

The Good, Bad, and Ugly of Populism: A Comparative Analysis of the U.S. and Slovakia

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Abstract

The dynamics of political campaigning is as unique as the people and party platforms that inhabit the campaign period. The progress of certain political personalities or of political parties themselves insure a positivity to the political process in contrast to statism. Not all change is welcome surely, but the fact that such activity occurs within pluralist democracy is a sign of vitality in both practice and principle. One such change in recent political campaigns has been the increased popularity of candidates and parties espousing populist platforms and rhetoric. While in the United States, such represented interest is historically based from the late nineteenth century, in Slovakia it is more recent, but no less significant in its historical roots. In the following paper the methodology of a comparative analysis is employed to investigate populism within the United States and Slovakia while utilizing the theoretical context of neoclassical realism that has populism in the national context: personalization of politics, catch-all policies, media centrality, professionalization and political marketing.

Key Words: Populism, U.S., Slovakia, Neoclassical Realism, Comparative Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Populisms' appeal is largely based upon its doctrine of care for ordinary people. Therefore, the interests and conceptions such as fear and hope that the general population holds is placed in contrast to the prevailing social and political interests. The existing status quo is challenged and predominant politicians and parties are put on the defense during electoral campaigns.

The response by vested interests and their challengers offer new trends in electoral engineering and party competition. Recently, newly formed political platforms and leaders have been observed in the United States of America, while in Slovakia one-party governments and other party platforms are seen. In both nations, the effects of populism channeled through the media and social media in particular has effected electoral strategies, competitiveness and the personalization of politics.

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Appealing to emotions and prejudices, even ignorance of lower socioeconomic class to achieve power is an old phenomena. The promotion of political motives using demagoguery can be traced from ancient Greece to the Cold War politics of 1950s America during the second Red scare. The recent attraction of politicians, candidates, and parties using populism to advance motives and achieve power has been aided by economic and social concerns. In prior decades populism was a derogative term employed by the established politicians and political parties against opponents. And while unrealistic proposals held a certain appeal, the status quo had been maintained. Despite efforts to stop populism's popularity, a revival of the doctrine has occurred across the political spectrum exploiting arguably the fundamental weakness of democracy; ultimate power is held by the people and nothing prevents them from giving that power to individuals appealing to the largest segment of the population.

Scholars have produced definitions of populism and recent efforts to understand populism beyond typical right-wing definitions on specific social bases, economic programs and electorates. In this effort, populism has been investigated (Laclau 2005, Taguieff 2002, Meny and Surel 2002) on its own rather than dealing with it simply as an addition to other ideologies. Such an approach has enabled populist identification and comparison. Recent definition of populism as an ideology that, "pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity, and voice" (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008, p. 3). Current leaders following this ideology reject the political spectrum definition of left and right focusing instead on the central tenet of populism, that democracy is reflected in the pure and undiluted will of the people. Furthermore, while some politicians see populists as positive there are political scientists who contend the irrationality and instability that populism introduces to the political process. Modern populism has been divided into agrarian and political (Canovan 1981). Agrarian populism of commodity and subsistence farm movements and intellectuals who romanticize peasants and farmers. Political populism calls for more political participation, reform and popular referenda, as well as non-ideological appeals. Political populism has also been observed in reactionary politics and authoritarian governments. The following paper will focus on two of the seven sub-categories.

The current trend of populism that is attracting the most attention in the United States and Slovakia are reactionary and authoritarian. There are elements of both categories in the political branch of modern populism observed in these countries so it is difficult to definitively state which exists. While reactionary populism has been harvested by certain candidates and politicians on social issues such as

immigration and economic crisis the concern that authoritarian populism may occur in Slovakia is in the fact of its one-party government. SMER, the majority political party's popularity with the Slovakian electorate has remained steady and forecasts ahead of the March 2016 parliamentary elections indicate both electoral success and continued dominance within the national parliament. In the United States the genuine interest in the candidacy for U.S. president of Donald Trump and Senator Bernie Sanders fits the criteria of reactionary populism with anti-establishment rhetoric.

In the following sections of this paper, the methodology of a comparative analysis will be explained and defended, populism will be explained, first in its historical context, then recent interest and use of populism within the United States and Slovakia. And finally an explanation of realism and where populism has the requisite qualities to be considered as both neoclassical and within the third central proposition of realism; actors are rational as their actions maximize their own self-interest.

1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Populism has been manifested on the left-wing, right-wing, and centrist formation of the political spectrum. As a form of politics it has also united groups and individuals of both diverse and partisan views (Wood 2002). That is a strength. It is not unique only to America² though the most extreme example being how populism interacted with and facilitated fascism in interwar Germany . (Fritzsche 1990, pp. 149–150). Fritzsche continues by explaining how diverse groups were appealed to by the Nazis. “The Nazis expressed the populist yearnings of middle–class constituents and at the same time advocated a strong and resolutely anti-Marxist mobilization....Against “unnaturally” divisive parties and querulous organized interest groups, National Socialists cast themselves as representatives of the commonwealth, of an allegedly betrayed and neglected German public....Breaking social barriers of status and caste, and celebrating at least rhetorically the populist ideal of the people’s community...” (Fritzsche 1990, pp. 233-235). It is this breaking of social barriers and speaking to the ideal of the people’s community that can currently be observed in populist appeals.

There is a precedence for this. The sentiment of populism has been contributed to the American Revolutionary War and remained to shape the young Republic. Similarly, in Europe, populism found its beginnings in the Reformation, and populist conditions were present throughout the English Civil War. Indeed, a proliferation of ideologies and peasantry political movements occurred from the mid-1600s.

² For an assessment of populism in the United States see, Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*.

American colonial roots can be found in the religious populism of the Puritans.

During the nineteenth century populism in the United States was observed in populist political parties with large farming and rural support for anti-trust legislation in the 1890s, as well as progressive politics in 1912 and 1924 with support during the early years of the Great Depression (1933-34) for populist politicians in the American South.

Populism has a long history in Europe, but it has always remained a marginal political phenomenon. In Central Europe, the populist rhetoric of Andre Hlinka found support amongst the Slovak farmers and the poor, providing Hlinka and his *People's Party*, the constituents during the First Czechoslovak Republic and Josef Tiso was able to express populist yearnings of advocating for a strong, Christian, and Slovak (national) nation-state during the war years 1940-45 of the First Slovak Republic. That in the latter, anti-Marxist and anti-Semitic rhetoric was effectively used which points to the success of Tiso as a populist, and one may argue enhances the period-specific trends while offering a warning to the racist and xenophobic successors today.

Post-war Europe saw populism emerge in the 1990s. While there were unique forms of populism prior such as Poujadism in France in the late-1950s, the Progress Parties in Denmark and Norway in the 1970s, and PASOK of the 1980s, the rise of the populist radical right in the late 1980s changed populism in Europe. Older political parties such as the National Front (FN) in France and Flemish Interest (VB) in Belgium existed but during this time they moved away from their elitist origins and embraced populist platforms.

Populism is more than rhetoric. It has a volatile nature igniting reform and reaction. Throughout history, it has been a source of idealism and scapegoating. During time periods of unique stress and uncertainty, citizens who view themselves as the "backbone" of the nation whether that was the farmers of yesterday or the middle class today see a system that is not advantageous to them. Elites preventing the advancement of the rest of society.

The compromise and usual political bargaining that constitutes governance in democratic nations is considered suspicious, creating a conspiratorial and perhaps even an apocalyptic element to the belief that if not the nation, then the majority of its citizens face ruin by malefactors such as immigrants, the wealthy, Jews and even politicians. This is the appeal to those candidates who seek to articulate the so-called authentic voice of the people. To say what people feel, but politicians fear to express out-loud. The deeply disenchanting public that sought refuge in the policies and rhetoric of the 1890s-1910s and 1930s are doing so again in the 2010s.

The current populist candidates in the U.S. and Slovakia seek a political revolution with plausible reforms while others are playing a game of anti-politics.

2 POPULISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Whereas populism has been nearly always associated with the radical right, an emerging strain of populism in the twenty-first century is emerging that is separate from the previous incorrect conflation of xenophobia and populism. A positive from this current strain of populism is that issues that the large segments of citizens are concerned about and pay attention to are being discussed by political elites. In Europe issues such as immigration for the populist right and austerity for the populist left are being discussed. Likewise in the United States where issues of wealth, pay (wages) and immigration are being added to the national agenda. Therein lies the potential for real change. Populism can act as a mirror so-to-speak in showing the painful, real problems in society (Arditi 2007). The negative quality of populism remains unchanged. Because it is a moralist ideology denying the existence of divisions and rejecting the political opposition's legitimacy a polarized political culture is created.

Populism may also become rather ugly once in power. In Europe, if power has to be shared with the opposition than those effects are small such as the populist, radical right FPO party in Austria were in the Schüssel governments. Moreover, when populists dominate the government such as in Greece or Italy or Poland or Slovakia the effects are still limited, because of political checks by either opposition parties, independent judges or outside influences such as the European Union. Such political checks occur in the United States as well through inherent Federalism that exists between the individual states and Federal government in Washington D.C.

Though 'checked', populism remains a potent political force because it does not exist simply in its pure form but rather is combined with another ideology that whether right or left presents an interpretation of either socialism or nationalism. Southern Europe is more in line with populism on the left while Northern Europe has found a connection with populism on the right. It is not with alarm that as early as 2010 populism was labeled the 'great danger for Europe'.³ With impressive popular majorities in Greece and Hungarian elections some European analysts may point to the prophetic insight. Populist leaders like Viktor Orbán in Hungary have done nothing to set aside worry. The ugliness of scare-mongering, and xenophobia seen in Hungary all under the legitimate guise of legal and Constitutionally approved measures is worrisome for the European Union.

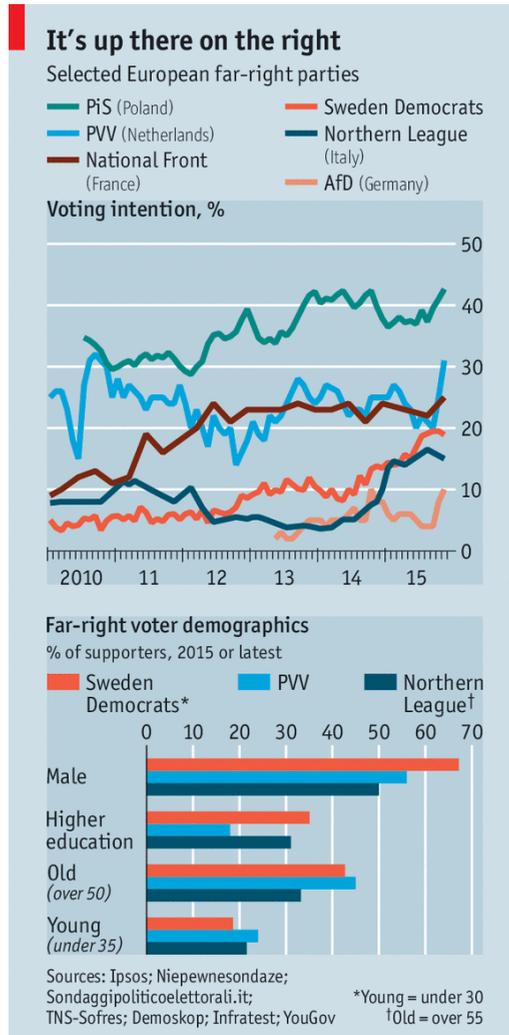
Populists offer more than just opposition to immigrants and Islam. "Most combine cultural conservatism with left-wing economic policies that please their older, less-educated supporters. Poland's PiS is lowering the retirement age and

³ see remarks by then- EU President Herman van Rompuy in the German newspaper *Fankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 April 2010.

promising state aid for the country’s inefficient coalminers. France’s FN supports a lower retirement age and more protectionist agricultural policies. Mr Wilders demands that money now spent to house migrants be spent on cancer treatment for Dutch citizens” (*The Economist* 2015).

2.1.1 Graphs

Graph 1: “Its up there on the right”



Economist.com

Source: The Economist

It is a caution as well to the young democracies elsewhere in Central Europe. For Poland and for Slovakia. And it also points to a history in Central Europe not fully explored or understood by those in power in Brussels.

Whereas it is true that a sizable amount of the European electorate feel that issues important to them are not being adequately addressed by political elites on imminent 'front-line' issues such as European integration and immigration and domestic 'hot-topic' issues such as unemployment and welfare state reform the Central European politicians are acutely under pressure on said above issues. The citizens in these nations and for the purpose of this paper Slovakia is discussed in particular, national political elites are perceived as being not only the same, but a political personality or party that is perceived to actually address the international issues and domestic topics of most concern have then the vote of the electorate. Here in lies the direct link to populism and fear for an authoritarian government to arise.

The socio-economic issues of the previous decades that saw rise to the new center or 'Third Way' which transformed social democratic parties Europe into center-right parties. Though such a phenomena was observed in more Western than Central Europe, the voters of this new center that were targeted had been those that usually voted Christian democrat or held conservative-liberal leanings. In the emerging political parties of Central Europe over the past twenty years a similar transformation took place but the addition of joining the European Union had an additional repercussion for traditional parties and its voting bloc. In an amazing and voluntary transfer of power, European 'elites' moved from the national to the supranational. This made the citizens in Slovakia see their national politicians as powerless. It should be noted that Slovakia did not gain independence until 1993, therefore the political spectrum was absorbing the ramifications of political parties in a new democracy only to undergo a new shock of political and later economic integration. Arguably after joining the European Union and a stable democratic system was established the center-left and center-right parties in Slovakia began a similar transformation as their Western European brethren. After joining the Eurozone in 2009 and suffering with other eurozone members the strain of the financial crisis wrought by the Greek crisis, the remaining working class and ideological voters of both left and right feel abandoned. Here is where populist rhetoric, politicians, and party is attractive. And in Slovakia where the political party Smer and Prime Minister Robert Fico has proven most successful. By seeking out the working class vote and the ideological left bloc once held by Smer's successor, entering into issue-based partnerships with various voting blocs in the national parliament, Smer has been able to maintain a commanding majority in parliament and dominant public discourse since 2011.

Under communism the media structure was strictly confined to state control be it party-owned newspapers, state radio and television. Censorship did not allow for a challenge of interests and values of the political mainstream. This changed after 1989. However, corruption and mismanagement of the economy involving elites from several established parties has been uncovered and soured the public mood. As such the popularity and success of populist parties and populist politicians in Slovakia and the United States is because of favorable discursive opportunities. In brief, populist candidates and politicians are more attractive to the voter and media.

2.1 The Art of the ‘Sell’: The U.S.

As mentioned in section 1, populism in the United States is not a recent occurrence. Rather than discussing the roots however, it is perhaps best to explain when populism became the most influential and trace its popularity to today.

The Great Plains of the United States has long been the source of wheat. In the 1880s drought arrived and devastated the area. Add to this calamity Southern cotton prices fell and the result was predictable for many tenant farmers. Debt. Economic depression swept the U.S. from 1882-85 and long held grievances against those that farmers did business with such as railroads and lenders came to the surface. By the 1890s, farmers where joined in their angst with industrial workers who shared farmers views on labor and trusts. The so-named Panic of 1893 was the bookend to a long period of economic depression but it was the early decade of resurgent populism in the country.

There were many popular figures during this period. The most notable being William Jennings Bryan who championed the people against Wall Street and big business. Familiar themes seen today can be found as well such as defending the middle class against enemies such as minorities and immigrants. While populism waned after the First World War, it came back during the 1930s during another period of economic uncertainty only to wane again after the Second World War.

In modern U.S. politics, populism has a presence being observed in the 1972, 1992, 1996, and more recent 2016 presidential elections. The spectrum of populism has remained predictable with populist candidates such as George Wallace, Ross Perot, and Patrick Buchanan using rhetoric and highlighting topics and issues familiar with their predecessors of a century ago. Confronting the enemies of the middle class from big companies such as General Motors or lobbyists in Washington who represented foreign interests. While Wallace fought racial integration, Perot and Buchanan battled against foreign workers and the then-proposed trade agreements such as NAFTA. In the 1992 presidential

elections, Ross Perot who ran as a third-party candidate received 19 percent of the vote, which was the best showing for a third party candidate since 1912. Patrick Buchanan who ran a protest campaign in the Republican New Hampshire primary received 38 percent of the vote against incumbent candidate George H.W. Bush. In 1996, Buchanan shocked eventual nominee Bob Dole by winning the Louisiana and Alaska caucuses, and then a repeat performance in New Hampshire.

The American media has identified numerous populist candidates and populist movements. Those listed in the above paragraph and in the 2000, 2004 and 2008 presidential elections there was Ralph Nader, who while not reaching the level of success that Perot received in 1992 nevertheless proved a serious candidate. Democrat John Edwards in 2004 and 2008 sought the populist mantle. In Congressional elections of 2010, the so-called Tea Party used populist rhetoric and symbols.

The Tea Party movement on the right, represents with their large outdoor rallies and patriotic symbols such as the recognizable Gadsden flag tap into a history dating back to anti-Federalism of the 1780s. The impulses that saw the rise of the Tea Party can also be observed in the Occupy movement; the first populist movement on the left since the 1930s (Lowndes and Warren 2011). With a slogan *we are the 99%*, the Occupy movement believes that the 1% creates economic instability and undermines those social safety nets put in place during the New Deal.

Populism has returned in the 2016 presidential campaign with significance, but unlike in previous times where the rhetoric and proposals have come from third party candidates unlikely to win in the general election, populist candidates are from the major political parties. While arguably the 2008 financial crisis unleashed a populist strain that is reshaping the Republican Party, the potency of Democrat Bernie Sanders populism and his 'people army' is worthy of serious discussion. Already an unpredictable primary contest has begun.

Self-made billionaire Donald Trump has astounded political observers by outpolling his Republican rivals despite efforts by Texas Senator Ted Cruz a former darling of the Tea Party movement who continues to make appeals to the antiestablishment mantle. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders who describes himself as a democratic socialist has raised substantial amount of money from small donors and has pushed front-runner Hillary Clinton to adopt more liberal proposals. Such a primary season for Democrats is important as ideologically the left and center-left is reconciled for the eventual general election. However, the populism seen on the right is more interesting because in the attempt to explain the popularity of Trump and Cruz, a distinct ideology has been ignored.

Donald Trump, the 'populist billionaire' is the crafted image he projects. A person embodying common-sense wisdom and leadership skills of the elite. The

fitting together of populism and plutocracy is not an easy task, but the appealing formula works since Trump has been able to use two political traditions⁴. The first is an appeal to blue-collar conservatives and the second is the pursuit of wealth from anti-corporate rhetoric and practice. The MARS phenomena that Warren describes as middle America radicals can have a similarity across the Atlantic in Central Europe where similar issues have created fertile ground for populism's return.

2.2 The Art of the 'Sell': Slovakia

In Slovakia, the prevalent tradition of populist appeals to voters ethnic origins was sufficiently deeply rooted prior to the Second World War II. A combination of historical, constitutional, social and cultural issues, lead Slovak politicians of the 20th century to interpret the so-called 'Slovak issue' with ethnic and nationalist elements such as language and nation. A sensitive issue throughout Slovakia's long history.

Slovaks formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and was affected by mutual interactions with other ethnic groups therein. During other stages of national development, Slovakia was part of the first Czechoslovak Republic and after 1945 the renewed Czechoslovak Republic, a two-nation partnership that allowed the Slovak ethnic entity to prosper. It is not without surprise then that following the 1989 Velvet Revolution that national populism, a potent force throughout Slovak nineteenth century identity and the wartime Slovak State saw a resurgence.

After the collapse of communism, democracy was reestablished. In the political arena, political parties appeal to voters based upon party manifestos, professed values and ideological backgrounds help characterize those populist parties. From 1992 onwards, these parties have regularly received a high percentage of the vote in parliamentary elections and have been coalition members. To distinguish between hard and soft populists. Those that have authoritarian and non-authoritarian tendencies. In Slovakia following independence but before EU accession, Slovakia was under the control of hard populists. During the period of integration a second generation of populists were formed and these soft populists have flourished since E.U. accession⁵.

⁴ To observe how Trump has fit together populism and plutocracy and possibly to understand his contradictory appeal see Donald I. Warren's *The Radical Center: Middle Americans and the Politics of Alienation* (1976) and Isaac William Martin's *Rich People's Movements: Grassroots Campaigns to Untag the One Percent* (2013).

⁵ For further details see Mesežnikov, Grigorij; Gyárfášová, Oľga; Bútora, Martin; Kollár, Miroslav: "Slovakia" in *Populist Politics and Liberal Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*.

The first was the People's Party-Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) that formed a coalition with the Slovak National Party (SNS) in 1992 and then with Union of the Workers Party (ZRS) in 1994. Claiming the title of architect, HZDS, founded in 1991 led the political dialogue and voter support for the division of the Czechoslovak Federation. Portraying itself as advocating Slovak national ambitions, the party and its leader Vladimír Mečiar were the principles during the breakup of Czechoslovakia known in the West as the Velvet Divorce. Mečiar and HZDS after 1993 are models of hardcore populism.

The second was in 2006, when Smer-Social Democracy (Smer) formed a government coalition with HZDS and SNS. So, the first period of populist parties was characterized as hard populism while the second may be considered soft. The incumbent administration of Smer is soft.

Populists have enjoyed dominant positions in Slovak national politics. Electoral success means that populist parties in Slovakia are in fact mainstream and able to pursue political goals. The exploitation of ethno-national issues and topics has seen persistent attention. No political party in Slovakia has had greater success than SNS. Created in 1990, but claiming legitimacy from the historic SNS that had existed from 1870 to 1938 it was a vocal proponent of Slovak independence between 1990 and 1992 and during the years of 1993-1994, 1994-1998 and 2006-2008 it was a part of the governing coalition. Utilizing rhetoric that is both anti-communist and right-wing it is a champion of radical nationalism.

Another mainstay of national-populist politics in Slovakia and currently the dominant political party holding the sole majority of seats in parliament is Smer. The upstart political party of 2002 has emerged with remarkable speed to the predominant role in Slovak national politics. From a self-declared non-ideological party to a third-way party (as briefly described in section 2.) to now openly declaring its social democratic position, it uses the nationalist element. The party and its leader, Prime Minister Robert Fico effectively take pro-Slovak positions on interethnic and international relations, and societal development since the fall of communism. Since its first time in power, both Smer and SNS have strived to strengthen the national element. But while SNS's efforts to promote patriotism, Slovak identity and national solidarity for example, are taken with criticism and skepticism because of their methods, Smer and Fico have no such difficulty. Nationalist arguments as a viable ideological anchor is something that Fico happily promotes. Declaring in 2007 that Slovaks lack a national outburst and that schools neglect a patriotic element (*SITA* 2007) his rhetoric touches upon both but without the negativity that surrounds SNS.

The process of building the state, Smer and Fico view the national element as much more important than democratic substance. Such a view can be observed in his July 2007 outburst that Slovakia was being engulfed by “the cancer of indifference, which is only one step away from national unconsciousness” (*SITA* 2007) and encouraging Slovaks patriotism as a process of that distinguishes from Hungarians. There is also Fico’s statement from July 2008 where he emphasizes the need to strengthen solidarity of Slovaks by building a “sturdy barrier against activities of the peculiar sort of adventurers who undermine Slovakia’s spiritual integrity” (*SME* July 7, 2008). For the prime minister, loyalty to national values is irreplaceable. “The only chance to survive in this complicated and unjust environment with dignity and sovereignty is to stick to Slovak national and state interests and pull together, whether we are on the right, on the left or in the middle,” Fico declared. “I hereby call on [embracing] such togetherness.” A duty therefore.

This duty affirms official state doctrine based on the anti-fascist tradition embodied by the Slovak National Uprising of 1944 as part of Slovakia’s public and political discourse on national history since 1989. Moreover, it remains vital despite revisionist perceptions of the war period on the Slovak state and president Jozef Tiso⁶. Smer fully subscribes to the ideological legacy of the anti-fascist Slovak National Uprising. Effective national populist mobilization therefore has a ethnic-nationalist and social element. And it includes Hungarians.

Ethnic Hungarians are portrayed “as disloyal to the state and a potential source of danger to the majority nation; most majority political leaders do not trust them and suspect them of intentions whose principal objective is to harm the majority nation” (Gyárfášová 2008). Whether the Slovak public has the potential to accept and appreciate such rhetoric is questionable. However, a survey examining collective identities from 2003 whose authors observed: “The strength of national identities rests most probably in potentiality, in the fact that while they may not be overly mobilized at the moment, there may arise a situation when they promptly become mobilized ‘against others’...” (Krivý 2006, p. 100). This situation occurred in 2010 and is presently in the public discourse over the issue of immigration and the continued eurozone crisis. Smer, as the dominant social-democratic party’s unusual emphasis on the national agenda also reflects the value content of the left in Slovakia compared to other Visegrad Four (V4) countries (Gyárfášová – Slosiarik 2008). Leftists in Slovakia essentially more frequently than rightists emphasized the value of nation.

⁶ For a superb comprehensive and scholarly English-language biography of the Catholic priest and Slovak nationalist see *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* by James Mace Ward

This value has been placed under consider pressure since 2010 with the relationship between Bratislava and Brussels and the contradictory nature of national and supranational relations. Issues of macroeconomic policy since Slovak joined the eurozone in 2009 and quotas on immigrants since 2015 highlight tensions between the capitals but also are topics used in fertile populist rhetoric at the national level. It is not without irony that populist sentiment against supranational elites allowed Slovakia to propose strict conditions for the second Greek bail-out when Eurozone Finance Ministers met in 2010 and the 2015 public rebuke by Brussels at Prime Minister Fico's stated religious and numerical conditions that Slovakia would accept refugees during the immigration crisis of that summer.

Populism in campaigns is hardly new to the Slovak electorate. Indeed there are professionalization, personalization, negativity and the broad use of emotions (Šaradin 2008; Žúborová 2011a). There has been in recent years scholarship on parliamentary elections in Central Europe and the specific political communication employed. While some authors have dealt with negativity (Žúborová 2012, 2011a), others have focused on the personalization of campaigns (Štefančík 2007, 2009; Žúborová 2011b) and others still on the political marketing undertaken (Čemez 2012a, 2012b; Žúborová 2011a). On the use of personalization during campaigns one may find a link to populism and also so-called catch-all policies. Whereas with catch-all policies a shift in strategy from ideology to politics, a shift from ideology to leadership is the strategy associated with personalization (Kavanagh 1995; Swanson and Mancini 1996). Personalization within politics is a global phenomena to be sure though populist rhetoric reestablishes the connection between political parties and voters considered lost due to the shift to catch-all policies observed by Swanson and Mancini (1996). Here one can find the appeal to populist candidates and party policies.

Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2009, pp. 832-836) concluded that populist appeals become less impressive after these parties assume power. And while there is a logical background to this conclusion the dominant position of populism in Slovak politics and anti-establishment emotions in the United States point to the possibility of a result beyond the elections of 2016 that does not follow this logical course.

3 SHARED ANGST

The methodology of this paper has been that of a comparative analysis (CA). Comparative analysis within political science is often used to study political systems, institutions and processes. Moreover, such a study can be

completed across local, regional, national and even internationally. Moreover, CA is typically employed on single nation (case) or a group of nation studies. The benefit to this is the fact that CA is grounded upon empirical evidence. Other political studies have developed through ideological and even theoretical discourse, but comparative research aims through a scientific method a greater political comprehension. This allows scholars to ask questions across different kinds of political concerns, seeking the connection, if any, between populism and democratization. Furthermore, as similarities and differences are examined patterns may emerge that allow for assessment of variables and variants within two or more political systems. What is the most appropriate to study for comparison whether quantitative or qualitative is decided by the researcher (Guy 1988). For the purpose of this paper a qualitative nature of comparison was sought within the discourse of populism in the U.S. and Slovakia.

All countries, to various degrees function interdependently, thus the popularity of comparative method of analyzing two or more countries (Landman, 2008). Topics such as immigration and the interdependence of economics and political decisions, especially in the case of Slovakia as a member of the European Union; may give a reduction in the transferability of findings. This may be due to the those findings being applicable to their counterparts as functionally equivalent. But this truth fails to describe the transnational trends (Franzese, 2007). And in comparing populism there are transnational trends that may qualitatively explain populisms success within society on said issues such as ethnic (national) preference, immigration, economic redistribution, and political integration to name a few.

There has been criticism of studying processes and institutions within two or more countries because less in-depth information compared to studies involving one country is produced (Franzese, 2007). While such criticism appears to be a substantial there is not complete agreement amongst scholars that such a balance between quantity and quality is of considerable importance, or even relevant.

The causes of political upheaval are similar in Europe and the U.S., they are not identical and in the case of Slovakia it has been indicated in the previous section to have been a potent force for over twenty years. The global financial crisis of 2007-2008 and the Great Recession that followed has left many Americans with the sentiment that the recovery was uneven. Europeans, arguably have felt it did not arrive, and Slovaks in particular, already a poor nation in comparison of GDP to their fellow eurozone members have felt unnecessarily burdened with an economic bail-out and immigration policy not by their own national design but imposed upon them by supranational entities.

Moreover, for both middle class Americans and Slovaks austerity has put considerable strain on the social safety net bringing to the surface questions over its long-term health. Such anger and frustration has fueled existing populist political parties in Slovakia and created fractures in the existing political parties in America. This explains the rise of Mr. Trump and Senator Sanders.

Furthermore, while the phenomenon of blue-collar conservatism is a distinct ideological cohort its mixture with national or ethnic elements indicates its viability in Slovakia. Whereas MARS were lower middle class whites who didn't fit the familiar patterns of either left or right in America. The distinct ethnic pro-Slovak nationalism of SNS and Smer rhetoric bridges the left-right gap in the battle against non-Slovaks and European politicians. Similar sentiment is found in hostility to the corporate elite and to immigration. Government social programs are supported but overt assistance to the poor or those in particular who don't work are opposed i.e. Roma. In the current election cycle in the United States there is a considerable overlap between the Tea Party worldview and that of Middle American Radicalism that Warren wrote about in the 1970s. And while Warren is writing about a segment of the American voter the sentiment is eerily familiar to the Slovak middle class voter towards non-Slovaks and the supranational government in Brussels.

CONCLUSION

Political trends often occur at the same time. In Europe and the U.S. it is true especially now. On both continents the political establishment is rattled. Political candidates and parties once widely held as belonging on the fringe have moved to the center stage and voters are leaving the traditional parties. The ugliness of populisms black and white views and uncompromising positions on minorities and elites deny legitimacy to the opposition, weaken minority rights, polarize society and lead to majoritarian extremism. Broadly speaking this is the concern in America and Europe, with fear that in Slovakia majoritarian extremism will occur. Populism is full of contradictions. While anti-elitist it creates new elites.

In American history there are not many examples of populist strongmen, though Southern governors Huey Long and George Wallace arguably are. The institutional and professional attachment to American democracy is firm enough to prevent more examples. And when previous populists have failed to win national elections in the U.S. important reforms have still been brought about such as anti-trust legislation and several labor laws championed by progressive politician Robert M. La Follette, Sr.

It should not be a surprise that the rise of populism in Central Europe since 2004 has directly challenged established liberal-democratic governments. Between 1990 and 2006 changes in the nation's socio-political situation occurred led by the political elite but often at the hands of outside forces which inevitably has led to electoral backlash. The strength of populist parties in Slovakia must be viewed in the context of socio-economic developments implemented through liberal reforms after 1998 but especially between 2002 and 2006.

In both Slovakia and the United States, the difference between rightwing and leftwing populism is to whom it excludes, which usually accompanies an ideology wither nationalism or socialism. In both countries the former is true while there are indications that the latter is the intention for the U.S.

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