

THE FORMATION, OPTIONALITY AND PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF POPULISM IN THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL-EASTERN AT THE BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL THEORIZATIONS AND EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

The article analyzes the peculiarities of the formation, optionality and prospects for the development of populism in the countries of Central-Eastern Europe at the background of political theorizations and the European experience. This is done in view of the fact that populism is being talked about both theoretically and practically, as well as in a regional context, in particular in the context of certain samples of countries and even parts of the world. It is revealed that the current understanding of populism is quite blurred by both regional and national specifics, as well as by the conditions in which political actors in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe appeal to or modify the principles and postulates that are classically associated with the phenomenon of populism in political theory and practice, at least in European one. Having studied the options of populism in the countries of the region, it is found that it only partially repeats the attributes of populism in the all-European context, as well as it (especially in the current political situation in the world) is not and cannot be a short-term phenomenon without a future.

Keywords: democracy, populism, parties, countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

POWSTAWANIE, OPCJONALNOŚĆ/MOŻLIWOŚCI I PERSPEKTYWY ROZWOJU POPULIZMU W KRAJACH EUROPY ŚRODKOWO-WSCHODNIEJ NA TLE TEORII POLITYCZNYCH I DOŚWIADCZEŃ EUROPEJSKICH

Artykuł analizuje i charakteryzuje powstawanie, opcjonalność i perspektywy rozwoju populizmu w krajach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej na tle teorii politycznych i doświadczeń europejskich. Dokonuje się to w związku z faktem, że o populizmie mówi się zarówno teoretycznie, jak i praktycznie, a także w kontekście regionalnym, w szczególności w kontekście pewnych przykładów państw, a nawet części świata. Ujawnia się, że obecne rozumienie populizmu jest dość rozmyte zarówno przez specyfikę regionalną i narodową, jak i przez warunki, w jakich aktorzy polityczni w krajach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej odwołują się do zasad i postulatów klasycznie kojarzonych ze zjawiskiem populizmu w teorii i praktyce politycznej, przynajmniej europejskiej, lub je modyfikują. Po zbadaniu wariantów populizmu w krajach regionu stwierdza

się, że tylko częściowo powtarza on atrybuty populizmu w kontekście ogólnoeuropejskim, jak również (zwłaszcza w obecnej sytuacji politycznej na świecie) nie jest i nie może być zjawiskiem krótkotrwałym, bez przyszłości.

Słowa kluczowe: demokracja, populizm, partie, kraje Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej.

СТАНОВЛЕННЯ, ОПЦІОНАЛ І ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ РОЗВИТКУ ПОПУЛІЗМУ В КРАЇНАХ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНО-СХІДНОЇ ЄВРОПИ НА ТЛІ ПОЛІТИЧНИХ ТЕОРЕТИЗАЦІЙ І ЗАГАЛЬНОЄВРОПЕЙСЬКОГО ДОСВІДУ

У статті проаналізовано особливості становлення, опціонал і перспективи розвитку популізму в країнах Центрально-Східної Європи на тлі політичних теоретизацій і загальноєвропейського досвіду. Це зроблено з огляду на те, що сьогодні про популізм говорять і загальнотеоретично чи загальнопрактично, і в регіональній прив'язці, зокрема у контексті тих чи інших вибірок країн і навіть частин світу. Виявлено, що поточне розуміння популізму доволі розмите як регіональною чи національною специфікою, так і умовами, в яких політичні актори в країнах Центрально-Східної Європи апелюють чи модифікують принципи та постулати, які класично асоціюються з феноменом популізму у політичній теорії і практиці, принаймні загальноєвропейській. Дослідивши опції популізму в країнах регіону, виявлено, що він лише частково повторює атрибути популізму в загальноєвропейському контексті, а також що він, особливо в поточній політичній ситуації у світі, не є і не може бути короткостроковим явищем без майбутнього.

Ключові слова: демократія, популізм, партії, країни Центрально-Східної Європи.

Populism has long since become the outline of political theorizing and political practice in almost every country and in every part and region of the world. Moreover, such a statement is considered valid both currently and in retrospect, since this phenomenon is being resorted to more and more effectively – due to which populism is diversifying, in particular regionally and nationally and has also been resorted to historically, including at the end of the 19th century – in the first half 20th century. Hence, today populism is often talked about in general theoretical or general practical terms, and in a regional context, in particular in the context of certain samples of countries and even parts of the world. Taking this into account, populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe, which only a few decades ago democratized and became part of the united Europe, needs special attention, in particular, on the subject of what is understood in them both theoretically and practically, and regionally or even nationally

populism, as well as what it is and is not, and therefore in what forms it can be expressed. The stated problem is quite relevant, since the current understanding of populism is rather blurred by both regional and national specifics, as well as the conditions in which political actors, including in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe, appeal to or modify the principles and postulates that are classically associated with the phenomenon of populism in political theory and practice, at least pan-European, etc.

In general theoretically (as well as in general on the example of European countries and other parts of the world) defined problems of understanding what populism is and is not, such scientists as J. Abromeit, B. Chesterton, G. Marotta and Y. Norman¹, M. Berezin², H.-G. Betz and S. Immerfall³, R. Brubaker⁴, M. Canovan⁵, C. DelaTorre⁶, P. Diehl⁷, R. Jansen⁸, J. Judis⁹, H. Kriesi¹⁰, E. Laclau¹¹, P. Mair¹², B. Moffitt¹³, C. Mudde¹⁴, J.-W. Müller¹⁵, P. Schmitter¹⁶, P. Taggart¹⁷, N. Urbinati¹⁸ and many others. At the same time, the understanding of populism, as mentioned above, is often determined by regional and national specificities, which, on the example of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, is covered in the works of such scientists

¹ Abromeit J., Chesterton B., Marotta G., Norman Y., *Transformations of populism in Europe and the Americas: History and recent tendencies*, Wyd. Bloomsbury Academic 2015

² Berezin M., *Illiberal politics in neoliberal times: Culture, security and populism in the new Europe*, Wyd. Cambridge UP 2009.

³ Betz H.-G., *Radical right-wing populism in Western Europe*, Wyd. St. Martin's Press 1994.; Betz H., Immerfall S., *The New Politics of the Right. Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*, Wyd. St. Martin's Press 1998.

⁴ Brubaker R., Between nationalism and civilizationism: The European populist moment in comparative perspective, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2017, vol 40, nr. 8, s. 1191-1226.; Brubaker R., Why populism?, *Theory and Society* 2017, vol 46, s. 357-385.

⁵ Canovan M., "People", politicians and populism, *Government and Opposition* 1984, vol 19, nr. 3, s. 312-327.; Canovan M., *Populism*, Wyd. Junction Books 1981.; Canovan M., Taking politics to the people: Populism as the ideology of democracy, [w:] Mény Y., Sured Y. (eds.), *Democracies and the populist challenge*, Wyd. Palgrave Macmillan 2002, s. 25-44.; Canovan M., *The People*, Wyd. Polity Press 2005.; Canovan M., Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy, *Political Studies* 1999, vol 47, nr. 1, s. 2-16.

⁶ De la Torre C., The Ambiguous Meanings of Latin American Populisms, *Social Research* 1992, vol 59, nr. 2, s. 385-414.

⁷ Diehl P., Die Komplexität des Populismus: ein Plädoyer für ein mehrdimensionales und graduelles Konzept, *Totalitarismus und Demokratie* 2011, vol 8, nr. 2, s. 273-291.; Diehl P., Populismus, Antipolitik, Politainment, *Berliner Debatte Initial* 2011, vol 22, nr. 1, s. 27-39.

⁸ Jansen R., Populist mobilization: a new theoretical approach to populism, *Sociological Theory* 2011, vol 29, nr. 2, s. 75-96.

⁹ Judis J., *The populist explosion: How the great recession transformed American and European politics*, Wyd. Columbia Global Reports 2016.

¹⁰ Kriesi H., The populist challenge, *West European Politics* 2014, vol 37, nr. 2, s. 361-378.; Kriesi H., Pappas T., *European populism in the shadow of the great recession*, Wyd. ECPR Press 2015

¹¹ Laclau E., Towards a theory of populism, [w:] Laclau E. (ed.), *Politics and ideology in Marxist theory: Capitalism, fascism, populism*, Wyd. NLB 1977, s. 143-198.; Laclau E., Populist rupture and discourse, *Screen. Education* 1980, vol 34, s. 87-93.; Laclau E., Populism: What's in a name?, [w:] Panizza F. (ed.), *Populism and the mirror of democracy*, Wyd. Verso 2005, s. 32-49.; Laclau E., *On populist reason*, Wyd. Verso 2005.

¹² Mair P., Populist democracy vs party democracy, [w:] Mény Y., Sured Y. (eds.), *Democracies and the populist challenge*, Wyd. Palgrave Macmillan 2002, s. 81-98.

¹³ Moffitt B., *The global rise of populism: Performance, political style, and representation*, Wyd. Stanford University Press 2016.; Moffitt B., Tormey S., Rethinking populism: politics, mediatization and political style, *Political Studies* 2014, vol 62, nr. 2, s. 381-397.

¹⁴ Mudde C., The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy, *Willy Brandt Series of Working Papers in International Migration and Ethnic Relations* 2008, vol 3, nr. 7, 24 s.; Mudde C., The populist zeitgeist, *Government and Opposition* 2004, vol 39, nr. 4, s. 542-563.; Mudde C., Kaltwasser R., *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or corrective for democracy?*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 2012.; Mudde C., Kaltwasser R., *Populism: A very short introduction*, Wyd. Oxford University Press 2017.

¹⁵ Müller J.-W., *What is populism?*, Wyd. University of Pennsylvania Press 2016.

¹⁶ Schmitter P., *A Balance Sheet of the Vices and Virtues of "Populisms"*, Paper delivered at the conference "The Challenge of New Populism" (The Centre for Liberal Strategies, Sofia, 2006).

¹⁷ Taggart P., Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 2004, vol 9, nr. 3, s. 269-288.

¹⁸ Urbinati N., Democracy and Populism, *Constellations* 1998, vol 5, nr. 1, s. 110-124.

as S. Engler, B. Pytlas and, K. Deegan-Krause¹⁹, V. Havlík²⁰, V. Lytvyn²¹, W. Merkeland, F. Scholl²², G. Mereznikov and O. Gyárfášová²³, C. Mudde²⁴, M. Orestain and B. Bugarić²⁵, V. Petrović²⁶, J. Rupnik²⁷, A. Skolkay²⁸, B. Stanley²⁹, S. Sutey³⁰, A. Topišek³¹, M. Tupy³², P. U'čen³³, O. Wysocka³⁴, K. Weyland³⁵ and others.

Taking all of this into account, our article will attempt to systematize the general theoretical/all-European works with the regional specificity of the delineation of populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe, in particular on the subject of whether the latter correspond to the former. To do this, attention will first be paid to how populism is most often understood in political science and practice and in general in the European context, and after that the specifics of the Central-Eastern Europe region will be emphasized. So, it is common knowledge that the term "populism" began to be used in the USA at the end of the 19th century, both to describe forms of political vocabulary and forms of political participation. Later, and more precisely at the end of the 20th century, it became quite obvious that populism is specifically compatible with democracy and, on the one hand, often even opposes liberal and representative

¹⁹ Engler S., Pytlas B., Deegan-Krause K., Assessing the diversity of anti-establishment and populist politics in Central and Eastern Europe, *"West European Politics"* 2019, vol 42, nr. 6, s. 1310-1336.; Deegan-Krause K., Populism and the Logic of Party Rotation in Post-communist Europe, [w:] Gyárfášová O., Mesežnikov G. (eds.), *Visegrad Elections: Domestic Impact and European Consequences*, Wyd. Institute for Public Affairs 2007.

²⁰ Havlík V., Technocratic populism and political illiberalism in central Europe, *"Problems of Post-Communism"* 2019, vol 66, nr. 6, s. 369-384.

²¹ Lytvyn V., Populistické strany a struktura moderných partijských systémů krajín Tsentralnoi Yevropy: porovnávací analýza, *"Osvita rebionu: politolohiia, psykholohiia, komunikatsii"* 2012, vol 2, s. 69-77.

²² Merkel W., Scholl F., Illiberalism, populism and democracy in East and West, *"Politologický časopis – Czech Journal of Political Science"* 2018, vol 25, nr. 1, s. 28-44.

²³ Mesežnikov G., Gyárfášová O., *National populism in Slovakia*, Wyd. Institute for Public Affairs 2008.; Mesežnikov G., Gyárfášová O., Smlilov D., *Populist Politics and Liberal Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*, Wyd. Institute For Public Affairs 2008.

²⁴ Mudde C., *EU Accession and a New Populist Center-Periphery Cleavage in Central and Eastern Europe*, Paper presented at the conference "Dilemmas of Europeanization: Politics and Society in Eastern and Central Europe after EU Enlargement" (Harvard University, 2003).; Mudde C., In the Name of the Peasantry, the Proletariat, and the People: Populism in Eastern Europe, *"East European Politics and Societies"* 2001, vol 15, nr. 1, s. 33-53.

²⁵ Orenstein M., Bugarić B., Work, family, fatherland: The political economy of populism in Central and Eastern Europe, *"Journal of European Public Policy"* 2022, vol 29, nr. 2, s. 176-195.; Bugarić B., Populism, liberal democracy, and the rule of law in Central and Eastern Europe, *"Communist and Post-Communist Studies"* 1999, vol 41, nr. 2, s. 191-203.

²⁶ Petrović V., Threats to Democracy: Measures Taken by Right-Wing Populist Regimes During the Covid-19 Crisis in Eastern Europe, *"Političke perspektive: časopis za istraživanje politike"* 2020, vol 10, nr. 2-3, s. 51-66.

²⁷ Rupnik J., Is East-Central Europe Backsliding? From Democracy Fatigue to Populist Backlash, *"Journal of Democracy"* 2007, vol 18, nr. 4, s. 17-25.

²⁸ Skolkay A., Populism in Central Eastern Europe, *"IWM Working Paper"* 2000, nr. 1, 20 s.

²⁹ Stanley B., Populism in Central and Eastern Europe, *"The Oxford handbook of populism"* 2017, vol 1, nr. 6, s. 140-158

³⁰ Suteu S., The populist turn in Central and Eastern Europe: is deliberative democracy part of the solution?, *"European Constitutional Law Review"* 2019, vol 15, nr. 3, s. 488-518.

³¹ Topišek A., The political economy of populist rule in post-crisis Europe: Hungary and Poland, *"New Political Economy"* 2020, vol 25 nr. 3, s. 388-403.

³² Tupy M., The Rise of Populist Parties in Central Europe. Big Government, Corruption, and the Threat to Liberalism, *"Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity, Development Policy Analysis"* 2006, nr. 1, 28 s.

³³ U'čen P., Parties, Populism, and Anti-Establishment Politics in East Central Europe, *"SAIS Review"* 2007, vol 27, nr. 1, s. 49-62.

³⁴ Wysocka O., *Populism in Poland*, Presented at the Fourth ECPR General Conference "The radical populist right in Eastern Europe" (ECPR, 2007).

³⁵ Weyland K., Neoliberal populism in Latin America and eastern Europe, *"Comparative politics"* 1999, vol 31, nr. 4, s. 379-401.

democracy³⁶ or, on the other hand, appears as a certain attempt at “people’s democracy”, which is based on the appeals and support of the new political elites by those voters who largely ignore the political process in the context of the crisis of legitimacy of the “old” political elite. Nevertheless, the majority of modern scientists agree that populism is contradictory in theory and in practice, which is why some scientists even state that this term should not be used in social sciences³⁷, while other scientists point out that the concept of “populism” is after all, it gained considerable scientific popularity precisely at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries³⁸. The main reason is that populism was not and is not limited geographically and culturally, although in some regions or in some periods we notice it in more pronounced forms or presence, etc³⁹. In general, in particular, based on the study of an array of general theoretical scientific works, it is generally obvious that, on average, populism is a form of antagonistic political rhetoric or politics, which with extreme ease, and sometimes concretely, simplifies the existing problems and reduces them to vague and unclear solutions, which are typically is characterized by the absence of a long-term, stable and implemented political course⁴⁰.

The explanation is that the populist politician presents himself as an ordinary person who understands the problems of others, in contrast to the “corrupt” elite (as this populist politician notes) who are incapable of governing and also claims that all social interests must be represented without exception, and not only the interests of certain (private) population groups. At the same time, differences between various social groups are overcome by populists with the help of a corresponding difference in political rhetoric, as a result of which populism is differentiated and appears as a systemically ambiguous phenomenon.

In particular, it is generally known that populism can be “elitist” (when it is mostly a means of obtaining and maintaining power) and “popular” (when it is a means of changing power and improving the status and rights of society)⁴¹. In addition, populism can promote pluralism and democratization in the conditions of autocratic political regimes or, instead, reveal the risks of the decline of democracy in the case of democratic political regimes, etc⁴². In other words, populism should always be perceived in a context-dependent manner⁴³. Such features of the theorization of populism certainly influenced and still influence its further development, conceptualization and transformation in a certain direction, including against the background of

³⁶ Urbinati N., Democracy and Populism, “*Constellations*” 1998, vol 5, nr. 1, s. 110, 116.

³⁷ De la Torre C., The Ambiguous Meanings of Latin American Populisms, “*Social Research*” 1992, vol 59, nr. 2, s. 387.

³⁸ Boulanger C., Constitutionalism in East Central Europe? The Case of Slovakia under Meciar, “*East European Quarterly*” 1999, vol 33, nr. 1, s. 21-50.

³⁹ Lyrvyn V., Populistski partii u strukturi modemykh partiinykh system krain Tsentralnoi Yevropy: porivnialnyi analiz, “*Osvita rebionu: politolohiia, psykholohiia, komunikatsii*” 2012, vol 2, s. 69-77.

⁴⁰ Lyrvyn V., Populistski partii u strukturi modemykh partiinykh system krain Tsentralnoi Yevropy: porivnialnyi analiz, “*Osvita rebionu: politolohiia, psykholohiia, komunikatsii*” 2012, vol 2, s. 69-77.

⁴¹ Laclau E., *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, Wyd. New Left Books 1977, s. 173.

⁴² Di Tella T., Populism into the Twenty-first Century, “*Government and Opposition*” 1997, vol 32, nr. 2, s. 200; Hennessy A., *Latin America*, [w:] Ionescu G., Gellner E. (eds.), *Populism. Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, Wyd. Weidenfeld 1969, s. 29.

⁴³ Erlin I., Hofstadter R., McRae D., To define populism, “*Government and Opposition*” 1968, vol 3, s. 176-177.; Canovan M., *Populism*, Wyd. Junction Books 1981, s. 172.

real manifestations of populism in the world, individual regions and countries, in particular, on the example of the ideas and activities of populist politicians and parties/coalitions. Although populism itself has never been and still has not become consolidated and unidirectional, as it was determined and determined by several groups and options of political practice, and therefore of political theorizing.

As it is mentioned above, one of the main or even the main characteristics of theorizing populism from the second half of the 20th century (especially since the 1970s) is that this political phenomenon and practice is considered in a very broad context. Instead, the populism was thought about earlier mainly in a context outside of European politics, because only since the 70s and 80s of the 20th century it became a phenomenon characteristic both for the European region and for other parts of the world. However, this is precisely what revealed the paradox of the development and conceptualization of populism, at least in its classical perception, since populism at this time – from the moment of the development and growth of the importance of post-materialist values in politics – began to be thought about much more broadly than before, in particular in terms of worldview, doctrinal and in the context political practice and differences from already (for several centuries) established and constantly modified ideologies of political parties, which mainly concerned European countries.

Taking this into account, the term “populism” started to denote and define the direction and components of socio-political discussions in one or another country, although until very recently it meant almost nothing, as it was “empty” in its practical meaning and political and party-electoral content⁴⁴.

Another feature of this process based on the example of European countries and mainly in general theory, was that as soon as populism entered political and doctrinal usage, it began to rapidly modify and diversify. The fact is that many political theorists and practitioners began to appeal to it, considering it to be convenient and encouraging in the expectation of party-electoral and political advantages in the future. Therefore, already in the 80s and 90s of the 20th century, populism began to play and continues to play a practical and pragmatic role in the European political process and political debates, however, the first thing in its negative perception is as a means of achieving/changing power, and only after that as a tool for improving the status and rights of society. In parallel with this, however, too narrowly, as it later became evident, populism in Europe began to be interpreted as the rhetoric of primarily right-wing, far-right politicians and political forces. And this is the main difference between European (primarily Western European) populism of the second half of the 20th century and populism in virtually all other regions and parts of the world. The manifestation of this was the fact that in the first ones “people” are not necessarily poor and disadvantaged, which cannot be said about the second ones. On the contrary, the focus of the understanding of “the people” in Western

⁴⁴ Taguieff P., *L'illusion populiste. Essai sur les démagogies de l'âge démocratique*, Wyd. Flammarion 2007, s. 122.

European populism, starting from the second half of the 20th century, became its identification with the “general” and ordinary people who fight against corruption, elitism, emigrants, etc.⁴⁵.

Nevertheless, the general theoretical and European understanding of populism was not completed there, as its expansion continued from the beginning of the 90s of the 20th century. This was mainly demonstrated in the fact that populism began to be talked about not only in the context of right-wing or far-right parties and politicians, but also in connection with various measures and tools of demagoguery, which were quite actively used at first by some, and eventually quite a lot of European politicians. Another feature of this period was the fact that under populism came its understanding as an appeal to the “people” primarily through mass media, and not party structures. As a result, a kind of anti-party and even anti-establishment discourse of populism began to take shape. Accordingly, populism in Europe, and later generally theoretically and practically, began to be additionally perceived as measures to condemn certain systemic political elites, and often entire party/political systems, in particular due to a demagogic appeal to the “simple”/”simpler” political decisions and unfulfilled emotional promises of politicians⁴⁶.

In parallel with this, populism began to refer not only to the anti-establishment discourse of individual politicians and parties, but also to the rhetoric and some positions of systemic parties, in particular their appeal to “inclusiveness” or “comprehensiveness” as a manifestation and involvement of “the people” in politics⁴⁷. One of the reasons for this was the very significant weakening of the importance, ideological orientation and organizational structure of traditional parties in European countries (primarily Western Europe), including due to the emergence and spread of various issues and problems of a post-materialist content. In other words, virtually all parties in Europe became more populist and inclusive, when voters began to vote not so much for their programs (as was the case before), but for their leaders, which became the norm and practice of personalization of politics, starting from the end of the 20th century⁴⁸. Accordingly, populism at this time, at least in the Ukraine, became a symptom of the design of parties’ retreat into the background or even to the margins, due to which governance began to become extremely comprehensive and aimed at the promised “interests of all”⁴⁹. As a result, the theorization (but not always the practice in the understanding of the political actors themselves) of European populism, at least in the discourse and mass media, began to become negatively oriented at the end of the 20th century⁵⁰. The main reason for this was that

⁴⁵ Taguieff P., *L'illusion populiste. Essai sur les démagogies de l'âge démocratique*, Wyd. Flammarion 2007, s. 137.

⁴⁶ Mény Y., Surel Y., *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, Wyd. Palgrave 2002, s. 131.; Taguieff P., *Political Science Confronts Populism: From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem*, “Telos” 1995, vol 103, s. 42.

⁴⁷ Mudde C., *The Populist Zeitgeist*, “Government and Opposition” 2004, vol 39, nr. 4, s. 550.; Canovan M., *The People*, Wyd. Polity Press 2005, s. 77-78.; Mény Y., Surel Y., *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, Wyd. Palgrave 2002, s. 87, 139.

⁴⁸ Mény Y., Surel Y., *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, Wyd. Palgrave 2002, s. 150.

⁴⁹ Canovan M., *The People*, Wyd. Polity Press 2005, s. 78.; Mény Y., Surel Y., *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, Wyd. Palgrave 2002, s. 96.

⁵⁰ Van Kessel S., Bale T., Taggart P., *Thrown with abandon? Popular understanding of populism as conveyed by the print media: a UK case study*, „Acta Politica” 2011, vol 46, s. 115.

the adjective “populist” began often to be associated with the attribute of irresponsibility of the authorities and politicians⁵¹, and sometimes even with the denial of globalization processes in the world by individual politicians and political forces⁵².

All this was inherited by the fact that in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, populism definitely started to be realized as an anti-systemic phenomenon, at least regarding its understanding and relationship to the development of liberal, and sometimes generally, representative democracy as such. Therefore, the content and content of populism, with the exception of the USA and Latin American countries (there it was perceived positively, at least before), began to become more and more negative, since populism began to be increasingly associated with “crisis”, “erosion” or at least “dangers” democracy both in general and in individual countries and regions of the world⁵³.

In addition, populism was constantly interpreted as a challenge and a change in the procedures of democracy, despite the fact that populism is based on the idea of “the people”, and therefore “people’s” representation. That is why, as some scientists point out⁵⁴, populism should be spoken of as a “distortion” of democracy, because this phenomenon combines a specific political context, liberalism (in particular, its principle of non-intervention), anarchism and conservatism, and therefore in such a mixture it appears as a certain “rebellion” against the modern understanding of the state and political system. This is evidenced by the fact that populism is significantly different from democracy, including in the perception of “people” and “nation”. After all, these categories are not determined by solidarity with a specific group of society in populism, but they are only outlined as formal constructs that are in opposition to the political system and the existing and dominant ideas and principles⁵⁵. And this is despite the fact that theorists and practitioners of populism habitually appeal to “the people” through the principles of popular sovereignty and majority⁵⁶.

With this in mind, today it is quite obvious that populism, primarily in European countries, but also mainly in general theory, challenges the current democratic socio-political reality and system⁵⁷, in particular due to the perception of “the people” as a homogeneous majority that counteracts or opposes the political establishment and the political elite. Even more, since populism sometimes turns not so much to anti-systemism, but to anti-partyism, which various

⁵¹ Di Tella T., Populism into the Twenty-first Century, “*Government and Opposition*” 1997, vol 32, nr. 2, s. 188.

⁵² Mény Y., Surel Y., *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, Wyd. Palgrave 2002, s. 217.

⁵³ Abts K., Rummens S., Populism versus Democracy, “*Political Studies*” 2007, vol 55, nr. 2, s.415; Canovan M., Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy, “*Political Studies*” 1999, vol 47, nr. 1, s. 2-16.; Mény Y., Surel Y., *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, Wyd. Palgrave 2002.; Albertazzi D., McDonell D., *Twenty-first Century Populism*, Wyd. Palgrave Macmillan 2007, s. 16.; Galston W., The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy, “*Journal of Democracy*” 2018, vol 29, nr. 2, s. 5-19.

⁵⁴ Priester K., *Populismus. Historische und aktuelle Erscheinungsformen*, Wyd. Campus Verlag 2007, s. 48-51.

⁵⁵ Canovan M., Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy, “*Political Studies*” 1999, vol 47, nr. 1, s. 3.

⁵⁶ Mény Y., Surel Y., *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, Wyd. Palgrave 2002, s. 25.

⁵⁷ Mudde C., The Populist Zeitgeist, “*Government and Opposition*” 2004, vol 39, nr. 4, s. 543.; Mudde C., *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Wyd. Cambridge University Press 2009, s. 23.; Albertazzi D., McDonell D., *Twenty-first Century Populism*, Wyd. Palgrave Macmillan 2007, s. 3.; Abts K., Rummens S., Populism versus Democracy, “*Political Studies*” 2007, vol 55, nr. 2, s.420.; Stanley B., The Thin Ideology of Populism, “*Journal of Political Ideologies*” 2008, vol 13, nr. 1, s. 100.

politicians and parties try to instill in their voters and sympathizers⁵⁸. Taking all this into account, it is quite obvious that populism in political theory and practice must be talked about as a multidimensional and multifaceted phenomenon, which is filled with several characteristics that describe different competing perspectives and options of populism as such. Among these characteristics, the following should be distinguished: personalized and paternalistic leadership; heterogeneous and multi-class/complex logic of applying the coalition to the political procession; a bottom-up process of political mobilization that bypasses institutionalized forms of representation; amorphous or eclectic ideology; use of the constructs of distributive justice and methods of clientelism⁵⁹.

Somewhat different, although largely inherited from the countries of Western Europe and from the logic of the general theoretical order, the situation is inherent in other European countries, in particular in Central- Eastern Europe.

In particular, populism in some Central - Eastern European countries and contexts was previously perceived and is still positioned as the result of the electoral success of some politicians at the dawn of independence of new states and/or at the dawn of anti-communism (all these countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s century came out from under Soviet pressure). Especially, given the fact that former communist elites, who actually discredited the “new” political leaders and “new” political elites of the countries of Central - Eastern Europe, opposed these politicians in the post-communist period. Hence, populism in this sense very often came close in its spirit and postulates to conditional nationalism (at the same time repeating the primary logic of interpreting populism in the countries of Western Europe as a manifestation of right-wing and far-right ideologies), because it typically reflected the opposition of the leaders of certain nations/countries to the spirit of supranational elites. Such logic, for example, was triggered quite often in Poland during the period of L. Walesa, A. Lepper and A. Kwasniewski, in Hungary in the case of I. Churka, J. Torgyan, and today V. Orban, in Slovakia in the case of V. Meciar, in Croatia during the period of F. Tudjman, etc. That is why populism in this context, as well as in the countries of Western Europe, began to be perceived, at least by political theorists and in political discourse, mostly negatively and anti-systemically, and primarily by the former communist authorities and former political elites, already in the early 90s of the 20th century. Moreover, this was completely independent of the real political and regime consequences of populism, whether democratizing (as, for example, in Poland and Hungary) or autocratizing (as, for example, in Slovakia and Croatia, etc.).

However, over time, populism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe has developed, in particular due to the inclusion on the agenda of various problems of social and political development, in particular, regarding the processes of European integration and the accession

⁵⁸ Taguieff P., Political Science Confronts Populism: From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem, *“Telos”* 1995, vol 103, s. 32, 34.; Albertazzi D., McDonell D., *Twenty-first Century Populism*, Wyd. Palgrave Macmillan 2007, s. 21.

⁵⁹ Roberts K., Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America, *“World Politics”* 1995, vol 48, nr. 1, s. 88.

of the countries of the region to the European Union and NATO, overcoming the consequences of the global financial crisis from 2008-2009, as well as the European migration crisis from 2014-2015, etc. As a result, populism in the countries of Central Europe has acquired a whole series of features and attributes⁶⁰ that are regionally peculiar only to it – in contrast to the general theoretical manifestations of populism in the world and, in particular, in the countries of Western Europe. So, firstly, populism as a phenomenon and populist parties in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe, even despite their program principles and manifestos, appeal to “the people” as a whole, in contrast to the corrupt and “helpless” political elites, in which it is compared to populism in the countries of Western Europe. That is, populism as a phenomenon and populists as politicians position themselves as an alternative not to specific political parties or blocs/coalitions, but instead as an alternative to the existing representative democracy and the political system as a whole. This is evident in the fact that populists generally promise, although they do not always try to “revive” the political process and even return “substance” to it.

Secondly, populism and populists in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe (albeit to very different degrees) oppose the fundamental idea of representative democracy, in particular, against the fact that the political majority should be limited to the influence of constitutional levers. That is why the regional family of populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe is mainly majoritarian, because it is centered on the belief that the participation of the majority should be the basis for the legitimization of power and politics. As a result, this regional subtype of populism competes against ideas of minority rights. Thirdly, populism and populists in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe one way or another (mostly) see their task as changing certain elements in the system of liberal consensus, although this was more typical in the period before the countries of the region joined the European Union. This concerned primarily issues of market-oriented reforms, integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, acceptance of the idea of nationalist behavior, etc. That is why populists challenge all or at least some of these taboos, reject the political correctness of liberalism, and also appeal to the ability of citizens to discuss issues that are important for other parties as well. It is also obvious that populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe has lost its primary meaning as an ideology of agrarian radicalism, from which it was originally born, unlike in the countries of Western Europe, etc. Instead, populism as a whole in the region has become sufficiently nuanced and eclectic to claim to be an ideology in the same sense as liberalism, socialism, or conservatism. But this did not prevent the growing interest in populism from covering the main political trends in the contemporary political world of the countries of the region (as a result of which there were real political events and the reasons mentioned above), which are generally depicted by the phenomenon of the growth of democratic illiberalism⁶¹.

⁶⁰ Mudde C., In the Name of the Peasantry, the Proletariat, and the People: Populism in Eastern Europe, *“East European Politics and Societies”* 2001, vol 15, nr. 1, s. 33-53.

⁶¹ Lytvyn V., Populistski partii u strukturi modernykh partiinykh system krain Tsentralnoi Yevropy: porivnialnyi analiz, *“Osvita rebionu: politolohiia, psykholohiia, komunikatsii”* 2012, vol 2, s. 69-77.

On this basis, it can be stated that the formation of the modern format of populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe was influenced by various leading factors and indicators, among which: the type and features of the communist regime (regimes of “real socialism”) in the last period of the existence of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact Organization⁶²; the strength and form of resistance of communism in the last period of its existence; the relative success or failure of socio-economic development in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in particular the level of GDP per capita, especially at the beginning of the transition period of development and in conditions of accelerated modernization⁶³; readiness or unwillingness of alternative political elites to participate in the political process, including the ease of their access to communication channels; the form of participation of political actors in the first free democratic elections in the countries of the region, including election rules and alternatives; successful resolution and presence of unresolved social contradictions inherited from the previous period of historical development of the countries of the region (status of national minorities, state borders, constitutional system); the impact of the political, social and economic crisis on the stage of liberalization and consolidation of democracies in the region; peculiarities and consequences of European integration and other globalization processes in the region and the world, and therefore social and political contradictions regarding them in the political community⁶⁴.

Taking into account such different factors of the development of populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe, it currently manifests itself primarily in the context of the formation and functioning of populist political parties, since it is based on the analysis of their rhetoric, manifestos and activities that we can talk about the optionality of populism as such. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that relatively “new” parties (which emerged mainly after 2000) in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe were mostly formed or are still being formed not on an ideological basis (or to a lesser extent on an ideological basis), but on the principles of pragmatic centrism, populism and opportunism. Furthermore, even the traditional parties in the region are often ideological (or at least more ideological) only during election campaigns, and instead, in inter-election periods, these parties often revert to populist identification. Most often, this manifests itself in the fact that the most electorally successful parties in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe are free from certain “ideological baggage” and use “comprehensive” electoral strategies⁶⁵. At the same time, among the main features of populist parties in the countries of the region, once again, the following traditionally stand out: appeal to “the people” in general; efforts to create an alternative to representative or liberal democracy;

⁶² Bozók A., From Soft Communism to Post-Communism (Authoritarian Legacy and Democratic Transition in Hungary, [w:] Kovács J. (ed.), *Transition to Capitalism? The Communist Legacy in Eastern Europe*, Wyd. Transaction Publishers 1994, s.121.

⁶³ Bruszt L., Transformative Politics: Social Costs and Social Peace in East Central Europe, [w:] Kovács J. (ed.), *Transition to Capitalism? The Communist Legacy in Eastern Europe*, Wyd. Transaction Publishers 1994, s. 103-120.

⁶⁴ Lytvyn V., Populistski partii u strukturi modemykh partiinykh system krain Tsentralnoi Yevropy: porivnialnyi analiz, “*Osvita rebionu: politolohiia, psykholohiia, komunikatsii*” 2012, vol 2, s. 69-77.

⁶⁵ Innes A., Party Competition in Postcommunist Europe: The Great Electoral Lottery, “*Comparative Politics*” 2002, vol 35, nr. 1, s. 90.

the conviction that the participation of the majority (despite the possibility of disregarding the rights of the minority) should be the basis for the legitimization of politics; the desire to violate the integrity of the liberal consensus system.

As a result of this, populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe from the post-communist period to the present has manifested itself in several varieties (families), among which radical left/right populism, social populism, national populism, centrist (new/latest) populism.

For example, radical left-wing populism is defined on the basis of taking into account the positioning of reformed communist and orthodox left-wing parties, which are on average anti-capitalist and focus on the possibility of an alternative political, social and economic order⁶⁶. This can be best demonstrated by the example of such historical or current political forces in the countries of the region as the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia in the Czech Republic, the “Croatian Labor Party”, and the Slovak Workers’ Association. In contrast, radical right-wing populism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe combines the features of populism, nationalism, xenophobia, and authoritarianism and typically belongs to the heritage of nationalism of the interwar period, as a result of which it consistently, albeit partially, denies transformational progress, which is most visible in the activities of such political forces in the region, as Party “Greater Romania”, Slovak National Party, League of Polish Families, National Union “Attack” in Bulgaria, Croatian Civil Party, etc. In turn, social populism combines traditional agrarian and marginal anti-elitist parties that resist the influence of industrial capitalism and defend the ideas of the traditional agro-industrial sector, which is visible (or rather was visible before) from the rhetoric of such political forces in the countries of the region as “Self-defense of the Republic of Poland”, People’s Union of Estonia, etc⁶⁷. In contrast, national populism is characterized by increased attention to the legacy of the regimes of “real socialism”, moderately appeals to the interests of a mythical and idealized national community, focuses on the search for external “enemies” and “traitors” of national values, and also resorts to an authoritarian style of regulating social relations, what can be concluded from the rhetoric and activities of such political forces as “Law and Justice” in Poland, “Movement for Democratic Slovakia”, “Fidesz” party in Hungary, etc. After all, centrist (new/latest) populism is conditioned by parties’ evasion of various ideological commitments (as “obstacles” to democracy), appeal to “common sense” and rational solutions, denial of all previous designs and configurations of the political elite. The specificity of the “new” populist parties is that they oppose the ideas of the “outdated” political establishment, which most often serves as a tool for such political forces to achieve success in the electoral and representative dimension of their activities. Among the very famous historical and current examples of such parties in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe are “Direction is Social Democracy” in Slovakia, “Alliance for a New Citizen” in

⁶⁶ March L., Mudde C., What’s Left of the Radical Left? The European Radical Left after 1989: Decline and Mutation, *Comparative European Politics* 2005, vol 3, nr. 1, s.25.

⁶⁷ Mudde C., In the Name of the Peasantry, the Proletariat, and the People: Populism in Eastern Europe, *East European Politics and Societies* 2001, vol 15, nr. 1, s. 33-53.

Slovakia, “New Era” in Latvia, “National Movement for Stability and Progress” and “Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria” in Bulgaria, etc.⁶⁸

From this we can draw a fairly obvious conclusion that populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe (both in the post-communist period and after it) is an extremely dynamic phenomenon. The countries of the region are permanently experiencing a transition from radical or moderate forms of populist rhetoric and politics through nationalism and authoritarianism to more moderate tendencies and vice versa (especially in the case of Hungary, since 2010). This is complemented by the fact that the parties of the era of the so-called “new” or the “latest” populism mobilize voters on a significant group of issues, and this is their main difference from other populism options in the region. Even though it is possible to confirm the fact that the formation and functioning of such parties as the “Ataka” National Union in Bulgaria and the Slovak National Party in Slovakia at one time or the “Fidesz” party in Hungary marked or still mark the process of the revival of ethnocentric populism. However, the last case today is rather an exception rather than the norm. In addition, it should be noted that those new parties that oppose the old establishment are often the basis for the emergence of “pure” populism, mainly as a tool for achieving success in elections. It is also obvious that, in contrast to the radical analogues of populism of a right and left nature, which prevailed in the populism environment in the region before, centrist populism largely succeeded in repeating the success of national populism in the 1990s, in particular even attracting the support of voters and forming government cabinets. After all, some of them (in some countries) turned out to be short-lived, while others retained their positions and were included in the mainstream of the political process (in other countries) in Central - Eastern Europe.

The situation is also developed by the fact that populism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was manifested in the past and is still manifested in various forms, in particular in “soft” and “hard” ones. Instead, “soft” populism is typically understood as a challenge to the current system of representation and democracy, in particular the party system, which is based on the idea of a crisis of representativeness. The latter one, according to populist politicians and parties, turns out to be the fact that institutionalized or mainstream parties are corrupt and “cartel-like”, since they are alienated from the people and excessively ideological. Instead, by “hard” populism, we mean those manifestations that are primarily associated with anti-constitutional identifications, since such politicians and parties oppose the current system of representation and the basic principles of liberal democracy – the protection of human and citizen rights, national minorities, etc. However, this gradation of populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe is very conditional, because the dividing line between “soft” and “hard” forms of populism is blurred and can change, what is especially relevant and noticeable in the context of election campaigns. Nevertheless, the examples of “soft” populism at different times

⁶⁸ Lytvyn V., Populistski partii u strukturi modernykh partiinykh system krain Tsentralnoi Yevropy: porivnialnyi analiz, *“Osvita rebionu: politolohiia, psykholohiia, komunikatsii”* 2012, vol 2, s. 69-77.

were parties such as the “National Movement of Simeon II” and later the “National Movement for Stability and Progress” and “Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria” Direction is Social Democracy” in Slovakia, “New Era” party in Latvia, Labor Party in Lithuania, etc. Instead, the most famous examples of the “hard” form of populism in the countries of the region were or are the “League of Polish Families” and “Law and Justice” in Poland, as well as the “Fidesz” party in Hungary recently, as it was evidenced or is evidenced by their position in relation to minorities, their attempts to establish criminal responsibility for the actions of political opponents, as well as disrespect for constitutional principles and international obligations⁶⁹.

As a result, the study stated that the understanding of populism in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries, including in general theory and in European countries never became consolidated, unified and systematized. After all, on the one hand, this phenomenon is characteristic of both democratic and non-democratic political regimes, which causes its different and changing orientation. On the other hand, populism can be perceived as a negative and positive socio-political phenomenon, although today it is traditionally and predominantly, especially in European countries, interpreted mainly negatively – primarily as a threat to representative and liberal democracy. This is complemented by the fact that the interpretation of populism differs not only from part to part or from region to region of the world, but even from country to country, and therefore it is always necessary to think about it contextually and in the plural. After all, the causes of populism can be both political and socio-economic factors, and therefore this phenomenon cannot and should not be interpreted as something integral and unified (this is especially obvious based on the development of the theory of populism in political science and practice). Instead, populism should be perceived as a heterogeneous and multifaceted phenomenon that outlines ideas, a style of behavior, optional discourse, and a way of political behavior, competitiveness and strategies of political actors and parties in the political process. Perhaps the only common denominator in this section is the awareness that populism promotes and exploits the idea of confrontation and mobilization struggle between “nation” (people) and the “oligarchy” (power or elite). Therefore, it is summed up by the scientific position, according to which populism must be differentiated in plural and in different vectors on the basis of certain criteria, in particular, taking into account its party-ideological or even extra-ideological aspects and determinants and context, and regardless of the region and country where it is operationalized.

In contrast, almost undisputed (with the exception of some countries) were the theoretical conclusions according to which: populism is specifically consistent with democracy, and in theory even contradicts it; populism depends on the specifics of development and influence of traditional party ideologies⁷⁰. After all, the common denominator is that the level of

⁶⁹ Lytvyn V., Populistski partii u strukturi modernykh partiinykh system krain Tsentralnoi Yevropy: porivnialnyi analiz, “*Osvita rehionu: politolohiia, psykholohiia, komunikatsii*” 2012, vol 2, s. 69-77.

⁷⁰ Urbinati N., Democracy and Populism, “*Constellations*” 1998, vol 5, nr. 1, s. 110-124.

development of populism in the world and, in particular, in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe, but especially in the countries of Western Europe, is largely determined by the decline of classical liberalism as such. It is also obvious that populism is not a temporary political phenomenon, because it successfully penetrates the media-centric and personalized component of the modern political process, and is also adapted to new methods of “cozying up” with voters. However, modern or new/latest typical populism is not radicalism, since in practice (especially when it manifests itself in the activities of governments led by populist parties) it mostly stops looking for an alternative to democracy, and instead somewhat modifies its ideal. This, in the case of electoral and managerial/official successes of populist parties, can be the reason for the modification of democracy, although sometimes its deconsolidation.

At the same time, it was possible to argue that in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe populism is quite specific, although it adopts most of the attributes of its counterpart in the countries of Western Europe and in general theoretically. First of all, it should be confirmed that, in general, modern populism in the analyzed region is not radicalism or extremism, since populist parties are not looking for a political alternative to representative democracy, but instead often appeal to such an ideal of democracy, which the establishment and non-populist parties consider dangerous. The previous conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the dividing line between “soft” and “hard” populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe is blurred and volatile. The fact is that since populist parties usually lack internal party structure and discipline (with the main exception of Poland and Hungary), as well as ideological cohesion, they are prone to changes in their profile. This is evident in the fact that the radical and even aggressive rhetoric of populist parties in the countries of the region is very often softened and weakened during, but mainly after, election campaigns, especially during the performance of certain official and, first of all, governmental duties by such political forces and their representatives. Very rarely, the opposite happens, in particular when populist parties become radicalized after coming to power – the formation of government cabinets – however, this is still not enough or is still taking place in some countries of Central - Eastern Europe, in particular in Slovakia in the case of the “Direction is Social Democracy” party, in Poland in the case of “Law and Justice” and in Hungary in the case of the “Fidesz” party, etc.

It is also worth noting that attribute of populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe, that the studied phenomenon is definitely not a purely post-integration phenomenon.

Although, on the contrary, after the accession of the countries of the region to the EU and NATO, the optionality and varieties of populism definitely expanded, but it did not intensify, since the ideas of some populists before the integration period regarding inflated expectations from EU membership and fatigue from long-term austerity measures in the countries of the region mostly did not come true. Perhaps the only current exception can be considered the situation in Hungary during the prime ministership of V. Orbán and the dominance of the “Fidesz” party. Hungary had already this experience in the 1990s, when “Fidesz” once dominated the

political life of this country and this period was marked by nationalist populism. This practice has been continued and significantly intensified since 2010, as a result of which Hungary has ceased to be considered a consolidated democracy, which is a direct proof of the negative relationship between populism and representative democracy. Instead, in other countries of the region, post-integration populism is also quite vividly developed, but it was typically preceded by populism of the period before joining the EU and NATO. The exception is probably only the case of Lithuania, in which populism became the main consequence of this country's entry into the listed supranational structures in 2004.

Instead, an attribute of the development of populism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was that it occupied the niche of liberal political parties, which were very popular in the early 1990s. This means that as soon as voters began to vote less for liberal political parties, which were typically centrist, then the electoral dividends, popularity and influence of various types of populist political forces and politicians increased. This happened when most of the countries of the region began to become liberal or consolidated democracies, since at that time they had sufficient conditions and grounds, as well as legal space for populist parties, in particular, regarding actions in the direction of significant democratic changes in the future. It was at this time that the populist ideas of the so-called post-democracy even began to develop in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe. This was supplemented by the fact that at various times in the countries of the analyzed region, the identification component of the parties that structured the party systems began to grow. However, this was not characteristic of the above-mentioned liberal parties, and therefore their decline resulted in the implementation of identified right-wing and left-wing strategies, from which, among other things, various (ideologically diverse) optional populism began to line up. At the same time,, populism did not emerge as a rebellion against liberalism or neo liberalism, but only paralleled its rather natural and overdue decline in the region. Perhaps the best manifestation of this was the fact that many, if not most, populist parties in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe are neoliberal in terms of their economic platforms and goals, and then additional programmatic attributes and principles are layered on top of them, including anti-egalitarianism and meritocracy, etc.

At the same time, it is quite obvious that populism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, especially in the current political situation in the world, is not and cannot be a short-term phenomenon without a future. The fact is that after the accession of the countries of the region to the EU and NATO, quite a lot of unforeseen and crisis events took place, which became the basis for the development of populist discourse in the world, Europe and individual countries. There are the world economic crisis from 2008-2009, the European migration crisis from 2014-2015, the Russian-Ukrainian war from 2014, but in a large-scale format from 2022, etc. among these events and factors are the world economic crisis from 2008-2009, the European migration crisis from 2014-2015, the Russian-Ukrainian war from 2014, but in a large-scale format from 2022, etc. and they definitely determined and will determine the success of regional

populism in the future. There are also general or common reasons for this, which are not always related to specific events in real politics. The fact is that politics in general has become more media-centric, digitalized and personified, and the populist parties themselves are well adapted to various types of modern communication and cozying up with voters, etc. For them, politics is very often a show, at least compared to more ideological parties. After all, the development of populism in the countries of Central - Eastern Europe will also take place due to the fact that in this region, on average, no real programmatic and ideological parties have been created, and instead, since the 1990s, political forces are often cartelized and all-encompassing, and therefore, in principle, they are characterized by an appeal not so much to a stable electorate, but to various strata of "the people", which is in the hands of populist politicians and political forces.

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