3.5 NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF 2018 AND 2022	70
3.6 SUMMARY	73
CHAPTER 4	75
4.1 2019 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS.....	75
4.2 2019 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS – POLAND.....	80
4.3 2019 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS – ITALY	81
4.4 CHOSEN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT GROUPS – ECR AND ID	84
4.5 POPULISM – COMPARISON	86
4.6 EUROSCEPTICISM – COMPARISON.....	89
REFERENCES	92
LIST OF FIGURES	105

Introduction

Two phenomena that are nowadays significant, what can be seen thorough the increasing number of publications and discussions in Europe, are populism and Euroscepticism. This thesis aims to study the relation between them in the European Union and it seeks to understand concepts of Euroscepticism and populism in researched countries. I would like to focus on two member states of the European Union, which are Poland and Italy, they don't share a similar history of political system but ended up with populist parties in governments in similar time.

The main aim of this work is to analyse populism and Euroscepticism and interpret the relation between them. This work is based on qualitative method. Based on the previous research and definitions I tried to describe situation in both countries in the most suitable way. Within the variety of possibilities within qualitative methods I chose to firstly explore the subject in both countries and secondly compare and contrast two cases.

Based on qualitative analysis I explored following topic: Populism in Poland and Italy and its influence on social perceptions of the European Union as a comparative analysis. This topic allowed me to compare how the situation according to populism and Euroscepticism has been shaping in those two countries, what are the characteristics of that two phenomena and if there are more similarities or differences between Poland and Italy according to the studied topic. Answering research question - How has the link between populism and Euroscepticism been shaping? - allowed me to study how these two aspects are connected and how do they influence each other. To examine social perceptions of the EU I explored Euroscepticism.

As for the time frame, I am focusing on the period starting from year 2015. This is the significant date for many reasons. First of all, populist party won the elections in Poland back then, this year was also marked by the migrant crisis, which affected both countries, but in a different way. In the case of Italy, the first elections I took under consideration are the one held in 2018. After that I examined elections to the European parliament in 2019 and analysed results of researched parties and what did they represent in their manifestos. Lastly, the most recent elections: 2019 in Poland and 2022 in Italy. Parties that I am focusing on are: Law and Justice (PiS), the Five Star Movement (FSM), League (Lega) and Brothers of Italy (FdI).

The most suitable approach to examine this topic is an inductive approach. Based on the literature, definitions, and electoral manifestos I tried to identify patterns and after that build a theory. Different elections, but what's important the same amount of it – two for the national parliaments and one for the European parliament, in the close period, represent a sample that is comparable. The relation between populism and Euroscepticism in those two countries is firstly captured individually and after that compared with each other.

This work has four chapters. First one is dedicated to the exploration of the definitions of populism and Euroscepticism, with a special focus on the populist in power and right-wing populism. Second chapter is the first country case of this thesis and is focused on the Polish case. It contains a short introduction of the historical roots of populism and the general characteristic of populism and Euroscepticism in Poland. Lately there is a focus on the Law and Justice party with its description and the analysis of 2015 and 2019 elections to the national parliament. Third chapter is structured the same as the second one. The parties that are analysed are the Five Star Movement (FSM), League (Lega) and Brothers of Italy (FdI). After party's description there is an analysis of the 2018 and 2022 elections. Last chapter covers the 2019 election to the European Parliament, with a special focus on the parties that are being analysed in this work. After that there is a comparison of the populism and Euroscepticism in Poland and Italy followed by final remarks.

Chapter 1

1.1 Populism

This chapter will be focused on the explanation of the phenomenon of populism, be presenting different approaches that will lead to choosing the one that will be used throughout the thesis. The most common form of populism in Europe is right-wing populism, that is why the following part will be devoted to explaining this kind of populism after also a brief explanation of other forms of populism. Following part will aim to explain how populist actors managed to get in power and why for some parties it is possible while for others not. Second phenomenon that will be discussed in this thesis is Euroscepticism with different approaches regarding this topic. Chapter will end with highlighting the relation between populism and Euroscepticism.

Populism is a phenomenon which is broadly discussed nowadays. The importance of the topic can be observed looking at the increasing amount of publications and discussion on this topic worldwide. Despite the frequency with which word populism appears in all kinds of papers, books, discussions and media there is no coherent definition of the phenomenon, as it often happens with broadly discussed topics. There are few main, competing with each other, definitions of populism and on the other hand some new interpretations are still proposed by scholars. As for the reasons why populism is nowadays discussed more often than it used to be in the past, we can point out some significant events that occurred worldwide, such as: decision based on referendum in Great Britain to leave the EU (Brexit), Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election in the USA, the growth of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe, such as the French National Front and the Italian Five Star Movement, Lega and Brothers of Italy, and, the rise to power of right-wing populist parties in Poland and Hungary.

In different periods of time meaning of the word populism and its characteristics have changed significantly. Populism was used for the first time to describe certain phenomenon that occurred in the late 19th century, almost simultaneously, in USA and Russia. (Mudde, 2017) In the USA People's Party, agrarian left-wing political party, was called a populist party (Mudde, 2017). It was important party, that gathered a group of people who criticized elites and capitalism. In Russia on the other hand, the word populism was used to describe a group of the intelligentsia who were standing in an

opposition to the Tsarist regime and industrialization and their main demand was that Russia needs a better form of government than the Tsarist (Martinelli, 2016). Those two events are not connected with each other, but they do have a common feature. In both situations a, rather significant, group of people opposed the ones that were in power.

After that, during the 20th century populism was used to describe anti-elitist movements against established order or main parties (Martinelli, 2016) and it mainly referred to Europe, North America and Latin America rather than other parts of the world. On the other hand, Mudde (2002, 2004, 2012, 2017, 2018), who is publishing works about populism since late 1990s, claims that we can talk about populism since last decades of the 20th century (Mudde, 2018). Nevertheless, populism is now an important topic, even more than ever, as “over one-third of humanity lives under populist regimes (Velasco and Bucelli, 2022: 10)”. It is crucial to understand what populism actually means, how it can be described and what are the main features of this phenomenon.

There has been a lot of scholars that were trying to capture the meaning of populism. First important publications were presented by Laclau (1977) and Canovan (1981). In the one by Ernesto Laclau, he describes populism as a discursive (original) strategy of political elites with the aim to provide meaning to the term “the people” (and “the elite”) (Laclau, 1977). Other work called *Populism*, was presented in 1981 by Margaret Canovan, where she provides an overview of the phenomenon by providing seven subtypes just to state at the end that populism cannot be defined – that there is no one thing called populism (Canovan, 1981).

There are also different ways of approaching the topic of populism by scholars and as this topic is getting to be more popular, new definitions and new ways of techniques are being presented. When defining populism Oxford Handbook of Populism (2017) might be useful, as it offers three conceptual approaches - an ideational approach, a political-strategic, and a sociocultural approach as well as it focuses on issues related to the populism and also most important normative debates.

First approach, called ideational, where populism is characterized as a “set of ideas that can be combined with other ideological features (Hawkins et al., 2017: 514)”. This definition allows scholars to interpretate the phenomenon in lots of different ways. Even though it gives direction that helps to understand what it actually is but there are still a lot of differences between scholars who are trying to explain populism in ideational

approach. Some of them are saying that populism is a “thin-centered ideology” i.e. Mudde, 2004 and 2017, among other approaches the most common terms are: “discourse” i.e. Stravakakis and Katsambekis, 2014, “frame” i.e. Aslanidis, 2016, “moralistic imagination” i.e. Mueller, 2016, “political claim” i.e. Bonikowski and Gidron, 2015, “style” i.e. Moffitt, 2016, and “worldview” Hawkins, 2010 (Mudde et al., 2018).

First of all, before presenting some definitions of populism it is crucial to also explain other terms that that will be used along with it. One of those is ideology, in this work I will base on the one presented by Michael Freeden (2003). He explains ideology as “cognitive maps that allow to identify crucial dimensions of the political and social world (Freeden, 2003: 51-55)”, he also points out that every ideology has a core concept through which it is possible to clearly identify doctrines. Lastly, there are four Ps that every ideology should possess (Freeden, 2003: 60-64):

- proximity, which means that the political concepts doesn't make sense on their own,
- priority, the meaning of political ideology depends on the type of concept that is stated as a prior one to the others,
- permeability, which refers to the fact that none of the ideology stand on its own, rather they interact with each other,
- proportionality, it describes spaces between arguments of the ideology, focuses on how much of the attention will be directed to the specific themes or cluster of concepts.

What is also important while speaking about populism is the fact that there are several ideologies that are already based on the division between people but regarding different aspects, that is why it is necessary to be careful while talking about populism. Those other ideologies are socialism and nationalism. In this work I will base on the definitions of Michael Freeden (2003) also in cases of socialism and nationalism. They are both broad topics, but here I will only focus on their main features and on the things that distinguish them from populism. Firstly, socialism is an ideology, where the basic social unit is a group and within that there are classes that are alienated from the group. Another important aspect is equality, the aim of socialism is to remove hierarchical distinctions between classes. Work does have an important role in this ideology, as it is the fundamental constitutive feature of human nature (Freeden, 2003). In the case of

socialism, we can see different groups of people, as in populism, but the differences between them are based on material status, which is not a case in populism. Nationalism on the other hand, is a thin ideology rather than mainstream ideology. “It concentrates on the exceptional worth of a nation while building human identity and it also emphasizes its superiority over other nations (Freedon, 2003: 98-99)”. Martinelli adds to it certain characteristics of nationalism, he says that it promotes the sovereignty, unity and autonomy of the people that are members of the same nation. People are divided by the groups on the base of a distinctive political culture and common goals, it also refers to a nation-state concept, building it through the belonging to the nation as a primary identity (Martinelli, 2018). Based on this definition we can observe that nationalism also divides people into groups, but it does so by dividing them, as in or out of the nation. People that are members of the nation are superior to the ones that are out. Similar to the populism, nationalism is rather a thin ideology, as it is limited in its scope and ambitions and is often combined with other ideologies. While speaking about European countries, Martinelli (2016) points out also other similarities between nationalism and populism, like “anti-EU attitude, the demonization of political opponents and a conspiratorial mindset (Martinelli, 2016: 16)”. What differs nationalism from populism is the fact that, the division in the nationalism is based on the nationality of a person.

Nevertheless, Mudde and his works have a special place while discussing the attempts to describe the phenomenon of populism. His works are one of the most often cited by other scholars that are dealing with populism. Some of them are expanding the definition that he proposed, while others are disagreeing with his works and are proposing other definitions, but they are somehow often related to the one presented by Mudde.

Mudde defines 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 (Mudde, 2004: 543)”. There are four main concepts in his definition: ideology, the people, the elite, and general will. Each of them can be easily contested and interpreted in a different way, this is why it is hard to clearly decide who should be called populist.

In the case of Mudde’s definition of populism he, together with other scholars (i.e. Abts et al., 2007; Stanley, 2008), is using term “thin” or “thin-centred” ideology. In the

works presented by Freedman (2003), thin-centred ideologies are the ones that do not answer all of the questions that macro-ideology would have and also that they are limited in their ambitions and scope. He also points out, that they do not formulate “a broad menu of solutions to major socio-political issues (Freedman, 2003: 96-98)”. Other examples of thin-centred ideologies, besides populism and nationalism, are also feminism and green political thought. Additionally, Mudde stated that in his works ideology is used in an inclusive way – based on the definition presented by Sainsbury (1980) “as a body of normative and normative-related ideas about the nature of man and society as well as the organization and purposes of society (Sainsbury, 1980: 8)”. In Mudde’s definition populism concentrate on division in the society, between “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite” and while conducting politics it focuses on “the general will of the people” on the other hand it doesn’t answer issues such as political institutional or socio-economic, that is why it cannot be called ideology, or macro-ideology.

Second thing in the Mudde’s definition is the concept of “the people”. While describing its features he is focusing on the purity and authenticity of this group considered in moral terms (Mudde 2017). The concept of “the people” is characterized by Paul Taggart, where he has stated that it refers to “an idealized conception of the community (Taggart 2004: 274)”. He also points out that populists are the ones who define the people “in terms of some of the key features which are usually related to the self-perception (or self-idealization) (Taggart, 2004: 274)”. “The people” are treated as a homogenous group, but we can observe that it can mean different thing in different regions. Populism can be combined with other ideologies, like based on class or nation, that is why the perceptions and characteristics of the “the people” may differ significantly between countries. The most frequent combinations of populism with other ideology results in the existence of “social populism” and “national populism” (Mudde, 2017). While talking about “the people” in social populism certain groups are excluded, for example ethnic minorities and immigrants (Mudde, 2017)

The main distinction between the people and the elite is based on their morality. While people are characterized as pure and authentic, the elite is the opposite of it, often called “corrupt elite” and is also out of touch from “the people”. In correspondence to the type of populism there is always something peculiar about the group called elite, and in different regions it may have different meanings. Most of the time it is based, as

mentioned above, on morality, but sometimes it is also based on other features, such as for example ethnic criteria or religion. Often elites are presented as the group that is globalised, cosmopolitan and alienated from the ordinary people (Benczes, 2020). It all comes down to the way how populists see “the people”, “the elite” will be characterized as the opposite to that.

Moreover, other feature of the Mudde’s definition is general will. It is based on the concept of common sense and special interests. Populists present themselves as the voice of people (*vox populi*) expressing its general will (Taggart, 2000). The ones who oppose common sense which follows the general will of the people, defined by populists, are, by definition, part of the corrupted elite (Mudde, 2017).

Mudde is also pointing out the strengths of his approach (Mudde, 2017), which can be stated as:

- distinguishability – it is possible to set clear boundaries in both qualitative and quantitative analysis, it allows to make a distinction between “populism” and “non-populism”,
- categorizability – populism is often combined with other ideologies and this definition allows for the construction of logical categories, like i.e., right-wing vs left-wing populism or exclusionary vs inclusionary populism,
- travelability - it can be used in cross-national and cross-regional analysis and comparisons, it doesn’t have strong national or regional characteristics, which means that it can be use in different parts of the world,
- versatility - it can be applied at different levels of analysis, it is one of few definitions of populism that can be used in quantitative analysis.

Other example of ideational approach has been stated by Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2014) where they present populism as a discourse. They are basing on the definition of Laclau (1977) and are paying attention to the fact that there should be a clear distinction between populism and nationalism. In a discourse-theoretical definition they are focusing on discursive construct of “the people” and created as the opposite to it “the elite” (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014). They are stressing out the differences between populism and nationalism. In nationalism the group that is supposed to be represented is the nation, or people-as-nation, the opposite of that are all of the non-members, like other nations. The relation between those two groups is horizontal, which

means that a subject is either in or out. In populism on the other hand, represented group is described as people-as-underdog, in the opposition to this there is elite or establishment and the relation between them is vertical, which means that there is a hierarchy, one group is superior to the other (Stavrakakis and Katzambekis, 2014).

Aslanidis (2016) challenges points of view of Mudde and Laclau. He stated that populism should not be characterized as an ideology, even thin-centred ideology but also that describing it as a discourse is not enough. He doesn't state his own definition, he agrees that populism is characterized by the features described previously in the literature. The novelty of his work is the way of researching populism. He proposes a discursive frame approach. As a frame he understands a way of interpretation complex events that are taking place in daily life and locate, identify and label them in order to be better explained (Aslandis, 2016). He says that it allows to better understand the phenomenon by stimulating empirical works, especially quantitative analysis. As a strength of his approach, he mentions the broad possibilities for further work in the subject of exploring populism. Defining it as a frame allows scholars to broaden the field of studies on populism, especially by collaborate with scholars form other fields.

Another approach is presented by Benjamin Moffit and Simon Tormey (2014). They describe populism as a political style with a performative strategic dimension and claim that it can be seen as an extension of a discursive approach. As for the people, Moffit and Tormey stress out that it is not possible to include all citizens from certain community. That is why, in this case a relation between populist party and the people is not one-sided. It is not only the populist party who responds to the needs of the people. In this definition populist party is "producing" the needs and characteristics of people they will later claim to represent. (Moffit and Tormey, 2014). The focus is put on the political performance, style of this performance and the social perceptions of the populists. What is important in this approach is that Moffit and Tormey challenge other definitions by saying that the elite does not have to be necessarily corrupted or that the populists have to always be in the opposition to the elite, they stated that it happens often, but it should not be a characteristic of a populism.

There is also another publication by Benjamin Moffit (2015), where he adds that populist actors often use a rhetoric of crisis. The first step of this attitude is to identify certain failure, that has been made by represents of the elite. It can be basically connected

to any topic that seems important in the given situation at a certain time. After identifying some failures populists link some of them together, so in the end it can appear as a big, systematic problem, which the government is not able to handle (Moffit, 2015).

Second approach that has been discussed in the Oxford's Handbook (2017) of populism is a political-strategic approach proposed by Kurt Weyland, which is also called as the organizational approach. He captures the relation between the leader and the mass followers ("the people") as a political strategy. He defines strategy as "the methods and instruments of winning and exercising power (Weyland, 2017: 55)". Following, he defines populism as "a political strategy through which personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unlimited, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers (Weyland, 2017: 59)". Additionally, he points out two main components of it, which are the type of political actor that seeks and exercise power and the principal power capability which that actor is able to mobilize.

When it comes to first component, the type of political actor, there are few options, it can be an individual, informal group, formal organization, institutionalized political party or military establishment (Weyland, 2017). It is common when it comes to populist movements, no matter if it is an individual or a group actor, that they are represented by a charismatic leader that plays a key role and is also setting him/herself as the opposite of the established elite. The leader of populist party is often described as extra-ordinary, personalistic and also opportunistic, who is also able to create and maintain a special, direct connection with the mass. Weyland adds to it also lack of ideological commitments, what is represented by using slogans and campaigns in instrumental way in order to mobilize as much people as it is possible (Weyland, 2017). Populist leaders are trying to avoid commitments, because it will allow them to be more flexible, that is why it may be hard to describe certain populist parties, as they shift they programs to be in the better position to answer the needs of the mass.

The second component is principal power capability, it focuses on the capability of the political actors to win and maintain at power. To do so it criticizes the privileges of the elite and on the other side it mobilizes "the people", as the main rule of this approach says that numbers or special weights are fundamental for populism. By establishing surveys and by encouraging people to openly demonstrate their support they claim to represent "the will of the people" and everyone who stands in the opposition to

it is characterized as an enemy of the people. As for the special weights, they claim that they provide privileges for the small amount of people, called “the establishment”, populist politicians are constantly pointing out those privileges in order to maintain the support mass support.

He also draws back on the typical elements of populist strategy. First of all, he describes the importance of reaching mass public, populists are trying to be presented in the TV, as well as in other media, nowadays especially in social media. It aims to create a sort of direct contact with people and also allows to present him/herself as a part of “the people” (Weyland, 2017). Another important aspect is to constantly mobilize followers. According to Weyland (2017), the best way to do so, is to create a sort of enemy to the people, it may take different forms in different situations. Lack of challenges and enemies may lead to losing interest from followers. The rule behind this is the belief that nothing can motivate people more than some serious challenge and common enemy. This is why the anti-elite rhetoric is one of the most important instruments that populist parties can use (Weyland, 2017).

Third approach explained in the Oxford Handbook of Populism (2017) was proposed by Pierre Ostiguy and is called a socio-cultural approach. He presents a high-low axis that focuses on “inequalities in the cultural-propriety dimension (Ostiguy, 2017: 87)”, with a focus on a specific relation between political leaders and his supporters. As it is also stated in Weylands’ definition here, the leader plays a crucial role, but in this case the focus is put more on the relation, as in the end it is about identity creation. There are two components in this definition: socio-cultural and politico-cultural, (Ostiguy, 2017).

Ostiguy pays attention while explaining group of so called “the people”, or as he calls them “Other”. Main characteristic of this group is that it “provokes shame or embarrassment for “decent”, “politically correct”, “proper” or “well-educated” people (Ostiguy, 2017:76)”. They are captured as underrepresented group, whose voice and needs are not heard or seen enough. In fact, Other are the truest Self of the nation, while the representatives are not representing them enough, so as in the previous definition there is a strong anti-elitist agenda.

The first component of this approach is the socio-cultural component. It refers to manners, behaviours, actions taken by people in the society. On the high axis there are

people who are presented as well behaved, proper, well-mannered and are described as cosmopolitan, but also serious and strict. On the other hand, on the low axis there are people who are expressionist, more emotional, more direct, often using slang and more understandable language. Additionally, a feature that is also added to this group is a cultural nativism, associated with so called “home pride” (Ostiguy, 2017).

Second component is called a political-cultural component, it is about different kinds of political leadership and the attitude to decision-making process. On the high axis, there are behaviours described as formal, impersonal and legalistic. On the low axis on the other hand, they are more personalistic and indirect.

Cultural populism is also presented in the POPREBEL project (Kubik and Mole, 2020), which is based on the distinction between what culture means for

As for the other approaches, some of them, as already mentioned above link populism with other phenomena. One of them is Alberto Martinelli (2016). He also stresses the mistrust towards elite, namely political elite, international finance and also differentiate “people” from others. Others are immigrants, ethnic minorities or people of other religion. What he also mentions is that the typical characteristic for the populist parties in Europe is the opposition to the EU institutions and building national sovereignty as the opposite to the EU, especially to the project of closer union (Martinelli, 2016).

Another point of view is also presented by Andrés Velasco and Irene Bucelli (2022), where he focuses on the economic meaning of populism. Firstly, he stresses out the economic approach that was used to be dominant, as if populism is a feature of countries that are losers of the globalization and as a result are characterized by bad economy. But the empirical evidence shows clearly something opposite to that, as populist parties are winning elections in countries that are benefiting from globalization, like European countries. He describes populism as a threat to the liberal democracy and points out that it has three main features: “denial of complexity, distrust of pluralism and anti-elitism (Velasco and Bucelli, 2022: 13)”. In his attempts to define populism he focuses on the role of identity policies, that characterizes populist parties, they are doing all they can to allow people to identify with them. As people tend to vote on the people, they have something in common. At the end he adds to it, that populism is a “style of politics that manipulates and exacerbates identity cleavages for political gain (Velasco and Bucelli, 2022: 20)”.

Afterall, it is not possible to establish one common definition of populism. The aim of presenting above definition was to try to explain it in the best possible way, taking under consideration different reasoning standing behind them. But what is possible is to stress out certain features that are repeating themselves in almost all definitions. First of all, there is an anti-elitist approach. By creating a group, often seen as homogenous, there is a opposite group of people, called elite. The group of people is presented as overlooked by the elites and not heard enough. Populists are trying to present themselves as members of the group of people. Most of the time populists are trying to use or create some sort of enemy that may threaten people so they can present themselves as the ones that will represent people. What can be also said is the fact that populism is different in different regions but in this work, I will be mainly using Mudde's definition. This is also the aim of this thesis to

1.2 Right wing populism

There are a lot of ways in which populism can be categorized. As already mentioned, populism is often combined with other ideologies. Some of the most important categories are right-wing vs left-wing populism and exclusionary vs inclusionary populism.

Based on the work of Dani Filc (2010) we can distinguish three main dimensions of exclusion/inclusion: material, political, and symbolic (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012). The material dimension focuses on the distribution of state resources. Political dimension refers to political participation and public contestation. Finally, symbolic dimension is about setting boundaries between "the people" and "the elite" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012).

Main differences between exclusionary and inclusionary populism are based on how populist actors define the members of the people and also the opposite side – the elite. Secondly, there are ideological features that are attached to the "particular populist ideology of the actors (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012: 148)".

Exclusionary populism, in terms of material dimension means that some groups are excluded from receiving resources provided by state, it can be about jobs or provisions. When it comes to second dimension, some groups are "prevented from participating (fully) in the democratic system and they are consciously not represented in

the arena of public contestation (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012: 161)”. The example of this behaviour may be observed by excluding those who are not natives. Symbolic dimension refers to the situation when certain group is not mentioned by populist actors, they don’t claim to represent this group, it means that this group is symbolically excluded. Additionally, whenever certain group is linked with “the elite” it automatically means that it is excluded from the group of “people”. In Europe, most of the time it is connected with the cultural element, like for example exclusion of ethnic minorities. There is also a work of Grigoris Markou (2017) where he points out that exclusionary populism is often combined with nationalism, where the group of people is created on the basis of nativist and racist reasons. Additionally, he claims that this kind of populism is a dominant in the Northern Europe, where it has also a hierarchical feature. He explains that it has its roots in the colonial history of those countries, he also suggests that the countries with a colonial history have a tendency to have exclusionary populist parties (Markou, 2017).

Inclusionary populism, regarding first dimension is characterized by providing more of state resources to the certain groups that populist parties claim to represent. Regarding political dimension, some groups are especially encouraged to increase their participation and representation in political sphere. It is targeted towards groups that used to be ignored or put on the margin by the so-called elite. It may be seen whenever populists are opposing doing politics behind closed doors, which is hidden from the people. Last dimension refers to the situation when some groups are included into we/us instead of them/they, it means that those groups are symbolically included. Markou (2017) claims in his article that inclusionary populism appears more often in the colonized countries or in those whose sovereignty was threatened by other countries and by so is more common in south-Europe, like Greece and Latin America (Markou, 2017).

Populism often takes form of some sort of extremism; it is almost never centrist. With the exception of central and eastern Europe, where populism is also observable in as a feature of centrist party (Stanley, 2017). Main features of right and left-wing populism are similar, the differences can be seen in the perceptions of the opposite to “the people”. Right-wing populism, called also national populism is focus on the control over, mostly personalised, external enemies, such as migrants or institutions, in European countries, especially EU institutions. It is also connected sometimes with anti-

environmentalism, neo-nationalism, anti-globalization, nativism, and protectionism (Benczes et al., 2020) Left-wing populism, called also social populism, on the other hand focuses on the political, economic and social elites as the opposite of the people. They are described as the ones fighting for sovereignty, social justice and democratization (Katsambekis et al., 2019). They frame “people” in socio-economic terms, such as they are presented as victims of the neoliberal, capitalist system that is supported by the political elite (van Kessel, 2016). This kind of populism is more common in Latin America, but there are also left-wing populist parties in Europe, especially in Southern Europe. Their importance in Europe increased after the financial crisis of 2008.

For right-wing populist parties identity is important, as in Velasco and Bucelli’s definition of populism, creating an identity for people that are supporting certain party is important. What characterizes this form of populism is an antagonism of ‘us versus them’ (Greven, 2016). Definition presented by Mouffe (2007) adds that they try to mobilize people in order to create collective forms of identifications. In her opinion right-wing populism parties are serious challenge for the democratic values.

Greven (2016) also stated that it is not possible to point out common features of right-wing populist parties. They have similarities, but they can differ significantly depending on “nationally specific factors such as political history, system and culture (Greven, 2016: 4)”. The opposition to globalization, which can be seen in the concerns over immigration, seen as a threat to traditional values and what follows, identity. Moreover, what defines right-wing populist parties (RWPP) is also the opposition to the establishment and international trade and finance. But what is special for right-wing populism is the need to defend “the people” from, as they see it, a threat to their sovereignty. According to them “external” institutions are trying to impose policies or rules that are against people, it is a case especially visible in the Eastern Europe (Greven, 2016). To add to this, in the article by Annalisa Merelli (2019) she also wrote that right-wing populist parties are adjusted to the specific situation in the countries, but they tend to “share xenophobic, nationalistic traits, a tendency toward authoritarianism, aggressive leadership, and an anti-elitist message (Merelli, 2019)”.

In the Weyland (2017) definition of the populism he also focuses on the distinction between populism and right-wing parties, in his opinion there are few main differences that should be considered. The most important are attributes of the leader, in populism he

is characterized as charismatic and opportunistic, looking for the support from the mass. On the other hand, right-wing populist leaders, are rather called “ideocratic and are more likely to stick to their beliefs (Weyland, 2017:63)”. They embody a dogmatic ideology and adapt long-term perspective. They rather wait in the opposition than abandon rules or beliefs.

In 2022 a report on right-wing populism has been issued by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Authors are trying to answer questions regarding this topic, such as reasons standing behind the rise of right-wing populist parties, how did they manage to succeed in elections and what makes them different from other types of populist’s parties. They are focusing on Europe, and they also present regional case studies, because, as they claim it is not possible to point out common features of right-wing populism in general. They stress out three main reasons of the success of those parties. Despite those reasons the one feature that is common for most of the right-wing populist parties is immigration. That is why authors of this report insist that, the rise of those kind of parties should be seen as a “cultural backlash” (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Kubik 2020; Halikiopoulou et al., 2022). Firstly, right-wing populist parties improved their electoral performance by mobilising voters with different kinds of views. They managed to do so by “pledging to restore national sovereignty and implement policies that consistently prioritise natives over immigrants (Halikiopoulou et al., 2022: 5)”. Secondly, a lot of right-wing populist parties managed to get to the governments or at least they were able to serve as a formal cooperation partners. Lastly, they were able to compete successfully with other parties and influence their policy agendas.

What is interesting in this report is the focus on the voters and the reasons who and why vote for RWPP. As it was already mentioned, one of the main factors that is responsible for the success of the right-wing populist parties is immigration, but it doesn’t explain the phenomenon completely. What is more, immigration is not a new thing in Europe in the contrast rise of right-wing populist parties is. First of all, men and older respondents are more likely to vote on the right-wing populism parties (Halikiopoulou et al., 2022) but there are differences between regions. In Western Europe the age of the peak is lower, 45-54, compared to the one in Eastern Europe, where it is 55-64. Another aspect is occupation, report shows higher likelihood of voting for RWPP for people employed in agriculture, craft occupations, low-skill and elementary occupations. Again,

the impact of the type of occupation is different in Western, where it is more significant than in Eastern Europe. They observed also an urban-rural divide, people living in the rural area are more likely to vote for RWPP, but what is worth mentioning is that it is more impactful in Eastern Europe. There are few more important aspects that differentiate Eastern and Western Europe regarding the higher probability of voting for RWPP. In Eastern Europe those parties are more likely to have an authoritarian attitude and high level of religious affiliation (Halikiopoulou et al., 2022). In the Western Europe on the other hand the factors that are increasing support for RWPP are Euroscepticism and economic and cultural concerns over immigration (Halikiopoulou et al., 2022). As already mentioned, immigration plays a crucial role in the RWPP manifestos. Both, cultural and economic concerns, alone but most of the time combined, seem to be impactful on the probability of voting for right-wing populist parties. This point of view is also presented by Norris and Inglehart (2019) where they stated that to explain the reasons standing behind voting for the right-wing populist parties we have to combine few factors, such as cultural values and social and demographic dimensions. In Europe popularity of those parties is based on appeals to traditional values (Norris et al., 2019).

Right-wing populist parties are most common form of populist parties across Europe. In their manifestos they pay special attention to identity and aspects that may threaten it. Most of the external factors or actors are presented as those who may be dangerous for the people, so their role is to protect people from it. That is why right-wing populism parties are often seen as authoritarian, xenophobic, nationalistic and racist.

1.3 Populism in power

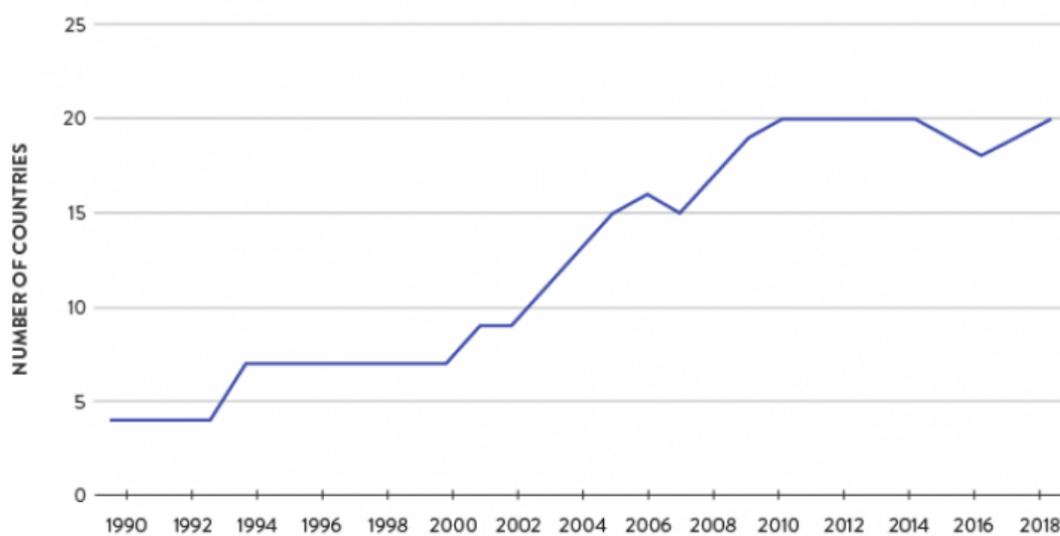
For a long time, there has been a belief that, “populist parties are destined for success in opposition and failure in government (Albertazzi et al., 2016: 2-3)”. Many scholars agreed with this, Margaret Canovan (1999) “claimed that if a populist party ‘actually gets into power, its own inability to live up to its promises will be revealed’ and it will consequently lose support (Canovan, 1999: 12)”. Others pointed out that “populist parties are by nature neither durable nor sustainable parties of government. Their fate is to be integrated into the mainstream, to disappear, or to remain permanently in opposition (Meny et al., 2002: 18)”.

Next decades showed the opposite. In many countries populist parties not only have grown but they also managed to be important actors with some of them getting into the governments, either as a minority in coalition or as an independent government. As because of their nature winning elections may bring a special kind of dilemma for them. They won, because they were standing in the opposition to the ones on top and now, they are those ones. McDonnell and Newell (2011) suggest two approaches to this dilemma. First one focuses on maintaining their positions as the outsiders and because of that remaining “pure”, but at some point, it may lead to being perceived as not relevant by the electorate. The second one is about “opting for a ‘voice’ through participation in government alongside other parties (McDonnell et al., 2011: 444)”. This one is connected with a threat of being perceived as a member of the elite/establishment, no longer a representative of the people’s will. This is the role for populist leaders, to deal with problems that are encountered by all the parties and still remain seen as an opposition to them. That is why to stay in the government by being re-elected, in the end it is up to the leaders of the populist parties, the technics they use while making decisions and also they skills. Another perspective is presented by Jan Müller (2016). According to him populist in power rule as populist. He points out 3 features that are characteristic for them: “attempts to hijack the state apparatus, corruption and “mass clientelism” (trading material benefits or bureaucratic favours for political support by citizens who become the populists’ “clients”), and efforts systematically to suppress civil society (Müller, 2016, 4)”. This may lead to significant changes in the country’s political institutions, but also to changes in people’s attitudes and expectations in future.

Tony Blair Institute for Global Change issued two reports concerning populists in power: *Populists in Power Around the World* (2018) and *A Playbook Against Populism? Populist Leadership in Decline in 2021* (2022). Both of them are based on the annual update of the database, concerning populist leaders globally, with data starting from 1990. In the first one, they observed that the number of populists in power increased significantly since 1990 and that the number of parties that are characterized as populists are in power has “increased fivefold, in the researched period (Kyle et al., 2018: 32)”. They also mentioned that it can be described as a global phenomenon, since populists were in power, not only in Latin America and Europe, but also expanded to many other countries on other continents, mainly in Asia. They have also prepared a figure (Figure

1.1), where they presented the number of countries with populists in power in the period of 1990-2018 (Kyle et al., 2018). The parties that are included in this figure are only the ones who reached “the presidency or prime ministership (or the equivalent executive office) (Kyle et al., 2018: 26)”. As it is observable the number of populists in power is as at its highest level, as in years of 2010-2015, since they started to measure it. What is not visible on the other hand, is the amount of populist parties that have governed as minority partners in coalitions, and from previously presented information, it can be assumed that this number could be significant.

Figure 1.1 Number of Countries with Populism in Power, 1990–2018.



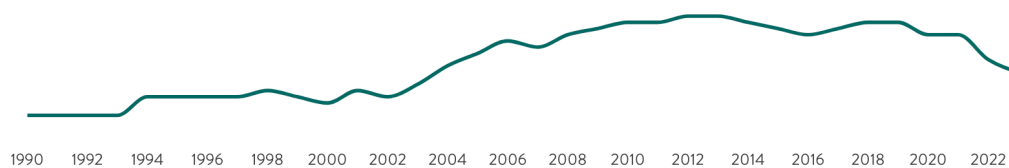
Source: Kyle, J. and Gultchin, L. 2018. *Populists in Power Around the World*. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change: 32.

The newest report, with data up to 2021, showed the decline of populist parties in power, driven mainly by Latin America countries. At the end of 2021 the number of populists in power fell globally to 17, which is the lowest since 2004 (Meyer, 2022: 3). Author of the report explains it using two factors. First one is the effect of dealing with pandemic of Covid-19. “Countries with populist leaders around the world had higher Covid-19 case and death rates than those without populist leaders, and populist leaders in Europe have seen a sustained dip in their polling popularity relative to more conventional parties throughout the pandemic (Meyer, 2022: 3)”. Second one is connected with the change of the parties that were in the opposition to the populist parties. Once divided,

oppositions parties focused in their election campaigns on removing the populists from the governments. “This happened in three out of four populist losses in 2021 (Meyer, 2022:3)”.

To build on this report, there is also a new article, also presented by Meyer (2023), where he still claims that globally populism is in decline, but taking under consideration regional perspective it is not that clear. As shown on the Figure 1.2, number of countries governed by populists is falling. In fact, year 2022 was marked by the lowest number of those kind of leaders (11) since 2003. Despite this fact 2022 was also marked by significant victories of populists parties, especially in Europe, just to mention, new populists leader in Italy and re-elected one in Hungary. But it is too early to claim the backlash of populism, especially when looking at the Europe.

Figure 1.2 The number of populists in power (1990-2023).



Source: Meyer, B. 2023. *Repel and Rebuild: Expanding the Playbook Against Populism*. <https://institute.global/policy/repel-and-rebuild-expanding-playbook-against-populism>.

Another thing is the role of populist parties in European Parliament, which will be described in details in following chapters. In the last elections of 2019, they won 192 seats out of 751 (European Parliament, 2019). There are 3 parties that are perceived as populists in EP (McDonnell and Werner, 2020) European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), European People’s Party (EPP) and Identity and Democracy Group (formerly called Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)). The significant result of populists in those elections shows that populists parties have an important role in shaping the EU policies and also the direction of integration.

Other aspects of the populists in power are their consequences on the political sphere. Scholars stress out that this impact is created by different factors, such as the populists’ degree of government access and their ideology (Mauk, 2020). The most important consequences are connected with their impact on countries institutions, such as parliament and constitutions, party system, media debates and public opinion, overall on

the quality of democracy (Caiani et al., 2022). To add to this, they may attempt “to turn the liberal institutions of a democracy into an ‘illiberal regime’ (Caiani et al., 2022: 570)”. The effects of a certain situation always have its pros and cons. Populists in power may lead to higher interest and political participation of citizens. They refer to people that may have been previously not interested in voting as they couldn’t empathise with other parties. Negative aspects on the other hand are more exploited by the scholars. Scholars have pointed out that countries that have populists in governments are more likely to, above all, experience decrease in quality of liberal democracy. In the article, published in 2022, Manuela Caiani and Paolo Graziano focused on the effects of populists in power on polity, policies and politics. Polity aspect concerns the impact populist parties have on countries’ institutions and their behaviour once in government. As already mentioned, there is a dilemma if populists that won elections should stick to their primary, anti-elitist attitude or focus on their government responsibilities, which is related with becoming less populist (Caiani and Graziano, 2022). There is no strict answer to this, as it depends on the specific case studies. Policies aspect is focused on the party’s ability to implement its policies, derived from ideology (Caiani et al., 2022). There is an important distinction between direct and indirect influence of populists in power (Biard et al., 2019). The indirect one seems to be more significant and it is characterized by the fact that other parties may follow the agenda of the populists’ ones and eventually implement them into their own manifestos. Populists in power, in case of influencing policies, are the most impactful according to the policies like immigration, multiculturalism or integration (Caiani et al., 2022). The last dimension is politics. It concerns the impact of the populist parties on mainstream parties and on “citizens’ political behaviour (Caiani et al., 2022: 575)”. It is observable by changes in political programs of non-populist parties and also in the polarizing or radicalizing of the political debate (Caiani et al., 2022). As authors of the article claim, there is not enough evidence on impact of the populists in power on citizens, but there are some assumptions. As populists present themselves as a voice of the people, they may tend to mobilize more people to participate in the politics. On the other hand, they may also be the reason of higher polarization of the society, as they divide people into groups that are the opposite of each other.

1.4 Euroscepticism

Second phenomenon that will be important in this work is Euroscepticism. Again, there are different approaches when it comes to explaining this concept, with few competing definitions.

Term Euroscepticism was primarily used by the journalists in the UK in the mid-1980s in order to point out reservations concerning concept of “Europe” (Spiering, 2004). Other scholars claim that Euroscepticism emerged in 1992, when Maastricht Treaty formed European Union as it is known now and it refers to scepticism directed towards European integration (i.e. Gómez-Reino et al., 2018, Rooduijn et al., 2019). In the broadest way Euroscepticism “refers to opposition to some aspect of European integration (Leruth et al., 2017: 2)”. Other definition formulated by de Wilde and Trenz (2012) “Euroscepticism as a discursive practice of political opposition to the EU polity”. It means that Eurosceptic parties are opposed to the competences of EU as well as to the whole idea of Union (de Wilde and Trenz, 2012). Some of the main reasons that are driving Euroscepticism are: “unemployment, socioeconomic vulnerability, climate change and widespread insecurities, morphing into not just anti-EU sentiment but anti-immigrant and xenophobic stances (Kaeding et al., 2021: 16)”. Euroscepticism does not limit itself to the EU member states, it is also observable in other countries, especially the ones that have close ties with EU, in both geographical and political terms, like for example Western Balkans or Iceland and Norway.

In the article published by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2018) they observed, based on the research they conducted, that Euroscepticism has a crucial role for shaping EU nowadays. With two exceptions, Malta and Lithuania, all of the members of European Union had at least one party that can be described as Eurosceptic (Taggart et al., 2018). Three crises had special role in shaping Euroscepticism in Europe: eurozone crisis, with its roots in US 2008 crisis, 2015 migration crisis and the decision of the UK to leave the European Union. Impact on Euroscepticism of those crises was not the same in European countries. First one affected mainly countries like Germany, Greece and Ireland. Migration crisis had strong effect in the countries of east Europe, despite that they have not been affected by it directly (Taggart et al., 2018). The effect of Brexit is the less visible and harder to track down, but it may most probably result in the rise of soft Euroscepticism rather than the hard one. Thinking about Brexit there is a distinction between short-time

and long-time effect. When the consequences of it are becoming clearer Euroscepticism may be losing its ground, as it happened for example in Denmark (Kaeding et al., 2021).

Some scholars focus only on the opposition to the European Union concept, like Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004) with the division on hard and soft Euroscepticism. First one means rejecting the entire project of European Union for both political and economic integration, there is no place for reforms of the Union. Soft Euroscepticism on the other hand, is also standing in the opposition to the European Union, but does not reject the whole idea of it, rather some institutions and policies. It seeks reforms in those areas. Some of the most contested fields are economy, migration policies and also democracy and sovereignty (Taggart et al., 2018). For different countries different factors were important as well as they were shaped in a different way. For example, some parties criticize EU for being too liberal, like Fidesz in Hungary and “Left” Party in Germany, others like National Front in France claims that EU’s economic policies are not protectionist enough. Another example is that some parties focus on the loss of sovereignty in case of deepening integration within EU (Taggart et al., 2018).

Kopecký and Mudde (2002) on the other hand added to the discussion by defining four categories of party positions on Europe (see Figure 1.3). Idea behind this definition was that previous ones were not precise enough and the same label could have been attached to the parties that are pro-European as well as to those who are rejecting it completely. They define “Euroscepticism in relation to other (party) positions on ‘Europe’ (Kopecký et al., 2002: 300)”. They point out two dimensions (Kopecký et al., 2002). First concerns position of a certain party towards its support for European integration and it separates:

- Europhiles

They believe in the idea of European integration in either both - political and economic aspect, or only one of them. Europhiles will be supporting for example the idea of federalism within Europe or creating a free trade zone.

- Europhobes

They do not support or even oppose the idea of European integration. It may concern just some of the policies of the EU or the whole project. In this case there are parties that are proposing new forms of integration but also parties which are not opposing the integration as it is, but just do not want to be a part of it.

Second dimension focuses on the support for the European Union, here there are also two groups:

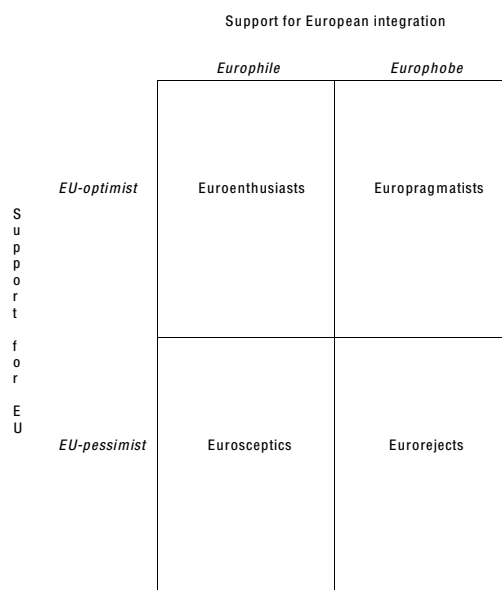
- EU-optimists

They “believe in the EU as it is and as it is developing (Kopecký et al., 2002: 302)”. Within this group there may be some critic towards certain EU policies or actions, but as long as the party is optimistic about the direction of the EU it should be considered as an EU-optimist.

- EU-pessimists.

They are not satisfied with the direction of the development of the EU. It does not reflect their idea of European Union, but it does not necessarily mean that they want to leave the EU, they rather propose some changes and reforms.

Figure 1.3 Typology of party positions in Europe.



Source: Kopecký, P. and Mudde, C. (2002). *The Two Sides of Euroscepticism: Party Positions on European Integration in East Central Europe. European Union Politics*, 3(3): 303.

Those two dimensions lead to four categories, showed above, which are: Euroenthusiasts, who support further integration and overall direction of the EU. Europragmatics who do not often have a firm opinion on European integration, they don't support idea of integration, but are either not oppose to that. They see EU as a mean to gain profits. Eurosceptics are supporting integration, but they are not satisfied with current and/or

future direction of development of it. Lastly, Eurorejects they are standing in the opposition to further integration and to the direction of the EU (Kopecký et al., 2002).

This definition, despite that allows to distinguish parties on many levels, still lacks clear characteristics that will allow to categorize certain parties as a concrete type. Especially “Europragmatists” and “Eurosceptics” categories are sometimes hard to distinguish from each other and therefore hard to point out which party is Europragmatic and which one is Eurosceptic.

There are more approaches when it comes to classification of Euroscepticism, one of them is Vasilopoulou (2009) among others. She focuses on the extreme right nationalist parties. She pointed out three types of party-based Euroscepticism based on how they position themselves against the three criteria that she proposed. Those criteria are principle, that describes the willingness for cooperation, practice which is a position towards current EU institutions and policies and lastly, future that concerns deepening the integration within the EU (Vasilopoulou, 2009). Types of Euroscepticism described by Vasilopoulou (2009) are:

- Rejecting Euroscepticism

They are against all aspects of integration. They reject principles, practices and future of European Integration. Their main goal is to restore the sovereignty of nations. As an example, there are parties like Italian Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore and French Front National (Vasilopoulou, 2009).

- Conditional Euroscepticism

They are willing to cooperate at a multilateral level, but only to the point when it is beneficial for the nation state. When it comes to institutions and policies, they claim that it is important to keep national sovereignty which cannot be compromised. They also reject any future cooperation at the EU level. As an example, there are parties like Italian Lega Nord (Vasilopoulou, 2009).

- Compromising Euroscepticism

They are in favour of the principle and practice of European Integration. They accept that some of the competences have to be transferred from national to European level in order to achieve economic prosperity. They are in favour of some aspects of integration, like economic one, but they are not advocating for

the concept of ‘an ever-closer union’. As an example, there are parties like Italian Alleanza Nazionale and Polish Law and Justice (Vasilopoulou, 2009).

This approach focuses on distinguishing different forms of Euroscepticism, it is more concrete than two others mentioned above as it allows to name different forms of Euroscepticism that parties are presenting.

Euroscepticism may take different form in different countries. It depends on the national context. Despite that, in most of the European countries there are some Eurosceptic parties, they may be not strong enough to enter governments, but they are influencing mainstream politics in other ways. In this work in order to describe Euroscepticism in chosen counties I will use the approach proposed by Kopecký and Mudde (2002) as it focuses on different dimensions, what is useful while analysing party cases.

1.5 The connection between populism and Euroscepticism

Based on the definitions presented above we can observe that populism is older phenomenon than Euroscepticism. Scholars point out both, similarities and differences between them. But what is most important, the fact that party is characterized as populist does not necessarily mean that it is also Eurosceptic and vice versa. On the other hand, there is a link between them, especially in times of crises (Pirro et al., 2018). The most significant were the financial crisis and the migration one of 2015. After those “populists started to carry the flag of anti-EU establishment, while Eurosceptic radical left and radical right parties converged on anti-elitism and an emphasis on people’s centrality (Conti, 2022: 26)”

Some research showed a correlation between Euroscepticism and populism, especially right-wing populism. EU is presented there as a ‘super state’, part of the elite. They focus on the fact that it is not close to the people, decisions are being made in some distant place and politicians are not aware of people’s problems with a lot of bureaucracy behind every decision. Some researchers have also showed that a Eurosceptic attitude of an individual, together with some other features may suggest that this person will be more likely to vote for right-wing populist party (Halikiopoulou et al., 2022).

Existing definitions are trying to explain both, populism and Euroscepticism but with the speed of changes that are taking place some of them are not accurate anymore or

just simply they are not explaining the situation enough. There is also gap of comparison between countries in Europe but with different history. There are publications that focuses on Western, Eastern and South Europe, but rarely about countries with different specifications and background. This is why the strength of this thesis is to compare populism and Euroscepticism in Poland and in Italy as this kind of comparison is not frequent.

Chapter 2

2.1 Historical roots for populism in Poland

Second chapter of this thesis is dedicated to the case of populism and Euroscepticism in Poland. Firstly, there is a short introduction that consists of historical roots of populism since 1989 with description of populist parties in that period. Next part is devoted to the general characteristic of populism in Poland. Main goal of this thesis is to study populism and Euroscepticism after 2015. Nevertheless, it is important to take a quick look on how populism has been shaping in Poland before 2015. In this part I will take under consideration years after 1989. Following, there is a description of Euroscepticism in Poland, its roots and position of the government towards EU. The main part of this chapter is the part about Law and Justice, as this thesis focuses on the populist party in power. Next, there is dedicated to the parliamentary elections in 2015 and 2019 which Law and Justice won. It is an overview of results with focus on the debates and main topics during each campaign. The chapter ends with the summary.

Until the end of the 1990s there were no significant populist actors, as some scholars suggest it is mainly due to the post-communist divide (Stanley and Cześniak, 2019). Those years are characterized by the creation of political system in a democratic manner with rather broad consensus on how the democratic transition should be, with a dominant neo-liberal paradigm. Some populist parties did exist, like Party X but they didn't achieve electoral success as they played rather marginal role. After first years of transition populist parties started to play role as the opposition for the elite. According to *The PopuList* (Rooduijn et al., 2019) we can distinguish 5 populist parties in Poland with 4 of them still active since early 2000s.

In that time, the differences between citizens were starting to be more visible, some people took advantage of the transition and others felt left behind. It created conditions for populist parties to grow. They started to represent people that were not satisfied with the transition and felt used by the elite. First electoral success of populist parties took place in 2001 with two of them entering parliament, with Self-Defence (Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, SRP) as a third biggest party and the other with less significant result of 14 seats.

First one is Self-Defence with its leader Andrzej Lepper who was known for his controversial statements. This party tackled most of the features that populist parties should have. It was established in order to defend the interests of farmers, that faced problems in adapting to new realities. They didn't present a coherent electoral manifesto it was a response to the current issues. For example, they opposed neo-liberal economic model and blamed the domestic elites together with external actors for not delivering the promise of economic growth. They also opted for more economic sovereignty that is also partly why they opposed the process of joining EU. They stated concerns about loss of sovereignty over monetary policy and they also seen that as a threat for agriculture sector. They managed to enter the government in 2005, together with Law and Justice party (Stanley and Cześniak, 2019). But after that, Self-Defence party never repeated its success. What was special for this party was its charismatic leader and lack of long-time programme. Based on that we can observe a struggle of populist parties to maintain the interest once they get into the parliament, as they can no longer act like outsiders.

The second populist party of this period is the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR). It can be categorized as a radical right-wing party and it originated from several nationalist and clerical parties. What was fundamental for this party was its Catholic approach combined with nationalist sentiments to social values with the "Pole-Catholic" identity (Stanley and Cześniak, 2019). As it is important for populist parties to create an identity according to which people can be divided into the main group of "the people" and others are presented as opposition, in this case also a threat. They were also standing in the opposition to the accession to the EU and in their programme, they referred to themselves as to the hard Eurosceptics (Liga Polskich Rodzin, 2006). Main reason behind it, was the protection of traditional values and at the same time putting restrictions on foreign capital through which competition might have been avoided. This party lacked a charismatic leader, on the contrary to Self-Defence party. But it managed to have close ties with the Radio Maryja radio station. This radio station is playing important role ever since on the political stage in Poland, which can be also seen by its connection with Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) later on. Through this cooperation League of Polish Families institutionalized expression of "populist Catholicism" (Stanley and Cześniak, 2019).

Another party that achieved success in the same period of time was Law and Justice, which can be described as conservative and populist party. They are present in parliament since 2001 and have won elections in 2005 by formulating coalition with two other populist parties mentioned above. They remained in power for two years. Since then they have been in the opposition until the elections of 2015. They are playing a role of the most important populist party in Polish political system.

What we can see through those examples is what Inglehart and Norris (2016) suggested. They claim that reasons standing behind the success of populist parties are not only economic reasons but also, or even more importantly cultural changes (Inglehart and Norris 2016). In other works, we can also find that it is linked to the delayed transformation fatigue, which is a form of “cultural syndrome” and is not related to economic factors (Guérot and Hunklinger, 2019). As level of income of the households have been increasing as well as overall economic situation in Poland the populist parties managed to get into parliament and even get to the government. The conclusion may be as follow, in Poland sociocultural variables are more significant when it comes to rise of populism than socioeconomic ones (Kotwas and Kubik, 2019).

2.2 Characteristics of Polish populism

The people are the most important group for populist parties, as they are the ones that those party refer to and claim to represent. First thing while talking about populism in certain country should be identifying this group as parties’ strategy is built in a way to respond to them.

Populism in Poland has an exclusionary character. Almost all parties that are described as populist define the group that they want to refer to on the basis of excluding other groups. It refers to all three dimensions: material, political and symbolic. Often the division is made in accordance with the transition period, so after 1989. People are being divided into those that have gained something from it and those who have lost. Most of populist parties in Poland have built their programmes based on this division. They often claim that transformation period created a privileged group – “pseudo-elite” (Kinowska-Mazaraki, 2021).

In particular there are two groups that are being excluded since 2015. First one is the opposition to the Law and Justice party. This group includes independent institutions,

like judiciary, public administration, media and civic society organizations (Kinowska-Mazaraki, 2021). The second one concerns minority groups, namely ethnic, religious and sexual. Using populist language, they can be called “cultural elites”. There is a narrative which is based on drawing a line between “us-them”, this dualistic approach is another typical feature of populism. The division between the group of people and elite is based on exclusion of people that do not identify completely with the vision of people presented by populist parties. Identity plays the most important role while creating populist parties.

Material dimension of exclusion can be seen through for example the type of organizations that are receiving support from public funds. Since 2015 most of the funds are directed to the organizations that are politically, ideologically or personally linked to PiS and its allies (Bill, 2020). Majority of those can be characterized as a conservative, and right-wing mostly affiliated with Catholic values or having close ties with Church.

By looking at the populist party’s manifestos we can say that relations with Church are important for them and it can be seen in all of the dimensions of exclusion. Main reason behind it, is the fact that Poland is an almost homogenous country when it comes to religion, that is why it plays an important role in all spheres of its citizens. The latest data that shows the numbers of people affiliated with certain religion are from 2011. Out of 91% of people that answered the question about religion almost 89% claimed their belonging to some religion with almost 88% answering that they belong to Catholic Church (GUS, 2022). Looking at changes in the Polish society those numbers may be a bit lower but it does not change a fact that the vast majority of population are at least on some level connected with Catholic Church. As a result, populist parties claim to represent the core of “Polishness” (Kinowska-Mazaraki, 2021). It refers to traditional values that are strongly linked with Catholic Church and according to populist leaders are being threaten by “Western values” which are presented as a sort of enemy to the “Polish identity”.

Politics and religion in Poland are closely linked and are influencing one other. As some scholars call it, there is a phenomenon of national Catholicism. Its role has strengthened in Poland over the last two decades (Riccardi, 2022). This relation between Church and state in Poland has a long history which is based on the link between nationalism and collective identity. It played a key role in creating identity, especially during the period of partitions and later during communist period. It allowed to defernite

from the state. It is important in the case of researching populism now in Poland, because while most of the European countries went through secularization processes Poland remained its close connections with Catholic Church until now.

What more, another typical thing for populist parties that can be observed looking at Polish populist parties is the fact that they claim to be an alternative for the main parties. As they are against the elite, or in Polish case it may be more suitable to call this group establishment, they don't want to be associated with existing parties. They claim that they can be a voice of people that are not represented or the ones that are not participating in elections because they have no one to vote for. It is also connected with another characteristic feature, the charismatic leader. Almost all of the populist parties in Poland have a leader that is playing the main representative role for the party. The whole decision-making process is focused in the hands of one person. In case of Kukiz'15 it is especially clear, as he built the whole party after his surprisingly good campaign in the presidential elections. Additionally, this party lack solid programme and structure, on contrary to the Law and Justice party, this is why leader is essential for this party (Hartliński, 2022).

Moving on to the second important group while speaking about populism – the elite. Looking at what populist parties want to stand up against in Poland, the elite may be defined as the establishment as well as modernity. This can be seen by looking on one of many speeches of the politicians from ruling party, like for example in words of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Witold Waszczykowski:

“[PiS] only wants to cure our country of a few illnesses. A new mixture of cultures and races, a world made up of cyclists and vegetarians, who only use renewable energy and who battle all signs of religion. It has little in common with traditional Polish values. Cyclists, vegetarians and renewable energies are simply signs of uniform liberal modernity that tries to break up with the past, that is, traditional Polish values. Identities, therefore, are disrupted as they have to face new modern values (Waszczykowski, 2016)”.

This is just one of the examples of speeches of prominent politics that push for protection of “traditional values”. Elites are represented as the ones that are abandoning traditional values for others, presented as external.

People that are voting for populist parties have different reasons and it is hard to point out strict thesis on what is driving the populist success. What can be said for sure, is that it is not based on economic indicators alone. Even though GDP per capita, in most cases, is not enough to explain the economic situation in country it can show general direction of macroeconomic situation. In Poland GDP per capita is still lower than in other EU countries, in 2022 it was around 19,91 thousand U.S. dollars while the average of advanced economies equalled 55,54 thousand U.S. dollars (IMF, 2023). This shows that Poland economy is not performing as good as others advanced economies, which are mainly Western European countries. But when we put it into the context and take history into account it can be said that Poland was one of the best performing counties after the 1989 in Europe. GDP per capita growth was the highest among post-Soviet and post-socialist countries (Owczarek, 2017). Since Poland joined the EU in 2004 other aspects, equally important also started to improve. Those aspects are: “higher average yearly earnings, increase of minimum wage, decrease of unemployment and poverty - both relative and extreme (Owczarek, 2017:39)”. This excludes economic situation from main reasons standing behind political success of populist parties. Even the 2008 economic crisis which impacted most of the economies in Europe did not cause severe implications for Polish economy, it did not lead to a recession as in many other EU countries.

The PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019) is a dataset of populist, far right, far left and Eurosceptic parties in Europe since 1989 and includes all relevant parties until 1st January 2020. In Poland there have been 5 populist parties, they all are also labelled as Eurosceptic and 4 out of 5 are far right (Rooduijn et al., 2019). Those parties are: Self-Defence (Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, SRP), League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR), party X, Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) and Kukiz’15. First 3 were already mentioned, they either do not exist or are not significant after 2015. In the researched period only 2 latter ones are parties that are functioning in this period.

Kukiz’15 is a populist, far-right and Eurosceptic party. It can be characterized as a party that tries to present simple solutions to complex problems and it does that in an emotional manner. It was established by a musician – Paweł Kukiz. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the political system and decided to run in the presidential elections in 2015 where his score came as a surprise for many (Stanley and Cześnik, 2019). On that wave he continued to be active in politics and together with his party, he decided to run

also in parliamentary elections in 2015. His main postulates were to change electoral law by replacing proportional representation by single mandate constituencies (majoritarian representation) in the elections to the lower house of parliament and also “introduction of the mechanism of an obligatory, nationwide, nonthreshold referendum, and the establishment of the so-called ‘referendum day’, on which all issues signed by at least half a million citizens would be voted (Fijał, 2022: 118)”. This was a main thing in parties programme and has never been properly discussed in the parliament.

Kukiz’15 party may be a good example of a party that succeeded in elections on the wave of freshness, so as the previous parties it did not manage to keep an interest after getting into the parliament. Party that alone gained 8,8% in 2015, did not repeat that success. In 2019, when they merged with Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL) during the campaign period they had support of 8,6% of voters. Now it struggles even more to attract voters. Elections polls shows that for the moment this party will not be able to get seats in the parliament (Kantar Public, 2023).

2.3 Euroscepticism in Poland

Joining EU was one of the primary and most obvious choice after 1989, changes where happening fast and most of the people were enthusiastic to be back “where Poland always belonged” – in Europe (Styczyńska, 2019) The accession procedure began in 1994 after the Government of Poland submitted the application to the President of the Council. On the wave of enthusiast, the approach towards the accession process was positive and majority were thinking that it will proceed fast. Overall, it took 10 years, as Poland join EU in 2004, which is known as the biggest enlargement in EU history with 10 countries joining the Union.

What can be said about the relations between Poland and EU is the fact that there is a certain paradox. Poles are strongly supporting EU, what can be seen in many polls, on the other hand there is a government that present Eurosceptic views. Ever since Poland joined EU in 2004 the support towards it remains stable, with the lowest score in 2013 that dropped to 72%. On the other hand, it peaked the highest, reaching 92% in 2022, so after 7 years of having Eurosceptic party in government (CBOS, 2023). What is also worth to mention is the fact that Poland is one of the biggest beneficiaries of EU budget. Each year since 2004 Poland receives more from the budget than it contributes.

The results of survey issued by Eurobarometer shows that main reasons for benefits from being a member of EU for Polish citizens are the fact that it improves people's living standard and that it contributes to economic growth. On the contrary, the least important issues are the ones connected with tackling climate change and fighting against terrorism (Eurobarometer, 2023). Based on that, we can say that for Polish citizens the most important factors of being EU member are connected with material benefits rather than other aspects of integration. What is more, EU is still treated as something rather external, the identity of being a European citizen is not popular among Poles, even after almost 19 years after accession. This is the part that plays significant role for Eurosceptic parties in Poland. They are using a narrative that what is happening in Brussels do not concern ordinary citizens. It also affects voter turnouts, which is generally not high in Poland, but for the elections to European Parliament it is even lower. Poles do not feel as a part of Europe in the matter of identity, that may be one of the reasons standing behind such a low turnout. In 2019 only 45,68% of those eligible to vote did it in the European parliament elections, European average was 50,66%. In previous elections, 5 years before, it was even less – 23,83%, while European average in that case was 42,61% (European Parliament, 2019).

Based on what was said, in most cases Euroscepticism in Poland can be categorized as Europragmatic (Styczyńska, 2019) using Kopecký and Mudde (2002) classification. There is a critic towards certain policies and the consensus is hard to achieve. Law and Justice party opts for reforms in EU that will loosen the Union, with stronger positions of individual nations. This leads to disputes between EU institutions and politicians representing Poland which can be from time to time really severe. Those disputes concern important aspects, like rule of law or EU budget. What is more, Law and Justice is in coalition with United Right (Zjednoczona Prawica, ZP) and with United Poland (Solidarna Polska, SP). The latter is even more Eurosceptic and opts for Poland to leave the EU. Leader of this party, Zbigniew Ziobro, is the author of reforms of judicial system that led to tensions with EU over the rule of law and in the end policies that are supported by him led to blocking EU funds for Poland.

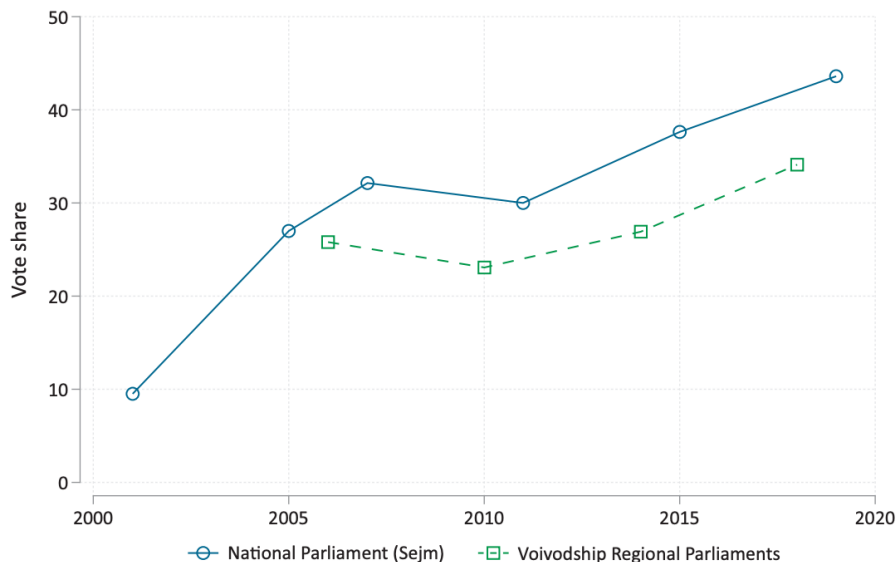
Despite the fact that Poland is the country that have one of the highest support towards EU membership, we can see that there is no consensus for certain important aspects, such as Eurozone or migration policies. There is also lack of coherent policy

represented by the government towards European Union and the role that Poland should play in it. Instead of it, EU is often used as a topic during electoral campaigns and it is presented as a threat to the Polish sovereignty.

2.4 Law and Justice – case of populist in power

Law and Justice party was established in 2001 by brothers Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński. As we can see on the Figure 2.1 party relatively quickly become relevant one with growing support. Since the beginning main features of this party were an anti-liberal and anti-establishment attitudes and challenging the legitimacy of the transformation after 1989 (Stanley, 2016). But it was not the first party founded by Kaczyński brothers. In 1990 they established the Centre Agreement (Porozumienie Centrum, PC) party which was a party that from an ideological point of view can be described as Christian democratic party. It was a part of minority government until 1992. For next years it was in the opposition and it was the basis for development of Law and Justice party as the Center Agreement came to an end in 2002. New party focused more, in addition to what was already said, on law and order, and anti-corruption issues (Pytlas, 2021).

Figure 2.1 Law and Justice results in national and voivodship-level parliamentary elections.



Source: Pytlas, B. 2021. Party Organisation of PiS in Poland: Between Electoral Rhetoric and Absolutist Practice. *Politics and Governance*, 9(4): 342.

Law and Justice won parliamentary elections in 2004, four years after its creation, with 27% of the votes. It formed government with two other populist parties League of

Polish Families and the Self-Defence party (Stanley, 2016). During the period of 2005-2007 we can observe typically populist appeals, such as claiming to represent ordinary people and protect them against corrupted elite and “others” that are a threat to the people. The government collapsed in 2007 due to internal conflicts over power (Pytlas, 2021). In the following years Civic Platform won 8 elections in the row between 2007 and 2011.

Law and Justice’s political and ideological point of view can be characterized as a conservative, nationalist and populist party (Szczerbiak 2017; Stanley and Cześniak 2019; Rooduijn et al. 2019). What I would like to emphasize here is the fact that in this work I refer to Law and Justice Electoral Committee, it means that it includes also representatives of political parties of Zbigniew Ziobro and Jarosław Gowin (in this case until 2021 – when his party decided to leave the Committee).

What also makes Law and Justice a populist party is its leader. Jarosław Kaczyński is chef of the party since 2003. He does not have a role in the government but he is the one de facto making decisions. He had different roles, with the last one as deputy prime minister, but he resigned from it in 2022. What is also worth to mention is that most of the time the official statements concerning various of things are taking place not in the parliament, but in the headquarter of Law and Justice, where also decisions are being made by Kaczyński.

It supports conservative views of the nation, family and tradition and they are all equally important and connected. In their opinion nation is built upon the family as it plays a crucial role in passing down religious values and is also responsible for building patriotic and national attitudes (Gwiazda, 2021). Traditionalism is based on Catholic Church’s teachings, especially when it comes to moral issues (Gwiazda, 2021). There is a part in the 2019 political manifesto that concerns this matter directly: Status of Catholic Church in people’s and state life is exceptionally important: “we want to support it and hold that any unjust attacks at the Church and attempts to damage it are dangerous to the shape of social life. (PiS, 2019: 15)”. As an example of this, Law and Justice is presenting a traditional view of family, which is defined as “a lasting relationship between a woman and a man (PiS, 2014, 2019)”. And as a result, it puts itself in the position to protect traditional values, morality and traditional gender role (Gwiazda, 2021).

Based on that the division in society is also created in the typically populist manner. The group of people is represented by ‘true Poles’ who are following values

mentioned above, they are also often from local, small-town or rural communities (Gwiazda, 2021). The opposite group was once called by Law and Justice politician ‘the worst sort’ (Fomina et al., 2016). During two electoral campaigns there were two different enemies that Law and Justice focused on. In 2015 they introduced a campaign against refugees that was connected with the immigrant crisis. During the next election campaign the enemy was identified in the LGBTI group, which was presented as a threat to the traditional values (Gwiazda, 2021).

Following this internal division, the external relations are also impacted by the populist approach to politics. The strategy towards foreign policy and diplomacy that Law and Justice is imposing is an interesting case and is called a historical discourse by some scholars. Relations between populism and foreign policy is starting to be explored more often by scholars recently (Chrysosgelos 2017; Verbeek and Zaslove 2017; Cadier 2019). As there is a division on the people and the elite it is also used in the strategies towards other countries.

In Poland there is a strong polarization in the society. It is closely linked with a different view over history. On one hand there is a more critical approach, where people claim that it is important to talk about history with its ups and downs, to present “victimhood and heroism” (Cadier and Szulecki, 2020) but also to talk about the guilt. Another group calls it unpatriotic and treats it as a “pedagogy of shame” that leads to undermining Poland as a nation. Law and Justice party represents the second group, it did so when it was in government in 2005-2007 and continues to do since 2015 and it has its origins in its national-conservative ideology (Longhurst, 2013). In their actions they are mainly focused on the history of 20th century. In order to change the narrative several administrative and legislative acts have been introduced. The most controversial ones were the takeover of the World War II Museum in Gdansk in 2017 with the aim of narrowing its exhibition to Polish perspective. Another one was the IPN Act (called the ‘Holocaust law’ abroad) presented in 2018 that criminalized mentions of Polish involvements in crimes committed during WWII, especially by the Nazi regime. After a wave of criticism, mainly from the US and Israel government decided to ease the law and in the amendment, there was a removal of criminal penalty, but it is still possible to impose a fine (Cadier and Szulecki, 2020).

What is more, Law and Justice often takes past as a reference. They claim that they have to raise Poland from knees and it have to be done by defending the honour of Polish people in the opposition to the elites that are ready to sell out the pride of Polish nation (Szulecki 2019). The division is often based on the opposition to the second main party Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO). In one of his speeches Jarosław Kaczyński addressed members of this party:

“You are the external party today, you are compromising Poland, you are against Poland. You have always been (Kaczyński, 2017)”.

What is also characteristic for Law and Justice is referring to moral superiority of the Polish People (Cadier and Szulecki, 2020). It is also one of the populist features, to describe people as pure and idealize them. They are highlighting what is good and rejecting any sort of wrongdoings (Müller, 2016). They are doing so, mainly by reactivating the myths associated with Polish martyrology (Kubik, 2020). It is used to differentiate people and create the identity that they can belong to. It is also showing that they all have the experience of being victims but morally victorious and because of that, certain actions especially on international level can be justified.

One of the best examples of this behaviour is the way of speaking about Germany presented in the political and foreign policy discourse of the Law and Justice government (Cadier and Szulecki, 2020). They are presented as a threat to the Polish sovereignty and accused of getting involved in domestic politics, also with the help of Polish politicians, especially those from the previous government. In the process of creation an enemy to the people Germany is most of the time presented as one, also because of history.

Another important thing is programme of the party, since 2015 election campaign there is one dominant factor, which is public spending. They are needed, because Law and Justice created a vision of Poland that need to be build back “from ruins” (Owczarek, 2017). The narrative of “Poland in ruin” was a contrast to the Civic Platform narrative of “Poland under construction” or “green island” as it was called after 2008 financial crisis as it did not have a bigger impact on Polish economy. In general PiS rejects the achievements of the transformation process in Poland (PiS 2014, 2019) claiming that the whole period after 1989 was led by corrupted elites and that they were not paying attention to people. That is why in their opinion the entire period after 1989 is a failure (Kinowska-Mazaraki, 2021).

Political manifestos presented by Law and Justice are rather coherent documents and they are focused on support for, as they claim, ordinary people. Here I will focus on two main documents, the one presented in 2014 and one from 2019. That is why the flagships of the programme are directly concerning people and contemporary issues with main motto - “good change”. First important programme was “500 +” and was a child benefit programme. It aimed to improve birth rates and support low-income families. (Bill and Stanley, 2020). Another important aspect was the promise to undo the retirement age reform that was introduced in 2012 by coalition of Civic Platform and Polish People's Party. The way the reform was introduced back in 2012 and the lack of dialogue and explanations contributed to people’s dissatisfaction and Law and Justice used it in the electoral campaign. The original retirement age reform of 2012 raised the age up to 67 for both men and women. The promise of Law and Justice was to lower it back to 60 for women and 65 for men. In EU only 7 countries out of 27 have different retirement age based on gender (OECD, 2021). Here we can also see the conservatism of the party. Different age for women and men is against the gender equality, which is one of the basic principles of EU. It also raised questions and concerns in the European Commission. Prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki answered that:

“What we propose reflects not only social expectations but also different roles for women, different roles for men (Morawiecki, 2017)”.

The effect of this kind of policies, based on gender, results in increasing gender inequalities and is based on the conservative view of the family, which Law and Justice is supporting. Both of those programmes – 500+ and retirement age reform were introduced in 2016, quickly after elections. They were done despite experts’ criticism and concerns about funding (Owczarek, 2017).

Traditionalism and conservatism were especially visible in autumn 2020 when the constitutional court imposed nearly total abortion ban. Protests took place in both, major cities and also, what came as a surprise for some, in smaller cities as well. Even though they did not contribute to undoing the reform they mobilized a lot of people with different backgrounds against the politics of Law and Justice.

Important role plays also the main state-owned television TVP with its main programme – Wiadomości. The president of this television has close relations with Law and Justice and he had taken this role in 2016 and keeps it ever since. Controlling the

most popular television and main information programme allows Law and Justice to create and spread its vision (Kinowska – Mazaraki, 2021). It is done in two ways. First of all, the political opponents are being blamed for whatever wrong is happening. It helps to create the vision of “elites” that are against ordinary people. Just to name few, LGBTI communities are being presented as the group that want to destroy traditional order by leading ideological revolution. Refugees are shown as a threat for traditional values, especially seen as a threat from the religious point of view (Żuk, 2020). Cultural elites, on the other hand, want to undo Law and Justice’s social programmes and are accused of being ashamed of Poland. Secondly, experts that are invited to discuss contemporary issues are most of the time journalists from right-wing media, there is lack of pluralism in the opinions (Żuk, 2020). Media have crucial role in the democracy as they should allow to critically present neutral information on what is happening. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) are conducting an annual World Press Freedom Index that focus on the environment for journalism in 180 countries. Since 2015 Poland was falling in this report with the lowest ever position in 2022, when it was classified as 66th. In the newest edition Poland moved a bit up and was ranked as 57th, which is still a low score and is described in the report as “problematic”. With main concerns focused on public media being a party’s mouthpiece (RSF, 2023).

Retirement age is not the only thing that draw attention from EU institutions to Poland in recent years. The biggest concerns were about judiciary. The reforms that were imposed were seen as a threat to democracy and the rule of law. Reforms started quickly after the elections, as first ones were initiated in 2015. It started with replacing key positions in Constitutional Tribunal (CT) and the Supreme Court with party loyalists. Right after that, also the legally elected judges in the Constitutional Tribunal were replaced in the same manner as the President of the CT. In the opinion of some experts, “The CT became a defender and protector of the legislative majority (Sadurski, 2018: 82)”. After that the reforms were also directed towards the ordinary courts. The result of those reforms is that “Judges whose verdicts contradicted government policy had to be prepared for possible adverse consequences (Kinowksa-Mazarki, 2021: 5)”. All of those actions were followed by a criticism from EU institutions. The Debate about judiciary reforms originated in European Parliament in 2017, but since than pressure from those institutions did not achieve its goals and additionally, they are accused of interfering into

Poland's internal affairs (Kinowksa-Mazarki, 2021). In 2021 the Polish Constitutional Tribunal challenged one of the basic rules, which is the primacy of EU law and ruled that the provisions of the EU Treaties are not compatible with the Polish Constitution. After that The Commission decided to open the infringement procedure against Poland and also to fine Poland with €1 million a day and was lower to half of this sum in 2023, which Poland refuse to pay. As a result, European Commission withholds funds for Poland, both recovery fund and cohesion policy funds. Last decision in this case is a decision made in 2023 by the European Commission to “to refer Poland to the Court of Justice of the European Union for violations of EU law by the Polish Constitutional Tribunal and its case law (European Commission, 2023).” All of this led also to worsening relation not only with EU, but also with other countries. In 2020 The Norwegian Court Administration (NCA) decided to end the cooperation saying that in Poland “basic European standards for legal security are no longer present (Holmøyvik 2020).”

To sum it up, Law and Justice is a populist party that in its views is conservative, nationalist, traditionalist and Eurosceptic.

2.5 National parliamentary elections of 2015 and 2019

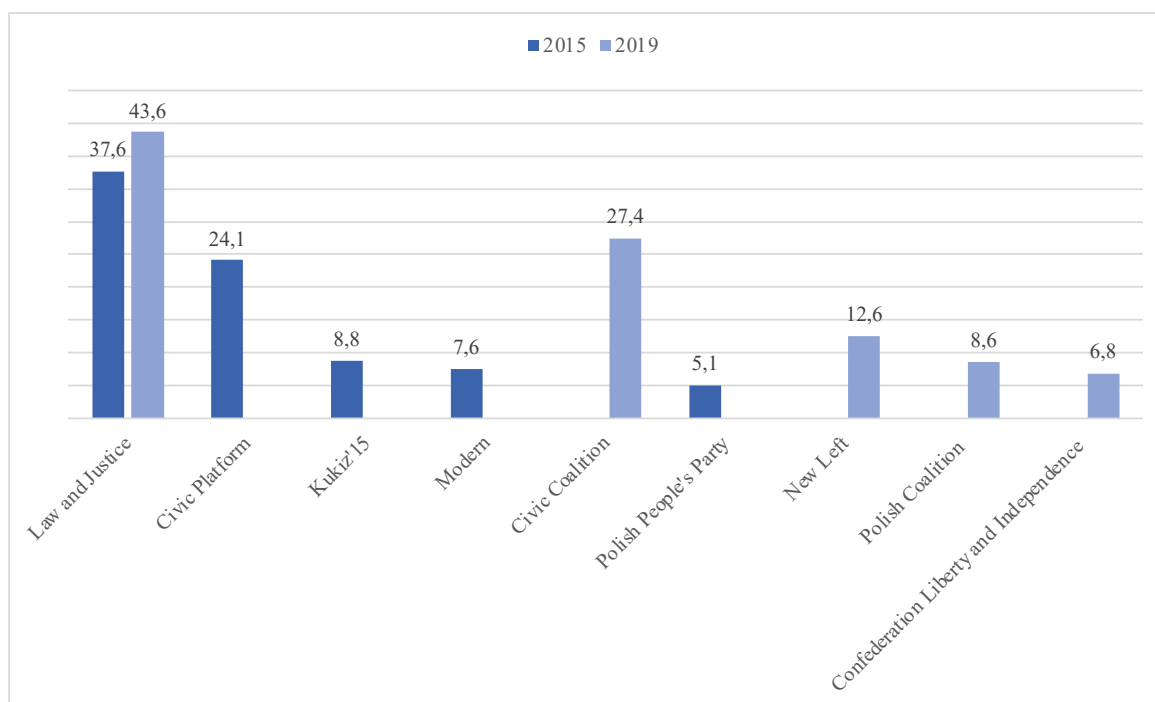
In this part I am focusing on the two parliamentary elections that took place in Poland, one in 2015 and the next one in 2019.

On 25th of October 2015 there were election to the Polish parliament. They were won by Law and Justice party with almost 38% support. They won 235 out of 460 seats in the lower house (Sejm) of the parliament and 61 out of 100 in the higher house (Senat). It is the first party after 1991 that were able to create a government without creating coalition with any other party. Voter turnout was almost 51% which is a rather high result compared to previous elections (PKW, 2015), but it is not high compared to other European countries.

Despite Law and Justice, four other parties won seats in the Polish parliament, the results are shown on the Figure 2.2. They were: Civic Platform, the one that has governed in Poland since 2007 to 2015. It managed to win 138 seats. The third party was Kukiz'15, which was already described here, and which is an anti-establishment, right-wing party with 42 seats. Next one was party called Modern (Nowoczesna), which was led by a pro-business economist, Ryszard Petru. They won 28 seats. The last one was the agrarian

Polish People’s Party with 16 seats. On the figure there is also a Democratic Left Alliance (Zjednoczona Lewica) with a result of 7.6% but because it was an Alliance it needed 8% to have seats in the Parliament.

Figure 2.2 Results of Polish parliamentary election in 2015 and 2019 (in %).



Note. Own elaboration based on PKW Wybory do Sejmu i Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2015 and Wybory do Sejmu i Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 2019.

Next parliamentary election took place on 13th of October 2019. Figure 2.2 presents results of this elections, in comparison to the election result from 2015. The number of parties that managed to win seats in the lower house of the parliament was the same as in 2015 – five parties accomplished that. Like four years before Law and Justice won the elections with even higher score – 43,6% which is translated to 235 seats. On second place there was the coalition – Civic Coalition that included Civic Platform, Modern and smaller parties. Their result was 27,4% which means 134 seats. The Left was a third party and it won 49 seats with 12,6% of support. It was a success for this party as it was out of the parliament for four previous years. Polish Coalition was a formation created just for those elections by Polish People’s Party, Kukiz’15 and smaller parties. They won 30 seats by reaching 8,6% support. It was worse result for the Kukiz’15 party, as four years before it managed to have a higher result by itself. It shows, what already has been written, that populist party may struggle to maintain high level of support. The

last party was a far-right, Eurosceptic and conservative party - Confederation Liberty and Independence (Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość) that had 6,8% support and which means that it won 11 seats.

In the higher house in 2015, Law and Justice won as well. The second party was Civic Platform with 34 seats. 1 seat was won by the Polish People's Party. Remaining 4 seats were occupied by people that did not affiliate themselves with any party.

What is also important is the fact that in 2015 there were also presidential election and they were won by the Law and Justice candidate. As a result, in one year the populist party won all of the elections and they gained both legislative and executive power.

Results of elections to the higher house in 2019 were different than the one four years ago. Law and Justice did not win, it gained 48 out of 100 seats which means that it was not in the majority anymore. Civic Coalition won 43 seats, 3 were for Polish People's Party and 2 for The Left.

The election campaign in 2015 was dominated by the promises presented by Law and Justice, with main points focused on the welfare packages. Main opponent party, Civic Platform did not present a concrete programme, they were rather focused on the achievements from previous 8 years of being in the government. According to some scholars, main problems of this party was not paying attention to peripheral regions and to the situation of low-wage workers (Zabdyr-Jamróz et al., 2021). This is the group that was targeted by Law and Justice. In both elections they attracted older and less educated voters from rural areas (Kozłowska, 2019). What results of the election showed, people wanted something new as the majority was dissatisfied after previous 8 years that is why populist parties were the winners of the 2015 elections.

In September 2015, so a bit more than a month before elections the campaign, took a new turn and focused on the migrant crisis. While Civic Platform was still in the government, after a long debate and a lot of scepticism it agreed to vote in favour of a refugee quota proposed by the EU about allocations of the refugees among the member states (Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier, 2016). This agreement was criticized by the politicians from Law and Justice party and was used in the campaign by presenting refugees as a threat and the party as the one who can protect Poland from it. During the debate on the refugee crisis Jarosław Kaczyński gave a speech about his concerns

regarding immigration from Muslim countries. He claimed that Poland can claim refugees, but only by giving financial support, not by allocating them. He also stated that:

“[Poland] has a right to defend itself from actions taken by the lethal enemies of Poland (Kaczyński, 2015).”

He did not point out a specific people or groups, but from what he said, those enemies are first of all EU, with Germany out front and secondly refugees that in his opinion were a threat to the Polish culture and traditions.

This kind of discourse influenced Polish society deeply. The general view of the Muslim community in Poland is very low and is mainly based on the political debate. Poland has never been a main destination of migrants and a lot of people do not have any direct contact with migrants. But what is interesting is that some research shows that people who do not have any contact with Muslims are the ones that are the most afraid of them and Islam as a religion in general (Pędziwiatr 2017). The exaggeration of the migrant issue is visible in the polls. In 2015 21% of Polish people were against accepting refugees from any country engulfed in war (CBOS, 2015). Just one year later, but after exploiting this topic in electoral campaign it not only increased up to 52% (CBOS, 2017), but also increase even more for refugees from the Middle East and Africa, with 74% of respondents against accepting refugees from those regions (CBOS, 2017). Finally, Poland did not accept refugees but it did not change the fact that the anti-immigration campaign was effective. In the poll in 2017 people were asked about what they think is a threat for Poland. Refugees were considered second to terrorist attacks, while unemployment or poverty was not that relevant (Kinowska-Mazarak, 2021).

What is observable is the increase in the voter turnout since 2015. Some scholars try to explain it as the result of bigger polarization of the society and using more emotional manner by politicians. Also changes that were proposed and some of them actually happened were not only reforms but rather transformation of the current political system (Rachwał, 2020). The same author (2020) points out 4 reasons that in his opinion led to increase of voter turnout that was visible in 2019 compared to previous years. He mentioned polarization of the political and what follows, electoral scene and using emotional content. It resulted in the general pre-electoral situation in which members of the party were trying to mobilize people by saying that other parties will take away programmes introduced by Law and Justice so far. And lastly, building a narration of

importance of the election what is also connected with presenting other parties as a threat to ordinary people (Rachwał, 2020). This theory may be applied in the Polish case as the voter turnout in 2019 was the highest since 1989 and reached 61,74%.

What was characteristic for the 2019 election was the narrative from all of the parties taking part in it that it was a time to decide what kind of Poland do people want. It was a choice between supporting the model of liberal democracy and on the other hand there was a model of illiberal democracy. Those elections were presented by the politicians as a stand on one or the other side fuelled by statements that victory of one's rivals will lead to the disaster.

The results of 2019 elections were rather good for Law and Justice as they won in the lower house of the parliament but they lost in the higher house. First reaction of the leader of Law and Justice was:

“We are a political formation which deserves more. We got a lot, but we deserve more (Kaczyński, 2019).”

The next day he changed his tone and said that:

“We are very happy. We received legitimacy to continue to change Poland, to continue the ‘good change’ (Kaczyński, 2019).”

But what was also clear during those speeches was the fact that this situation was seen as a defeat, because it makes the legislative process harder as higher house gained power to block some procedures. It was also not as Jarosław Kaczyński wanted it to be. He was hoping to win a majority of two thirds, which will allow him to change the constitution. Law and Justice did not increase the number of seats in the lower house as well, it was the same as for four previous years.

As it comes to the political programme for the 2019 elections, which is called “Polish Welfare Model” (PiS, 2019) and is a continuation of the spending promises, what guaranteed the success in previous elections. Manifesto focuses on five flagships, called as well as Kaczyński's Five. It consists of (Kozłowska 2019):

- Expansion of the 500+ programme (with a change that it includes first child as well),
- ‘The thirteenth’ – additional pension bonus for retiree,
- Reduction of personal income tax for people under 26,
- Decrease of personal income tax rate from 18% to 17%,

- Focus on extending public transport networks for peripheral areas.

In 2015 main external enemy were migrants. In 2019 it was LGBTI people. While talking about them they were referring to the “rainbow scare” slogan and “LGBT ideology”. Those two slogans appeared regularly through the pre-election period, both in the manifesto and in the statements presented by politicians. This group was presented as a threat for the traditional values. During the Law and Justice convention in March 2019 Jarosław Kaczyński began this topic by the statement:

“The LGBT and gender movements threaten our identity, threaten our nation, threaten the Polish state (Kaczyński, 2019)”.

During the campaign government officials were using dehumanization language towards LGBTI people (Kinowska-Mazarak, 2021). Large role was also played by the national broadcaster. There was a short movie broadcasted on TVP’s main channel which was anti- LGBTI and was published just few days before elections in 2019. This movie was in line with the Law and Justice narrative. Right after its first showing Campaign Against Homophobia (Kampania Przeciw Homofobii, KPH) organization sued TVP over this movie. In 2022 court stated that TVP have to remove this movie from YouTube, officially apologize during evening new programme and also transfer money to the Lambda Warsaw association helpline, which is supporting Polish LGBTI community and their relatives. Those actions combined draw attention from EU institutions. In response to creating “LGBT-Free Zone” in some cities, in the period of 2019, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in which it condemns all acts of discrimination and hate speech and especially the development of those “free zones”. In addition to that European Commission decided that areas which imposed those regulations will not receive EU funds.

Again, in this case the political debate influenced the situation of LGBTI people in Poland and also public opinion. ILGA is an international NGO that is working in 54 countries from Europe and Asia and is supporting LGBTI people. Each year they are providing Rainbow Map and Index ranking for all 49 European countries that measures laws and policies to ensure equal rights and protection for LGBTI people in each of the country (ILGA, 2023). The methodology standing behind this ranking is that each country receives a grade on a scale between 0% and 100%, where 0% means gross violations of human rights, and 100% means full equality of LGBTI people (ILGA, 2023). In 2023

Poland was on the 42nd position out of 49, with a score of 15%. This score has significantly dropped since 2015, when it equalled 26% (ILGA, 2015). In following years, it was never higher than 18% (ILGA, 2016 - 2022). When it comes to public opinion Polish people are divided when it comes to the rights of not-heterosexual people. Based on the Eurobarometer on Discrimination 2019 49% agreed that LGBTI people should have the same rights as heterosexual people and 45% did not agree with that. In comparison an EU average was 72% agreeing and 24% claiming the opposite (Eurobarometer on Discrimination 2019).

To sum it up Law and Justice won two consecutive parliamentary elections. It was a result of political programme that responded to the needs of people and motivated them to go and vote. But it was also achieved by creating common enemies and presenting themselves as the ones that can protect ordinary people from those threats.

2.6 Summary

The case of populism in Poland suits the theoretical frames of populism presented by Mudde (2017). There is a group of people and the opposite group of elite, which is built as the antagonism to the people and there is also a general will of people. Populism is connected with Euroscepticism in Poland, as EU is often presented as the external enemy. Additionally, there is a link between rising populism and deepening of polarization (Krastev, 2017). It is also based on an emotional dimension, as politicians were building identities by putting them as the opposition to something else. In Poland there was a case of migrants in 2015 and LGBTI in 2019, but also EU in both.

The reasons standing behind the rise of populism in Poland are not connected with macro-economic situation (Kubik, 2020). It was rather a response to the current situation and focus on people that were not targeted by other parties combined with strong position of political leadership (Owczarek, 2017).

Looking at the Polish case we can see the link between populism and Euroscepticism. PiS is using the anti-EU stances in its electoral campaigns often, most of the time by presenting EU as a threat to the Polish sovereignty. Amount of this kind of statements increased especially after the discussions with European Commission over the rule of law and general opinions of the EU representatives about decreasing of the democratic values in Poland since PiS is in power.

The results of 2015 elections, strengthened by 2019 elections changed the character of Polish politics. Campaign election for 2019 was focused on programmes of public spending. Even parties that were opposed to the social programmes in 2015 claimed that they will retain them and they also added new social programmes (Civic Coalition, 2019). All parties had to adapt to the new climate of the narrative created by Law and Justice. And this new climate is that “social spending has become the new norm in Polish politics. (Bill and Stanley, 2020: 386)”.

Overall, the rule of populists in Poland is responsible for growing polarization in the society, change of the public debate that is more focused on social programmes and spending and in the end, it led to democratic backsliding (Kubik, 2020). On the other hand, despite the Law and Justice narrative the attitude towards EU has not changed. Polish citizens are amongst the ones that think that membership in EU is a good thing, the average is higher than the EU average (Eurobarometer, 2022). The same report shows as well that 84% of Poles think that Poland benefited from being a member of EU and the main aspect that benefited from being a member of EU for Polish citizens is the people’s standard of living (Eurobarometer, 2022). Also, the view on the future of the EU is perceived as very optimistic (13%) or fairly optimistic (60%) which is again one of the highest result in EU. Actions taken by Law and Justice did not lower the satisfaction from EU but it decreased the feeling of belonging to the EU and start to treat EU only as an economic union that should not interfere into internal matters.

Chapter 3

3.1 Historical roots for populism in Italy

This chapter is dedicated to the case study of populism in Italy. The structure is similar to the one used in the previous chapter. In this chapter I am taking into account, years after 2018. Firstly, there is a brief presentation of historical roots of populism in Italy, what events shaped it and how it was built during the years, I focused on the period starting from early 1990s. Based on that I moved forward to the description of characteristics of Italian populism nowadays. Next, I described Euroscepticism in Italy, what are the reasons standing behind it and what kind of Euroscepticism is the most common in Italy. After that I focused on populists in power in Italy and to do so I presented 3 main populist parties in the period of time: Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle, M5S), League (Lega) and The Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia, FdI). After presenting three parties I focused on the national parliamentary elections of 2018 and 2022. The chapter ends with summary.

Since 1947 up until early 1990s Italian government was mostly controlled by the Christian Democrats (Democrazia Cristiana, DC) with different coalition partners. Next period, years of 1992-1994 are characterized by major changes, both internally and externally. As for the external factors, the collapse of the Soviet Union influenced the situation in Europe drastically. This is also the time when a series of corruption scandals occurred and it was followed by the collapse of the existing party system. Corruption scandals led to the 'Clean Hands' investigations that aimed to overcome problems related to corruption and it also mobilized people against political elite. Even though the parties on the political stage changed because of investigation it did not cause a real change among political class. According to Della Porta and Vannucci (2007) the 'Clean Hands' investigation was an attempt to seize the problems that dominated Italian politics in the past but it also showed that the political class was neither not able nor not willing to change. Some scholars refer to those years as to the political and institutional earthquake (Orisna, 2019; Castaldo and Verzichelli, 2020). Others add that those years were also a period when the current populist right was created, as it was a time of redefining collective identity (Ruzza and Balbo, 2013). Out of all of this the 'Second Republic' originated, which was a result of a referendum that was held in 1993 in which "82.7 percent of the

voters approved the introduction of a predominantly majoritarian electoral system for the Senate (Orsina, 2019: 54)” and created a competitive liberal democracy. Next years, 1994-2011 are characterized by the existence of almost bipolarism when it comes to party competition. There were two blocs competing with each other, right-wing and left-wing. First ones voted for Berlusconi and the other ones wanted to keep him out of power. Silvio Berlusconi played a key role in shaping political system for many years ahead. After that the debt crisis of 2008 was followed by the second big wave of rise of populism, in this case especially for the Five Star Movement. Economic and political crisis of 2010s contributed significantly to the rise of populism, but not only in Italy, but rather in whole Western Europe

As for the populist parties, according to The PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019) in Italy we can distinguish 7 populist parties. Three of them: Five Star Movement, League and Brothers of Italy will be discussed later since they are the most relevant for the researched period.

Forza Italia is one of the parties mentioned on The PopuList. It is a party founded by Silvio Berlusconi in 1994. In this case there is a debate between scholars about putting a label of populist party to the Forza Italia party itself, as it does not tackle all of the requirements presented in the definition of populism. There is no problem though with calling Berlusconi a populist, and because of the role he is playing in the party it is categorized as a populist party (Maccaferri, 2022). He was a media magnate that within few months became a Prime Minister of Italy. What is also worth to mention is the fact that he was the longest serving Prime Minister in the post war era – in total, he held this position for 9 years. He was a charismatic leader that is connected to a lot of scandals within his political career. In the elections in 1994, party’s first elections, Forza Italia won majority in the Chamber of Deputies, winning 21,01%, but after just few months the government that they created collapsed. There are few important factors that are standing behind its popularity. First of all, changes on the political stage deprived lots of people of their traditional choices, as a lot of parties collapsed or changed drastically. It opened a space for new parties, such as the one created by Berlusconi. Secondly, leader of the party had a direct channels to reach voters. At that time, he owned three national television networks and he knew how to use them to present himself and the party. He also used the anti-establishment, anti-elite atmosphere in the country. He presented himself as one of

“the people” on the contrary to the political establishment. Programme of the party focused on civil society and less politics. Lastly, in order to win elections party built an alliance that survived a long time. It was a coalition built together with post-fascists in southern Italy and the League in the north (Orsina, 2019). In its initial form party survived until 2009 and during this time it was centre right, populist party with a strong position of its leader (Ruzza and Balbo, 2013). Later, party was recreated in 2013, but it was smaller and less relevant than in its first form. Looking at its ideology new Forza Italia is more liberal than its previous version. In the latest elections, held in 2022, Forza Italia received 8,11% support in the Chamber of Deputies and 8,27% in Senate what shows that its relevance decreased with the time (Eligendo, Camera and Senato).

Southern Action League (Lega d'Azione Meridionale, LAM) is another populist party mentioned in The PopuList. It is a regionalist far-right party that was founded in 1992 and is active in Apulia region. For a brief moment, in 2014 it joined Forza Italia party, but it left it soon after that. It does not play a significant role in the national politics.

Venetian League (Lega Veneta) is also a regionalist political party and is active in Veneto region. It was founded in 1979 and was one of the first party of its kind. It actively worked in the process of integrating with other regionalist parties. It is focused on the Venetian nationalism and the federal reform.

The People of Freedom (Il Popolo della Libertà, PdL) was a successor party of Forza Italia. When it comes to the ideology it is a populist centre-right political party. Firstly, it was established by Berlusconi as a centre-right alliance in 2007. After Forza Italia was dissolved it became a full political party in 2009 which governed in coalition with the Northern League (Orsina, 2019). Party was dissolved in 2013 and was replaced by the rebuild Forza Italia.

3.2 Characteristics of Italian populism

While speaking about Italian politics what is often pointed out is the rising success of populist attitudes. Italy is unique when it comes to the populist success in electoral elections in Western Europe. For many years there has been a fertile ground for populism (Tarchi, 2015). It can be seen by looking at the overall support that populist parties receive in the national parliamentary elections, it rose from about 30% in 1994 to slightly more than 50% in 2008 and 2013, up to almost 70% in 2018 (Vercesi, 2023). Populist parties

in Italy are rather diversified, when it comes to their manifestos, ideology, position on the political stage and targeted group. League and The Brothers of Italy are described as exclusionary FSM on the other hand is said to be inclusionary (Font et al., 2021).

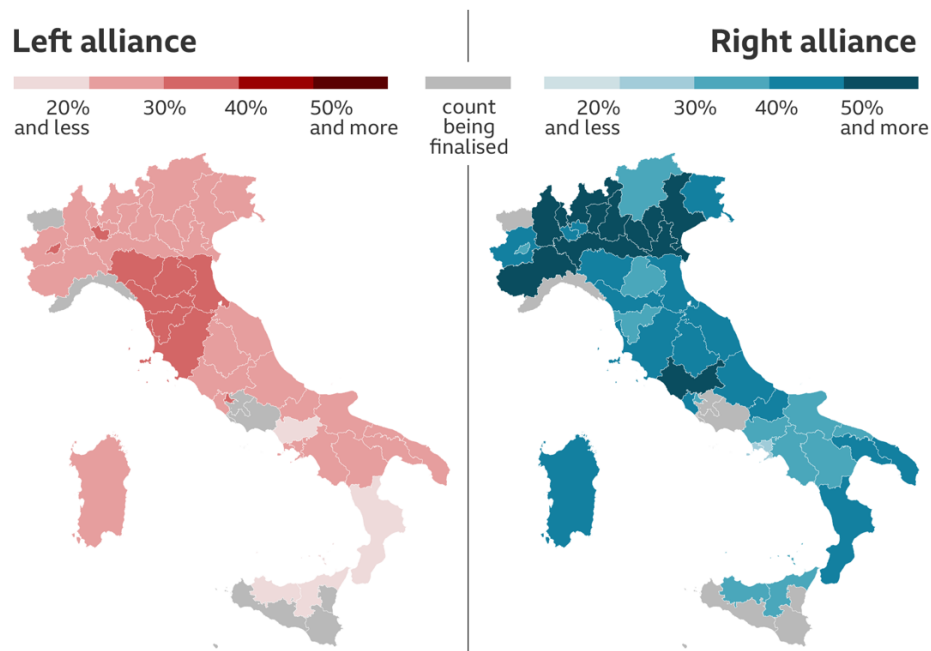
When it comes to explanations of the rise of populism there are several factors standing behind it, with the most important economic, political and cultural. There are more and more inequalities between different groups of people. As for the reason standing behind it, globalization is often pointed out. It contributed to making life of low-skilled and young people precarious (Vercesi, 2023). The lack of trust in the political elite also contributes to the success of populist parties. When it comes to the cultural one, it is connected with a cultural backlash that is visible across whole Europe. Another thing is a migrant crisis of 2015 and its implications. Italy was one of the countries that were directly impacted by it and it contributed to the rise of populism drastically. So called “migrant crisis” was a politicised topic. Before 2015 immigration appeared as a topic in media but it was rather an exception. It changed in the 2015 when it became heavily politicised in almost whole Europe (Hutter and Kriesi, 2022). The big wave of migration was a result of ongoing severe wars or conflicts especially in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The numbers shows that more than one million refugees and migrants reached Europe only in 2015 by sea. It was also followed by the tragically high number of people that did not survive the journey, almost 4000 drowned trying to do so (UNHCR, 2015). The numbers of asylum seekers in 2015 were way higher than in any previous year. In 2015 it was almost 1.3 million application, year before it was a bit more than 50 thousand, the second highest number was set in 1992 and was due to the fall of Iron Curtain (Pew Research Centre, 2016). Italy was often a place of landing of the refugees and it impacted the internal politics. Italy became a country of immigration only recently, since around first decade of 2000s. Such a rapid flow of refugees and migrants, as the one in 2015 together with high unemployment rate and still relevant implications of the economic crisis started the social and political debate. In addition to that what also triggered some group of people was different religion of refugees in the country that is predominantly Catholic (Nese, 2022).

All of those factors are more or less common for the rise of populism across Europe and this is why they are not explaining the Italian case with its significantly high share of voters choosing populist parties enough. What is special in Italian case is the

deep-rooted tradition of anti-parliamentarism followed by the mistrust and scepticism towards political elites and institutions (Vercesi, 2023). This builds a fertile ground for populist parties, as often voters of such parties are unsatisfied with the politics (Bowler et al. 2017). That is why almost all Italian populist parties favour direct relationship between citizens and leaders instead of representative institutions. The group of people is based on the shared and common values, religion, customs and history that is betrayed by the elite (Mazzoleni and Bracciale, 2018).

Regional differences within Italy are significant and they play an important role when it comes to politics as well. It is due to the fact that Italy is a rather young country, unified in the mid XIX century out of many different from each other states. Not only they had a different culture but also different language and different political systems. Those differences are still visible also while looking at the election results and the parties that different regions support.

Figure 3.1 Results of 2022 parliamentary elections by region. Vote share by coalition (in %).



Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63029909>.

As it is presented in the Figure 3.1, which presents results of the 2022 parliamentary elections, there are differences between north and south of Italy. What is not visible in the Figure 3.1, in the south of Italy Five Star Movement was popular as well. Those differences are crucial while creating a group of people as a populist party. It

is not possible to create one group that will respond to the needs of people from different regions. That is why most populist parties in Italy focus on the social problems, such as unemployment and positioning themselves as the opposition to the political establishment.

Unemployment is something that is drawing a lot of attention nowadays in Italy, especially within young people. It is important because it creates frustration amongst voters what can also create an opportunity for populist parties that are trying to use it in their electoral campaigns. The average unemployment in Italy is higher than the average in EU and in euro area. And what is even more problematic is the unemployment rate among young people (under 25s), in this group in Italy it remains on one of the highest levels in EU. For example, in April 2023 the average in Italy was 20,4% and in the EU 13,8%, unemployment was higher only in 3 other countries: Spain, Greece and Sweden (Eurostat, 2023).

When it comes to general will populist claim that people's will is the fundamental principle and is the one that should be prior to everything else. As it is shown below in the Giorgia Meloni's speech the issue of sovereignty of people is the core of politics and she claims to restore it, especially from EU.

Giorgia Meloni—24 November 2016

“I think that it will be a good day for the Italians the day when they can recover their sovereignty and can choose their governments and when we will no longer have an executive of lobbies and Merkel but a government of Italy and the Italians (Mazzoleni and Bracciale, 2018: 5).”

The group called elite, which refer to the “other” of “them”, as in the Mudde's definition of populism is diversified in Italy. There is also a difference between elections in 2018 and 2022. In the first one there was a focus on the ethnocultural immigrants and refugees. Some of the parties, like Brothers of Italy focused especially on the Islamic factor. During the latter due to the multiple reasons, such as covid-19 pandemic and Russian aggression Ukraine it has changed. The scope of the group of “others” were limited to the “illegal immigrants”. In addition to that while speaking about the opposition to the people populist parties agree on the fact that it is presented by the intellectual and administrative elites. They describe them as those who have lost touch with “ordinary” people and their problems (Vercesi, 2023). In addition to that European Union is also

sometimes presented as the enemy, as it is seen as a threat to the sovereignty of the country (Mazzoleni and Bracciale, 2018).

3.3 Euroscepticism in Italy

Italy was one of the founding country of the European Union in 1957, together with Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. In 1999 Italy implemented euro as a currency as well. As for the views of the EU in Italy the outlook is rather positive but is definitely not amongst the countries that have the highest support and trust towards EU. As in many other European countries visions for the future of the EU have been a reason of polarisation and were used during the electoral campaigns.

Change of the attitude towards EU over time is presented in the Figure 3.2 which shows the percentage of people that have a favourable opinion of the EU in Italy over time. What can be observed is a rapid fall after the economic crisis while comparing numbers from 2007 and 2012 and years that followed. Crisis that was followed by the change of attitudes towards EU again was covid-19 pandemic. First phase of it brought a lot of dissatisfaction amongst Italian society as some of the countries did not want to agree on the collective support for countries that suffered because of pandemic the most, such as Italy. The opinion on EU started to rise again during the latest phase of covid-19 pandemic as people seen the benefits from being in the Union in the times of crisis like this. It was mainly due to the change of EU attitude and implementation of the Recovery Fund which was an acceptable compromise that allowed to help in financing post-pandemic stimulation.

Figure 3.2 Views of the European union over time (% who have a favourable opinion of the EU).

	2007	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Italy	78	59	58	46	64	58	57	58	58	58	67

Note. Own elaboration based on the: Pew Research Centre - Global Indicators Data <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/database/indicator/28/country/it>.

Being favourable towards EU is one thing and putting a trust in it is another thing. Figures 3.3 and 3.4 show Italian's and for the sake of comparison European's trust in the EU. The economic crisis was a reason of decaling of the trust towards EU in almost whole Europe, in some countries more than in others. Italy is one of the countries in which it

contributed to the significant drop of trust, with one of the lowest levels of trust across Europe in 2012, when it was barely bit over 20%.

Figure 3.3 Italian's trust in the EU.

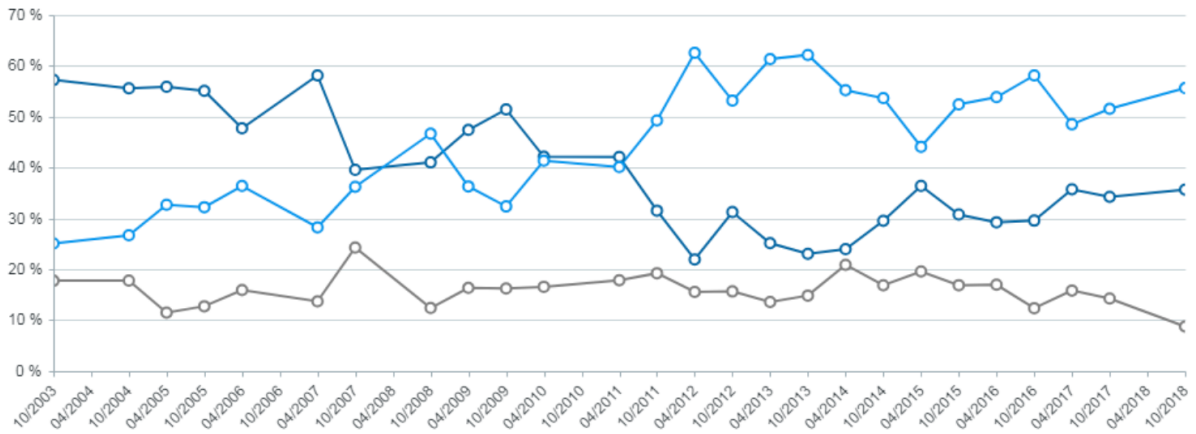
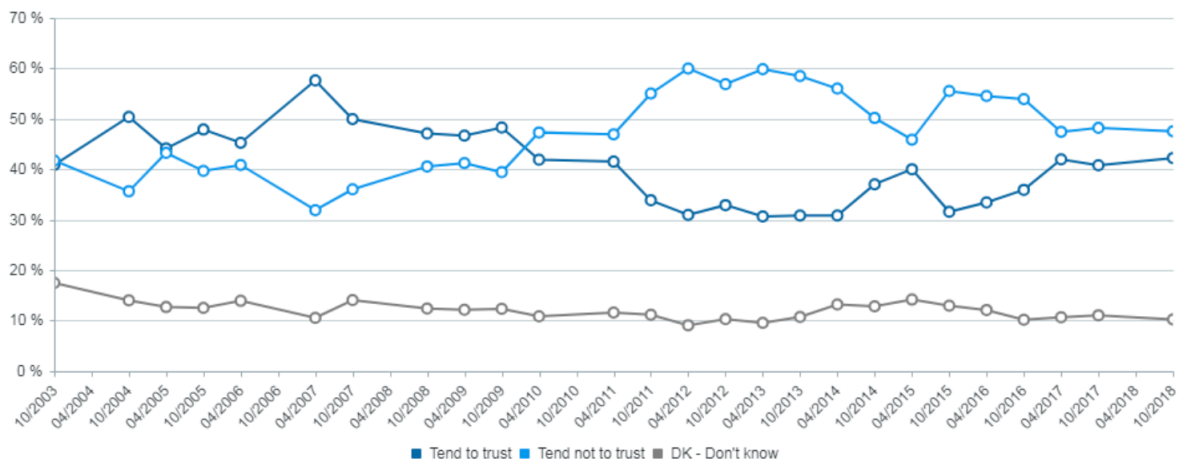


Figure 3.4 European's trust in the EU.



Source: Balfour, R. and Robustelli, L. 2019. *Why Did Italy Fall Out of Love with Europe?.* IAI Commentaries, 19 (48 – JULY).

What we can also observe looking at the figures above is the fact that level of trust in the EU in Italy is lower than the European average and is also harder to rebuild it in comparison to other European countries. What is more, as the latest Eurobarometer showed, Italians are one of the last to feel as citizens of the EU. Only 65% of correspondents claimed that they are European citizens, compared to the European average which is 74% it is not a lot. Only three countries had lower score: France, Romania, Greece and Bulgaria (Eurobarometer, 2023).

For a long time, Italy was one of most supportive country when it comes to the European integration. As an argument for this the results of the referendum of 1989 can

be used. The referendum concerned granting the European Parliament constituent powers, the result was that almost 90% of those who voted were in favour of that (Pasquinucci, 2022). It started to change since the Maastricht Treaty, especially due to the process that was leading to the monetary union. Public debate was focused on the effort that was needed due to join the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (Pasquinucci, 2022).

Using Euroscepticism as a tool by politicians in Italy, can be tracked down in the 1990s together with the rise of anti-establishment movements, but it was not a mainstream back then. It became so in the 2010s and was fuelled by economic crisis and the recession that followed. Next years brought other crises such as migrant one and Brexit. Based on it, it became easy to blame EU for countries unsolved problems (Balfour and Robustelli, 2019). Europe was presented as the one that led to worsening crisis what was also used be the political parties that present anti-European stands, such as League and the Brothers of Italy leaders. They tend to present “Europe as a cage” (Pasquinucci, 2022) that is putting an external discipline on Italy.

All three parties that I am focusing on in this work, League, The Brothers of Italy and FSM, are described as Eurosceptic (Rooduijn et al., 2019). Using the definition of Euroscepticism presented by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004) three of them are presenting soft Euroscepticism (Taggart and Pirro, 2021). In 2020 Giorgia Meloni presented the Manifesto for a New Europe in which it is stated that it is needed to restore the idea on national belonging. FdI view over the future of the EU is of Europe that is created out of free and sovereign nation states instead of creating European state (Sondel-Cedarmas, 2022). Party is proposing changes within the EU that are needed in their opinion, especially decreasing the bureaucracy and the Franco-German dominance. Using Kopecký and Mudde (2002) definition FdI can be described as Eurosceptic, as they are overall supporting the integration, but not in the current form. Euroscepticism presented by Salvini’s League is based on paying attention to the ‘cultural battle’ and presenting the EU as a threat for the Italy and its citizens and culture. Party rejects federalist project across Europe as they are seen as threatening to the cultural identity. What is also worth to mention is the fact that League’s voters are those who identify themselves as ‘being Italian’ the most and the least as ‘being Europeans’ (Demos survey, 2018 in Zappettini and Maccaferri, 2021). League can be described as europragmatic according Kopecký and Mudde (2002) definition. Lastly, M5S this party is more focused on the internal

matters and the topic of the EU appeared less frequent compared to the two parties mentioned above. While talking about EU M5S is presenting the same view as in the internal policy, it means that it presents the division between the elites (political actors) and the citizens. It is also using the argument of forgotten by the politicians, this time on the EU level Italian citizens. Its main arguments are to seize the EU's caste privileges and introducing more of the direct democracy, for example European referendum (Zappettini and Maccaferri, 2021). In this case, similarly to the League M5S can be described as Eurosceptic using Kopecký and Mudde (2002) term. As we can see three of the following parties are labelled as Eurosceptic, but they differ from each other significantly. Kopecký and Mudde (2002) definition allows to better understand and point out the characteristic and differences between parties than the definition presented by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004) in which all of the 3 parties are described the same as soft Eurosceptics.

3.4 Populists in power

What I have already explained populism in Italy has a long history. It took different forms over time and is presented by parties with different ideologies. Globally populist, most of the time, struggle to maintain at the power, as it is hard to keep anti-establishment attitude being part of the establishment. Since 1994 there were 7 populist governments in Italy, 4 parties were involved in it:

- Forza Italia - four times (1994-1995, 2001-2006, 2008-2011 and 2013),
- Five Star Movement in the coalition with League (2018-2019),
- Five Star Movement (2019-2021),
- The Brothers of Italy (2022-).

What they all have in common is the charismatic leader and strongly negative attitude towards elites, especially political. Those elites are sometimes understood differently by parties. Also, the definitions of 'us' and 'them' differ amongst the parties they I will focus in following part. But what is also common is creating an enemy that is presented as the one threatening ordinary Italians, different groups are used to do so. Based on this short description, but what will be proved in the case studies of three populist parties below we can say that they all tackle the requirements to be called populist parties that are stated in the Mudde's (2004) definition of populism.

The Brothers of Italy (Fdi)

The Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia – Fdi) is the conservative – sovereign, right-wing and populist party established in 2012 (Rooduijn et al., 2019). It was founded by the former members of The People of Freedom party, that was already mentioned in this work as it was closely related with Forza Italia and its leader - Berlusconi. The people responsible for establishing Fdi were: Giorgia Meloni, Ignazio La Russa and Guido Crosetto.

Giorgia Meloni is the leader of the Fdi party since 2014 and since 2022 she is the first female Prime Minister of Italy. She was also the youngest cabinet member in Italian history, as she was only 34 when she became youth minister in Berlusconi's government (The Atlantic, 2023). She described herself in 2019: “I am Giorgia, I am a woman, I am a mother, I am Italian, I am Christian (De Giorgi et al., 2023: 108)” According to the opinion polls published in 2019 she was the most popular politician in Italy (Sondel-Cedarmas, 2022). What is more, she was also pointed out by The Times magazine in 2020, together with other selected personalities, to be one of the most influential person in the European politics for years ahead.

Fdi has close, declared by the party, ties with the post-fascist party Italian Social Movement (Movimento Sociale Italiano, MSI). The party was firstly called Fratelli d'Italia – Alleanza Nazionale to highlight its connections with National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale - AN) a post-fascist party which was the successor of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), a neo-fascist party which was active from 1945 to 1995. As we can see, the relations with neo-fascist traditions are vivid in the party's roots and identity. What is more, even the Fdi logo is referring to the neo-fascist traditions by using the three-colour flame or torch that used to be a symbol of the MSI (Sondel-Cedarmas, 2022).

This work is not focusing on the fascist in Italy but in order to understand the current situation it is crucial to briefly describe this phenomenon. The rise of fascism in Italy is linked with the Benito Mussolini and his party - National Fascist Party (Partito Nazionale Fascista, - PNF) and, generally speaking, was built on the dissatisfaction stemmed from WWI, as many other movements of this type across Europe in this time. The beliefs that were characteristic for the fascist movement in Italy were nationalism, totalitarianism and traditionalism. What was also special for the party was a dualism of being a party with anti-establishment sentiments and at the same time trying to be

practical by working in coalitions. After the WWII fascist movements still remained important on the political stage because of the existence of the Italian Social Movement party which was dissolved in 1995 which was succeeded by the National Alliance party (Gallego, 1999).

Based on that we can observe how historically closely FdI is related to the fascist movements. Even though officially the leader of the party – Meloni, is claiming that she was never a fascist she for example supported the idea of replacing the holiday that is held on the 25th April which commemorates the fall of fascism with anniversary which ‘does not divide Italians so much’, another example is the fact that she was amongst the people that strongly criticised a bill that had an aim of proclaiming fascist propaganda a crime back in 2017 (Sondel-Cedarmas, 2022). FdI is positioning itself as a more traditionalist and conservative rather than fascist compared to the previous parties like MSI and AN. Also, some parts of the programme presented by FdI suggests it link to with the fascist movements, especially the points related to nationalism.

The success of the FdI came really fast, starting with 2014 European Parliament elections, in which party won 3,7%. Next elections were the one for Italian parliament with a support of 4,3%, through the 2019 European Parliament with the score of 6,5% this time. Rapid change was visible in the regional elections in 2020 when party gained 16,2 % voters support. Last elections of 2022 ended with the victory for the FdI party, during which they attracted almost 26% support of the voters.

When it comes to the programmes of FdI and its main areas, few points can draw more attention. Under the motto of the party “God, homeland and family” there are few main principles of the FdI party. Back in 2017 Giorgia Meloni announced that she wants to create a ‘patriot movement’. In addition to that party is focusing on national sovereignty, nativism and there is also a strong focus on the principle of national tradition (Sondel- Cedarmas, 2022). But what is worth mentioning is the fact that, FdI is firmly pro-Ukrainain and is in favour of sanctions on Russia on the contrary to the party’s’ coalition partner the League. Party is also described as Eurosceptic (Taggart and Pirro, 2021) there were even suggestions about leaving the Euro during the Euro Crisis, but before 2022 elections party leaders claimed that it is not in their intention to leave EU or eurozone. As for the other international partners, relations with the United States and G7 should remain stable and Meloni presents pro-NATO posture (Paolucci, 2022).

Other important aspect of the FdI programme is the idea of reforming existing welfare system in Italy. Main points of this reform are to guarantee benefits for the weakest members of the society, lowering the retirements age to 60 years and increasing minimum pension and at same time. Another point of the programme was to restore the authority of the state by reducing bureaucracy and simplifying administration processes (Sondel-Cedarmas, 2022).

Important role in the election campaigns were devoted to the migration factor. What can be seen by looking at the FdI's programme from 2019 and 2022 is the change in this regard. The first one is really contributing to this topic and especially is focusing on the factor of religion. In the 2019 programme it was stated amongst others that the construction of places of worship and media and cultural activities funded by "fundamentalist countries" will be prohibited. There was also a strict view of who can be treated as an immigrant, it was stated that representants only of those nationalities whose representatives demonstrate a readiness to integrate and do not pose a threat in the field of security and terrorism should be called immigrants and only they should be legally allowed to enter Italy. In addition to this, they were also opposing Turkey's accession process to the EU.

In the 2022 program it has changed, first of all there was not as many attention to this topic as in the previous one. In the programme it is said that party is promoting legal immigration and is also focused on the initiatives aimed at controlling the migration flows by for example the so-called hotspots immigrants in the countries of origin with the aim of considering issuing refugee status already there. In the 2022 programme category 'them' referred to 'illegal immigrants', which is narrower group than the one targeted in 2019 programme (Fratelli d'Italia. 2022).

As for the identity, in the Manifesto for a New Europe that was presented in 2020 there is a strong focus on the idea of national belonging. Meloni links it closely with the Christianity and she claims that secularism should be seen as a threat. It is also visible in the criticism towards multiculturalism, which according to FdI is leading to the abandoning Italian and even more general European identity in favour of cosmopolitan universalism (Sondel-Cedarmas, 2022).

Some scholars suggest that FdI should not be described as "neo-traditional," but rather as a combination of "neo-traditional" and "modern-traditional", as in their

programme they try to combine traditional views with some modern elements. As an example of this, there is focus on promoting the integration of women in the labour market, advocating measures that allow a combination of work and raising children. But on the other hand, aspects like support for equal pay for equal work is missing. As for the traditionalist view, FdI is supporting traditional and conservative roles in the family (De Giorgi et al., 2023)

League

League is a right-wing, populist, Eurosceptic party (Rooduijn et al., 2019). It was founded in 1991 due to the merge of several movements originated in the northern Italy region. They were functioning there since 1960s, focused especially around the Venetia League. The process of merging began with the transformation of the northern federalist movements into the nationalist party (Passarelli and Tuorto, 2022). Party established itself as one the most successful parties, being amongst important political players and also being multiple times in the coalitions, especially in the Berlusconi era, while being also the oldest group in the Italian Parliament in contemporary politics in Italy (Zappettini and Maccaferri, 2021).

Important role in the unifying of the different sections of the party played Umberto Bossi, main founder of The Northern League party. During the period when he was a leader of the party there was a strong focus on the differences between north and south Italy. They emphasized those differences on the growing economic and social gap between a wealthy North and a much less developed South (Zappettini and Maccaferri, 2021). Bossi played significant role in the process of creating and shaping the party up until 2012 when he had to resign due to the corruption scandal.

The resignation of Bossi led to the short-time crisis in the party and after some period Matteo Salvini became a leader of the party. He was responsible for introducing some drastic changes regarding alliances, organisation and party guidelines (Passarelli and Tuorto, 2022). Salvini imposed new paradigm. First of all, he embraced Italian nationalism and led the party more towards right than it used to be before. Secondly, as he aimed to be a leader of national not regionalist party, he eliminated the suffix “Nord” from the name of the party. Before 2018 elections party was forcing the idea of ‘Padania’, which is an imaginary Italian macroregion that consists of everything north of Tuscany,

Marche and Umbria and it claimed for the separatists claims for this region. The party slogans changed from “North First” to “Italians First” (Passarelli and Tuorto, 2022). It changed with the elections of 2018, southerners were no longer seen as a threat, this role was played, according to the League party, by foreigners, immigrants. Those groups were blamed for almost all that is wrong, starting from the economic crisis up to increasing social insecurity (Albertazzi et al. 2018). Another thing that changed when Salvini became the leader of the League is the drastic turn into right. Previously party’s ideology was more centre oriented. Salvini has strengthened links with other populist parties in Europe and also transformed League into almost a far-right party (Passarelli and Tuorto, 2022).

Figure 3.5 League’s electoral performance in General elections (1992–2022).

Year	%
1992	8.7
1994	8.4
1996	10.1
2001	3.9
2006	4.6
2008	8.3
2013	4.1
2018	17.4
2022	8.8

Note. Own elaboration based on the: Italian Interior Ministry.

What is special while speaking about Salvini as a leader, despite the fact that he can surely be called a charismatic one, is his way of communicating with people. He is one of the most popular Italian politician on social media and he is really often using it to share his views. He is using it to shape national debate on issues that he finds important. His, often controversial, statements are quickly picked up by both, citizens and media (Albertazzi et al., 2018). Figure 3.5 is presenting League’s performance in the parliamentary elections through all the years of its existence. As it is visible League’s best result was in 2018, but in general the takeover of the party’s power by Salvini brought better results and higher support. It was mainly driven by the change of the character of

the party to more nationalist and less regionalist and also focus on certain aspects, especially connected with migration.

Even though anti-immigrant, racist and Islamophobic views were new to the party they really quickly became the main topic in the party's programme. Hostility towards minorities has been justified as it was seen as necessity to protect Italian society from uncontrolled effects of globalisation (Passarelli and Tuorto, 2022).

In the 2018 programme opposition to the immigration was the main point. They were using slogans such as “stop immigration!” and “defend Italians from the invasion”, which were especially targeted towards migrants from Islamic communities. In the rhetoric that is used by Salvini and his party he is presenting Islam as “other” and that it is a threat to “our” civilization (Cervi, 2020). Other significant other is the European Union. League is presenting the most radical anti-European stances from the parties presented in this work (Passarelli and Tuorto, 2022).

League led by Matteo Salvini, is an example of a classic right-wing populist party. Especially in the light of Mudde (2007) definition, it is led by the charismatic leader and presents a clear statements on who is ‘us’ and who is ‘them’.

Five Star Movement (FSM)

The Five Star Movement (FSM) is a populist party and is also an interesting phenomenon on Italian political stage. It is labelled as populist on The PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019). As it was stated by the founder of the party ‘the FSM is not a rightist nor a leftist phenomenon, it’s on the side of the citizens. Proudly populist (Grillo 2013)’. It is also rejecting to call itself party, politicians connected with it are rather calling it a movement.

Beppe Grillo was the founder of the movement. Previously he was a comedian, who produced shows since mid-1990s that were more and more political over time. FSM has its roots in the blog that was created by Grillo back in 2005 and is still working and publishing new materials and comments to the ongoing situations and news. It was born out of frustration with the political establishment in a country. Grillo started to post more political content and in 2009 when he decided to create a movement and start in the next elections. This movement turned into a loosely organized party that managed to win

election few years later (Font et al., 2021). Currently, since 2021, Giuseppe Conte is the leader of the party.

FSM is a party that attracted voters quite quickly. It gained attention during 2012 local elections. After that there was a success in 2013 in national elections in which the movement gained almost 26% of votes. Here there is a case of populist party that has a really high support in the first elections that they take part in, on the wave of freshness, but unlike many other parties it managed to attract people, even after few elections. The most important elections were the one in 2018, during which party received almost 33% of voters support and they managed to win elections.

Party is rejecting the traditional division on the right and left and is claiming that focus should be put on the group that is 'above' – corrupted ruling elite and 'below' - other people (Dal Zotto, 2017). Party's main discourse is based on anti-corruption and anti-establishment. By some scholar's movement is described as a left-wing populism, what makes it different from previously described, right-wing populists is the focus on anti-capitalism, social justice, pacifism, and anti-globalization topics (Varriale, 2021).

The original agenda of the party was connected with the five themes (this is why in the name there is "five stars") which are: public water, sustainable transport, sustainable development, technology, and environmentalism (Varriale, 2021). The programme evolved later, but those five themes remained crucial for the movement.

FSM is different from other populist parties mentioned in this work. Main different is based on the definition of the two basic groups for populists - the people and the elite. The group of people is described in the very general terms, with only one specific group – the one of young people (Font et al., 2021). It has almost an inclusionary character, which is limited to the 'Italians', but still remains most inclusive compared to other parties explored in this work. Also, the political manifestos are not specific and they do not possess a lot of concrete proposals. Another thing that is different for the FSM party is the non-charismatic leader. It puts FSM in the opposition to the FdI and League, because both of them have a strong position of leader. Grillo for the long time a key figure and face of the movement, other people involved in it were also communicating key messages through different channels and different voices (Zappettini and Maccaferri, 2021). When it comes to the elite, as it was already explained FSM is presenting strongly anti-establishment and anti-parliamentary views, so the main enemy is personalised as

the political actors and the whole system that is supporting it, especially media. As Grillo (2013) has stated:

“The FSM is your last chance ... We are you. We have everyone against us ... Parties, newspapers, banks, TV, free- masonry, the ECB, lobbies (Font et al., 2021: 173)”.

What is also special for the FSM is its innovative approach to the internet, even though a lot of parties and politicians are actively using it, it is FSM who was the first one to operate exclusively online. Other than that, there is a strong focus on the direct democracy in party's programme, meaning that they were using communication strategy that focuses on direct way of communication with people. Movement's social media and Grillo's blog are being used as an alternative to the mainstream media (Zappettini and Maccaferri, 2021). In general, direct democracy is a form of direct participation of citizens in democratic decision making, it is especially supported by the populist parties who see it as a matter of giving voice to the people (Freyburg, 2021)

The fact that FSM is presented as being more of the leftist party is also visible in the programme for the domestic policy, in which it focuses on the partially redistributive and quasi-socialist economic policy which aims to reduce socioeconomic inequality. When it comes to the foreign policy on the other, at the beginning party presented more strict hostile view over the European Union and to the relations with the United States. It also wanted to have a closer ties with China and Russia (Varriale, 2021). It changed after the Russian aggression on Ukraine in 2022, since when FSM is supporting EU sanctions imposed on Russia.

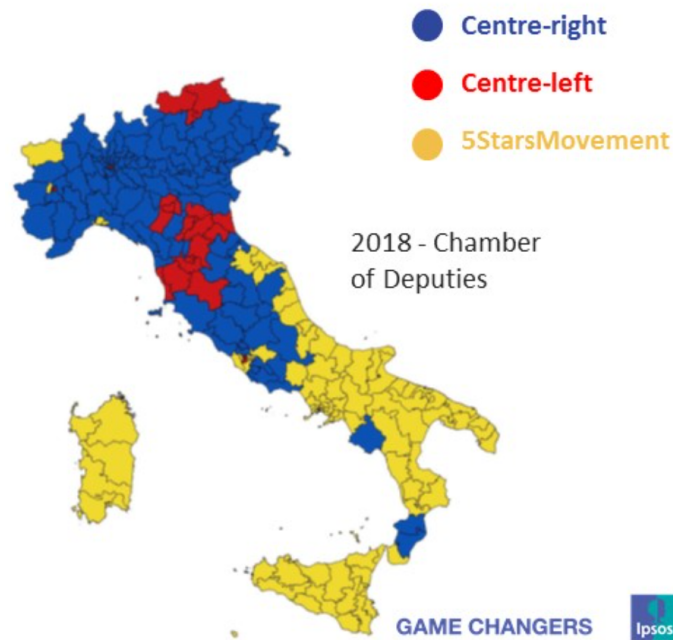
FSM government, especially in its beginnings, during the coalition with League changed an attitude towards the EU, they were one of the first parties that openly confronted Brussel, especially about budgetary matters (Varriale, 2021).

3.5 National parliamentary elections of 2018 and 2022

On the 4th of March 2018 national parliamentary election were held in Italy. After those election, Italy became the only Western European country governed exclusively by anti-establishment forces at that time with a quite high voter turnout of almost 73% (Orsina, 2019). What is special when it comes to this election is the defeat of two mainstream parties: Democratic Party (Partito democratico - PD) and Forza Italia. Those

parties played a crucial role in previous years and in the 2018 they were defeated by the rather new movement. Figure 3.6 presents share of votes in different regions across Italy. As we can see FSM dominated in the South and on islands. North on the other hand, was dominated by the Lega, which was also a surprise as this region was in the past often voting for the Forza Italia. The 2018 elections imposed so called “imperfect tripolarism” (Pinto, 2020), which means that there are three main political sides: centre-right, centre-left and FSM. With the last one that cannot be putted into either into the centre-right nor in the centre-left. This tripolarism may be seen mainly due to the fact that FSM, as an individual, is able to compete with the coalition of parties, either right or left.

Figure 3.6 2018 parliamentary elections results – geographical view.



Source: *Political Elections in Italy 2018*. <https://www.ipsos.com/en/political-elections-italy-2018>.

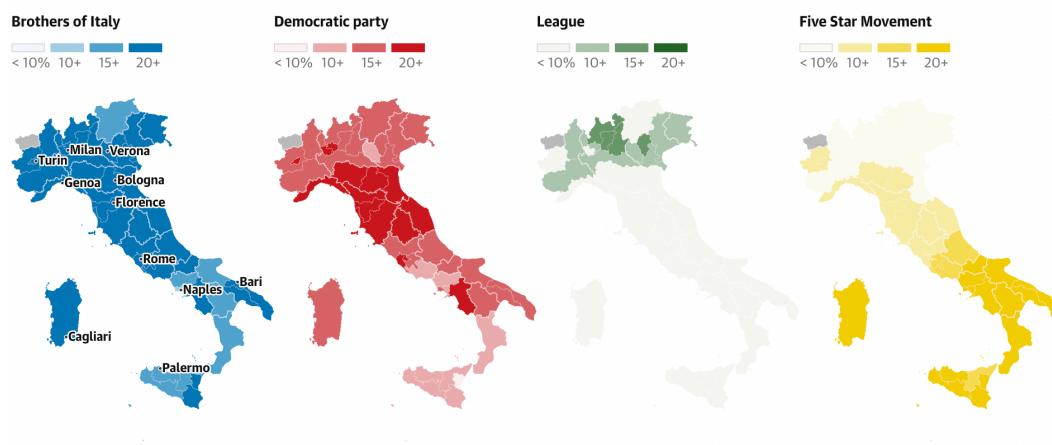
Overall, the elections, when it comes to the number of seats as an individual party, were won by the FSM which received 32,7% of voters support, it translates into 227 seats out of 630 in the Italian Chamber of Deputies. FSM has also received the biggest number of votes when it comes to the Senate, but again it was not enough to take the majority of votes, as 32,2% of voters supported FSM which translates into 112 seats out of 315 in Italian Senate. Second party was the Democratic Party with 18,8% of support and the third League with 17,4% of voters support. First Cabinet, that consisted of MS5 and the League lasted only few months. After the government crisis of 2019 second Cabinet was

created. This time FSM formed a coalition with the centre-left parties which lasted until 2021. Next government was consisted of different parties and was headed by Mario Draghi. It shows that FSM struggled to stay in power, even though it won when it comes to the amount of seats as an individual party, but it did need succeed to have the majority of seats to govern alone.

Next elections were held on the 25th of September 2022. They were held as the Draghi's government collapsed. Voter turnout was one of the lowest in Italy, as only around 64% people that are able to vote did so. 2022 election were won by the far-right FdI party, despite its sometimes extreme politics and views. Some scholars suggest that it was mainly due to their programme that consisted of strengthening the government, increasing energy security, and cutting spending – even at the expense of the environment – above issues such as immigration or taxation (Mattia, 2022).

When it comes to the results to the Chamber of Deputies, FdI won 26% of voters support which is 119 seats out of 400 (as due to the reform introduced in 2020 the number of seats was reduced to 400 from 630). Second party was the Democratic Party with 19,04% of votes and it was followed by the FSM that won 15,4% of the support. The situation looks similar when it comes to the Senate, FdI received 26% of the support.

Figure 3.7 Party vote share per region – 2022 elections.



Source: *The guardian*. 2022. *Italian election 2022: live official results*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2022/sep/25/italian-election-2022-live-official-results>.

This election brought some novelties to the Italian political scene, as the FdI's government is one the first right-wing government since 1945 (DW, 2022). The government was created out of three parties from right-wing coalition, which is led by

FdI. The other two are League and Forza Italia. Also, it brought the first female Prime Minister in Italian history. What is more FdI won among some groups that were previously won by centre-left, those groups are amongst others public-school teachers, public-sector employees and factory workers. On the other hand, as we can see on the figure 3.7 some things, such as regional differences when it comes to the parties that won in particular regions were similar to the years before. Like for example FSM having the biggest support in the South and Democratic party on the central regions. More of a surprise was the overall big and equal support across the whole Italy towards League, once regionalist party from the North now popular both in the South and in the North.

3.6 Summary

The case of populism in Italy, similar to the case of populism in Poland described in previous chapter, suits the definition presented by Mudde (2004). The group of people is defined differently by different parties, but it is distinguished. On the other hand, the group called elite is really well defined and it has its roots back in the mid 1990s. Anti-establishment and antiparliamentary attitudes that are common in Italy and have been a base for the populist movements in Italy over time. Italian voters have a rich history of supporting anti-establishment movements and populists of various ideologies like Silvio Berlusconi, the Five-Star Movement, Matteo Salvini and lately Giorgia Meloni.

Analysing Italian case, we can see that populism does not necessarily have to be in tandem with Euroscepticism, as in the example of FSM. On the other hand, FdI, but mainly League made Euroscepticism an important part of its programme. It is seen for example by describing EU as an distant institution that is threatening Italian sovereignty and is leaving Italy alone when it comes to the securing its borders in the migrant crisis.

As the main reasons standing behind the growth of populism in Italy lots of scholars pointed out the social arguments (Vercesi, 2023). Even though the support for populist parties grew after economic crisis but it was mainly due to its implications for the society. Additionally, like in many other European countries the reason for the success of the right was the failure of the left.

There is also an interesting view that was presented by Orsina in 2019 in which she stated that Italy is a precursor of the European and global political trends. She especially pointed out that the crisis of traditional politics happened as one of the first in

Italy in 1990s. It was followed by the rise of populist movements, which was also not typical in other countries of the region before, especially Berlusconi's populism provided a model for many others around the globe (Orsina, 2019).

Chapter 4

4.1 2019 European Parliament elections

After analysing Polish and Italian cases separately I will focus on the comparative analysis in which I would like to deep dive into the characteristics of populism and Euroscepticism in those two countries and highlight similarities and differences between them. But first I would like to also pay attention to the European Parliament elections and research what was the attitude towards them of the four parties that are being described in this thesis. What view did they present, to which group do they belong and how many voters were they able to reach. I will focus on the 2019 election and its campaign.

Before heading to the 2019 EP election, I would like to firstly focus on the general idea of this kind of elections and EP itself. The European Parliament originated from the Parliamentary Assembly that was established in 1951. This institution was created rather to supervise than to take real actions. After it changed multiple times it was set up in the form that we know and call it today in 1979. The first elections were held in June 1979, and members were elected across 9 member states. None of the groups had an absolute majority back then and it later become a permanent feature of European elections. Since the first elections the EP is the only directly elected EU institution. Its main goals are to represent people's interests, shape and decide on new legislation and promote human rights, both in and outside Europe (European Parliament). The latest Treaty, the Lisbon Treaty, from 2009 strengthened the European Parliament's powers by fully recognising it as a co-legislator with increased budgetary powers.

First elections were held in 1979 and since then there were 8 more with the last one in 2019. A lot of things changed over time when it comes to the EP elections with the main change fuelled by the enlargement of EU and what followed – the increased number of Members of European Parliament (MEPs). Figure 4.1 presents the results of the EP elections over time, including number of seats of the party that received the highest voters' support and voters' turnout. What we can observe looking at it, is the first of all, growing number of seats in the EP, also the fact that percentage of seats gained by winning parties has never been higher than 38% which means that in the decision-making process a lot of parties have significant importance and that those decisions are taken by different parties presenting different views. Another interesting thing is the turnout, which was

higher in the first elections and with time was getting lower and lower. Decrease is especially visible in 2004, this is the year of the biggest EU enlargement and the countries that joined EU back then lowered the average. Only in the last election of 2019 it started to grow, as before there was a negative tendency when it comes to the voters' turnout.

Figure 4.1 European Parliament elections results (1979 - 2019).

Year	Number of seats	% of seats	Party's name	Turnout
1979	410	27,3%	Socialist Group (S)	62,0%
1984	434	29,95%	Socialist Group (S)	59,0%
1989	518	34,8%	Socialist Group (S)	58,4%
1994	567	35,0%	Group of the Party of European Socialists (PSE)	56,7%
1999	626	37,1%	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats (EPP-ED)	56,7%
2004	732	36,6%	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats (EPP-ED)	49,5%
2009	736	36,0%	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (EPP)	43,0%
2014	751	29,4%	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (EPP)	42,6%
2019	751	24,2%	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (EPP)	50,7%

Source: Own elaboration based on: About Parliament. European Parliament. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>.

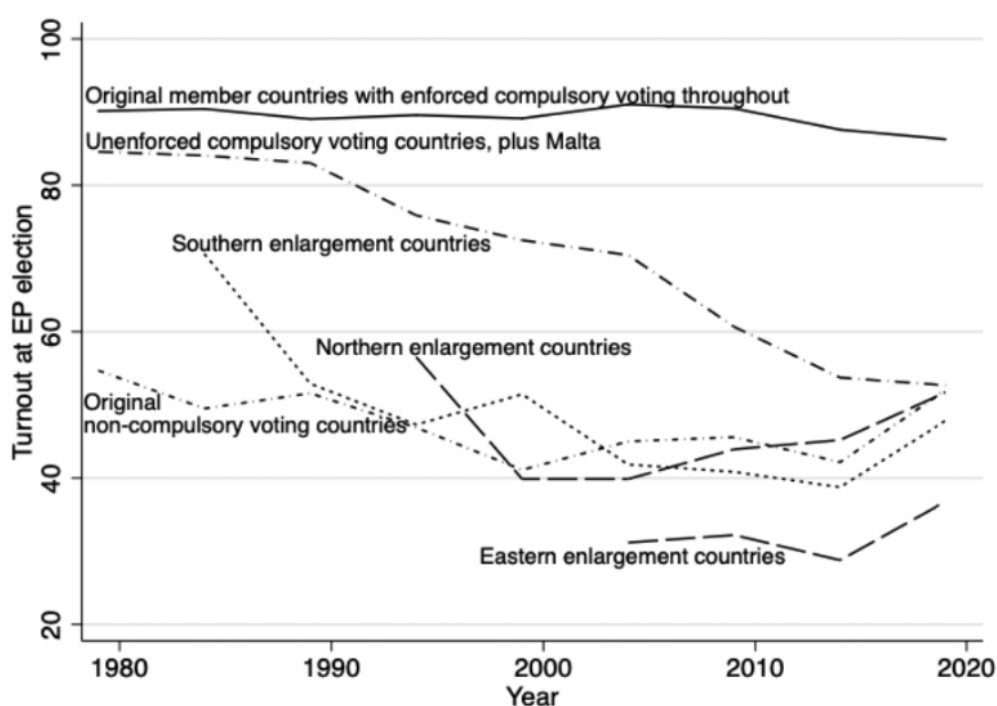
European Parliament and elections that lead to formation of it are unique and are not like any other national elections. One of the main difference is the fact that the aim of

parliamentary elections in the member states is to formulate the government that will have a leading position. There is no government formulated after EP elections, and as it is also visible in the figure 4.1 none of the party alone managed to have majority in the EP. Another thing is the fact that in most elections, especially until 2009 one, EP elections were treated as akin to a national parliamentary elections and they did not focus much on the European matters, they rather appeal as the support for the national parties and were a result of the party loyalties in the member states (De Sio et al., 2019). Some scholars claim that since the 2014 EP elections they started to be more focused on Europe. It does not necessary mean that national interest stopped to play a role in the elections, as the elections still were the reflection of the political concerns in member states but it rather mean that European concerns started to be visible as well (De Sio et al., 2019).

There is even a theory, presented by the Reif and Schmitt (1980), called Second Order Election (SOE) that is trying to explain this phenomenon. It is worth to add that EP elections differ significantly from other types of SEO, for example from local elections, as the EP ones are held on the national level – as the first order elections such as national parliamentary. This theory is tested after each of the EP elections and so far, it has always confirmed its effectiveness (De Sio et al., 2019). Some other scholars on the other hand, highlights that even though SOE theory is still relevant, we should not forget that the EP has changed drastically since the first elections of 1979. It went a long way from being merely a representative body, with little power to the institution that is a co-legislator with its budget and stronger real power (Ehin and Talving, 2021). Nevertheless, SOE theory says that because EP elections do not determine political leadership, there is less at stake for both, political actors, parties in general and voters (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). They are also treated as a way to show support or dissatisfaction towards national parties, as voters' primary focus is based on the national issues, rather than focusing on the actual programme of the EP political groups (Ehin and Talving, 2021). While speaking about the SOE theory it is important to mention, as this is often used as an argument, voter turnout. In most cases throughout the years EP elections were characterized by a lower voter's turnout than elections to the national parliaments. Differences between member states when it comes to voter's turnout in national elections are rather big, that is why it may be not that straightforward to base only on the average European turnouts to the EP. Figure 4.2 shows different patterns of voting turnout in different group of countries. As

for the group of unenforced compulsory voting it consists of Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Malta (De Sio et al., 2019). What is clearly observable is the low turnout of the countries from the Eastern European region, those of the 2004 enlargement. The patterns of certain groups of countries differ significantly from each other, but they have in common the peak in first EP elections that was followed by the decrease of the turnout. Across almost all of the groups it started to change with 2019 elections, when the trend started to increase due to different kind of reasons, that will be described later.

Figure 4.2 Turnout by different groups of EP-voting countries over time.



Source: De Sio, L., Franklin, M., and Russo, L. 2019. *The European Parliament Elections of 2019*: 60.

EP elections of 2019 were different than others before in some aspects. One of this aspect is again the turnout. For the first time in five out of twenty-eight countries the turnout in the EP elections were higher than in national elections, those countries were: Belgium, France, Greece, Lithuania and Romania. The average difference of all of the member states between turnout in the EP and national elections in 2019 was 17,7, what despite the few exceptions still confirms the relevance of the SOE theory (Ehin and Talving, 2021). Another thing worth mentioning while speaking about 2019 EP election is the fact that they were described by many commentators and also scholars as the battle over Europe's future (Treib, 2021).

The 2019 European Parliament election were held between 23 and 26 May 2019. The parliament that was established as a result of this election consists of 7 groups and one formation of non-attached Members. Figure 4.3 presents the share of seats that each of the group received. European People's Party (EPP) received the biggest support and secured 182 seats in the EP. They can be divided into two main blocs, one that is pro-EU, as they believe in the benefits of deeper integration and they present the view of 'ever closer union' (Steven and Szczerbiak, 2022) with 518 seats all together. The second one that is more Eurosceptic with 176 seats. This bloc is more diversified, as there are both, hard and soft Eurosceptic groups with some of them opposing EU in general and some of them opposing only some parts of it with no desire to leave the EU, rather focus on just an economic integration and creating union of sovereign national states. In the first bloc there are groups like (De Sio et al., 2019):

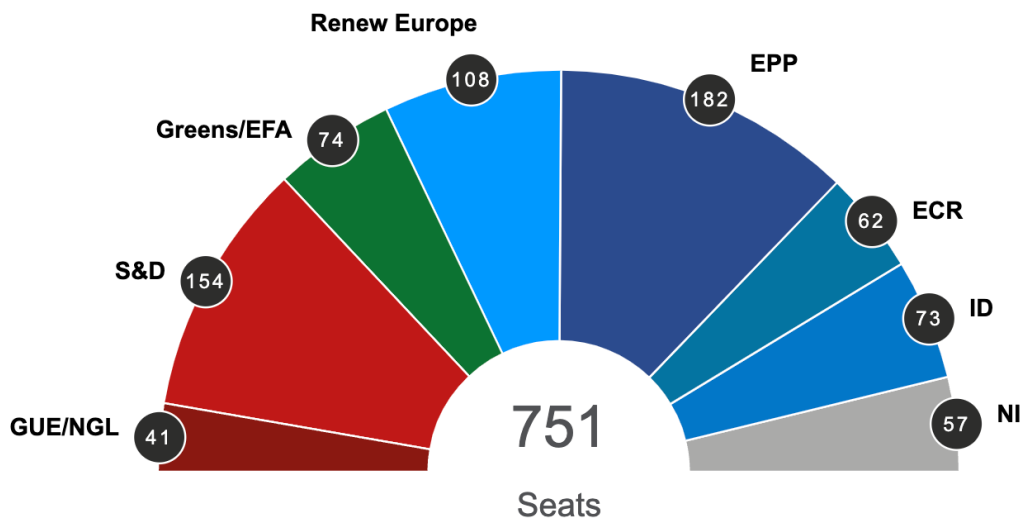
- European People's Party (EPP), a centre-right group,
- Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), a centre-left group,
- Renew Europe, a centre and liberal group,
- Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) a centre-left group.

On the other side, the group of Eurosceptic parties which are:

- Identity and Democracy Group (ID), a right-wing group,
- European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), a right-wing group,
- Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL (the Left) a left-wing group.

Based on the results presented in the Figure 4.3 it can be marked that despite the events like Brexit and growing populism and Euroscepticism across Europe and increasing number of populists in power in the EP elections majority was won by the pro-EU groups. Populist and Eurosceptics gained quite a lot of seats in the EP during 2019 elections, but not as much as it was forecasted by some scholars or commentators and polls. Also, not as much as pro-EU forces feared, this fear was a part of the programme of those parties, presenting populists as a threat to the democracy and basic EU values and principles. Even though those pro-EU groups were in majority, they were also more fragmented than before which makes it more difficult while processing some legislatives. Creating majority in such a fragmented parliament is harder.

Figure 4.315 European Parliament 2019 - 2024.



Source: De Sio, L., Franklin, M., and Russo, L. 2019. *The European Parliament Elections of 2019*: 60.

Also, the fact that Eurosceptic parties, just looking at the numbers, might have not gain that much of the voters support, but when we will deep dive into it we can say that those 176 seats out of 751 is occupied by MEPs that are opposing, in most cases, current state of the EU and putting it in this perspective makes it an interesting point while thinking about the future of Europe. Around 23,4% of the EP have a sceptic view of the EU and want to change it.

4.2 2019 European Parliament elections – Poland

Poland has 51 seats in the EP. While looking at the seats by political groups: 26 seats were won by the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), 17 by the European People's Party Group (EPP) and 8 by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D). What was special for this election was the highest turnout in the history of EP elections in Poland, 45,7% of those who could vote decided to do so. It was 22,3% higher turnout than it was 5 years ago, the turnout is still lower than the European average but it does not change the fact that a lot of people decided to go and vote in the EP elections, way more than it used to be in the past. The main reason standing behind it is politicizing those elections, political conflict that is dividing society is also strongly mobilizing voters. High turnout was more of the result of domestic politics and polarization of the society than it was a real concern about

European matters. 2019 EP election in Poland were a typical example of the SOE – used as a tool in domestic politics. They were seen as a testing ground before 2019 parliamentary elections that were held few months later (Haßler et al., 2021).

Law and Justice (PiS)

Party's result looking at the results by national party in the 2019 EP election equaled 45,4% and was the highest one. PiS is a part of ECR in the EP. PiS presents a peculiar case of Euroscepticism, on the one hand it advocates for the Poland's membership in the EU and also it supports the expansion of EU, especially more to the East. At the same time, it is a member of ECR, which supports drastic reforms of the EU and which can also be described as confederative and supporting the view of Europe as a union of nation, opposing European federalism. As Poland can be characterized as a country with one of the highest support for the EU PiS has presented itself as a pro-EU party at the same time some of its politicians presented statements that were decreasing the significance of the EU for Poland. The result of EP election came as a surprise, as party made some controversial decisions since 2015, when they won the national parliamentary elections. Some of those decisions were accused of violating the constitution and being anti-democratic. There is a strong division between urban and rural electorate in Poland, voting for PiS is associated with the electorate that is coming from the rural areas and also with lower education level and being older. This the group that PiS managed to mobilize to vote during the 2019 EP election as they were not participating in the previous EP elections in such a number as in the 2019 one. Victory of PiS is said to be a result of mobilizing this group of people (De Sio et al., 2019).

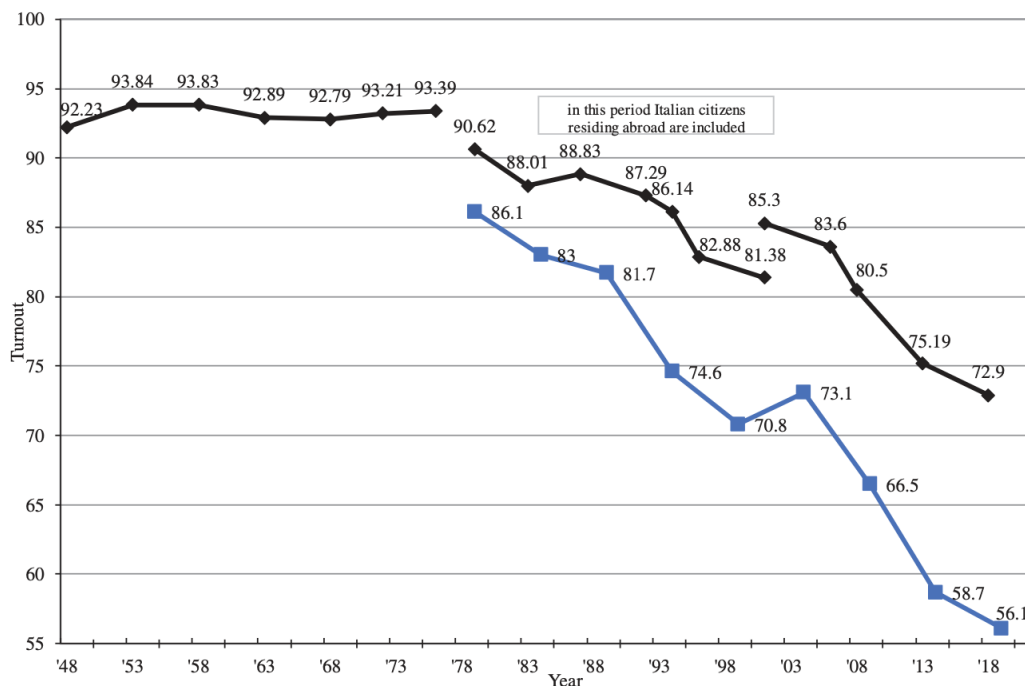
4.3 2019 European Parliament elections – Italy

Italy has 73 seats in the EP. During the 2019 elections 28 seats were won by the Identity and Democracy (ID) group, 19 by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D), 14 by non-attached Members, 7 by Group of the European People's Party (EPP) and 5 by European Conservatives and Reformists Group ECR (ECR). The majority of votes coming from Italy were supporting Eurosceptic EP groups, which was something new for this country as elections before were most of the time won by pro-EU groups. Populist parties, all

together received a support of 68,4%, which is a second highest score of populist parties in this elections. Higher result, of 71,2% was only in Hungary (Mudde, 2021). Based on that it can be observed that Italy is making a shift towards right on the political stage. As in many other countries, what is also explained by the SOE theory, domestic politics is influencing the EP election. In Italian case it was seen by looking at the low result of the Democratic Party which is a part of S&D group in the EP. And the S&D group lost in Italy with the Eurosceptic ID group (De Sio et al., 2019).

Electoral campaign before 2019 EP elections focused on the future of the EU, and issues related with migration policy like management of migrants and asylum seekers and also social matters like unemployment and redistribution.

Figure 4.4 Turnout at European and parliamentary elections in Italy, 1948–2019.



Source: Chiaramonte, A., De Sio, L. and Emanuele, V. 2020 Salvini's success and the collapse of the Five-star Movement: The European elections of 2019, *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 12(2): 144.

2019 EP election in Italy were not in line with the general trend of increasing the turnout. As we can see on the Figure 4.4, which presents turnout at both, European a national parliamentary election between 1948 and 2019, there is a decrease in the amount of people taking part in elections. In Italy it has decreased compared to the 2014 EP election, only by the 2,6% but the trend is contrasting with the European trend. Also, there is big difference between turnout while comparing national parliament elections with EP

elections, it is a general thing, already explained with the SOE theory above, but in Italy we can observe that the differences are intensifying.

Brothers of Italy (FdI)

Party's result in the 2019 EP election was not high, as it won 5 seats. FdI is a part of a centre-right, presenting eurorealism ECR group in the EP. During the campaign FdI main proposals included tax reduction and abandoning austerity measures. They also supported idea of military controls at the external EU borders in order to fight with migration (De Sio et al., 2019). Its result in the 2019 EP elections was described as a good performance, mainly, due to the fact that it managed to increase the electoral support compared to both, 2018 national parliamentary election and also 2014 EP election during which it did not succeed to exceed the 4% threshold. Additionally, there were only two parties in Italy that managed to increase its support compared to the 2018 elections, both in terms of percentage but also in terms of numbers of votes, one of them is FdI and the other one is League (Chiaramonte et al. 2020). FdI was the only party in Italy that discussed EU policies during the campaign, it presented nationalist and Eurosceptic stances with the aim of appealing to the anti-EU voters (Haßler et al., 2021).

League

By looking at the results from national parties' perspective League received the biggest support of 34,3%, what means that it won 28 seats in the EP. Salvini's party is a part of ID group. League is said to be the biggest winner of the EP election in Italy. Some scholars claim that this success is mainly due to the strategy of "nationalization" adopted by Salvini (Chiaramonte et al. 2020). The party that used to gather and claim to represent northern regions of Italy, during the 2019 EP election succeeded to increase its vote share in the South, even though FSM still was the most popular party in that region the high result of League came as a surprise for many and allowed it to achieve such a high result in those election (Chiaramonte et al. 2020). During the campaign it supported sovereignty of nation states and focusing on the economic cooperation rather than on political one (De Sio et al., 2019). When it comes to the topic that were discussed during the campaign, there were not really different from the ones discussed during the 2018 electoral

campaign. Dealing with migration and focusing on domestic affairs were main topics presented by League (Haßler et al., 2021).

Five Star Movement (FSM)

Party was the third one by looking at the results by national parties. It received 17,1% support. The 2019 EP election were not a success for the FSM party, as they lost half of its support comparing to the election that was held just one year before, during which party gained the biggest amount of seats in Italian parliament and created a government together with League. FSM is not a part of any EP group that is why all of the 14 seats that party secured contributed to the non-attached Members. During the campaign it focused on the welfare issues, such as implementing EU minimum wage system, expanding welfare provisions and generally stronger EU power on order to bring EU closer to its citizens (De Sio et al., 2019). This is the example of the party that is populist but does not present a Eurosceptic approach.

4.4 Chosen European Parliament Groups – ECR and ID

Parties that I am focusing on in this thesis are part of two EP groups: European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) and Identity and Democracy Group (ID). The first one gathers 20 national based parties, amongst them there are Italian FdI and Polish PiS. League on the other hand is a part of ID group, which gathers 8 national based parties.

ECR is a centre-right political group, established in 2009 by the British Conservatives. In the current EP it is represented by 66 MEPs and is 6th when looking at the number of seats. Its main goal is to reform the EU and deliver a common sense, claiming that it needs a new direction. Their actions are based on, as they call it, Eurorealism – basically they want EU to have a new shape and new direction. Their Eurorealism is based on the antipathy towards ‘ever closer union’ but, at the same time, they are in favour of the more economic aspects of European integration. First thing is restoring the sovereignty of nations, which means taking some of the power form EU institutions and giving it back to the national governments. In their opinion EU has overreached, it became too ambitious, too centralised and out of touch with its citizens. They opt for looser confederal association of nation-states who choose to work together

in areas where they have common interests instead of closer Union (ECR, 2021). Another important thing is that ECR advocates for Atlanticism which focuses on an international order with the main role of USA in geo-politics and NATO when it comes to the international relations and security. This view is based on the importance of co-operation with USA and NATO rather than creating a European 'super-state'. Currently PiS has the biggest number of MEPs in the ECR group, also the leader of this group comes from PiS party -Ryszard Legutko. Second biggest national party is Italian FdI. What is more, ECR has the largest number of Central and Eastern European Country (CEEC) MEPs when comparing with other groups in the 2019-2024 EP, with the biggest number coming from Poland (Steven and Szczerbiak, 2022).

ID group was established in 2019 and is a successor of the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) group. ID was created under the leadership of Matteo Salvini from League and Marine Le Pen from the Rassemblement National, they have joined forces with other anti-immigration parties across Europe and created the biggest far-right group in the European Parliament. Currently it is a 5th largest group in EP while looking at the number of seats – with 73 seats. League and Rassemblement National have the biggest number of seats in the ID and this group is led by Marco Zanni from League. ID presents the most Eurosceptic view from all of the others groups of EP and is a far-right formation. First of all, it claims the need of restoring countries sovereignty, that they claim EU has taken from them. They oppose to transfer competences to the EU. Another key priority for the ID is the protection of the EU's external borders. This group is created by national parties that present anti-immigrant attitudes, especially the two leading parties of the group – League and Rassemblement National.

The relation between those two groups is complicated, despite that they both are Eurosceptic and right-wing they differ in some crucial aspects, such as the view over EU and the direction of integration and relations with Russia. ECR presents soft Euroscepticism with the idea of reforming EU while ID is more of a hard Eurosceptic group. When it comes to relations with Russia, ID used to have rather warm ties with Kremlin, through Salvini and Le Pen. ECR, where Polish PiS is the biggest party, sees Russia as a threat for the whole Europe.

4.5 Populism – comparison

When it comes to populism, as it was already explained, for the purpose of this work I am using the definition presented by Mudde (2004): “populism is an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people (Mudde, 2004: 543)”. It is a general definition and by looking at the different party cases we can see that it can take different forms. It depends first of all, on the country and political situation in which it is operating. One of the most important thing in this matter is a historical background and the story of political system. Comparison of the two cases – Poland and Italy show that it is crucial when it comes to the grow of populist parties. Reasons behind the grow of populism are also different between those two countries. This work especially contributes to the comparison of two cases that are not often compared, as the first country – Poland is a representant of the Central and Eastern Europe while the other example of Italy is counted as a Western Europe country. Most of the comparisons, while speaking about populism are based on the countries from one of this group. This work aims to provide answers if the comparison can be also made between countries that have more differences between each other.

In Poland raise of populism was based mainly on the cultural and social dimension, in Italy on the other hand, factors that were important were social and economic. This can be explained based on the situation in those two countries, as Italy was more impacted by the economic crisis of 2008 and its effects are still there, especially seen by looking at the unemployment rate, which generates the biggest dissatisfaction amongst Italians. Poland was not impacted that much by it, it was one of the countries that managed to avoid severe consequences of this crisis.

In Poland populist parties existed in the years between 1989 and 2015 but they did not play a significant role back then. On the other hand, in Italy populist parties were in power and were popular since 1990s. The story of populism differs significantly between those two countries but it led to the populist right-wing parties gaining power in similar time, 2015 in Poland and 2018 in Italy, where it was more of a comeback of populist parties after some years of the government that was formulated by the Democratic Party.

Crises are playing important role in shaping populist attitudes within societies and they are a main fuel for the populist parties to grow, but they are not main causes rather a catalyst (Mudde, 2021). Migrant crisis of 2015 resulted in the growth populism in both countries even though it impacted them in a drastically different way. Poland did not experience the inflow of migrants directly, Italy on contrary was one of the most impacted in terms of that. What is common in this case is presenting migrants as a threat to the culture. Both Poland and Italy are predominantly catholic countries where religion is an important aspect of the daily life. Knowing that, populist parties used those sentiments and created the view of migrants that are coming to Europe who will lead to changing the core principles and way of living. Using the strategy that is based on pointing out ‘the otherness’ of certain groups is definitely not new, but it was intensified by the populist parties.

As some scholars pointed out, populists in power often lead to establishing an illiberal order (Pappas, 2019). While pointing out similarities between Poland and Italian case we can see that it is true. In both cases the WJP Rule of Law Index, which is an annual report evaluating situation in the countries all around the globe, taking under consideration four principles such as: accountability of the public and private actors under the law, just law, open government and accessible and impartial justice. The newest one, presented in 2022, shows that two countries that I am focusing on have a rather low score compared to other EU countries - Italy is ranked on the 20th place comparing to the EU countries and Poland on the 22nd (WJP, 2022). This is just an example of illiberal change in the countries that are ruled by the populist parties. But what can also be observed is the fact that the drop of rule of law and in general in democratic attitudes is more visible in Poland than in Italy, it may be mostly due to the fact that populist parties were already in power before for a long time in Italy, in Poland it is newer phenomenon.

In addition to that what is similar between Polish and Italian case is the charismatic leader. In PiS it is Jarosław Kaczyński, in FdI Gerogia Meloni and in League Matteo Salvini. FSM is a bit of a different example, as its founder Bappe Grillo is not a leader of the party currently, but he was the one responsible for the establishing and growing popularity of this party.

The most important factors while speaking about populism is the distinction between two groups – people and elite. The group of people in the cases of Poland and

Italy is characterized in a way that we can find some similarities between them, especially while discussing PiS, FdI and League. FSM differs from those three, as it presents more of the inclusionary populism and does not focus that much on this group, it just refers to the group of 'Italians'. The first three parties are stricter in establishing group of people, it is mostly due to their nationalist attitudes. The people they claim to represent are citizens of the country, most of the time there is also a focus on the religion and culture.

The elite on the other hand, is a broader topic. A lot of groups are excluded from the group of people, based on different features. In all the cases of parties described in this work parties that are in the opposition are called the elite. The anti-establishment is visible in the parties' programmes and statements of the main politicians. Another actor that is presented as a threat, that is why it is called elite is EU, with its bureaucracy and being out of touch from people. There are also other groups excluded from the group of people, mainly the ones of the different background, especially cultural and the ones that are of the different religion. Here we can see more differences between Poland and Italy, as the exclusion of certain group of people is based on the specifics of given country. In Poland for example there is also a strong focus on LGBTQ+ community. PiS is creating a view that shows this group as a threat to the polish identity. In general, in Poland, more than in Italy, there is a focus on identity politics and it plays an important role in shaping a political discourse.

Comparing Polish and Italian case shows that there is no common reason standing behind the grow of populism, there are sets of different factors influencing given country, and by looking at the Italian case we can also see that even within one country there can be different populist parties, focused on different aspects. Of course, there are some similarities, like distinguishing group of people from the group of elite by creating the enemies in certain, chosen groups. This is where the similarities end most of the time. This is also a reason why Mudde's (2004) definition of populism is spread worldwide, as it allows to name the phenomenon and point out which parties are and which parties are not populists. On the other hand, it does not pay much of the attention to the reasons standing behind popularity of populism and it does not help us to understand why it occurs.

Overall, we can observe both, differences and similarities between Polish and Italian populism. It is more of the response to the current situation in country, even

concerning the parties that managed to stay in power, than a common pattern while thinking about the success of populists. Certain criteria are the same while looking at the successful populist parties but there are more differences. In my opinion the most important role is played by the leader of the party, the better he or she is in creating the programme that responds to the needs of the society the more successful the party is. What all of the parties that are described in this thesis have in common in my opinion is the good understanding of the ongoing situation and the ability to provide or just address issues that people are struggling with the most at given time.

4.6 Euroscepticism – comparison

While talking about populism and Euroscepticism there is a tendency to assume that they tend to be linked with each other and that one cannot exist without the other one. In reality it is not true, even though it is really common to observe it together, like in cases of Polish PiS and Italian League we can also find examples of populist parties that do not have a Eurosceptic approach, like Italian FSM.

As we can see looking at the Polish and Italian cases the support towards EU expressed by the society in the polls is not a sufficient explanation of the level of Euroscepticism in the given country. Poland is a country with one of the highest supports towards EU but it has an openly Eurosceptic government. Italians on the other hand, are not so enthusiastic when it comes to the attitude towards EU compared to Poland and it also has a Eurosceptic government.

The most important factor influencing Euroscepticism relates to politicizing this topic. In both cases we can see that EU is used during the campaigns to position itself against it. Almost all of the examples presented in this thesis, despite FSM, presents Eurosceptic views and they are using it especially to distinguish the people they claim to present from others. It is used by the parties that are also nationalist parties and are presenting EU as a supra-national institution, that is out of touch from ‘ordinary people’ and should give back the sovereignty that, they claim, was taken away from the people. We can see it by looking at the parties describe in this work: PiS, FdI and League. All of them are members of the Eurosceptic groups in the European Parliament.

In 2021 there were two important events concerning Euroscepticism in Europe, firstly in July that year there was a summit organized by the right-wing parties from across

Europe in order to sign a joint statement on the future of Europe. It was signed by the leaders of Polish PiS, Italian League, French Rassemblement National and Hungarian Fidesz amongst all. Main point of this declaration was the call for reform of EU. It should be done through ending the domination of the strongest member states that according to them want to impose rules and ideologies to other countries. Second event took place in December the same year and it was a Warsaw summit. Again, it was a meeting of Eurosceptic parties like Polish Law and Justice, Italian League, Hungarian Fidesz, Spanish VOX and Italian Brothers of Italy. During this event parties declared that they would act to stop ‘the disturbing idea of creating a Europe governed by a self-appointed elite’ (Styczyńska, 2022). It was especially interesting, as it was a meeting of the representatives of the two Eurosceptic groups of European Parliament that were not agreeing on certain aspects of each other, especially they argued on the ID’s relations with Russia.

Overall, even though populism does not necessarily have to be linked with populism, it often is. But more accurate will be saying that Euroscepticism is linked more with nationalism and because a lot of populist parties are also nationalist ones, they tend to be Eurosceptic as well. It is especially visible by looking at the example of FSM, they are not paying much attention to the matter of national identity and they also are not presenting Eurosceptic view as much as other parties described in this thesis.

To sum it up, Euroscepticism is often used by the populist parties as one of the tools to attract voters. Some of the scholars claim that both radical left and right parties are more likely to be Eurosceptic than more centrist parties (Rooduijn and Kessel, 2019). Additionally, what we can observe by looking at the Polish and Italian case, what is also common outcome of populist in power is the polarization of the society. Also, in both cases the political axis moved more to the right after the success of populist parties, as all of the parties presented in this thesis are right-wing. Other mainstream parties existing in those countries moved more to the right with their programs.

There are still a lot of questions about the future of populist parties, especially populist in power. The main question is if the polarization that is a result of actions taken by those parties will be a permanent factor in contemporary politics. At the EU level Eurosceptic parties that tend to be also populist lost during the 2019 elections, the next test will be during the 2024 elections, if they will manage to increase number of seats that

they occupy or not. On the other hand, in both countries elections to the national parliaments were taking place after EP election of 2019 and in both cases populist parties won. The relation between populism and Euroscepticism is visible more during national election during which EU is presented as a threat or as a institution that is distancing itself from people. During EP election the negative stances are hidden and the parties are focused on proposing reforms than to present negative stances against EU, as they tend to do during campaigns to the national parliaments.

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List of figures

Figure 1.1 Number of Countries with Populism in Power, 1990–2018.-----	22
Figure 1.2 The number of populists in power (1990-2023). -----	23
Figure 1.3 Typology of party positions in Europe. -----	27
Figure 2.1 Law and Justice results in national and voivodship-level parliamentary elections. -----	39
Figure 2.2 Results of Polish parliamentary election in 2015 and 2019 (in %). -----	46
Figure 3.1 Results of 2022 parliamentary elections by region. Vote share by coalition (in %). -----	57
Figure 3.2 Views of the European union over time (% who have a favourable opinion of the EU).-----	59
Figure 3.3 Italian’s trust in the EU. -----	60
Figure 3.4 European’s trust in the EU. -----	60
Figure 3.5 League’s electoral performance in General elections (1992–2022).-----	67
Figure 3.6 2018 parliamentary elections results – geographical view. -----	71
Figure 3.7 Party vote share per region – 2022 elections. -----	72
Figure 4.1 European Parliament elections results (1979 - 2019). -----	76
Figure 4.2 Turnout by different groups of EP-voting countries over time. -----	78
Figure 4.3 European Parliament 2019 - 2024. -----	80
Figure 4.4 Turnout at European and parliamentary elections in Italy, 1948–2019.----	82