State Transformation and Populism:

From the Internationalized to the Neo-Sovereign State?

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Abstract

This article conceptualizes populism as a discourse of international relations that arises as response to state transformation, a phenomenon that encompasses changes in both state-society relations and the norms defining the appropriate practice of statehood. The current surge of populism is a response to one such transformation: the internationalization of state elites and their insulation from popular scrutiny. Populism does not simply address material and cultural dislocations that internationalization entails. Crucially, its distinct discursive logic allows these partial social demands to adopt the moral claim to representation of the 'real people' and so counter the universality of the norms that underpin state transformation. Beyond the current conjuncture of state internationalization, this conceptualization accommodates iterations of populism in various regional and historical contexts of state transformation, making it a promising basis for the further comparative study of populism.

Introduction

Scholars have long considered populism a pervasive condition of democracy (Canovan, 1999; Mudde, 2004), but its current surge across the world has generated a discussion about how populism relates to broader trends of international politics as well. In this vein, and most prominently, the current rise of populism has been linked with globalization. To some scholars, globalization explains populism as a cultural resistance (Kriesi et al, 2008) or as a reaction to socioeconomic dislocations (Rodrik, 2017).

Valuable as these analyses are, they still leave questions open. Systemic explanations of populism as reaction to globalization can ignore important variations and contingencies such as the timing of its emergence. These explanations can also suffer from conceptual slippage, given that the exact link between globalization and populism is usually specified according to one's definition of globalization and whether its economic or cultural dimensions are prioritized. Even so, it is also not clear why globalization should give rise specifically to populism or populism-infused phenomena, and not socialism or nationalism in their pure forms. What makes populism such a pervasive feature of international relations today? And more generally, why and how does change on the international level foster populism in national politics?

All this points to an overarching conceptual question that is the main focus of this article, namely how to think about populism as a phenomenon and concept of international relations. I argue that this is most fruitfully done if we understand populism not as programmatic response to economic or cultural dislocation brought about by international change (because this can be done by other pre-existing ideologies as well), but as a distinct way of articulating societal frustrations as an overarching demand of an antagonistic identity of the 'people' for recognition and representation. Looked at this way, the question of the link between populism and systemic

conditions like globalization is less about policy content and more about how international change engenders tensions in the relationship between official power and political community.

To understand this connection between international change and the power-people nexus, I turn to the concept of *state transformation*. Populism today is a response to one such major transformation of statehood: the emergence after the Cold War of the *internationalized state* whereby, in response to their ever-shrinking capacity to regulate modernizing and fragmenting domestic societies, state elites presented the increasingly transnational nature of policy challenges under globalization as legitimation for their migration to transgovernmental policy networks and supranational institutions. This has changed the reference point of state legitimacy from state elites' vertical relationship with the political community to their horizontal cosmopolitan relationship with equivalent elites from other states. In the process, 'states have uncoupled from societies' (Bickerton et al, 2015: 312), and governing has become detached and insulated from national representative processes.

Any state transformation normally entails some combination of redistribution of economic costs, a challenge to established patterns of power-society relations, and normative modernization that often fosters cultural alienation. With its embrace of international economic openness, the insulation of its elites in opaque transnational governance networks, and the prioritization of universal ideas of efficiency and rules-based governance, state internationalization translates globalization domestically as a multifaceted challenge to the standing of political communities as source of political legitimacy. In reaction to this, populism demands a return to re-territorialized political rule where the sovereignty of government and people become coterminous again. Populism's potency as a political discourse, and its distinctiveness as a concept, is that it addresses all three externalities of internationalization: economic-material, political-representational, and normative.

The article argues that populism is a distinct political discourse of international relations that constitutes a self-standing, and qualitatively different from ideologies like nationalism or socialism, reaction to state internationalization. Especially concerning nationalism, the analysis will show that populism differs from its classical vision of the overlap between political power, state and nation. For populism, the territorially bounded re-alignment between political power and people can only be realized *against* a state apparatus absorbed in transnational networks and reflecting the priorities of internationalization. At the same time, under internationalization populism's opposition to official power often comes to be articulated in conjunction with the theme of separation of the domestic from the international, typically a feature of nationalism.

The article proceeds as follows: First, I discuss the concept of state transformation and the phenomenon of state internationalization. Then I present my conceptualization of populism, showing how populism as a discourse of international relations challenges state transformation generally, and the internationalized state particularly. In the third section I offer an empirical demonstration of the argument, outlining the vision of the neo-sovereign state put forth by populists. The cases I examine are Western democracies, which have the longest experience of embeddedness in global and regional transgovernmental governance. My conceptualization however can apply to state internationalization in other regions, as well as historical cases of state transformation. The concluding section considers the implications of the argument for the study of populism in world politics.

State Transformation and the Emergence of the Internationalized State

Populism is a reaction to the internationalization of the state as the latest incidence of state transformation, a multi-faceted phenomenon with internal and external, and material and

normative, aspects. The state is understood here as a purposeful actor (Mann, 1984; Skocpol, 1979) operating on the intersection of the domestic and the international. Domestically it is linked with its society via a specific set of institutions and representative practices (Migdal, 2001; Risse-Kappen, 1994). Internationally it is embedded in institutional arrangements, rules, norms and practices that define the character and generally accepted standards of statehood.

The specific shape of statehood is a function of how state elites mediate, aggregate and adapt to these domestic and international conditions (Huber et al, 2015). In doing so, elites pursue primarily the state's (and their own) reproduction as a legitimate institution of political rule. Internationally this has a material aspect (e.g. maintaining effective control over a certain territory), but also a normative one: the state must constantly adapt to evolving norms of appropriate exercise of sovereignty (Zürn and Deitelhoff, 2015: 207; generally, Wendt, 1999). Domestically elites must both abide by established standards of legitimate representation and satisfy a variety of societal demands. These international and domestic exigencies on the state are often contradictory, which often constrains but also provides opportunities to state elites to pursue their reproduction by playing domestic pressures off international ones.

The international environment can pose both material and ideational pressures for change on the state. Materially, changes in the international distribution of political and economic power can restructure power relations between societal interests in national arenas (Gourevitch, 1986). Ideationally, change of the normative character of statehood also redefines the appropriate modes of incorporation and representation of society (Koslowski and Kratochwil, 1995: 135-137). The state is also subject to transformation from below such as the emergence of new political cleavages, the loosening of traditional social bonds etc.

State transformation is thus a meaningful change of material and ideational aspects of statehood, both with regards to state-society relations domestically and the practice of

statehood internationally. State transformation is catalysed by a constellation of internal and external changes engulfing the state. The specific direction and content of this transformation however is determined by the actions of state elites themselves as they engage with changing conditions and pursue the perpetuation of the state's and their own legitimacy. The passage from the classical nation-state to the internationalized state today is an example of such a transformation that reflects a conscious strategy of adaptation and balancing between domestic and external change.

In the classical nation-state, which in post-World War II Western Europe and North America was also a mass-democratic one, the sovereignties of political authority, state apparatus and political community over a given territory coincided (Bickerton, 2015: 58; Zürn and Deitelhoff, 2015: 195-196). In the advanced capitalist states of 'embedded liberalism', the dilemma of international and domestic adaptation was easier to resolve, since in principle governments could satisfy societal preferences while they partook in international cooperation. For example, trade openness and stable exchange rates still allowed governments to pursue their preferred model of economic regulation and welfare (Katzenstein, 1985; Ruggie, 1982).

After the end of the Cold War, the national economies of the sovereign nation-state were becoming difficult to regulate due to high capital mobility and intensification of transnational economic and societal flows and exchanges. At the same time state-society relations underwent a significant transformation (Blyth and Katz, 2005). Under embedded liberalism they were structured by mass parties and sectional organizations representing and aggregating societal interests. But the representation of these interests had been steadily weakening since the 1970s in Western societies due to ongoing socioeconomic and value changes and the loosening of traditional identifications like religion and social class (Inglehart, 1977; Katz and Mair, 1995).

This 'crisis of Keynesianism' made state elites realize that policymaking according to the preferences of increasingly differentiated and atomized societies failed to produce efficient outcomes (Bickerton, 2015: 65-68, 71), not least because at the same time economic and social policy challenges became more transnational in character. In response to this, elites gradually strengthened political and administrative transgovernmental policy networks, and international and supranational institutions. Within these institutions and networks, politicians and bureaucrats from different states exercise collective control over the economic, societal and security aspects of globalization. The migration of state elites to a supranational and transgovernmental realm of mutually monitored policy convergence was seen as offering the best way to manage processes that increasingly cut across borders (Huber et al, 2015: 17).

But in this way the international legitimized the elites' emancipation from society (Bickerton, 2015: 66), as internationalization of policymaking allowed them to evade the vertical chain of accountability between government and people when this relationship was being significantly complicated by the contradictions of economic and social modernization (Bickerton, 2012; Mair, 2009: 14). The disaggregation of state sovereignty and the transference of its political and administrative components to supranational institutions and transgovernmental networks sheltered elites from the demands of individualizing societies, and allowed them to focus on responding to global competitive pressures instead. Important changes in the nature of state-society relations in Western democracies, such as the passage from the mass to the cartel party, have been legitimated with reference to the needs of the state in a globalized world (Blyth and Katz, 2005).

Elites now present their legitimacy as deriving less from representation of society than from the delivery of efficient responses to problems of transnational magnitude (Bickerton, 2015: 57). Thus, state internationalization is the outcome of conscious elite strategies in the face of

concurrent domestic and international challenges to their capacity to act. The denationalization of policymaking removed elites from the scrutiny of political communities (Bickerton et al, 2015: 320), while it allowed them to renew the legitimacy of the state as an entity pursuing efficient solutions through transgovernmental cooperation. The side-effect of this strategy is the entrenchment of international institutions that, by facilitating policy coordination and mutual monitoring between national authorities, limit the discretion of political communities for meaningful decision-making at home (Zürn, 2004: 262-275).

While this process has been most intense, and most carefully documented, in the West (Bickerton, 2012), it is not confined there. Indeed, the crisis of Keynesian political economy and social modernization in the West have their analogies in the failure e.g. of import substitution and protectionism in Latin American economies in the 1980s, or the popular democratic pressures on authoritarian states like Turkey and Thailand in recent decades. Even though the pathways of change differ from the West, in many non-Western countries the dynamic has been similar: economic globalization and proliferation of international network governance after the end of the Cold War provided state elites with the means and legitimation to shelter themselves from demands of increasingly restive societies at home (Hadiz and Chryssogelos, 2017).

State internationalization creates three sets of interrelated dislocations in national arenas. First, the economic dimensions of globalization, such as openness to free trade and global capital flows, create substantial costs to socioeconomic strata exposed to international competition. These material dislocations can find expression in sociocultural grievances, as the scholarship on the affinity of ‘globalization losers’ for the populist radical right in Europe demonstrates (Kriesi et al, 2008; Rydgren, 2013).

Second, internationalization of the state poses important questions about the democratic legitimacy of political systems that still function overwhelmingly along national lines. In response to this, the transference of policymaking away from the national level can itself become politicized, as the legitimacy of increasingly intrusive international institutions and of decision-making far and above nationally demarcated democratic communities becomes an object of contestation (Bickerton, 2015: 59; Zürn, 2004: 275-277).

Third, state transformation becomes possible because it can be legitimated with reference to dominant international norms. The passage from 'modern to post-modern statehood' is justified by state elites as overcoming old-fashioned sovereignty and embracing economic and cultural openness (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 22-23). The shift away from vertical territorial representation is legitimated by the favouring of decentralized modes of *governance* over hierarchical *government*; the downplaying of territoriality (Bickerton, 2015: 54-55, Zürn and Deitelhoff, 2015: 211); and the view of sovereignty as conditional on the satisfaction of universalist norms like the responsibility to protect (Zürn and Deitelhoff, 2015: 208). Economically, competitiveness and efficiency trump representation of societal interests that are often presented as sectional and parochial (Zürn, 2012: 66).

For internationalized elites operating above and beyond the nation-state, '"policy" efficiency and "best practices" [are more important] than representation' (Kratochwil, 2014: 119). This normative change however is not unproblematic. Its 'cult of universality of norms' sidesteps the 'historicity and embeddedness of institutions in […] specific "local" practices and understandings' (ibid: 129). For all its claims to universality, the modernization of international norms under globalization can also alienate and energize an array of particularisms along class, ethnic, cultural etc. lines. As I will show, one of the strengths of populism is that it can reinstate

to these particularisms their own claim to universality: the moral appeal of the 'people' for recognition and representation.

Conceptualizing Populism as Discourse of International Relations

Populism is a contested concept. Here I view it as a discourse following the work of Ernesto Laclau (2005a; 2005b; see also Howarth et al 2000; Panizza, 2005; Stavrakakis, 2014). According to this approach, populism is an antagonistic discourse that coalesces a chain of demands unaddressed by official power. This chain is articulated via a signifier – usually the 'people' – whose generality (or 'emptiness') captures the multiplicity of unaddressed demands and articulates them as a unified front against the official power that has neglected them. A populist discourse follows the logic of equivalence: unaddressed demands become linked in a chain that acts as a dividing line between people and power. Populism's logic of equivalence contrasts to the logic of difference: official power segmenting the chain of social demands and treating each in separation.

The discursive view is important for conceptualizing populism in international relations. As opposed to the dominant approach in the comparative study of populism, which views it as a thin-centred ideology that acquires a more specific content by association with thicker ideologies (see most recently Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017), the discursive approach views populism as a self-standing phenomenon with its own distinct logic of political contestation. The discursive view also allows the concept of populism to travel more for comparative research, given that well-developed, thick ideologies are rarer outside Western countries. As such, it provides a more flexible analytical framework for studying populism in its international dimensions.

Populist discourses emerge as a response to representational gaps between power and society. These gaps are both material-structural – in the sense that a political system always fails to tackle some societal demands – and discursive – in the sense that there is never a perfect overlap between the legitimating discourse of political power and all values represented in a political community (Arditi, 2010: 493). The nature of representational gaps in a political system conditions the subsequent expression of populism. As the official power towards which social demands are addressed is the state, itself part of a broader international system with structural and normative dimensions (Bull, 1977), the relationship between power and society is internationally embedded.

The domestic and international pressures the state found itself in after the end of the Cold War, and the ways its elites have decided to tackle them, showcase how the gaps between state and society can be internationally conditioned. The function of the internationalized state is underpinned by the segmented treatment of social demands under technocratic and inclusive discourses (De Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017: 6). Elites' decision to transpose policymaking from the national to the supranational and transgovernmental level raises the question of democratic legitimacy of world politics: the more comprehensive international institutions and transgovernmental governance processes become, the more they constrain the meaningfulness of democratic choice at the national level (Zürn, 2004; 2014).

The calculations of state elites have been particularly obvious in Europe, where under the weight of EU integration the nation-state has been transformed into the 'member state'. In the European member state national governments consciously neutralize social demands and legitimize their rule with reference to their participation in opaque EU policymaking processes. Rather than the vertical relationship with their electorates, state elites prioritize the horizontal relationship with elites from other EU member states, as they collectively eschew national

representative politics. In this sense populism is a reaction to the hollowing out of national democracy under intense regional integration (Bickerton, 2015: 61; Mair, 2009: 17).

But structural and normative gaps between society and state do not over-determine the emergence and content of populism. These hinge on how political actors will align available discursive elements in the social field to construct antagonistic discourses and an identity of the 'people' (De Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017: 5). Thus, the negotiation by state elites of the relationship and contradictions between the domestic and the international contains within it the opportunities for populist agency to exploit new gaps between state and society. As populism becomes articulated at two intersections – of state and society, and of the domestic and the international – populist mobilization often develops with external referents. Especially in the internationalized state, the 'power' and the 'system' increasingly connote not only domestic but also international authority and elites.

The discursive approach allows for the comparative research of populism in an international context: as state internationalization creates multifaceted material, political and normative dislocations in multiple countries or regions, frustrated demands get woven together and articulated around the representational claim of the 'people'. The specific construction and articulation of the 'people' will reflect variations of the local context – countries' political systems, ethnic composition, political economies, historical memories, position of peripherality etc. – and different programmatic agendas will develop. Thus, populist agendas under globalization should be compared less in terms of *policy content* than of the *form* with which demands are put forward.

This view of populism as political agency within a broader structure of state-society relations and the state's embeddedness in the international system helps account for the different time sequence of the appearance of populism. The internationalization of the state is

a process that has been ongoing since the 1980s, but effective populist reactions have taken a long time to appear. Often this happens only under conditions of concurrent economic and political crisis (Hadiz and Chryssogelos, 2017: 407), such as financial crises in Latin America in the 1980s, Asia in the 1990s and Europe in the 2010s that quickly acquired the character of severe crises of representation of national political systems.

In this way, the argument here avoids international-structural determinism by accounting for the variegated impact international systemic conditions may have on national politics. Populism is a temporally and spatially contingent effect of the process by which globalization becomes translated in domestic contexts as a multifaceted challenge to power-society relations by the adaptation efforts of political and administrative elites – efforts that, under globalization, invariably take the form of internationalization of policymaking but can cause a variety of concurrent material, political and cultural frustrations and therefore different types of populism in different countries at different points in time.

In a context of state internationalization, it is common to identify populism with the demand for national sovereignty. But 'national resistance […] is not based in the respective nation-states' "obsession" with sovereignty, but within the national *societies*' (Zürn, 2004: 279, emphasis in original). Populism is a discourse of *social* sovereignty that simultaneously challenges supranational institutions and transgovernmental policy networks outside *and* national elites inside the state eager to participate in them. Thus, a key difference between populism and nationalism is that while nationalism assumes the identification of state and people, populism sees the interests of the two under internationalization as diverging. Consequently, when populist parties gain power they often make a distinction between the political component of the state (now considered to be aligned again with the interests of the people) and its bureaucratic, judicial, regulatory etc. components embedded in

transgovernmental networks (Zürn et al, 2012). For nationalists the state is the expression internationally of the nation. For populists, political rule must express the interests of the people *against* a state absorbed in a web of transnational policy cooperation. In populism re-territorialized political rule actually means rule *against* the state (at least until the later has been purged of its internationalized elites).

Populism does not just articulate material and representational grievances as rightful demands of the 'people'. Its very logic as antagonistic and oppositional discourse also contradicts the universalist character of established international norms, through which state elites have tried to legitimize domestically state transformation. By expressing a distinct way of relating to established norms of the international system, we can think of populism not simply as a phenomenon but as a distinct *discourse* of international relations.

State transformation generally, and the emergence of the internationalized state more specifically, is a phenomenon with normative as well as material dimensions. Generally official power prioritizes a technocratic and segmented way of addressing social demands. In the internationalized state this has taken the form of 'responsible' politics that privileges efficient collective problem-solving over satisfying the demands of specific social groups (Bickerton, 2012; Mair, 2009). The elites of the internationalized state present their capacity to tackle policy challenges as intricately tied to their membership of transgovernmental and supranational networks and institutions. This is however more than a question of practicality. Institutions and networks of global governance are underpinned by myriad norms, practices and ideas with a claim to universal applicability (Reus-Smit, 2001; Sikkink, 1998): efficiency, openness, rule-based decision-making, rights etc. In the face of the universality of established international norms, the partial demands and grievances of social groups and political communities can be easily dismissed as parochial (Kratochwil, 2014: 203).

Weaving frustrated demands around the signifier of the 'people' reflects populism's intention to allow the bearers of these demands to redefine themselves as the real political community with a rightful claim to representation. At the core of populism is the claim of a political identity composed of the excluded *parts* to define themselves as the legitimate *whole* of the political community (Arditi, 2010: 490-493; Laclau, 2005a: 81). Populism is characterized then by a discursive bifurcation. By rallying multiple marginalized groups, populism aims to impose a new hegemonic definition of the political field (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). But before achieving this universalism, the political identities of the 'people' necessarily start off as antagonistic, oppositional and therefore essentially partial and circumscribed. Populism's aim to achieve a hegemonic universalism-in-partiality is the mirror image of official power's promotion of 'diversity-in-unity' (Abts and Rummens, 2007).

Populism's bifurcation between particularism and universalism enables it to counter the universality of international norms upon which state elites rely to legitimize the internationalization of the state. While cultural identitarian grievances can be dismissed as narrow nationalism and socioeconomic demands as parochial classism, populism puts forth a morally underpinned dialectic between the partiality of the political identity of the 'people' it has constructed and the universality of the claim to representation. Class, ethnic, national etc. grievances against the internationalized state can make their own strong claim to universality as demands of the 'people', the real political community. What look like parochial agendas in a globalized world acquire their own counter-claim to universality against the norms that underpin the international institutions within which state elites have retreated. In this way, populism effectively undercuts the effort of state elites to reproduce and legitimize themselves via the international realm.

The Neo-Sovereign State in Practice: 'Taking Back Control' in Western Democracies

Populist parties and movements in Western democracies, which have the longest experience of embeddedness in networks of transgovernmental governance, come in different ideological iterations, spanning the right and the left of the political spectrum. Despite the different ways in which they construct the identity of the 'people', they challenge the principles and legitimations that have underpinned the denationalization of policymaking in the West. To norms of economic openness, policy effectiveness and post-modernization of sovereignty, these populists juxtapose the moral claim to political representation of territorially rooted political communities.

Donald Trump's 2016 US presidential election campaign was not only characterized by a virulent anti-immigrant discourse, but also by the explicit promise to free the US from the burdens of serving as the guarantor of the international liberal order. Trump's discourse explicitly tied domestic elites to foreign interests that rob the US government of its capacity to protect American interests and condemn its people to 'unfair deals' – be it trade openness or the security commitments to allies in Europe and Asia. As articulated in his inauguration speech, Trump's promise to restore popular sovereignty had a clear external referent – the motto of 'America first', a promise to shed America's role of global imperial guarantor in favour of the role of a nation-state looking out for its interests.

In Europe populists have long been Eurosceptic, opposing the transference of power from the state to the EU, a thick organizational web of supranational and transgovernmental cooperation. When the vast majority of successful populist parties in Europe belonged to the radical right this could be explained by their strongly nationalist or, more accurately, nativist feelings (Mudde, 2007). Yet the Eurozone crisis revealed how this role could be played as well by populist parties of the left like SYRIZA and Podemos (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014),

or populist parties with a more heterogeneous profile like the Five Star Movement in Italy. With Brussels-imposed austerity and bailouts the societies of the European South, that had until that point been quite pro-EU, came to see EU membership as a constraint on national sovereignty and democratic representation (Clements et al, 2014).

The success of these populist movements cannot be understood in isolation from their capacity to lump together domestic and international elites (Brussels, the financial markets, Germany), to problematize the genuineness of democratic choice under conditions of intrusive macroeconomic monitoring, and to clamour for reinstatement of democratic sovereignty to the locus where this has been traditionally practiced, i.e. the nation-state. Even though populist mobilization during the Eurozone crisis has had transnational dimensions (such as when SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras ran as a candidate for president of the European Commission in the 2014 European elections), populist parties in the EU South represent political identities of the 'people' defined primarily along national lines (Halikiopoulou et al, 2012).

A comparison between the populist and the non-populist left is instructive. The attitude of most variants of the non-populist left in Western democracies – social-democratic, green, even radical anti-globalization ones – towards internationalization had been to try to democratize global governance at the international level on the basis of cosmopolitan ideas. They would not challenge the *fact* of internationalization but rather its *content*. They accepted that problems of transnational nature demanded international solutions, and tried to shape the deliberations of global governance accordingly. The comparison with the populist left puts into perspective the distinct logic of populism: even parties espousing progressive goals may see these as best realized by territorially grounded communities (Zürn, 2004: 278-285; 2014: 61-64).

A good example of this is the SYRIZA-led government in Greece that came to power in 2015 on an explicit promise to reorient Greece's relationship with the EU. Many were surprised

that SYRIZA chose for its coalition partner not one of the ideologically adjacent (but pro-EU) centre-left parties but the nationalist-populist party of Independent Greeks (ANEL). That choice signalled SYRIZA's understanding that the end of austerity was not just a matter of economic policy, but primarily of reinstatement of policy independence to the national level.

The economic renegotiation with the Eurozone was the most prominent example of this approach. But the SYRIZA-ANEL coalition exhibited an intention to extract Greece from the obligations that the embedding in EU and other international structures entailed in a range of other policy areas as well: from energy policy (Michalopoulos, 2015) to immigration, where SYRIZA challenged the EU Dublin regulations not only on humanitarian grounds but also on national interest grounds (claiming that they placed unfair burdens on Greece), to even sports governance, where its effort to uproot corruption from Greek football turned into a showdown with UEFA's rules of political non-interference in football affairs.

Until it was forced by the Eurozone to accept a new bailout in July 2015, the SYRIZA-ANEL coalition explicitly presented disengagement from external constraints as precondition for putting through its domestic agenda. Indeed, most of SYRIZA's ambitious promises, from the end of austerity to a shakeup of the 'old system of economic oligarchy' to a reinstatement of the 'people' as the ultimate source of political power, presupposed the modification of a series of international agreements and obligations Greece had signed up to. More than an anti-austerity coalition, the Tsipras government of the first half of 2015 was a far-reaching experiment in radically re-territorializing political rule.

Elsewhere in Europe, the governments of Viktor Orban in Hungary and of Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland challenge the EU based on nationalist populism. Here as well these governments go beyond simple policy spats with Brussels. They both put forward the repatriation of powers to nation-states from the EU and hence the re-alignment of state with

popular sovereignty. Autarky from international financial institutions plays a big role in Orban’s rhetoric (given Hungary's experience with IMF-dictated austerity and economic crisis that spilled over into widespread distrust of pro-European elites in 2008-10), while PiS has decided (not unlike the first SYRIZA-ANEL government) to vocally challenge EU diktats across the board, from immigration to environmental policy to reform of the judiciary.

In both cases the ‘elites’ and ‘power’ which these governments are opposing are not only inside Hungary and Poland but also outside, primarily in Brussels. More than their rise to power, it is their *exercise* of power in office that relies on a constant targeting of institutions and processes outside the borders of the nation-state. More than overturning the ‘system’ at home, it is the rebalancing of the state’s relationship with the transgovernmental and supranational structures within which it is embedded that is meant to guarantee popular sovereignty. Mirroring the actions of populist governments, opposition movements in both countries have come to see EU membership as the last guarantee for the survival of counter-majoritarian institutions of liberal democracy in their countries.

The Leave campaign in the British EU membership referendum also exhibited frustration with elites’ embedding in policy processes that transcend the nation-state and limit the options of political communities. British Euroscepticism has a long pedigree of presenting the EU as an intrusive and unelected institution that limits the sovereignty of parliament and courts. Both the Leave campaign during the referendum, and the Conservative government of Theresa May that undertook to implement UK’s exit from the EU after the Brexit vote, advocated re-establishing popular sovereignty and control over key functions of the state that were subsumed in EU policy networks and institutions, from trade policy to immigration to market regulation.

It is interesting to note that, while British Euroscepticism and the vast majority of the Leave campaign were rooted in the right (the Conservative Party and the right-wing populist UKIP),

the same affinity for independent policymaking accountable to the people has also been exhibited by the left wing of the Labour Party, most prominently its leader Jeremy Corbyn, an exponent of left-wing populism in Europe – Labour's central election slogan in the 2017 election after all was 'For the many, not the few'. Populists of the left and the right may differ as to how inclusive the political community inside national borders must be, but both think that policy discretion presupposes freedom from external constraints, and that popular sovereignty is ultimately realized within the jurisdiction of the state. Contrary to the preferences of Labour's elites, Corbyn's attitude towards the EU ranges from the indifferent to the outright suspicious although many of the policies he espouses – tighter market regulation, protection of the environment – would arguably be easier to achieve if the UK remained in the EU.

This is not to indiscriminately equate the populist right with the populist left. Whether populism prioritizes a definition of the 'people' according to the inside/outside dimension that is a key feature of nationalism (as the populist right does) or an emancipatory 'empty' understanding of the populist signifier that draws on its core up/down dimension (as the populist left does) (De Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017: 13-14) has indeed important repercussions about populist preferences on domestic governance. But under conditions of internationalization the inside/outside and top/down dimensions are increasingly difficult to disentangle. The increasingly hostile attitude of some left-wing Brexiteers towards immigration from Eastern Europe, originally a rallying call of right-wing populists, is a case in point here (see e.g. Goodhart, 2018).

With state elites increasingly embedded in transnational governance networks and supranational institutions, an emancipatory vertical differentiation between the elites and the people inevitable acquires an inside/outside dimension. This has allowed the European populist left to deploy patriotic and sovereigntist themes next to its egalitarian ones during the Eurozone

crisis in ways that the non-populist left would find difficult to do. SYRIZA's revival of World War II national resistance slogans is a case in point (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014).

Under state internationalization on the other hand the inside/outside dimension that is characteristic of nationalism and, in a more radical form, nativism (Mudde, 2007) finds it easier to acquire a more emancipatory content. The menacing 'outside' is not only equal (hostile nations) or inferior (immigrants, minorities), but also superior (global and regional elites). This allows the populist right to infuse its nationalist understanding of the 'people' with an anti-elite meaning, making it appear emancipatory and democratizing. Ultimately, under state internationalization populism is an attractive political strategy because it allows an inter-articulation of the up/down and inside/outside dimensions.

Conclusions

This article has argued that populism today is a reaction to state internationalization under conditions of globalization. This state transformation has been brought about as state elites tried to use adaptation to policy challenges of increasingly global and transnational character to legitimize their insulation from fragmenting and individualizing societies formulating increasingly complex demands. Populism can effectively express discontent with all of the economic dislocation, representational impotence and normative modernization that underpin this disaggregation of state sovereignty. For this reason, it is a rewarding strategy against state internationalization under conditions of globalization, and of state transformation more generally.

A conceptualization of populism as an antagonistic discourse constructed around the signifier of the 'people' helps us appreciate its role in international relations both as a reaction

to material structural change and as a counter-normative discourse opposing the universality of dominant international norms that legitimize the unbundling of the nation-state. This discursive conceptualization of populism dovetails with the ideational view of world politics that is found in constructivist and post-structural literatures of international relations theory. It is therefore one way for future research to bridge political theory, comparative politics and IR in the study of populism in world politics.

Another conceptual corollary is that, in an ever-globalized world, it is necessary to incorporate the international dimension as constitutive of a definition of populism and its differentiation from non-populist politics. Greece is an interesting example. Even after accepting a new bailout, the SYRIZA-ANEL government was re-elected in September 2015 and is since then implementing EU-dictated austerity. Is it still populist though? According to the argument here, a key feature of populism is the active effort to undo at least some of the key features of state internationalization. Under this definition, the SYRIZA-ANEL government, which after the summer of 2015 tries to tackle all major policy challenges Greece faces (the economy, migration, foreign policy) via the EU, can only with great difficulty still be considered populist.

With regards to the historical applicability of the analysis, this article argues that populism need not be identified with any specific policy or ideological outlook. If populism in Western democracies today usually exhibits an opposition to free trade, global governance, humanitarian intervention and policies that imply further denationalization and disaggregation of state sovereignty, it is important to remember that e.g. the American agrarian populists of the 1890s were pro-free trade and in favour of supporting democratic governments around the world (Amstutz, 2014) or that the populist radical right in the 1980s had embraced neoliberal economics (Chryssogelos, 2014). In all these cases the distinct characteristic of populism was

not its policy content, but the form under which this was being articulated: a weaving of various grievances around the moral claim to representation of a constructed identity of the 'people' with the promise to normatively counter whatever was considered at any given time the modern and appropriate exercise of statehood. Historical comparisons may shed further light on populism's role as opponent to previous cases of state transformation.

With regards to the applicability outside of the West of the claim that populism is a reaction to state internationalization, this indeed seems to be the case to the extent that in multiple world regions populism emerged after experiments of sheltering the state from the socioeconomic demands and representational expectations of political communities by subsuming its functions in international and supranational institutions (Bickerton, 2012: 190-191). State transformation in Europe towards the 'member state' for example may have its analogy in Asia in the emergence of the depoliticized and representationally insulated 'regulatory state' (Bickerton, 2015: 57) which is also deeply enmeshed in regional and global governance institutions. Asian populisms could then fruitfully be understood also through the lens of state internationalization, especially in countries like Thailand where at times of financial crisis international institutions enabled the responses of a state always suspicious of the popular masses (McCargo, 2001).

Similar patterns were present in Latin America, with the emergence of left-wing populism in several countries after the economic crises of the 1990s, and in Turkey, with the emergence of Islamic populism after a harsh IMF adjustment program (Aytaç and Öniş, 2014). In these cases as well, traditional elites' embrace of internationalization, accentuated in periods of crisis, lead to populist reactions that saw making the state responsive to popular demands and freeing it from international constraints as mutually dependent goals.

Finally, the degree of state internationalization may explain the different content of populist identities in world politics. In the West, where the state is deeply embedded in

networks of transgovernmental governance, populism wants to curtail state internationalization that has gone too far, hence the discursive constructions of the ‘people’ overlap often to a large degree with national identities. In the Global South internationalization of the state is resisted, but often the deficient representation of the state itself in the international system is also seen as a problem. Hence a demand of non-Western populisms is often not the withdrawal from structures of international cooperation, as often posited by their Western brethren, but their radical democratization. For this reason, populist discourses in the Global South may be both territorially grounded when they demand the de-internationalization of the state, and ‘pan-national’ (De Cleen, 2017) when they construct identities of the ‘people’ on regional (Latin America), religious (Islam) and other transnational bases to counter global governance norms and institutions largely developed by the West. The hypothesis then is that the deeper the absorption of the state in structures of transgovernmental cooperation and supranational institutions, the more territorial and nation-centred the construction of the ‘people’.

In conclusion, populism can be understood as a distinct discourse of international relations that emerges as reaction to state transformation due to its capacity a) to articulate resistance to resulting material, political and ideational dislocations as a moral representational claim of the ‘people’; and b) to act as a normative counterweight to the universality of established international norms that underpin the functioning of the international system and ideas of appropriate practice of statehood. The exact articulation of the identity of the ‘people’ and the policy content may differ between populisms, but they will all be united in presenting state transformation and adaptation to international change as exacerbating gaps between official power and territorially defined political community. With regards to state internationalization under globalization, populist agendas posit the alternative vision of neo-sovereign rule, which differs in crucial respects from classical ideas of national sovereignty.

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