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FROM HERO TO ZERO. UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING  
PROCESS IN POLAND AFTER 2015.

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From Hero To Zero. Understanding Democratic Backsliding  
Process In Poland After 2015.

Zirveden Sıfıra. 2015 Yılından Sonra Polonya'daki Demokratik Gerilemeyi  
Anlamak

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## **ABSTRACT**

In recent years, the term populism has been used repeatedly in political debates and media. Given the political situation in the European Union, we also find that far-right populism has spread in Europe. The increase in the number of representatives of right-wing populist parties in the parliaments of France, Austria, and Germany, as well as the withdrawal of Britain from the European Union under the influence of the far-right in that country, is proof of this claim. In the case of the study, Poland, the Law, and Justice Party is also known as the far-right party. The main question of our article is what crises have led to the growth of right-wing European populism? The present study first examines the trends of populism and its tendencies over the last twenty years in Europe, then investigates the similar trends and preferences in Poland in a case study. Then, by analyzing our findings using Spragens' chaos theory, the study investigates the affecting factors of democratic backsliding in Poland and tries to predict the future of these parties in Poland. The thesis concludes that the economic crisis in the form of unemployment and recession and the social crisis in the form of illegal immigration are the two main reasons for the growing popularity of right-wing populism in Poland.

**Keywords:** Populism, Poland, Democracy, Europe, Far-right

## ÖZET

Son yıllarda "popülizm" terimi, siyasi tartışmalarda ve medyada tekrar tekrar kullanılan bir terim haline gelmiştir. Ayrıca Avrupa Birliği'ndeki siyasi durum göz önüne alındığında; “aşırı sağ popülizmin” Avrupa'da da yayıldığını görüyoruz. Fransa, Avusturya ve Almanya parlamentolarında, sağ eğilimli popülist partilerin temsilcilerinin sayısının artması ve İngiltere'nin, ülkedeki aşırı sağın etkisiyle Avrupa Birliği'nden çıkması bunun kanıtıdır. Bu çalışmada, Polonya Hukuk ve Adalet Partisi de aşırı sağ parti olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Tezin ana sorusu; hangi krizlerin aşırı sağcı Avrupa popülizminin büyümesine yol açtığıdır. Çalışma önce Avrupa'da son yirmi yıldaki popülizm eğilimlerini incelemekte, ardından Polonya'daki benzer eğilimleri ve tercihleri bir vaka çalışması şeklinde ele almaktadır. Ardından, Spragens'in Kaos Teorisi'ni kullanarak bulguları analiz eden çalışma, Polonya'daki demokratik gerilemeyi etkileyen faktörleri araştırmakta ve Polonya'daki bu partilerin geleceğini tahmin etmeye çalışmaktadır. Tez, işsizlik ve durgunluk olarak yansıyan ekonomik krizin ve yasadışı göçlerle gelen toplumsal krizin, Polonya'da sağcı popülizmin artan popüleritesinin iki ana nedeni olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Populizm, Polonya, Demokrasi, Avrupa, Aşırı sağ

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Following the scientific, industrial, and political revolutions in Europe between the 17th and 19th centuries, the intellectual foundations of the hereditary rule of political regimes weakened, and the legitimacy of the state became increasingly based on the rule of the "will of the people." Modern thinkers primarily first coined the idea, and Max Weber later conceptualized it as a contradiction between traditional rule and the rational rule of law (Cirtautas and Mokrzycki, 1993).

This democratic idea has evolved in the historical process of the last two centuries. With the surrender of the undemocratic Nazi and fascist regimes to Western democracies in the mid-twentieth century and the eventual collapse of the Soviet communist regime in the last years of that century, it seemed that the democracy had reached its peak of success (Ágh, 2018). However, this political thought and system, which emerged as the only legitimate form of society's political management, faces fundamental challenges and problems.

In addition to criticism from rival ideologies in recent decades, well-known Western theorists such as Huntington, Putnam, Dalton, Norris, Habermas, and others expressed concern about the situation with specific interpretations such as the crisis of legitimacy, lack of public confidence, political stagnation, and the crisis of democracy and sought to find a solution to the problem (Albertazzi and Mueller, 2013). After examining the roots and background of the formation of this democratization process and its consequences on the political behavior of citizens, this study focuses specifically on the decline of democracy in Poland.

## 1.2 THESIS STATEMENT

Even though democratic systems have faced numerous crises and challenges since their inception, what is referred to today as the "de-democratization" is not a threat from "outside" but mainly the result of "internal changes" in these societies in the last decades of the twentieth century

and the early years of the third millennium (Bale and Szczerbiak, 2008). This crisis is more about post-industrial society's identity and value issues than purely economic crises or military threats (5). Nearly three decades ago, in an independent study, Bernhard (2005) concluded that the nations of Europe, North America, and Japan are facing a de-democratization crisis.

Europe's economic problems resulting from the 2008 financial crisis have put additional pressure on new democracies, especially those in the eurozone. Other causes and factors, including the wave of migration to Europe affected by the Middle East and North Africa crisis, especially the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria between 2011 and 2015, surprised Eastern European countries (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2016). While the European Union was unable to prevent the influx of large numbers of foreign immigrants into Europe, differences between politicians in the East and West of the continent became apparent, leading to a different approach in Eastern Europe (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2017).

Over the past decade and under such circumstances, right-wing populism, as an extremist party, has been able to improve its position in the public opinion and political structure of European countries, especially in the east of the continent. Populists and the far right are now in power in Eastern European countries, including Hungary (Fidesz), Poland (Law and Justice), Slovakia (People's Party Our Slovakia), the Czech Republic (Freedom and Direct Democracy), Bulgaria (Attack), Serbia (Serbian Radical Party), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnian Movement of National Pride), and are growing in other countries parts of the continent. Populism and the far-right have transcended the Baltic and Aegean regions and occupied much of Eastern Europe (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2016). Poland is a clear example of the emergence of this phenomenon, which has been growing since the 2015 election and the rise of the Law and Justice Party. Thus, in this study, we examine the process of democracy decline in the case study of Poland. In this study, after examining the political history of Poland, we first examine the concepts related to populism. We then turn to the history of populist parties in Europe, and then focus specifically on the case of Poland. Using the framework of chaos theory, we try to analyze the decline of democracy and the growth of populism in Poland according to similar patterns in European countries.

### 1.3. RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

Poland's history has had its ups and downs in the political, cultural, and economic spheres, which have always affected the conditions of the Polish people. During the Cold War and in the early 1980s, Poland became known as the banner of liberation from the communist bloc in the shadow of the liberation movement led by the workers' solidarity movement. A fundamental change in Poland's position occurred when the country, as one of the members of the Soviet Union, set foot on the path to democracy, and after liberation, on the path of development and progress with adequate planning in the political and economic spheres (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2017).

Even though this country, like other countries liberated from the Eastern Bloc, was in a dire economic situation, it was considered incapable of creating a unified political identity as a country on a larger scale. Poland was one of the countries that had just emerged from the sphere of power of the Soviet Union. As a result, it lacked a coherent and efficient political structure, a dynamic economic system, and a progressive cultural system (Domber, 2008). As a result, it sought to strengthen its political, economic, and cultural foundations as a country. Poland's reconstruction process has been repeatedly threatened by its authoritarian political structure.

The importance of examining the democracy decline in Poland is vital as the confrontation of the far right with immigrants, especially Muslims, provides a clear picture of the acceleration of this phenomenon. The emergence of a security crisis in West Asia and the overflow of refugees and asylum seekers into Europe has caused various problems for European countries. Far-right parties believe asylum seekers in European countries pose security, identity, and economic challenges to their communities. Their opposition has led to anti-immigrant slogans and inciting nationalist and anti-immigrant sentiments. Hence, the far-right parties see any foreigner who wants to settle in their country or immigrate to their country as a threat and try to magnify fear and panic by exaggerating and attributing every country's problem to foreign citizens. Although the history of the formation of right-wing parties varies, the far-right in Europe has gained significant votes in national and parliamentary elections similarly through the anti-immigrant sentiments. At the same time, this trend warns of the danger that history may repeat itself in a catastrophic way (Drinóczi and Bień-Kacała, 2021). With the protracted Russia-Ukraine war and the subsequent increase in the migration of Ukrainian asylum seekers, this trend could also accelerate.

## 1.4 THESIS STRUCTURE

In this study, after examining Poland's social, economic, and political background, we examine the factors influencing the process of democracy decline. As a result, we are faced with the question: what factors led to the formation and spread of de-democratization in Poland.

Our hypothesis is that the economic crisis in the form of unemployment and recession and the social crisis in the form of illegal immigration are the two main reasons for the growing popularity of right-wing populism among European countries, especially Poland. By analyzing the spread of populism and the decline of democracy in Poland and examining internal and external factors such as economic problems, frustration with EU policies, the rising tide of foreign immigrants, the results of BREXIT and Britain's exit from the EU, and Donald Trump's policies as President of USA, the leading country of democracy, can help us to investigate the matter better.

The importance of this study is to recognize the reasons for the acquisition of political power by right-wing populist currents in Poland because today, one of the dangers that threaten democracy all over the world, especially in Europe, is the danger of the spread of populism, especially right-wing populism. The next chapter describes the historic background of Poland and its politics. After introducing populism-related concepts, the study's theoretical framework, the chaos theory of Spragens (1976), is presented. The following chapters will examine the tendency of right-wing populism groups in Europe, and after that, the case study of populism in Poland will be investigated. Based on the chaos theory, the last chapter examines the reasons for the growth of right-wing populist parties in Poland, and finally, the consequences of these parties gaining power are discussed.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 BACKGROUND

Poland (Polish: Polska) is a country in Eastern Europe. The Republic of Poland is a country in central Europe, east of Germany, north of the Czech Republic, south of the Kaliningrad region of Russia, southwest of Lithuania, and West of Belarus and Ukraine (Figure 1).



Figure 1 Map of Poland and its neighbors

Poland is one of the European countries, geographically and culturally the connecting point of Eastern and Western Europe. Due to its location in the central plains of Northern Europe, Poland has become a remnant of the first Polish nation, dating back more than a thousand years. Contrary to the turbulent history of this country, its people have been able to preserve their identity and

culture (Dryzek and Holmes, 2000). Poland has become a stable country in the region and is one of the largest European countries with the largest population among Eastern European member states.

Due to this strategic position, Poland has a special place in the European Union. Poland is separated from Eastern Europe by the Bug River border, and from a more profound view from a geopolitical and geographical point of view, Poland is located in Western Europe. Many Western European, American, and Asian investors have invested in Poland. Poland is an essential link between Eastern and Western European countries due to its convenient geographical position in the Eastern European region, having a large population and an expansive area (Ekiert and Hanson, 2003). Polish waterways, especially the Vistula and Oder rivers, have long been used as shipping lines to transport grain and other agricultural products to Western Europe (Fesnic, 2016).

Poland was invaded by the great powers during the First and Second World Wars. Poland was one of the first members of the Warsaw Pact, which joined in 1955. The people of Poland were the first country in Eastern Europe to change the communist system and adopt a republic based on a parliamentary democracy whose officials were elected by direct popular vote. It joined NATO in April 1999 and the European Union in May 2004 (Gwiazda, 2015). Joining the European Union The European Union in 2004 had a significant impact on accelerating the country's economic development. In addition to benefiting from the EU's reputation for attracting foreign investment, Poland has also made good use of EU aid packages for infrastructure (Karolewski, 2016).

On December 21, 2007, Poland joined the Schengen area. As a result, the need for visas to enter Poland's border countries was eliminated. This agreement practically means that a person receiving a visa from a Schengen member state can travel freely to the 24 Schengen member states without any restriction, from Portugal to Poland and from Greece to Finland (Marino et al., 2019).

With a population of about 38 million, the Republic of Poland is the sixth most populous country in the European Union. It has almost three times the population of countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Austria. As a result, Poland has a relatively strong domestic market that has become the driving force behind the country's economic growth (Lee, 2001).

## 2.2 HISTORY

The events in Poland have been one of the most significant developments in contemporary European history, but despite its importance in the political scene of Eastern and Central Europe, it has always been concerned about its security stability. Poland's geopolitical characteristics and its alignment with the interests of regional and global powers have led to persistent security concerns. According to political analysts, this persistent concern is not unreasonable. At some point in European history, we have seen Poland lose its existence in the wake of European political events (Marino et al., 2019).

Poland has entered the present age in this context, with its characteristics and the same concerns, but struggling differently. Poland's history was primarily a contest of struggle against its German and Russian neighbors, who had divided Poland for centuries before World War I. Patriotism was nurtured by the passionate Catholic religion during these turbulent times, and even under the officially atheistic rule, more than ninety percent of the population was baptized in the Church (Peled, 2013).

Polish rural society successfully resisted Stalinist collectivization, leaving a class of peasants who stubbornly remained independent, which was unique in Eastern Europe and owning three-quarters of the land. Backed by a powerful Catholic church, historical patriotism had deep roots among the peasants and their sons and daughters who immigrated to the city (Porter, 1992). This provoked frequent and robust resistance from the Poles against the imposed Soviet government.

The history of Poland is one of the most tumultuous human histories and shows the resistance and high ability of the people of this land, a country that has the second constitution in the world after Switzerland (Lewinski-Corwin, 2013). These countries were divided among their neighbors several times until they regained their independence in the twentieth century, but it seems that historical events have always brought nothing but suffering to the Polish people (Bernhard, 1998).

Poland was the first country to be invaded by Nazi Germany during World War II. It killed six million people. After the end of the war, the Soviet Union came under its influence, and with its communist ideology, it sought to change the political, economic, and social structures of Poland. However, the centrally planned European economies, managed by the central government,

were not comparable to the free and market-oriented economies of the West due to their commonality and lack of competition (Bertschi, 1994).

Food shortages and rising commodity prices led to riots and protests in 1956, 1970, and 1982, but the Solidarity movement led by Lech Wałęsa, a Gdansk shipbuilding electrician, finally succeeded, with 10 million members. In 1989, they seized the opportunity and, with the support of Western countries, especially the United States and West Germany, used the Gorbachev era to free themselves from Soviet influence as the first country in the region (Pakszys and Mazurczak, 1994).

This movement became a model for other Eastern European countries and became the source of subsequent developments in Eastern Europe and the liberation of other Soviet-ruled countries. Poland held its first free elections since independence and adopted an economic reform program to achieve a market economy, eliminating the shortcomings of a centralized economy and integrating with the global economy, paving the way for EU membership. Poland achieved this and was one of the most prosperous countries to move from a centralized economy to a market economy in its society. Poland's economic growth also increased with its accession to the European Union. The planning and management of Poland's political and economic elite were such that it was the only country with positive economic growth at the height of the economic crisis (Castle and Taras, 2018).

In the field of democracy and the political system, twenty years after face-to-face negotiations and the first free elections in Central Europe, compared to Central Europe, Poland is now a mature democracy with a relatively strong civil society, competitive media, and parliamentary system. Growth benefits. However, according to some observers and experts, democracy in Poland is declining with the growth of far-right parties in recent years. In this section, we first examine the history of Poland and the important experience of the transition from the communist regime, and then we look at the events of the last decade so that we can have an accurate view of the formation of democracy in Poland (Wendt and Bógdał-Brzezińska, 2020).

### **From formation to world wars**

Mieszko I from the Piast family founded Greater Poland in 966 AD. Little Poland was also formed by the southern tribes of Poland. The two Poles were united in 1047 by Casimir I, and Poland was united in a royal marriage in 1325 between the son of the King of Poland and the

daughter of the King of Lithuania. Between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, this Polish-Lithuanian state was at its power peak (Sadurski, 2018). This government succeeded against the superior powers of the time, such as the German Knights, the Tutankhamuns, Tsarist Russia, and the Ottomans. The lack of a strong monarchy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century allowed the superpowers to divide Poland three times in 1772, 1792, and 1795, after which the decline of Poland began (Swianiewicz, 2011).

In 1918, with the coming to power of Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, Poland reestablished itself in Europe, and on November 11, 1918, a republic was established in Poland. In 1919, the famous patriot Ignacy Jan Paderewski became Prime Minister of Poland. Piłsudski took full power in a coup in 1926 and established a dictatorial government in Poland until his death on May 12, 1935 (Sztompka, 1996).

In 1939, after World War I, a secret non-aggression pact was signed between Hitler (Germany) and Stalin (Soviet Union), known as the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. In this pact, the two countries secretly divided Poland and agreed to occupy Poland from the east and Germany from the West. The same thing happened on September 1, 1939, when the Soviet Union and Germany occupied Poland from the east and West, and the treaty of partition of Poland was signed on September 28, 1939. Vladislav Rachikiewicz, a Polish exiled leader, formed a government in exile (Taras, 2019). After the defeat and occupation of France in 1940, Razkiewicz moved to London. In June 1941, Hitler's army invaded the country, ignoring its alliance with the Soviet Union, during which the Nazis occupied all Polish territory. During the occupation of Poland, the Nazis tried to eradicate Polish culture by replacing Nazi culture (Rose-Ackerman, 2005).

As the Soviet army advanced on Warsaw, the city's Poles revolted against the Nazi occupiers, known as the Warsaw Uprising. The revolt aimed to keep the government of Warsaw and Poland in the hands of the Poles after the withdrawal of the Germans. The Soviet army, aware of the uprising, stopped in front of Warsaw, and the German army was able to suppress the uprising. The only aid to the insurgents was in the form of British air shipments. The US military refused to send aid to the Poles, and the Soviets did not allow the British to use Soviet-controlled airports in aid operations (Ágh, 2018).

### 2.2.1 Poland from 1944 to 1948

The government was exiled to Poland in 1944 and replaced by a communist government imposed by the Soviets in Poland. They liberated the eastern Polish city of Lublin from Soviet communists and formed The Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland. Several members of the Polish government in exile members from London also joined the government and founded The Polish Committee of National Liberation. The United States and Britain immediately recognized the government. In 1945, US President, Soviet Communist leader, and British Prime Minister set out to demarcate Poland's western borders (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2017).

They defined the Oder and Nice rivers as the border between Poland and the West. West Germany finally accepted this border by signing the Non-Aligned Movement on December 7, 1970. Also, on August 16, 1945, Poland defined its borders with the Soviet Union. The new constitution was made in 1952 that was somehow influenced by the Soviet Union (Drinóczi and Bień-Kacała, 2021). Poland became a member of the Warsaw Pact in 1955, and Poland's foreign policy was entirely in line with that of the Soviet Union (Gwiazda, 2015).

The casualties suffered by Poland during World War II and the changes in government, human resources, and borders resulting from the war created a new geopolitical structure that significantly affected the social structure over a long time. The war casualties were about 6 million people in Poland, which was about 22% of the total population of Poland at that time. The Polish borders were changed at the Yalta Conference (Karolewski, 2016).

After the war and military operations, the change of borders caused migrations. For example, some Poles emigrated to the Soviet Union, and on the other hand, Germans living in Poland migrated to Germany, and internal migrations, such as migration from the countryside to the city (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2016). We should mention the financial losses caused by World War II for Poland, which amounted to 13 times the total national income of this country in 1938. This damage can only be calculated by calculating the damage caused by the German invasion and does not include the damage caused by the Russian invasion of Poland (Albertazzi and Mueller, 2013).

In addition to significant financial and human losses, the war caused material losses in the field of culture and science. The occupiers killed many scientists and promoters of national and cultural assets such as museums, libraries, universities, and works of art. The formation of a new

Polish government under agreements in the Yalta Conference, under the auspices of the USSR, the Soviet-backed Liberation Committee formed the Polish Provisional Government in Moscow, while the Polish government in exile in London was ignored (Taras, 2019).

The Polish National Liberation Committee ordered rural reform in September 1944, according to which all land was divided among the villagers, and the social class of the landed aristocracy was almost destroyed. The communist government nationalized all industries in 1946, thus abolishing the bourgeois system in Poland (Bernhard, 2005). The 1947 law restricting the ownership of trade and crafts led to the closure of many private shops, leading to the abolition of the lower middle class. Other political changes accompanied the abolition of the former elite and the nationalization of industry. The suppression and elimination of the opposition and the monopoly system in 1946-1948 gave rise to the characteristics of totalitarian governments in Poland. In 1948, the communist government began an intensive process of industrialization in Poland (Krajewska, 2021). One of its goals, along with the reconstruction and construction of the country's development infrastructure, was to create an industrial working class.

World War II also led to changes in Poland's borders and system of government, which in turn changed the social structure of Poland in the years after World War II. These changes led to a homogeneous ethnic community in Europe, but before World War II, Poland was made up of other ethnicities, accounting for about 30 percent of its population, which changed during the war due to casualties and after the war due to widespread migration (Karolewski, 2016).

After World War II, Poland experienced a planned and rapid transition from agriculture to a predominantly industrial society like other Eastern European countries. When the Communist system ruled the country in 1945, Polish society came under rigid ideological principles. Communist dogmatism succeeded in changing many Poles' intellectual and spiritual landscape due to traditional institutions such as the Catholic Church and the family (Ágh, 2018). The functioning of Polish society primarily influenced these institutions created by the communist regimes. This was explicitly the case in education and health, where government service programs provided greater access to the Polish population. Communist ideology destroyed the aristocracy, which played a significant role in preserving Polish national consciousness and culture, especially during the years that Poland was divided (Marino et al., 2019).

Disruption of the traditional hierarchy and removing social barriers created considerable upward mobility as the urban population emerged in direct contact with the peasantry. Poland is

located in a region of Europe whose instability has been permanent throughout the history of European wars. This drawer was the first victim of the Nazi army in an aggressive and expansionist attack (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2017). Poland was the largest country in Eastern Europe and a strategic region between Germany and Russia. Poland was the scene of historical disputes between the two countries and a morsel of fat for Stalin, and the Soviets claimed sovereignty over half of Poland under the Rubin Trop-Molotov Treaty (Karolewski, 2016).

The United States and Britain agreed to change the borders of Poland, with the reduction of borders on the Soviet side and the expansion of German borders. However, the plan failed in July 1944. The Polish government in exile in London declared its existence, and Stalin sharply criticized the London Poles (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2021).

According to the agreements reached, free elections were guaranteed in Poland. All legal parties had the opportunity to form a truly free government. Edward Osóbka-Morawski became the leader of the radical section of the Polish Socialist Party for the first time since the war. Wladyslaw Gomolka became General Secretary of the Polish Socialist Party and representative of the Communist Party in Poland, and Mikołajczyk became Deputy Prime Minister. In general, key officials were in the hands of the communists or those with strong ties to the communists. The communists had national security and internal security, and all economic affairs. Communists within the trade unions sought loyalists for executive positions in the government (Żuk and Żuk, 2021).

### **2.2.2 Domination by the Soviet Union**

The Soviet Union pursued the following policies in the occupied territories (Ágh, 2018):

- Confiscated private property, declared it national, and distributed it among people.
- Under Soviet law, all residents of the territories annexed to Soviet territory were automatically considered citizens of the Soviet Union.
- All Polish government institutions were dismantled, closed down, and placed under Soviet-appointed rulers.

During the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944, Stalin refused to help the Polish resistance. He then recognized the Polish government of Le Blaine. At the Yalta Conference, it agreed to allow several government members in exile to participate in the Polish government, provided that

elections were held by January 1947 (Lowe, 1997). Among the members of the government in exile were moderate Stalinists such as Mikolajic, but he fled Poland in October 1947 (Albertazzi and Mueller, 2013).

With the onslaught of the Red Army, Polish nationalist guerrilla forces were crushed. This means that all Polish parties and organizations were closed and dissolved, and only the Communist Party and its affiliated organizations existed. The Polish currency circulated in rubles, meaning that all the people's savings were destroyed overnight. The media came under Moscow's control to reduce the likelihood of any open criticism of these changes (Bernhard, 2005). Changes took place in the social and cultural spheres. For example, the communists and their officials persecuted all religions. In addition, the study of the Polish language and literature in universities was suspended, and on the other hand, any political or cultural resources belonging to the previous Polish government were removed (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2016).

The Soviets carried out mass killings and expulsions to ensure full compliance with the new laws and eliminate the Soviet opposition. They used communist ideology to justify the massacre. Soviet government officials considered the services of individuals to their country Poland during the war, the crime against the 1917 revolution, and counter-revolutionary activities (Domber, 2008). Many Polish intellectuals, politicians, government officials, and scientists were subsequently arrested and harassed on suspicion of threatening the Soviet Union. The Soviets arrested about 100,000 Polish citizens, including former Prime Minister Leon Kozlowski and Aleksander Prystor (Ekiert and Hanson, 2003).

In 1944, the Polish government in exile and the underground army sought to overthrow the Nazis and restore an independent Polish state before complete Soviet domination. However, when the Soviet Union annexed Poland, it ignored the government in exile to restore democratic freedoms (Gwiazda, 2015). In 1946 a referendum was held for communist rule in Poland, the material of which was to test the popularity of the communists, but the result showed little support for the communists in governing Polish society. However, by cheating and manipulating the referendum results, they said that the people supported the rule of communism. Following the referendum, the rights of non-communist parties were banned, and some dissidents were sentenced to death (Kurczewski and Kurczewska, 2001).

### **2.2.3 Economic restructuring between 1956-1948**

The plan for the Polish economy was to expand heavy industry in the country. The goals for the country's economy were very ambitious. For example, more capitalist developed countries were determined by annual performance. This should have been possible in a short time for all the production lines of society. However, the lack of modern production technology and knowledge led to reduced production efficiency and reduced competitiveness of goods produced in Poland with other countries. This, in turn, reduced the growth rate of living standards and shortages of goods, facilities, and services in people's lives (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2004).

In the 1950s, the Polish Workers' Union was formed without a specific motive and then expanded. The theoretical reason for its existence was the creation of a strong, educated, and politically experienced working class. The party did this for various reasons, mainly because Stalin had told them to build many factories. The leadership of the Polish Communist Party also took the opportunity to weaken the peasantry, the country's most robust social class until then (Peled, 2013).

Under Stalin, the priority he gave to security surpassed the priority he gave to ideology. In the first two years after the end of the war, the development of the communist one-party system in Eastern Europe did not accelerate but escalated after the announcement of the Truman Doctrine and the severance of Tito's ties with Moscow, which escalated into East-West relations. Forced sharing of farms under the salinity model was not fully implemented until the 1950s. Even at the time of Stalin's death in 1953, this was done sporadically (Petrova, 2012).

By 1953, 8% of agricultural land was shared in Poland, 25% in Hungary, and 40% in Czechoslovakia. Stalin feared the rise of nationalism throughout Eastern Europe, especially among the elite communists. He had to control the war and the army in every Eastern European state. Therefore, by signing a bilateral defense agreement with the Soviet Union, he eliminated all military commanders and handed over posts to those who had served in the Soviet Union and were loyal to him (Rose-Ackerman, 2005).

In Poland and Hungary, Russian officers held senior military posts. Thus, only its name remained the "national" armies. In the post-Soviet years, the Soviets played the role of a traditional colonizer in plundering the wealth of Eastern European countries and compensated them: they bought cheap raw materials extracted from these countries (uranium from Czechoslovakia and

Hungary and coal from Poland) and destroyed factories. After Stalin's death, the free transfer of resources was stopped (Swianiewicz, 2011).

With Stalin's death, the era of terror ended, and Moscow started to lose control. Although the Warsaw Pact in 1955 was a reaction against NATO, it was also a multilateral political pact that replaced direct Soviet puppetry. With the recall of high-ranking Soviet officers from Eastern Europe, the officers returned to the national army and came under the command of local officers (Regulska, 1998).

With the rise of Khrushchev in Soviet politics and the adoption of policies different from previous methods, the result was the re-establishment of relations with Yugoslavia and a serious effort to defuse tensions and reformist demands in Eastern Europe. In early 1955, Khrushchev undertook a series of changes called de-Stalinization. The consequences of de-Stalinization were not limited to the Soviet Union, with most of its effects being felt in areas under Soviet influence (Porter, 1999).

In Poland and Hungary, the demand for reform was very high and intensifying day by day. Public demand in the two countries emphasized two indicators: the rejection of previous methods (repressive police methods) and the anti-communist tendencies. The second aspect of these demands was weighty for Moscow, so they used military force to suppress this demand (Sztompka, 1996).

#### **2.2.4 Protests against the regime in 1956**

In February 1956, with the death of the leader of the Polish Communist Party, Boleslaw Bierut, Edward Ochab replaced him. Ochab tried to make shallow reforms, including creating an open space for discussion. With the advent of this open space, the demand for a free press and economic reform gradually increased. In June 1956, workers in Poznan protested against food shortages and consumer goods, poor housing conditions, declining incomes, poor trade relations with the Soviet Union, poor economic management, and the transfer of power to Vladislav Gomolka (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2021).

Gemolka was part of the Titoist revisionist Communist group during Bierut times and was sentenced to prison. The Polish government responded by labeling the demonstrators "counter-revolutionaries" and imperialist elements. The uprising in Poznan in June 1956 was severely

suppressed by the Polish army, which killed 50 protesters. On October 19 and 20, 1956, Khrushchev personally visited Warsaw and agreed to economic reforms by suppressing unrest and installing Gomolka, led by the party, and dismissing then-Polish Defense Minister General Rokossovsky (Taras, 2019).

The return to normalcy in Poland took place after October, learning from the bitter events in Hungary. The events of 1956 forced Gomolka to retreat in the face of Khrushchev, and he obtained his consent to create an open political space in Poland. Most of the few communal farms organized by the former Stalinist government were dissolved. Gomolka had managed to satisfy the Poles for a while (Wendt and Bógdał-Brzezińska, 2020).

### **2.2.5 Poland in 1960 and 1970**

The 1960s and 1970s were years of skepticism about economic plans and financial problems and years of widening gaps in the Eastern Bloc. The crisis began with rising prices in Poland, ordered by Gomolka. The Polish government saw the rise in prices for goods and services as the first step in economic reform. In 1956, when Gomolka came to power, he based his foreign policy on nationalism and domestic policy on liberalism, but rising prices sparked a wave of popular discontent and protest. In the first incident on December 17 in Gdynia, the army severely suppressed the protests of the protesting people and workers (Zielinski, 1918).

However, in 1970, workers became angry at the announcement of a 30 percent increase in food prices and went on strike, occupying factories. In addition to its internal problems, the government feared a Soviet response to the situation and decided to force Gomolka to resign and replace him with Edward Gierek (Żuk and Żuk, 2021).

The new leader on behalf of Moscow was Edward Gierek. He reduced the prices of goods and services. He apologized for police shooting at Gdansk shipyard workers and killing them. Edward Gierek focused on supporting investment and consumerism, which provided education in the West and informal activities in Poland. The economic crisis, the strike, the social conflict, and the problems of buying essential goods eventually led to 2.5-2.2 million people emigrating from Poland, half of whom left Poland forever (Albertazzi and Mueller, 2013).

Gierek, like Gomolka 14 years ago, announced a new economic policy. The main problem with Gierek's plan was that Stalin-style investment in Poland was directed to the realm of heavy

industry, leaving few resources to be spent on agricultural modernization to feed the rapidly growing population (Lewinski-Corwin, 2013). This policy, coupled with the enormous inefficiencies of a centrally managed distribution network, addressed food shortages and high prices (Bernhard, 2005). In this way, the price of consumables could be kept affordable for ordinary wage earners only through government controls, in other words, through subsidies. At all times, the government ran out of money and tried to cut these subsidies by raising prices, as in 1970, when an explosion of workers' dissatisfaction erupted (Cirtautas and Mokrzycki, 1993).

Gierek's solution was to profit from the international tensions and obtain heavy loans from Western banks. These loans should make the Polish industry competitive in global markets. It was hoped that Polish products would be profitable enough for Poland to buy whatever it lacked, raise living standards, and repay loans. A combination of several factors condemned this attempt to fail (Eberts, 1998).

Agriculture remained lagging behind. Meanwhile, the global economic downturn following the 1973 oil crisis hit the Polish economy, which had recently become vulnerable to global economic trends, just as severely as it hit the West. At that time, the current government could only borrow. Poland's foreign debt increased twenty-fivefold from 1970 to the mid-1980s (Karolewski, 2016).

As the government struggled to pay off foreign creditors, prices rose, and living standards fell. By August 1980, when the government announced a new rise in commodity prices, workers' patience ran out. Within four years, meat consumption fell by 20 percent. A country that was a food exporter in the 1950s now inevitably imports most of its food, and consumers stand in long queues for food rations to receive their meager monthly rations (Lee, 2001).

### **2.2.6 Poland's transition from communism**

The popular image of the Polish government was lost after the fall of Gomułka. In July 1980, a new rise in prices led to a nationwide workers' strike. In August, shipbuilding workers in Gdansk, led by Lech Wałęsa, called for the establishment of free trade unions, and the Polish government agreed to grant the concessions. In the late 1980s, the alienation of the people from the Polish communist regime became public. In September 1980, the Gdansk workers formed the Solidarity Alliance, which soon had millions of members (Marino et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, Communist Party leader Edward Gierek replaced Stanisław Kania. With the official announcement of the Solidarity Alliance in November, the strikes were broken, and everyone went to work. However, in 1981 relations between the Solidarity Alliance and the Polish government broke down, and since December 1981, the general fear of a Soviet invasion of Poland has worried Poles. Previous attempts by various society sections to advance change through the legal dissolution and suppression of the Solidarity Movement of Poland in 1981-82 and the exercise of martial law 1981-83 had been thwarted (Marino et al., 2019). However, these measures did not wholly destroy the Solidarity Movement, which continued to operate underground, and their suppression did not alleviate the people's economic problems (Drinóczi and Bień-Kacała, 2021).

The strike in Gdansk in the summer of 1980, which gave birth to the Solidarity movement, took Moscow by surprise. This was the worst crisis in Eastern Europe since 1968, threatening East and West de-escalation policies. This policy began during the Era of Stagnation. The Soviets initially tried to calm the strikers by making concessions. This policy was the same on the Baltic coast just ten years ago. Moscow approved the change of party and approved the new government's policies by providing more economic aid and food exports. The new government sought to keep workers satisfied by raising wages, and Moscow feared the ideological dangers of these strikes to become part of the Soviet Union to form independent unions (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2004).

In Poland, the compromise efforts of the Solidarity movement and the party were believed to be beneficial. The 1980 strikes were the fourth major unrest in the post-war working class. The experience demonstrated that a centralized control system through party exclusivism would undoubtedly lead to continued unrest, and Poland would be more stable with the establishment of new institutions. Moscow found itself in an exceptional position among Eastern European countries, with the private sector active in agriculture and the presence of a powerful Roman Catholic church in Poland. The conclusion of a social contract between the party and the Solidarity movement could save Poland from the economic crisis and make it a reliable ally of the Soviet Union (Petrova, 2012).

The solidarity, led by an electrical technician at the Balkh Walesa shipyard, spread for fifteen months and became virtually a rival to the Polish government, which shook the communist government. This challenge to Soviet rule in Eastern Europe was far more daunting than the movements led by Naki and Dubcek. More than 200,000 Poles left the Communist Party. While

ten million people, about a third of Poland's population, joined the solidarity movement. Of course, the Soviet invasion of Poland was ruled out because Poland still had choices to maintain central power (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2004).

General Jaruzelski became prime minister in February 1981 and became party chairman in October of that year. In December, Jaruzelski shocked public opinion by banning the "Solidarity Movement," arresting thousands of members and declaring martial law. The West strongly attacked Jaruzelski's repressive actions, and Ronald Reagan imposed sanctions. However, many Western European leaders tended to take the events in Poland as an internal matter. Barzani ousted martial law in late 1982, and Lech Wałęsa was released from prison. Jaruzelski then sought to restore government power by gradually increasing the amount of economic liberalization parallel to Hungary and, after a difficult period, allowed Poland to repay its foreign debt (Rose-Ackerman, 2005).

In an effort to establish a popular basis for his actions, Jaruzelski held a referendum in November 1987 to gain popular support. He called on the Poles to endorse these reforms and the promise of greater political freedom. The government intended to give the community a limited free political space through a referendum and use decentralization instead of austerity. Less than half of eligible voters voted in favor, signaling an atmosphere of mistrust between the majority of Poles and their government (Marino et al., 2019).

To many Poles, Jaruzelski, like the Hungarian cadre or the Czechoslovakian Hozak, was considered one of the Soviet fatteners. His situation required a delicate balance: he should not go so far as to provoke the anger and rebellion of the Poles, nor should he take any action that would endanger the Soviet invasion (Rose-Ackerman, 2005).

However, the attempt to hold a referendum showed that the regime had concluded that if the government wanted to overcome economic problems, it needed to change how the country was run and showed the realization that society should be more involved in the country's administration (Porter, 1992). However, this view was not entirely accepted within the regime, and this was one of the reasons for the significant disputes within the regime (Bale and Szczerbiak, 2008).

Under Gorbachev, the Soviet invasion was unlikely. The continuing deterioration of the Polish economy sparked another wave of strikes in 1988. Industrial riots intensified in August and September, and lifting the ban on the Solidarity movement was one of the strikers' main demands. In response, the government made informal proposals to Lech Walesa, the leader of the Solidarity

Movement, calling for a roundtable discussion between the government and the Solidarity Movement, which was still illegal, as well as a wide range of other social forces to provide a consensus on economic problems and lift the ban on the Solidarity Movement (Rose-Ackerman, 2005).

Although prominent figures in the government strongly opposed the proposal, it also manifested itself at the General Assembly of the Central Committee of the ruling United Workers' Party of Poland in January. General Jaruzelski (president and party leader) was formally approved in January, and the roundtable started in February and ended in early April. The two sides reached a series of complex agreements that shared the communist government's power for the Solidarity movement (Ekiert and Hanson, 2003).

However, the timetable was a gradual regime change. Several parties scheduled elections to be held in June. 60% of the Polish Sejm or House of Representatives seats were reserved for the Communists and their allies (5% of the seats were also reserved for the Church). Elections were also scheduled to be completely free four years later. The legal solidarity movement was then declared, and an economic reform package was proposed (Karolewski, 2016).

In May, the legal status of the Catholic Church was strengthened. The Church gained independence from government oversight and was allowed to have independent media, schools, and properties that were confiscated in the 1950s. Roundtable talks between officials and the opposition were an agreement between the ruling elite on the one hand and the opposition elite on the other, which ultimately led to the dismantling of the communist monopoly of power (Karolewski, 2016).

In the June elections, the communists were humiliated. While the Citizens' Solidarity Committee won all 161 remaining unreserved seats, the Communists and their allies could only keep their reserved seats in check. The Citizens' Solidarity Committee also won 99 of the 100 Senate seats. A few months after the election results were announced, Poland witnessed a political maneuver by the Polish United Workers' Party and the Solidarity Movement, seeking a leading position in the new government. The Solidarity movement did not put much pressure on the government to take over and support Jaruzelski as president (Lee, 2001).

The Solidarity movement sought to form a coalition government with the Democratic Party and the United Peasants' Party, independent parties supporting communists. In mid-August, the United Workers' Party of Poland, fearing complete removal from the government, agreed to join

the coalition government led by the Solidarity Movement as a new partner (Peled, 2013). Tadeusz Mazowiecki was sworn in for the government on September 12, 1989, when four cabinet members were Poland's Allied Workers' Party members. It was the first non-communist government in Eastern Europe. However, the country did not have a president until 1990, when Walesa was elected (Sadurski, 2018). In October, the economic shock therapy program was announced, paving the way for the collapse of the communist dictatorial economy. In January 1990, the Polish United Workers' Party disbanded and formed a new party: Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (SdRP) (Taras, 2019).

In October 1991, the parliamentary elections were not held, and the transfer of power was completed with the Mazowiecki government coming to power. Thus, the main feature of the transition in Poland was the agreement between the regime elites and the opposition elites (Rose-Ackerman, 2005). A prominent figure in the opposition elite was the leader of the Solidarity movement, whose prominent position stemmed from the leadership of an organization that gained its main strength from popular support, which initiated the transition process through strikes and their election in the June 1989 elections (Marino et al., 2019).

Stalin once said that trying to impose communism on Catholic Poland was like putting a saddle on a cow. With the emergence of a close aide to Walsabe as prime minister, more than forty years of trying to make Poland communist had all failed. The Solidarity Movement, as the most significant movement in Eastern Europe, became a model for other Eastern European countries, and the people of these countries, influenced by the success of this movement, took action in their own country, and this became one of the factors intensifying the bloc of communist countries. Of course, the contribution of the Polish Catholic Church to the Solidarity movement as the most influential social base should not be overlooked. In the case of Poland, Marino et al. (2019) have also given explanations of Poland's transition from communism based on its eight causes:

- **Type of pre-transition regime:** Communist dictatorship with limited social freedoms
- **The crisis of legitimacy:** the moral and political failure of the governing body; Killing of workers and repression of academics; A blow to the regime's legitimacy with the appointment of Pope John Paul II and his visit to Poland in 1979 and widespread anti-regime demonstrations; Condemnation of the Jaruzelski regime worldwide for its military repression of the Solidarity and Opposition

- **Efficiency crisis:** failure to provide social welfare through the import of Western goods with Western credits; economic crisis; workers' uprising in 1976; rising in food prices and strikes; economic boycott of Poland; intensification of the economic crisis
- **Solidarity Crisis:** Dissatisfaction of the Liberal revisionist faction in the Communist Party
- **Dominance Crisis:** Jaruzelski ordered, under pressure from Moscow, the army to attack the Solidarity Movement and arrest its leaders, declare martial law, and suppress civilian institutions; However, the regime could not control the opposition in the long run; The inevitability of the regime reconciling with the opposition and the signing of a solidarity agreement in April 1989 for free elections; The beginning of a change in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union
- **Social discontent:** Nationalist sentiments against Russia, intellectual and student protests against Gomulka's 1968 cultural policies; Workers' protests against the 1970 price increase and its bloody repression; The demand for economic reform, the workers' uprising of 1976; Opposition to the Catholic Church
- **Social organization and structure:** the prominent role of the Catholic Church; The importance of the peasantry due to the non-sharing of agriculture; Continuing the relative importance of the private sector in the economy; Relative activity of the industrial working class; The relative activity of intellectuals; Workers' strikes due to weakness of the Communist Party; Regular organization of labor strikes; Political mobilization and the emergence of Solidarity Movement as a legal institution and its impact on the emergence of civil society and the demand for freedom and participation
- **The ideology of resistance:** religious and political freedom, civil liberties, democracy, and political participation
- **Type of leadership:** Alliance of the Catholic Church and workers and intellectuals; The emergence of solidarity as a result of the signing of the workers' agreement with the Communist Party

- **Early Transition Date:** The 1989 Agreement between the Regime and Solidarity, the Complete Victory of Solidarity in Parliamentary Elections, and the Plan for Political and Economic Reform (Marino et al., 2019)

### **2.2.7 Poland, as a newly independent country**

The new government was facing significant problems as soon as it took office. These include tackling inflation at 800% a year, a 10 percent drop in national income, and rising unemployment that shook the Polish economy (Domber, 2008). It was here that the new government, in the name of democracy and seeking support from Western governments, sought foreign aid, which gradually came into play. Significant credits were granted to Poland, which allowed the country to stabilize its currency. The Polish government also cracked down on inflation, increased purchasing power, reduced financial systems, and reduced defense spending. At the same time, the country began to privatize government institutions (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2004).

By the end of 1989, Poland was a progressive country in the Central and Eastern European region, moving toward democracy and transforming its planning economy into a market economy. From 1991 to 1992, although the country's economic situation improved, Lech Wałęsa, who held the presidency, ran into problems and its government experienced political instability, and the multi-party system failed to secure a majority in parliament (Domber, 2008).

From 1989 to 1991, Poland underwent a democratic transition to end the Socialist People's Republic of Poland, leading to a democratic regime called the Third Polish Republic. In December 1990, Lech Wałęsa was elected President of Poland. Poland's first parliamentary elections were held in 1991. More than a hundred parties participated, representing a full range of political views, but no single party received more than 13% of the total vote. One of the legacies of communism in Poland is the extreme problem of the representative electoral system in terms of population (Dryzek and Holmes, 2000).

The result was that two years after the shock treatment, four governments and the same number of finance ministers were replaced. Parliamentary factions either delayed the enactment of the necessary laws or failed altogether. Several industry ministers criticized the privatization. In this regard, one of the ministers was accused of bribery and corruption. Political energy was wasted fighting the control of the armed forces and revealing the identities of former police

informants. In 1992, the two prime ministers were forced to spend most of their time uniting with opposition groups (Bernhard, 2005). In 1993 the second round of elections occurred, and the parliament was formed to serve a full term. The Democratic Left Alliance by Aleksander Kwaśniewski received the largest share of the vote (20.4%). During the November 1995 presidential election, Wałęsa was defeated by a former communist, Aleksander Kwaśniewski (Bale and Szczerbiak, 2008).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the communist era in Poland came to an end. Poland joined NATO in 1999, along with the Czech Republic and Hungary. On March 1, 2004, Poland joined the European Union. Leszek Miller resigned on May 2 of that year as his popularity plummeted to less than 10% due to widespread corruption and rampant economic turmoil (Karolewski, 2016). The September 1997 parliamentary elections were another turning point in Poland because a pro-solidarity conservative party could win a majority of seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate by reorganizing and creating a new party called the Solidarity Election Action forming a coalition government with the Liberal Union. Therefore, the Solidarity Electoral Action Party coalition elected the Prime Minister, and the government members were elected from the two coalition parties. Over the next few years, the main task of the president and the government was to admit Poland to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Castle and Taras, 2018).

In 1999, Poland's membership documents in NATO were ratified. In 2000, Aleksander Kwaśniewski was re-elected as President with 53.9% of the vote. The highlight of the following years was the negotiations with the European Union on accession and internal preparations for this work. Poland joined the European Union in May 2004 (Ágh, 2018).

In the next parliamentary elections, there was a little difference in the composition of the previous governments. After the 2001 parliamentary elections, the Democratic Left Alliance was in alliance with the other two parties, the Labour Union and the Polish People's Party, to gain a majority of Sejm. After the 2003 parliamentary elections, it formed a minority government with the Labour Union (Bernhard, 2005). At the beginning of the American war with Iraq, Poland was an ally of the United States. Poland sent 200 troops to Iraq as a multinational force. In April 2005, Poland announced that it would withdraw all troops from Iraq by the end of that year (Gwiazda, 2015).

## **2.3 POPULISM**

The label of populist has been linked to a wide range of political movements, making it difficult to establish a central meaning that can function as an analytical concept with great precision. In order to achieve a systematic understanding of populism that identifies the main features of this phenomenon and allows a more principled comparison of populist policies in different contexts, different definitions and theories have been proposed regarding the forms and contexts. The formation and consequences of populism can be distinguished from three main conceptual approaches. Experts which will be mentioned below, present these three approaches to populism as an ideology, a discourse style, and a form of political mobilization (Bobba & Hubé, 2021; Chrostowski, 2022; Csehi & Zgut, 2021; Lendvai-Bainton & Szelewa, 2021; Maatsch & Miklin, 2021; Orenstein & Bugarič, 2022; Sińczuch, Michalski, & Piotrowski, 2021; Szente, 2021).

### **2.3.1 Populism as an ideology**

Cas Mudde (2004) suggested a clear definition of populism as an ideology in studies focusing mainly on right-wing populist parties in Europe: "Populism is a limited or superficial ideology that ultimately divides society into two homogeneous and opposing groups: pure people versus corrupt elites." They argue that politics must reflect the public will of the people (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012). Explaining "limited or superficial ideology," Aslanidis, a late scholar of populism, says: "Superficial or limited ideology includes those ideologies whose lexical morphology, that is, their formulation and conceptual patterns for comprehensive solutions is not enough for the whole range of socio-political problems. These are the problems that the big ideological families have always thought of as usual. Superficial ideologies refuse to offer their agenda, for example, about social justice or the conditions of individual prosperity. They also limit themselves to a weak foundation, one or two issues supporting political discourse, borrow these ideas from somewhere, or try to cultivate content by marginalizing other ideologies." (Aslanidis, 2016).

Here, populism is first and foremost a set of ideas characterized by conflict between the people and the elite and also means the primacy of the people's sovereignty over the virtue of the

public will over the moral corruption of the elite actors. Since Mudde defines populism as a thin-centred ideology, it can be sought in all ideological gaps mixed with leftist or rightist demands. The ideological characteristics attributed to populism depend on the socio-political context in which populist actors mobilize (Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013). This group of thinkers believes populism lacks a clear and unified ideology and may turn left and right according to the circumstances and in the form of various ideologies from socialism to conservatism and Nazism (Moffitt, 2018). Populism is like a hollow drum, so it is always looking for a suitable ideology to take shape and become objective. In the absence of a proper ideology on which populism can ride, it can only bring together issues and concepts more attractive to the people in a chain of equivalence to gain the support of the people and sometimes blow up behind-the-scenes issues, conspiracies, corruption, and potential threats (Müller, 2017).

### **2.3.2 Populism as a discourse style**

Another approach that opens a new dimension into analysis of populism is seeing this phenomenon as a style rather than just an ideology. Moffitt separates populism from ideology and political style saying that those two definitions can be explained separately and are not mutually dependent. He defines populism in terms of performance and style distinguishing three main features (appeal to "the people" vs. "the elite"; applying "bad manners" as a part of political performance; using "breakdown, crisis, threat" as a boogeyman) as a point of analysis. He also defines populism "a speech or rhetoric that turns politics into a moral and spiritual struggle between people and the oligarchy" (Moffitt, 2016). By taking a comparative view of populism at different times and places, Hawkins conceptualizes populism as a dualistic discourse that assigns a dual moral dimension to political conflict (Hawkins, 2010). Similarly, Jagers and Walgrave define populism as a discourse used by those who claim to speak on behalf of the majority of Americans. In their view, populism is not an ideology that captures the core ideas of certain political actors, but a form of political expression used selectively and strategically by right, left, liberals, and conservatives (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007).

Despite the apparent similarities between ideological and discourse approaches, the nuances have significant theoretical and methodological implications and lead researchers to adopt different empirical research methods. On a more abstract theoretical level, Laclau's work has been

particularly influential in shaping the discourse approach. Criticizing Marx's interpretation of economic determinism, she developed a particular theory of populism. In her view, populism is a specific political logic, not the result of a certain class alliance. This political logic confronts the existing hegemony through constructing a coherent discourse that divides society into two blocs of power, the elites against the bloc of people. These discourses are not created by chance but result from a three-step process in radical politics (Laclau, 2005):

- Linking different wants and demands
- The formation of a collective identity through the determination and recognition of an enemy
- Adequate investment in an element that represents the people

The symbolic distinction between "us" and "them" that forms the populist discourse is an example of a sign that can take on different content depending on its social context. These categories are obtained through a process of identification or classification by which certain social groups are interpreted as "people" (us) and confronted with "oppressors" (them). Thus, populism is a discourse against the status quo and part of the struggle for hegemony and power (Laclau, 2005). There are similarities between ideological and discourse approaches, and both emphasize the distinction between "us" and "them" as an essential part of populist rhetoric in the context of politics. Taggart lists the four core components of populism as follows (Taggart, 2004):

- Existence of two homogeneous analytical units, "people" and "elites"
- Hostile relations between people and elites
- The idea of popular sovereignty
- Positively valuing "people" and discrediting "elites"

### **2.3.3 Populism as a political strategy**

In contrast to the ideological and discourse method, some scholars defend the understanding of populism as a kind of political strategy. This approach, which is especially common among sociologists and political scientists working in Latin America, includes three distinct subfields, each focusing on different aspects of political strategy: Policy method, political organization, and forms of mobilization. Madrid, for example, in its analysis of the rise of ethnic

populism in Latin America, argues that populism is shaped by specific economic policies and mass mobilization capacities. He defines populist policies as those aimed at the economic redistribution and nationalization of natural resources and defines populist mobilization as a combination of anti-establishment and anti-systemic demands (Madrid, 2008). Another of the three approaches that fall under the political strategy approach has been proposed by Weyland, which defines populism in terms of political organization: "The best definition of populism is to view it as a kind of political strategy through which a personalized leader seeks or exercises power over the government based on the direct, immediate, and noninstitutionalized support of a large number of unorganized followers." (Weyland, 2001)

What matters here is not the content of the policies or discourse style used by political actors but the relationship of those actors to their constituents. While this position is incapable of explaining ideological diversity, in all populist movements and parties, political organization is considered a fixed principle. Barr also distinguishes between populism and specific policymaking by analyzing the left turn in Latin American politics. He defines populism as a top-down political mobilization of constituencies by personalized leaders who challenge established political and economic elites on behalf of vague people and emphasizes that populist demands are ideologically flexible. He believes that although charismatic leadership is important in populism, it is not a prerequisite. There are populist leaders worldwide who do not have charismatic qualities, and Barr cites former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori to support this idea (Barr, 2009).

It should be noted that these three definitions of populism as ideology, discourse style, and political strategy do not contradict each other and overlap in some areas. At the same time, it is important to emphasize the theoretical differences between the three approaches because they each carry relevant concepts about populism and how to define and study this phenomenon empirically. These differences are summarized in Table 1.

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Analysis unit</b>	<b>Related methods</b>	<b>Authors</b>
Political ideology	A collection of related ideas about the nature of politics and society	Parties and party leaders	Text analysis using qualitative method or automatic text analysis method, mainly party literature	Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012)  Aslanidis (2016)
Political discourse	A way of making claims about politics; Discourse Profile	Texts, speeches, public discourse on politics	Interpretive textual analysis	Jagers and Walgrave (2007) Moffitt (2016)
Political strategy	A form of mobilization and organization	Parties focusing on structures, social movements, leaders	Comparative historical analysis, case studies	Weyland (2001) Wodak (2015)

**Table 1 Characteristics of three approaches in populism research (Adapted from articles mentioned in the table)**

## **2.4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY**

Populism has been one of the problems and challenges facing democracy in modern times. With the spread of universal suffrage and the existence of a mass society in some Western countries, authoritarian political discourses in the 1920s and 1930s established totalitarian regimes in Germany and Italy with a mass base. Conservative thinkers such as Gustave Le Bon and José Ortega Gasset were skeptical of the masses entering politics (Domber, 2008). Later, political

theorists considered the process of modernization and mass society as the basis for the rise to power of elites and authoritarian populist currents and the formation of totalitarianism (Fesnic, 2016).

Porter (1992) is one of those who discuss the relationship between hypocrisy and democracy. He sees the signs of populism as the supremacy of the will of the people and the direct connection between the people and the government and considers populism as an aspect of political culture rather than a particular kind of ideological system.

According to Bernhard (1998), populism in Europe is rooted in a radical perception of democracy and pessimism about representative institutions of government that prevent direct rule by the people. In this sense, populism is a vague conception of democracy that emphasizes elements of direct democracy such as referendums, that democratic structures of representative people should govern their destiny, and that mediating institutions such as political parties and parliaments are secondary tools and obstacles to real democracy.

Saville-Troike (1984) sees populism as a reaction to understanding the shortcomings of elitist democracy. Critics say that elites are no longer active in the public interest in EU countries and are highly distrusted due to high levels of corruption. The continuing decline of mass parties and the inability of elite-based organizations to mobilize has created a space for new policies by social movements and opponents of the ruling parties. Cirtautas and Mokrzycki (1993) believe that representative democracy has no choice but to tolerate the coexistence of elite neutralizing forces and populism. "government of the people, by the people, for the people" is the famous phrase of the President of the United States of America, Abraham Lincoln in 1863, which was accepted by the Democrats and the populists and has been interpreted in different ways.

Some writers have emphasized the close connection between democracy and populism, as both seek their roots in the people and emphasize the people's superiority. However, there is an inherent tension between them that has been less analyzed (Hidayat et al., 2018). The definition of democrats is more prosperous and does not condition democracy only on this vague term but also links objective indicators of democracy to free elections, political pluralism, elite rotation through political play and democratic rules, and civil, social, and political freedoms. Populists do not accept the mediating institutions of the people and the government and reject them or are suspicious of them (Karolewski, 2016).

Also, their understanding and definition of people create political and analytical challenges. The people that the populists talk about are amorphous, indifferent individuals and masses, not classes, strata, ethnic groups, and various associations and parties arising from the needs and social gaps of society. The people are not citizens with rights and responsibilities but a whole alliance with shared traditions and history. The populists point to the exploitation of these people by official systems and institutions such as corrupt parties, unions, and minorities; They boast of the lack of real democracy and the decline of the popular will and are sometimes even pessimistic about elections as a method and mechanism for the emergence of the public choice (Krajewska, 2021).

Civil society is the first bulwark of democracy exposed to damage and destruction because of populist ideas. Civil society includes many of the most important components of democracy, including legal and formal parties, free media and non-governmental organizations, organized and unorganized opposition, and individuals and dissidents, people and citizens. Civil society is so important and significant that it can be argued that with the destruction of civil society, what is left of democracy will be practically nothing but a shell without a core and a form devoid of content (Finchelstein and Urbinati, 2018).

## **2.5 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The right, in conjunction with the concept of the far-right, is a socio-cultural concept, referring to parties that take authoritarian positions on specific issues such as law, order, citizenship, and immigration policy, as exemplified by far-right parties in Europe (Fesnic, 2016). Socio-economic issues for these parties are a combination of nationalism and xenophobia, which can be described as a kind of policy of national supremacy or welfare chauvinism. From this perspective, the economic policies of these parties are, to some extent, subject to their socio-cultural programs in the framework of national and economic protectionism or a combination of them (Gwiazda, 2015).

Politically, the main feature of these parties is their monist leanings and opposition to pluralism. The extremist right-wing monist tendencies are expressed in two ways: 1) the rejection of the democratic political system; 2) the rejection of egalitarian and universal values known as democratic values (Bernhard, 2005).

In recent decades, many studies have been published that show a decrease in people's interest in political participation and pessimism and citizens' distrust of politicians. These researches have provided statistics and figures that indicate the decrease in citizens' political participation in democratic politics.

As a result, through a combination of good structural opportunities and the opportunism of vigilant political agents in recent decades, the right-wing populist currents have achieved significant results in some Western European countries, such as France, Switzerland, and Denmark, and in some countries, such as Italy, Australia, and the Netherlands, for the first time in the cabinet (Hidayat et al., 2018)

These parties have reached out to frustrated citizens with traditional politics and their representatives through new forms of communication and attracted the attention of a section of citizens and the public by offering a policy of liberalization versus a pragmatic institutionalized approach. These parties' election campaigns usually have slogans such as demagogic promises and slogans such as complete and true democracy, people's sovereignty, saving the people and democracy from false threats, hostile rhetoric towards the ruling parties and their policies, and restricting immigration (Karolewski, 2016).

Poland is one of the countries where far-right populist movements have gained significant influence in politics, and this presence has been the source of much controversy and concern in the country's academic and political studies. After discussing the theories about populism and its relationship with democracy, this thesis uses a case study method from the perspective of political sociology. It then discusses the populism trends in European countries similar to Poland. Then in a case study, the thesis investigates the related matters of populism in Poland using the historical timeline and related studies. In the next section, the thesis examines the crisis of democracy in Poland in four stages, using the theoretical framework of our study.

The theoretical framework of the present study is based on chaos theory (Spragens, 1976). This theory, as one of the methods of understanding political thought, has four stages in which each stage is based on the previous stage: 1) observation of disorder and crisis, 2) diagnosis of pain, 3) reconstruction of society, 4) Ways of treatment. The theorist's problem starts with social disorder. He should develop self-doubt and look for the root causes of the problems that are often hidden. Why did society collapse? Or why are members of the community dissatisfied? In our case, for example, why should Poland have social problems?

The theorist finally completes the case and discovers what he thinks is the leading cause of the disorder. Spragens (1976) examines his political community and the dynamics of its components and concludes that the behavior of power-hungry people ultimately leads to civil war, so the government must curb them. The findings of political theorists are never really unbiased. Of course, the theorist tries to be objective by relying on primary resources and problems and logical solutions. But his root-finding of causes considers some measures and actions legitimate and wise, and others baseless and meaningless (Spragens, 1976).

From the point of view of this theory, to understand the thoughts of a political perspective, the first question is: "What is the problem, or what does this perspective think is dangerous, corrupt, and destructive?" The theorist's question at the beginning of the second stage is whether the political problem raised has political roots? This question is divided into two other questions because a political cause is a public cause, not an individual one. It is contractual and not natural; The theorist must therefore discover whether the root of the problem relates to society and is thus general or whether it is merely mental and individual influences. Then, if it concludes that the problem is social, one must determine whether the problem is the product of conditions that man can change, contractual clauses, or whether the causes are natural phenomena. The theorist must be convinced that observation of political disorder is not merely the product of mental projection, transmission, or displacement. The theorist who considers the major causes of human dissatisfaction in natural phenomena is probably more conservative in political worldview than one who considers the major causes of problems to be social phenomena. On the other hand, radicals also place the responsibility for individual problems on social factors. In fact, detecting radicals minimizes the distinction between the individual and society (Spragens, 1976).

From the point of view of this theory, there are several ways to reconstruct the political society in political theories. First is a radical shift in direction in politics. This attitude calls for far-reaching changes. The radical theorist is idealistic. He is philosophical, abstract, imaginative in his approach, and highly rational in his conclusions. The radical thinker paints a picture of his society by observing the failures of his society and then by imagining a society in which these failures do not exist (Spragens, 1976).

Undoubtedly, each period seems chaotic from the point of view of the people who live in the heart of that period, and the last decades of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century are no exception to this rule. Crisis has existed in the politics of every country

and every era, but what is meant here is chaos in the international system and the changes that are a reflection of this crisis. Chaos is something beyond the hustle and bustle that occurs with the transformation of critical variables, but the main feature of riotous politics is uncertainty and uncertainty. The fluctuations of the variables usually follow specific patterns, and with the onset of turbulence, the regularities disappear (Banerjee et al., 2014).

From this perspective, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, uprisings erupted rapidly in Central and Eastern Europe, with people flocking to the city streets and squares to demand a change of government, and according to Rosena's theory, the paradigms governing relations. The international community has changed due to the increasing developments in the last years of the twentieth century, and the global system needed a new format in this regard. Crisis causes every small change to quickly become the reference for a significant transformation in the whole set. These developments can be attributed to specific principles, rules, and computations that political analysts believe in "order within disorder." The characteristic of chaos theory is the "butterfly effect," meaning that a slight change in the initial conditions of predictable equations leads to massive fluctuations in the system response and drastic changes in the results (Banerjee et al., 2014). Crisis refers to internal disturbances, while the butterfly effect is related to external factors, given that the present study can adapt to the chaos theory. As a result, the spread of populism can be analyzed based on initial conditions and recurrence indicators among the communities of the European countries, especially in Poland.

The present study first examines the trends of populism and its tendencies over the last twenty years in Europe because European populist parties have much in common, and reviewing similar movements in European countries could give us a picture of the future of democracy in Poland. The study then analyzes similar trends and preferences in Poland in a case study. Then, by analyzing our findings using chaos theory, the study investigates the affecting factors of democratic backsliding in Poland and tries to predict the future of these parties in Poland.

# METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 THE CASE STUDY OF POLAND

The case study method is one of the most common qualitative research strategies. This approach is not a method but a kind of research strategy, and within this strategy, various methods and techniques are used. These methods may be quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of both. Although often based on qualitative approaches and methods, a case study can not be defined solely through qualitative research techniques but must be defined in terms of theoretical orientation (Bernhard, 1998).

The purpose of the case study is to establish a bridge between library studies on the one hand and real-life information on the other. The case is a narration of research that already exists and is not a situation that has been artificially created. In addition, it bears no resemblance to experimental research in which variables are manipulated to measure the effect of a particular element. The case study is an in-depth and multifaceted analysis done using qualitative research methods on a social phenomenon (Bertschi, 1994).

Bernhard (1998) states that a case study is an approach according to which each social unit is considered as a whole. This whole can be an individual or a family or a social institution and things like that. He states that a case study is an in-depth analysis of an individual, group, institution, incident, or event through examining documents or interviews and any monograph. This research method is suitable for our study for three main reasons:

- Recognition of the whole reality: This method can be used to obtain the entire fact of democratic backsliding in Poland
- Recognizing the hidden dimensions of social phenomena. A case study with a deep look and exploration of democratic backsliding in Poland could identify invisible or ignored aspects
- Achieving a unique whole: that result is only possible from a case study (Bernhard, 1998)

The case study's first and primary purpose is to understand complex social phenomena better. Many of the everyday phenomena we witness in our lives are complicated and beyond typical human understanding. While some experts believe that the case study is more exploratory, Bertschi (1994) thinks it can have three characteristics: exploratory, descriptive, or descriptive/explanatory.

Most researchers believe that a case study is a comprehensive research methodology or strategy. Accordingly, a case study is an in-depth study of one or more closed systems (cases) over time and through accurate and in-depth data collection processes, including multiple sources of information (such as observation, interview, audio-visual materials, documents, and reports). Finally, it publishes a descriptive report of the case and case-based themes.

The decline of democracy in European countries, especially the Visegrad countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), has gone through a similar process for similar reasons. So a look at these trends in these countries to Poland can give us a more accurate view of what has happened in Poland to the decline of democracy. Therefore, in this study, we examine the decline of democracy throughout Europe, particularly in the Visegrad countries, and then study the case of political changes in Poland. Finally, the reasons for these changes and suggested solutions are presented.

In this study, we investigate the factors influencing the formation and spread of this phenomenon from 2008 in the east of Europe, particularly in Poland. In our research hypothesis, economic problems, the refugee crisis, and frustration with EU policies are considered the reasons for the spread of populism in the Visegrad countries. Domestic and external influences of this phenomenon can include economic problems, frustration with EU policies, the rising tide of foreign immigrants, the results of the referendum on Britain's exit from the EU, and the victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential election (Blokker, 2021a). In this study, our analysis method is to examine the history and pattern of populism formation in European countries first, and then the case study of populism in Poland. After finding the factors influencing populism, we try to examine the crisis of democracy in Poland in four stages, using the theoretical framework of chaos theory.

## RESULTS

### 4. 1 POPULIST PARTIES IN EAST EUROPE

Right-wing populist parties have a long history in Europe, but several left-wing parties are also known as populist parties. The rise of right-wing populist parties dates back to the 1970s. The reasons for naming these parties "populist" are anti-elitist positions, advocating the reduction of hierarchy, opposition to weak democracy, and disregard for the demands of the lower classes of society and the broad class-social base of these parties among these classes (Ekiert and Hanson, 2003)). These parties are radical because their attitude towards democracy is radical, less bureaucratic, and gives equal opportunities to all classes, especially the working and lower classes. Economically, they advocate for fundamental socio-economic change and support the national economy against globalization. They are right or conservative because they advocate the restoration of the status quo ante in Western industrial societies based on the preservation of cultural-racial originality and a free national economy (Banerjee et al., 2014).

Although populism has a long history in Europe, it has always been a marginal political phenomenon. This phenomenon first appeared in Russia in the late nineteenth century. A party called Narodnik was a relatively small group of urban elites who tried unsuccessfully to launch a peasant uprising. Although unsuccessful in Russia, it had a strong influence in Eastern Europe, where peasant populist parties were active in the early twentieth century. Most of these groups had little political influence in the authoritarian regimes of the period. While both communism and fascism used populist rhetoric, especially in the movement phase, both ideologies and regimes were elitist (Gwiazda, 2015).

After World War II, populist parties were less present in Europe until the 1990s. In France, Poujadism existed in the late 1950s, the progressive parties of Denmark and Norway in the 1970s, and Pasok in the 1980s, but they cannot be considered part of a broader populist movement. In the late 1980s, the situation changed with the growth of right-wing parties, although the group's older parties, such as the National Front in France and the Flemish Bloc (now called Flemish Interests), began to operate as elite parties in Belgium (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2016).

Developments in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which led to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the former Soviet Union, had profound implications for the political and economic structures of Central and Eastern Europe. Except for Romania, the people of most of these countries forced the former regime leaders to resign and replace the new military in a peaceful process with civil protests (Fesnic, 2016).

The 1990s were a time of the collapse, transition, and transfer of power in Central and Eastern Europe, and they were able to adopt the new model of the European Union in the early years of the third millennium and replace the old structure. When the Cold War ended in 1989 and communist regimes in Eastern Europe collapsed, the race to join the West was the shared mission of all Central and Eastern European countries. Liberal politicians, meanwhile, grew in popularity and came to power in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Many leaders of Central and Eastern Europe, especially the Visegrad Group, were determined to join the EU, and a number of them joined the EU in the first wave in 2004 (Karolewski, 2016).

In the first wave of developments in 2004, eight Central and Eastern European countries, including Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, which were part of the former Soviet Union, joined the European Union. In the later stages, Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia joined the Union (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2017). Emerging countries were expected to integrate with the European Union and join the political, economic, and social structures, improve the foundations of their economies, and integrate into the advanced and developed societies of the West. Europe's economic woes resulting from the 2008 financial crisis soon put additional pressure on newcomers, especially those entering the euro area. Other causes and factors, including the wave of migration to Europe affected by the Middle East and North Africa crisis, especially the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria between 2011 and 2015, surprised Eastern European countries. While the European Union could not prevent foreign migrants into Europe, differences between politicians in the east and west of the continent became apparent, leading to a different approach in Eastern Europe. Under such circumstances, right-wing populism, as an extremist current, has been able to improve its position in the public opinion and political structure of European countries, especially in the east of the continent, over the past decade (Ágh, 2018).

Populists are now in power in several Eastern European countries, including Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and are

growing in other parts of the continent. Populism and the far-right have transcended the Baltic and Aegean regions and occupied much of Eastern Europe. This trend is visible in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. After two problematic and inflammatory decades and the poor performance of the liberal parties, the approach of imitating and imitating the West has been seriously questioned. At the same time, a few years after joining the European Union, the Visegrad countries faced the emergence of populism and anti-liberal policies in this area (Castle and Taras, 2018).

## **4.2 BACKGROUND OF FORMATION**

The phenomenon of populism in Eastern Europe spread with pessimism and rejection of elites and traditional parties, and criticism of the performance of politicians and ruling parties. Analyzing the spread of populism in the Visegrad Group countries is necessary because the confrontation of the far right with immigrants, especially Muslims, provides a clear picture of the acceleration of this phenomenon, and it warns of the danger that history might repeat itself catastrophically. This phenomenon has economic, cultural, and security dimensions and components. The grounds for the formation of the new populism, including right-wing populism in Eastern Europe, are related to three areas of the economy, culture, and security (Hidayat et al., 2018).

### **4.2.1 Economy**

In all European countries, especially Eastern Europe, the decline in government aid to disadvantaged sections of society can be seen in the cost of economic liberalization and the weakening of the "welfare state," which has widened the class divide in these countries. EU officials' justification for reducing government aid to the underprivileged refers to economic competition with other countries and global free-market spending, which has led to widespread protests and street movements in some EU societies. Many disadvantaged and middle-class people in these countries feel that their governments do not want to improve their livelihoods, and traditional liberal parties are content with empty promises before each election. This led to the

frustration of conventional parties and politicians in Eastern Europe, and as a result, they turned to populist parties (Paquot, 2018).

#### **4.2.2 Culture**

The process of globalization has not only brought the economic standards of different regions closer together but has also disrupted the differences between moral norms and different forms of life. The growing migration trend to Europe has been unprecedented in recent years, especially in southern and central European countries. According to the United Nations, Europe has seen a massive wave of migration and asylum over the past decade. The trend of globalization, digital developments, and virtual and communication networks have increased this phenomenon, and the presence of immigrants in European countries has led to the unwanted coexistence of different cultures in urban communities (Sadurski, 2018).

Despite the slogans of some liberal parties, multicultural societies are not acceptable to a significant portion of Central and Eastern European citizens, and the presence of foreign cultures is a form of aggression against their identity. Some cultural norms of foreign immigrants, especially Muslims, which may be contrary to the values and even the rules of the host countries, have been met with xenophobia and Islamophobia by far-right and populist parties. As a result, some citizens of such societies, who feel that their governments are incapable of responding to cultural and social problems, are substituting simple populist solutions to treat complex issues (Marino et al., 2019).

#### **4.2.3 Security**

Wars in the Middle East and North Africa, especially in Libya and Syria, have led to crises and insecurity in these areas, sending floods of migrants to southern, eastern, and western Europe. The government of European countries has not yet provided an effective solution in this regard, and the citizens of those countries are extremely sensitive to the issue of social security in their communities. In recent years, some terrorist acts by Islamic fundamentalists in some European cities and towns have exacerbated this concern. The recurrence of terrorist incidents, the increase

in organized crime, and lawlessness and lawlessness in the social sphere are among the cases that continue to fuel insecurity among citizens (Taras, 2019).

### **4.3 FACTORS ACCELERATING THE SPREAD OF POPULISM IN EASTERN EUROPE**

The internal factors are among the factors accelerating the spread of populism in Eastern Europe, including the identity crisis, the crisis of resource distribution, and the crisis of representation. In contrast, the economic crisis and the immigrant crisis, Donald Trump's victory in the US elections, and the referendum on Britain's exit from the European Union (Brexit) can be considered external factors.

#### **4.3.1 Internal factors**

The process of globalization, which is affected by rapid changes in socio-economic structures, new communication technologies, and the integration of different cultures in the global arena, is considered the leading cause of the identity crisis in Europe and the world (Drinóczi and Bień-Kacała, 2021). In this regard, populism has warned of a decline in the national identity of individuals in European societies and an increase in immigrants (Wendt and Bógdał-Brzezińska, 2020). Unemployment, tax increases, declining welfare, and living standards are some of the factors to which populism has reacted, attributing them to the inefficiency of the ruling parties, the performance of politicians and elites, and the exorbitant cost of joining the structures of liberalism (Krajewska, 2021). Populists are skeptical about the efficiency and performance of politicians and people's representatives and do not consider them the real representatives of the people. On the contrary, They consider themselves the real voice of the people (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2021).

### **4.3.2 External factors**

The global economic crisis, the immigrant crisis, Donald Trump's election victory, and Britain's exit from the European Union (Bergzeit) are the external factors contributing to the spread of populism in Eastern Europe.

#### **4.3.2.1 The global economic crisis**

Populist movements have become increasingly visible since the global economic downturn, and growth and development in Central and Eastern European societies have been driven by increasing anti-immigrant and extremist sentiments (Žuk and Žuk, 2021). The US financial crisis, which began in 2008, quickly turned into a global economic crisis, threatening weak European governments, including Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and especially the eurozone. The crisis spread to Central and Eastern Europe from Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, and, to a lesser extent, the Czech Republic.

It was not long before the crisis reached its peak and spread to all union members. However, the extent of this impact and its dimensions were not the same among member countries and was affected by this crisis in proportion to factors such as the volume of the bubble burst in the real estate and housing sector and prominent financial centers. When the European Union needed more unity and solidarity than ever before, disagreements over how to resolve it became a challenge among members. As a result, Germany agreed to a tighter austerity program, and France decided to sell the bonds. Meanwhile, differences between Merkel and Sarkozy, the presidents of Germany and France, have exacerbated the situation. But the dimensions of the catastrophe were more than this, and the crisis gradually received feedback and turned into divergence within the union, including in Central and Eastern Europe (Marino et al., 2019).

Between 2008 and 2012, Europe was plunged into a financial and economic crisis that accelerated the process of divergence among its members. The gap between rich and poor, south and north, borrower and lender, also accelerated the confrontation between the European and American approaches between Eastern and Western Europe. The new members in Eastern Europe thought that they would feel better about the past and enjoy greater prosperity from joining the union after joining the union. But more than a decade after joining, they feel their economic

situation has not improved, but they have also come under pressure from powerful union members (Taras, 2019).

In such a case, they are unwilling to hand over their national sovereignty to a transnational organization and give it up a little. The economic crisis accelerated the process of divergence within the Union and spread the phenomenon of populism among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Sadurski, 2018). The European Commission's regulatory and austerity policies on national economies and sanctions on Eastern European countries have provoked a backlash among the Visegrad group in Central Europe. The direct reflection of the economic crisis, with the rise of some populist parties in Europe, including the populist Fidesz parties in Hungary, the Law and Justice Party in Poland, and the ANO Party in the Czech Republic, has had consequences for divergence within the union (Paquot, 2018).

#### **4.3.2.2 Immigrant crisis**

Among the issues that have led to the rise of far-right groups and populism in Europe have been unemployment and declining job opportunities among European countries due to the 2015 wave of Syrian and Iraqi asylum seekers and refugees migrating to Europe (Blokker, 2021a). The crisis of immigrants and asylum seekers in Europe, following the first wave of the spread of this phenomenon at the end of World War II, is unprecedented. The trend of populism has spread in a domino manner, especially with the presence of Donald Trump in the White House and the popularity of far-right candidates during the European Parliament elections. US President Donald Trump, known for his extremist anti-immigration policies, has made this approach one of his main policy strategies and has seriously pursued it (Bobba and Hubé, 2021).

Upon the arrival of each asylum seeker, the host country pays for the application, food, accommodation, health, education, and other related services. According to the laws and regulations of different countries, this process takes years and imposes many costs on the host countries. If these countries are economically prosperous, the influx of immigrants will not only not limit the native labor force but will also compensate for some of the skills needs and deficiencies in these countries (Scheiring, 2021). But if a country's economy is in recession, the influx of immigrants will create significant problems in the labor market and threaten the employment of indigenous forces. As a result, it will expand the dimensions of anti-immigration,

creating a climate of hatred and barring asylum seekers from feeling threatened by job losses in countries with vulnerable economies (Sińczuch et al., 2021).

With an unprecedented influx of hundreds of thousands of war-torn migrants to Eastern and Western Europe, including Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Germany, and France, the European Union has put the immigrant quota scheme on its agenda. The plan was strongly opposed by many governments, including Austria, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and others, and led to a political dispute with Brussels over the governments of those countries (Blokker, 2021a). When the pattern of rapid Westernization did not materialize rapidly in Eastern Europe, an alternative solution was found. The solution was that the opposition in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic saw the wave of immigration to these countries and, consequently, the immigrant quota scheme as a betrayal by the European Union and strongly opposed this decision (Blokker, 2021b).

The Prime Minister of Hungary, Victor Orbán, became the leader of the opposition, and Visegrad's leaders strongly supported him. As a result, the EU imposed sanctions on these countries for failing to meet their obligations under the immigrant quota scheme. Opposition to the admission of asylum seekers became a major issue in populist parties in Eastern Europe between 2015 and 2017, and far-right parties were able to make good use of the space created. In Hungary, Fidesz's populist and anti-immigrant party, led by right-wing Prime Minister Victor Orbán, won 13 of the 21 seats in the European Parliament with 52% of the vote (Cadier, 2021). "Although we are small, we want to change Europe," he said, calling for a change in the structure of the European Union after the victory. With these remarks, he started a new approach in line with Donald Trump's anti-immigrant discourse (Blokker, 2021b). One of the main issues facing Hungary with the European Union is the quota plan for 160,000 migrants on the continent, during which Hungary will have to accept 1,294 asylum seekers. All members of the Visegrad group oppose the EU's immigration quota plan, and Hungary has even filed a lawsuit against it in the European Court of Human Rights (Cadier, 2021).

Poland was somewhat different from other members of the Visegrad Group in some issues, including the US-Iraq war, while Hungary and the Czech Republic shared common positions with the European Union on non-alignment with the US. The United States has close relations with the Visegrad Group countries, especially Poland. The US Congress has approved the sale of 32 advanced F-35 fighter jets by the Trump administration to Poland for \$ 5.6 billion, which could

boost the country's military capability. Polish officials have sharply announced their readiness to hand over a military base and deploy a US missile defense system on Polish soil, which has met with a strong response from Russia (Chrostowski, 2022).

#### **4.4 POPULISM IN POLAND**

According to the Polish constitution, the system of government in this country is a parliamentary democracy, so the president has little role in the executive branch but in the political arena has a major role. The country's executive branch has three pillars, including the president, prime minister, and cabinet. The president is elected for a five-year term, with a maximum of one president serving two terms. The legislature in Poland consists of the House of Representatives (SEJM) with 460 deputies and the Senate with 100 senators, whose term is four years (Csehi and Zgut, 2021).

The Polish constitution does not recognize the legislative power between the two parts equally and gives the House of Representatives a dominant role. This dominant role does not mean that only the House of Representatives has a prominent role in passing ordinary laws and ratifying international treaties and agreements, but it does mean that between these two branches of the legislature, only the House of Representatives has control over the work of the Council of Ministers. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives jointly exercise the role of the National Assembly under the principles of the Constitution. The dominance of the House of Representatives over the Senate is guaranteed during the constitutional ratification process (Hesová, 2021).

The seats in the Polish Parliament are divided based on the relative number of votes cast by the parties. This seat is divided between parties that have won at least five percent of the vote. Coalitions must also win at least eight percent of the vote. There are 41 constituencies in Poland, and each constituency represents between seven and nineteen seats, depending on its size. The election of senators in Poland is more direct. One hundred members of the Senate are elected by direct popular vote, based on a system of majority votes (Csehi and Zgut, 2021).

As Figure 2 shows, looking at the election process in Poland over the last twenty years, it can be seen that since 2005, the two right-wing parties, the Civic Platform and the Law and Justice Party, have won the elections.

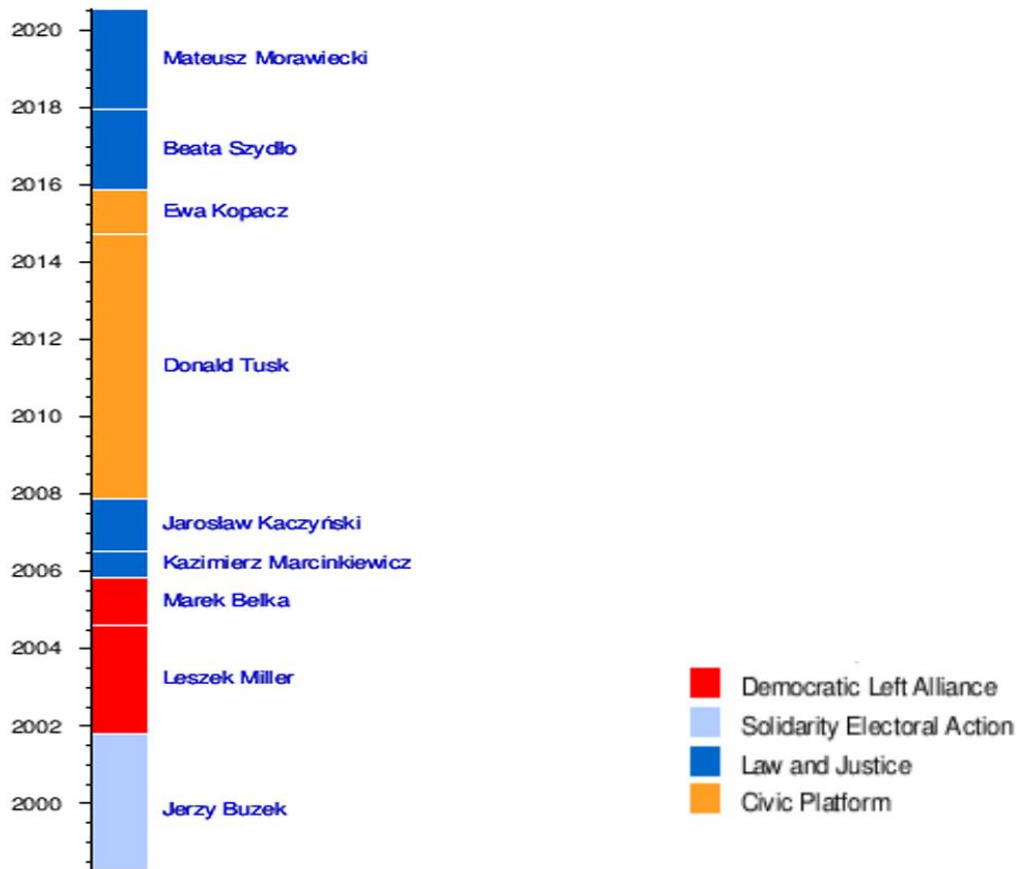


Figure 2 List of Polish parties and prime ministers in the last twenty years (Żuk and Żuk, 2021)

In the fall of 2005, Poles voted in both the parliamentary and presidential elections. From the Law and Justice party, in Polish: Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), Lech Kaczyński won the presidential election. Also, after the Law and Justice party's parliamentary elections, a lesser-known figure, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, was appointed prime minister of the minority government. Accordingly, a coalition government was formed. In July 2006, Marcinkiewicz resigned after opposing his party leader, Jarosław Aleksander Kaczyński, to replace him as prime minister (Fesnic, 2016).

Over the next 15 months, the government passed the controversial anti-corruption clean-up act, which provoked national and international reactions. The government pursued anti-corruption clean-up policies, and a central anti-corruption office was established. The new government also took a more skeptical stance on the euro by adjusting its foreign policy. Under

these circumstances, the coalition between the constituent groups collapsed, and the parliament (Sejm) voted to dissolve itself until the conditions for the October elections were met. In October 2005, parliamentary and presidential elections were held simultaneously. The two parties on the right, the Law and Justice Party and the Civic Platform, prepared to take over and decided to work together to compete with the left (Karolewski, 2016).

As a result of the parliamentary and presidential elections in October 2005, the arrangement of forces in the Polish political scene was completely transformed, and not only did the right replace the left, but one party won a significant victory. The two parties, Law and Justice and Civic Platform, disagreed after the election over the formation of the ruling coalition. Due to the lack of a sufficient majority to form a cabinet, the winning party turned to other parties instead of a coalition with a Civic Platform and sought to create a majority bloc in the House of Representatives. After lengthy negotiations, the Patriotic Self-Defense party and The League of Polish Families, a right-wing nationalist, patriotic and anti-EU party, finally joined the Law and Justice Party led by Jarosław Kaczyński and formed a coalition government (Marino et al., 2019).

On December 23, 2005, Lech Kaczyński of the Conservative Party was named the new President of Poland, replacing Aleksander Kwaśniewski of the Communist Party. Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz was also appointed prime minister (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2017). In July 2006, the President of Poland ousted Prime Minister Marcinkiewicz and appointed his twin brother, Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of the Law and Justice Party, as the new Prime Minister of Poland. Prime Minister Jarosław did not refrain from any wrongdoing due to the support of his brother, who was president (Sadurski, 2018). This left him free to commit large-scale economic embezzlements and the many economic scandals he committed during his presidency (Marino et al., 2019). This forced the Polish parliament to remain silent, and he also questioned the name of his party, Law and Justice, by acting illegally (Taras, 2019).

The Kaczyński-led coalition government was short-lived, splitting after two years with disagreements between government parties, and the president was forced to dissolve parliament, paving the way for early elections. In this election, which took place in October 2007, the main rivalry was between the traditional and liberal right-wing parties, the Law and Justice Party and the Civic Platform. Finally, Civic Platform eliminated the rival party with 51.41% of the vote. Donald Tusk, the leader of the Civic Platform, was appointed by the President in November 2007 to form the cabinet. Due to the lack of an absolute majority in parliament, he was able to form a

new coalition government with the help of the old and minority Polish People's Party (Sadurski, 2018).

At that time, the most critical international issue that Poland was involved in was the issue of the US missile defense shield in Poland. In January 2007, the United States offered Poland and the Czech Republic to deploy an anti-missile defense system consisting of 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar system on Czech territory, which Russia opposed. The proposal coincided with the rule of neo-conservatives led by George W. Bush in the United States and conservative Vladimir Putin in Russia. Gradually, the issue of establishing this system in the Czech Republic and Poland faced obstacles, and the United States replaced Romania with these two countries and signed a contract with this country. The United States has said it intends to use the system to counter threats from countries such as Iran, but Russia has denied the US justification, stressing that Tehran lacks the missile capability to target Washington's interests (Taras, 2019).

In April 2007, parliament voted to disqualify Jarosław Kaczyński. This time, his brother could do nothing for him, and in September 2007, President Lech Kaczyński ordered the removal of his brother. In November 2007, he elected Donald Tusk as the new Prime Minister of Poland. April 10, 2010, the Tupolev 154 aircraft carrying President Lech Kaczyński, his wife Maria, and 94 companions, including senior political officials, the Deputy Minister of Defense, the Deputy Foreign Minister, 18 members of parliament, the commanders of the three forces and others, crashed near the airport on Smolensk, Russia, killing all on board. Lech Kaczyński and his entourage planned to attend the 72nd anniversary of the Katyn tragedy in the presence of 400 members of the victims' families and pay their respects to the event (Marino et al., 2019).

Following this incident, the presidency was transferred to Bronisław Komorowski, the then Speaker of the Polish House of Representatives, for two months. On June 20, 2010, the decision was made to hold early presidential elections in the country, during which the required quorum was not reached, and the candidate of the Civil Platform Komorowski and the candidate of the Law and Justice Party Jarosław Kaczyński entered the second round. Finally, on July 4, with about 53% of the votes, Komorowski defeated his rival Kaczyński who had 48% of the votes, and was elected the new President of Poland (Fesnic, 2016).

The seventh round of elections to the House of Representatives and the eighth round of elections to the Polish Senate was held on October 9, 2011. The election, which nearly 50 percent of the population attended, saw the Civic Platform Party with 207 seats and the Law and Justice

party with 157 seats. The Tusk government was in place for a legal period and was re-elected by the people in the October 2011 elections (Czaputowicz and Wojciuk, 2017). From 2010 to 2015, the president has been Bronislaw Komorowski, and his first minister, Ewa Kopacz (Drinóczi and Bień-Kacała, 2021).

In 2015, Poland witnessed two primary presidential and parliamentary elections that significantly changed the country's political structure and led to the rise of right-wing and nationalist groups. The Central Election Commission officially announced the election results. According to the results, the Law and Justice had 37.58 percent of the votes; the Civic Platform had 24.09 percent of the votes; the Kukiz'15 movement had 8.81 percent; Nowoczesna had 7.6 percent, and the Peasants' Party had 5.13 percent. These parties won seats in the House of Representatives, while the United Left entered parliament with 7.55 percent, the Korwin Party with 4.76 percent, and the Together Party with 3.62 percent. The participation rate was 50.9%. Law and justice in all provinces won over its main rival, the Civic Platform (Fesnic, 2016).

The new president, Duda, who won 34.8 percent of the vote in the first round of the May presidential election, defeated former President Bronislaw Komorowski in the second round with 53 percent of the vote. Komorowski, elected President of Poland in 2010, was affiliated with the Civic Platform party. He intended to choose the euro as the country's currency if he won again. During his five-year presidency, he focused more on the security challenges that Warsaw faced in the midst of tensions with Moscow over the Ukraine crisis. Almost all polls considered him the winner of the presidential election. The populist Law and Justice Party won for the first time after Jaroslaw Kaczynski's government from the Civic Platform, whose party has held parliament and the Polish government at the same time since 2007 (Hesová, 2021).

These developments can be considered a political revolution in Poland and the European Union. In this victory, Andrzej Duda and Beata Szydło became president and prime minister. According to Drinóczi and Bień-Kacała (2021), such an election result has preserved the separation of the political scene from Law and Justice and other parties. The other parties are divided into two groups: the opposition to the two right-wing parties, Law and Justice and the Civic Platform, which are Nowoczesna and the United Left, and the second group, which includes the Korwin movement and Together Party, which are not opposed to the Law and Justice party.

Sixty percent of voters between the ages of 19 and 29 (the majority of young people in the community) voted for Duda, the young lawyer. This is very important because it shows that the

Polish political climate was at the beginning of a generational change, and the 25-year period of post-communism was coming to an end with all its successes and shortcomings. But the presidential election was not the only change in these times (Koposov, 2022). In October, as the president took office, the Law and Justice Party won parliamentary elections. With more than half of the seats in parliament, the party did not need to ally with any other party to form a government and elected Beata Szydło as Prime Minister of Poland to witness the rise of a right-wing party in both branches of power in Poland. This pro-church party succeeded in winning the race against the Liberal Party with religious slogans, including opposition to abortion and artificial insemination, patriotic and populist views on economics, and instilling fear for the immigrants who had made their way to Europe from the Middle East (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021).

In the 2015 election, the conservative Law and Justice Party, led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, won more than 39% of the vote and 242 seats in the Polish parliament. The leader of the party, who is also the brother of the late President Lech Kaczynski, said in his first speech after the victory: "Ten years ago, Lech Kaczynski was elected President of Poland. I am not raising this issue today because it is the tenth anniversary of this occasion, but I repeat that without him, we would not be here now, and the right would never be united."

The party won more than half of the parliament and did not need to form an alliance with any other party to form a government. The Law and Justice Party leader has nominated Beata Szydło, who topped the party list, as a candidate for prime minister. The Law and Justice Party is a conservative party seen within Europe as a group opposed to EU policies. The party had promised to increase the role of the country's independent policies in the economy, reduce the retirement age, and not join the European currency any time soon. The Law and Justice Party have countless supporters among the villagers and those close to the influential Catholic Church (Maatsch, 2021).

The Civic Platform party, which has been in power in the country for the past eight years, lost the election, winning only 23 percent of the vote and winning 133 seats in parliament. The Civic Platform is a center-right and liberal party that advocates the idea of the European Union, seeking to create a minimum hourly wage and imposes stricter sanctions on temporary employment contracts, as well as joining the European currency (Maatsch, 2021). The party's prime minister, Ewa Kopacz, had previously criticized Kaczynski for his "religious republic" and warned of a "religious republic" in the Catholic country. "The past eight years have not been lost, and I have no doubt that Poland today is more beautiful than ever," she said, referring to the

people's trust in the party over the past two terms. Earlier in the seventh term of the House of Representatives and also the eighth term of the Polish Senate on October 9, 2011, the Civilization Party won 207 seats (Maatsch and Miklin, 2021).

Pawel Kukiz, a rock singer and leader of the Polish anti-regime movement, who had previously won third place in the presidential election with 11 percent of the vote, also won 44 seats in parliament, making him the third-largest party in the election. The party's main slogan was to change the current situation in Poland as a "colony of foreign countries and international companies" (Maatsch and Miklin, 2021). After the presidential election, the Polish political climate consisted of three main tendencies: the right-wing party, a center-right liberal party, and a conservative party. The center-right politicians have been in power for about eight years, although their situation has always been fragile, and they have always seen the conservatives in the shadows. The immigration crisis in Europe had severely affected Poland's presidential and parliamentary elections. Former Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz agreed to accept 7,000 asylum seekers, which sparked protests from right-wing parties, including the Law and Justice Party (Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville, 2022). Opposition parties were united in their opposition to the government's decision. Even before the election, Kaczynski, the Law, and Justice Party leader, said that immigrants could bring diseases and disorders to Poland with them. Therefore, before the elections, Islamophobia and anti-immigration were on the agenda of the main opposition parties, and they were able to bring public opinion with them. However, in the defeat of the Civic Platform Party, the eavesdropping scandal of some ministers was not ineffective (Melito, 2021). As shown in the Figure below, the Civic Platform (PO) lost many popular votes from 2011 to 2015.

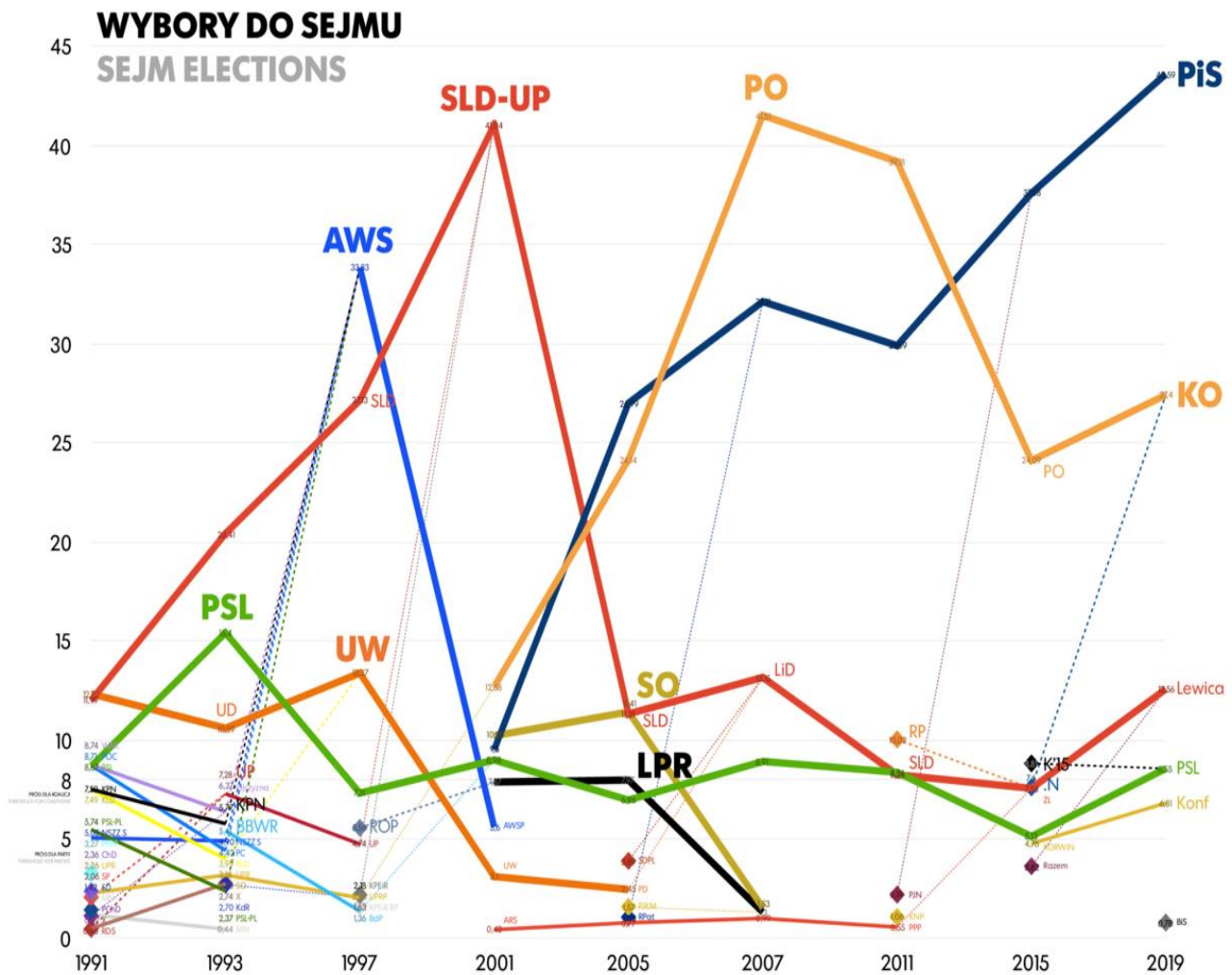


Figure 3 Popular votes of Polish parties in SEJMU throughout history (Chrostowski, 2022)

The drop in popularity was mainly due to the release of audio recordings of conversations between several Polish government officials in 2014 at a restaurant in Warsaw, which led to a political crisis for the Civic Platform party. For a year, conversations between government officials and industry owners who went to Warsaw's top restaurants for lunch or dinner appeared to have been illegally recorded. It is said that some people in these restaurants hid a remote control with a microphone under the dining tables (Orenstein and Bugarič, 2022). It is unclear who or for what

purpose did this, but the finger of accusation was directed at the circle of government opponents, wealthy industrialists, and perhaps the Russian secret services, outraged by Poland's strong support for the Ukrainian government. After 2,500 pages of dossiers relating to the investigation into illegal wiretaps of Polish policy and economic figures were published online, the scandal damaged the party's reputation. After the scandal and before the presidential and parliamentary elections, the Civic Platform party was placed in a politically inappropriate position (Stanley and Cześniak, 2022).

The Law and Justice Party won elections in a country known for its strong European backing over the past decade. Now, with the Law and Justice party in power, the question was whether Poland, which was a bulwark of stability, trust, and credibility for Europe, was on the verge of breaking Europe. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia were among the countries that opposed the presence of asylum seekers in their countries, and in all of them, right-wing parties were able to gain the upper hand. Following the election and the formation of a new Polish government, the new Prime Minister announced that his government and his country would refuse to accept 7,000 asylum seekers (Szente, 2021). November 11, 2015 (Poland Independence Day) was also the day of the right-wing demonstrations in the capital and most cities, and they held the largest march in those years with nationalist and anti-asylum slogans such as "Poland for Poles and Poles for Poland" (Vachudova, 2021).

It should be noted that from 2005 to 2007, when the Law and Justice Party was in power, deep domestic tensions, extreme conservatism in domestic politics, and more nationalist foreign policy prevailed in Poland. We can conclude that the Polish people's vote for Law and Justice Party was against Europe or for a fundamental change in the country's foreign policy. However, this could have been a hasty conclusion because this election was focused on Polish domestic affairs (Hesová, 2021).

Economically, Poland has been one of the leading countries in the Eastern European region since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the exit of the Eastern countries from the structure of the communist system, and its per capita GDP growth has been higher than that of the Visegrad Group. Since joining the European Union in 2004, key indicators and average per capita income have improved, making it the only EU country somewhat able to escape the stagnation of the 2008 crisis (Melito, 2021). In Poland, however, revenues are still one-third below the EU average and just over one-fifth of the average wage in the UK. Limited opportunities in this country have led to the

migration of nearly 4.4 million Poles (more than 6% of the total Polish population) searching for a better life in Western Europe (Orenstein and Bugarič, 2022).

The populist Law and Justice Party, in its long struggle for power, made good use of internal strife, especially the slogan "Poland in ruins," during the election and questioned the narrative of the improvement of economic indicators by rival parties and replaced their narrative with a populist one. Wise leadership and populist slogans could play the primary role in the victory of the Law and Justice Party (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021). Joining NATO and having the structures of the European Union were among the main goals of Polish politicians and people during the transition and transformation in this country. With increasing dissatisfaction with the economic crisis that overshadowed Europe, the economic situation among Central European countries and Poland, to a lesser extent, was affected. However, the immigrant and refugee crisis has played a role in the Law and Justice party's victory in the 2015 parliamentary elections (Chrostowski, 2022).

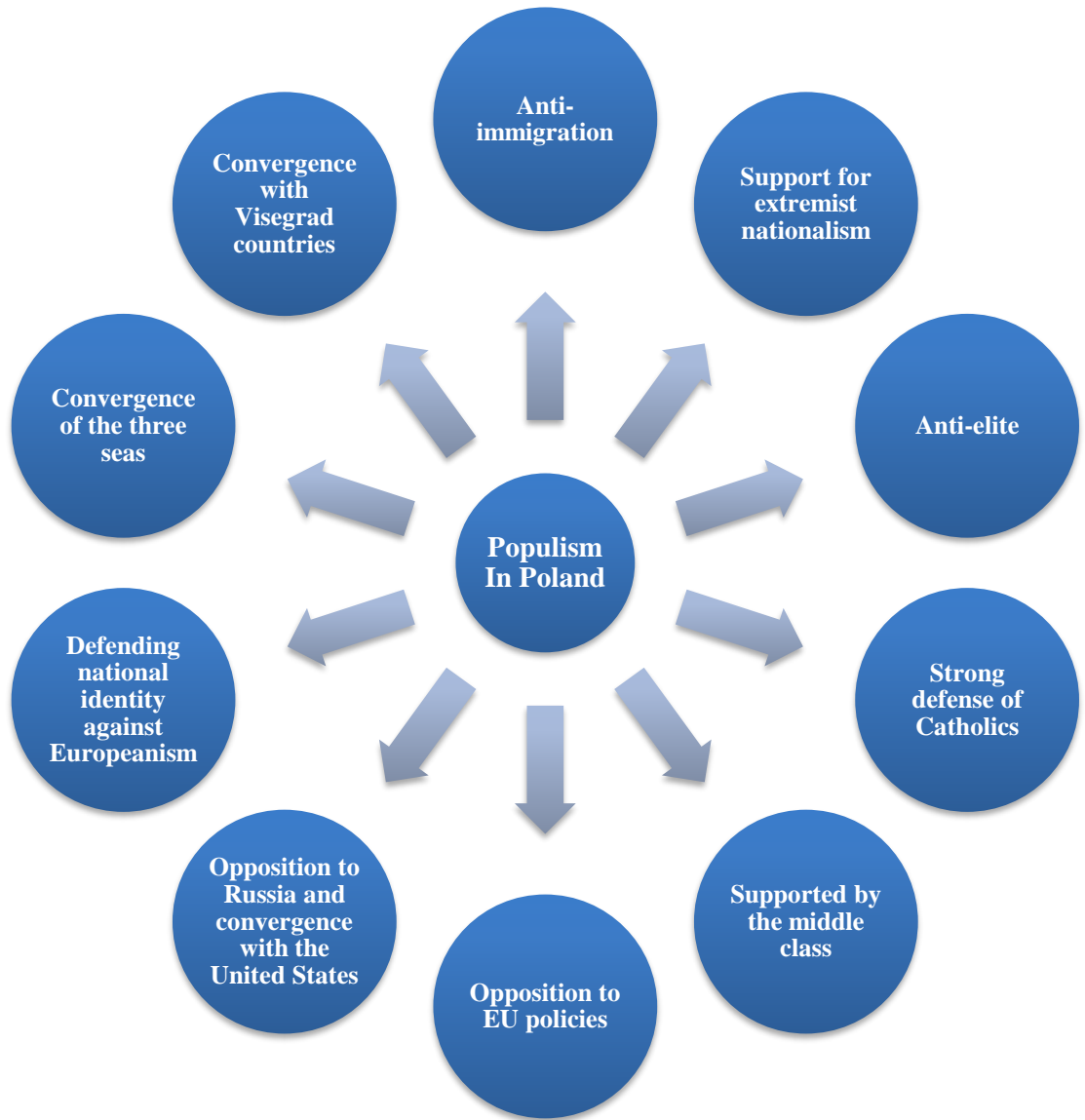
Perhaps the main reason for the Law and Justice Party vote was the demand for a change in the 8-year rule of the Civic Platform Party led by Tusk, the then-President of the Council of Europe, and Komorowski. Poland's economic transformation in recent decades has led to its sudden and rapid growth, but not all Poles benefited from this growth. The youth unemployment rate was above 20 percent, and even those with jobs complain of low incomes and poor employment contracts and find public welfare services out of reach (Maatsch and Miklin, 2021). The main weakness of Komorowski and his party was that they failed to picture a vision of Poland for the next ten years for the electorate, and they increasingly emphasized convergence on European policies, and with these slogans, they failed to attract silent votes. But one definitive result of this election is a generational change in Polish politics that could tarnish the country's political landscape in Europe much sooner than expected and increase tensions with Germany and Russia (Blokker, 2021b).

During the years that the Law and Justice Party has been in power, it has brought about significant changes in Poland. Critics say the rule of law has been weakened during the party's rule (Stanley and Cześniak, 2022). That caused Poland has become the first country whose prospects for membership in the European Union are in doubt. For the 2019 election, while pressing the independent news media, the government TV and radio stations vigorously campaigned in favor of the ruling party (Orenstein and Bugarič, 2022). However, some believe Poland is not yet like

Hungary or Turkey and is far from an autocracy (Orenstein and Bugarič, 2022). Civil society is still active in this country, and the voices of critics are still heard from the media. Polls show that for most Poles, the feeling of freedom has not diminished compared to previous years (Koposov, 2022). But some believe that legal battles have not yet affected ordinary people (Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville, 2022).

In 2015, when the Law and Justice Party came to power, it promised to lift Poland off the ground and took nationalist positions alongside economic promises, and party leaders chanted security slogans for Poles. (Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville, 2022). They were able to gain the trust of a section of the people who previously thought they had been neglected by rulers who wished for capitalism (Koposov, 2022). The ruling party, however, also had the support of the Roman Catholic Church during this period, and many priests openly supported the Law and Justice Party and voted for its members (Chrostowski, 2022).

The discourse of populism in Poland included convergence with the United States and rivalry with Russia, which distinguishes it from other members of the Visegrad group. Also, anti-immigration, opposition to imposed policies, sanctions, and discrimination among EU members, defense of national identity and nationalism against Europeanism, the staunch defense of Catholic Christianity against other religions, and regional convergence versus convergence with the European Union and the three seas initiative are some of the discourses of populism in Poland, as shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4 Characteristics of populism in Poland**

## **4.4.1 Characteristics of populism in Poland**

### **4.4.1.1 Regional convergence vs. opposition to EU**

Poland especially after 2015 when the Law and Justice Party won the elections has started a slight switch in conducting foreign policy. The foreign policy to date has been mainly focused on maintaining good relations with the EU. The Law and Justice Party, however, changed this tactic, focusing on regional policy and strengthening the position of the new member states in the EU. The emergence of Three Seas Initiative (TSI) in 2015, on the initiative of the then new president of Poland – Andrzej Duda and president of Croatia – Kolinda Grabar – Kitarović is the confirmation of this fact (Grgić, 2021).

Populists are usually assumed as inward looking, nationalists focused on the national interest and undermining international cooperation. However, the Polish case shows that populists engage in international cooperation especially on the regional level (Fredrik Söderbaum, 2021). The involvement of populists in regional cooperation is an attempt to unite the allies in a fight against a corrupt and elite EU that seeks to enforce laws against the “will of the people”, for example obligations under the immigrant quota scheme. Involvement in the regional cooperation especially in the Polish case is treated by populists as evidence to their constituents that they are doing a lot to save the national interests, however mostly those intentions are ending on rethoric speeches and public performances based on the people- elite antagonism then actual problem – solving. This gives them the opportunity to strengthen their image as a savior of the nation (Fredrik Söderbaum, 2021).

Several researches have correctly pointed that the accession to the EU by Poland has triggered historical fears of losing sovereignty and independence which, as mentioned in the first part of the thesis, was often lost. Based on this fear, populists take advantage of supranational organizations such as the EU and other countries, mainly Russia, as the main threat of sovereignty loss (Markowski, 2004; J. Kucharczyk, 2008; Buzalka, 2008).

Strong collaboration in Central and Eastern European states is perceived as a widening the gap between the new member states of EU and old EU members (Fredrik Söderbaum, 2021), That, as a final result can even cause a separation of some of the new member states from the EU.

#### **4.4.1.2 Convergence with the US vs. opposition to Russia**

This aspect is based on the very same tactic mentioned on the previous example. In Poland, the perception of the USA is similar to that in many other states, especially in the former communist bloc. For them, the USA is a model to follow, a savior and a guard against an evil Russia.

The United States has close relations with Poland. The US Congress has approved the sale of 32 advanced F-35 fighter jets by the Trump administration to Poland for, which could boost the country's military capability. Polish officials have sharply announced their readiness to hand over a military base and deploy a US missile defense system on Polish soil, which has met with a strong response from Russia (Chrostowski, 2022). At the beginning of 2007, the USA offered Poland and its neighbor the Czech Republic to deploy an anti-missile defense system consisting of 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar system on Czech territory, which Russia opposed. Gradually, the issue of establishing this system faced obstacles, and the United States replaced Romania with these two countries and signed a contract with this country (Taras, 2019).

To explain this aspect in the context of the populism it is important to mention once more the plane crash that took place near the airport on Smolensk, Russia, in April 10, 2010, killing all on board. Lech Kaczynski and his entourage planned to attend the 72nd anniversary of the Katyn tragedy in the presence of 400 members of the victims' families and pay their respects to the event (Marino et al., 2019). This event is so significant, because it became the main ideology that made the Law and Justice Party win both the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005.

As Ivan Krasnov accurately explained in his book, one of the hallmarks of the populists in Central Europe is the reliance on conspiracy theories and the growing distrust for mainstream media (Krastev, 2020). Attempting to explain the causes of the Smolensk catastrophe and blaming Russia for the catastrophe, even joined opponents of the party together. In 2016, in public opinion polls, showed that, believe in conspiracy theory about Smolensk cover –up and blames Russia for having accomplished this tragedy was a strongest determinant whether the person was a supporter for PiS party or not. (Krastev, 2020).

#### 4.4.1.3 Defending national identity against Europeanism

In order to explain this case it is important to explain both terms to show how populists describe them. For populists “nationalists” or “patriots” are people who focus their activities, deeds on national interest. However, “Europeans” are their opponents, those who reject nationalism as an approach and they do not care for the local interest (Krastev, 2020).

Polish national identity is strongly connected with the Catholicism. Roman Dmowski in his book of 1927 *The Church, the Nation, and the State* said: “Catholicism is not an addition to Polishness, colouring it in some way, but is a part of its essence [...] Any attempt to separate Catholicism from Polishness, to separate the nation from religion and from the Church, threatens to destroy the nation’s very essence.” (R. Pankowski, 2018). Religion is deeply rooted in the Polish national identity, that can be seen while studying the Polish history. It has been a part of surviving the national identity and encouragement for the Poles to fight for independence after partitions of Poland, world wars and the fight against communism (P. Froese, 2018). Catholicism is not only a part of the Polish national identity, but also a Polish Church takes strong part in Polish politics, as a guardian for moral values and cultural sphere. The Polish Church has supported joining Poland into EU only after when it was assured by the Polish government that they will not agree to any statutory changes that would introduce a cultural or moral change, like abortion, same sex marriages or children adoption by homosexual couples (R. Pankowski, 2018).

The Law and Justice Party is focusing its political strategy based on fear (Krastev, 2020). They have built a “thin-centered ideology” around threat of losing national identity and traditional, Christian values. As mentioned before, the Polish dilemma of losing sovereignty is deeply rooted in the awareness of the Polish society, therefore, any attempt to reduce independence is treated negatively. During the last two elections the party was using “traditional” and “Christian” values as a part of their political program. This rhetoric can be seen in one of their political rally speeches: “We will effectively defend Polish national identity, tradition, culture, and the Polish model of life and customs against the emerging tendencies to introduce, in a supranational manner, some risky cultural experiments which are not accepted by the majority of society(..)”. (Pis party materials, in Fuksiewicz 2014).

Jaroslaw Kaczynski has even asked for a political endorsement from the Polish Church, which have been approved, but in exchange for introducing the existing law changes like:

prohibition of abortion (which was allowed by the Polish Constitution) or ban on trading on Sundays (Stiftung, 2018).

A side effect is the extremist nationalism which results in the Islamophobia and anti-immigration. The ex-leader of the Law and Justice Party, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, used very consciously in his public statements about the immigration crisis and possible acceptance asylum seekers words and sentences that have a negative attitude towards immigrants. He, also very rarely uses the term “uchodźcy” which means “refugees”, instead he and his party colleagues use term “immigrants” to avoid emotional overtone of this word (Kim, 2017).

He often described immigrants from Syria as "roznoszących pasożyty i zarazki - spreading parasites and germs", that is, the language of dehumanizing his fellow men (Krastev, 2020; Kim, 2017). The ruling party presents itself as the only one fighting for the good of Poland and Poles, opposing the acceptance of refugees. Jaroslaw Kaczynski at the beginning of the immigration crisis said in Polish media: „zapomnijcie o solidarności, współczuciu, miłosierdziu dla ludzi uciekających przed wojną. Bogaćcie się i nie dzielcie się swoją zamożnością z nikim. Macie prawo być egoistami. Macie prawo być ludźmi niemoralnymi. Macie prawo powiedzieć „nie”, bo „nie ma powodu, żebyśmy radykalnie obniżyli standard naszego życia / Forget about solidarity, compassion, mercy for people fleeing from war. Get rich and do not share your wealth with anyone. You have the right to be selfish. You have the right to be immoral people. You have the right to say "no" because there is no reason for us to drastically lower our standard of living” (Kim, 2017). By accepting the immigrants the economic problems will start to occur and the real Poles who are already in need will not get the help that they need, because the refugees will take it instead.

Extreme statements about refugees pronounced in the name of the good of Poles is placed on the top of the handbook about populism, however coated with the concern for the welfare of the nation and its safety is a good trick to gain more support among potential voters.

#### **4.4.1.4 Middle class support vs. anti –elitism**

There are two common characteristics that all populists share no matter whether they are left or right. The first statement that populists use is, that all the elites are corrupt and self-serving. The role of the populists is representation of the people and better articulation of their

interest (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012). In Polish case the failure of the previous government formed by the Civic Platform, caught with a corruption scandal, has led to a dissatisfaction for the mainstream parties that are mostly related to the successful democratic parties. The populists raise up in the places where the weakness of the mainstream parties occurs. They are the only one who talk about things that really matter, that often are skipped by the other parties. They do not worry to criticize the institution like EU and openly talk about topics like for example immigration crisis (Anna Grzymala-Busse, 2017).

Right after the Law and Justice Party got into the power, it has started implementing the new laws, under the program name “The good change”. They have started to make personal change on the executive level on every possible public sphere. Starting from public media, state-owned companies, cultural institutions till judiciary and civil service. The change was explained as a necessity to get rid of the “bad – anti-establishment elite” and replace it with the “good elite”, that will be able to take care of the true national interests for “the people” (Bill, 2022). Report for Puls Biznesu, shows that, the Law and Justice Party made more than a thousand new appointments for the public positions in their first year of government (Tokarz, 2022; Kopińska, 2018). However, the anti-elite does not only apply to the Law and Justice opposition party, but also mentioned before the Brussels elite, which the ruling party also fights fiercely for the better good of “the people”.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Given the political situation in the European Union in recent years, we find that right-wing populism has spread not only in Poland but in most European countries. In this chapter, we analyze the spread of this trend based on the four stages of the chaos theory of Spragens (1976).

## **5.1 FIRST STAGE**

The first step is to observe disorder and crisis. Currently, the crises that threaten the European Union are the economic crisis and the social crisis. Leaders of right-wing populist parties have also seen these two crises in their societies and know how these issues should be used to gain power.

### **5.1.1 The economic crisis**

The economic crisis has gripped the EU since about 2010 due to rising debt from the EU's periphery and its inability to repay loans (Blokker, 2021a). The crisis began in Greece and continued in Portugal and Ireland. Shortly afterward, the crisis swept through Italy and Spain, Europe's third and fourth-largest economies. Then the crisis hit France, and at one point, there was talk of the crisis spreading to rich European countries such as the Netherlands and Germany. These countries have recently implemented several austerity programs to overcome this crisis (Maatsch, 2021).

These economic programs have raised unemployment and taxes in Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Cyprus. Eventually, the countries' political leaders in crisis also concluded that austerity programs did not help overcome the crisis. Numerous austerity programs have not only not improved many countries' economic and social situations but also reduced economic growth and worsened the social situation in these countries. Unemployment rose in Europe, as did government budget deficits, while domestic demand, people's purchasing power, and, of course, their incomes declined (Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville, 2022). Different views have been offered on the roots of this deep crisis. Some attribute the crisis to the non-competitive economies of countries, mainly in southern Europe, and their reliance on EU financial aid, which has gradually increased their debt (Melito, 2021, Bobba and Hubé, 2021, Hesová, 2021). They argue that the actual value of southern currencies is lower than that of rich northern nations, and before the introduction of the euro, these countries solved their problems by lowering the value of their national currency. However, with the introduction of the euro, these countries were deprived of this possibility, and gradually, economic problems became apparent (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021).

Others, including former European officials, have blamed the United States for Europe's economic crisis. They believe the United States has spread its economic crisis to Europe to alleviate its economic woes (Koposov, 2022, Vachudova, 2021). Regardless of the cause and root of the crisis, some consider mismanagement as one of the causes of the recent crisis (Szente, 2021). They believe that if, in the early stages of the crisis, a correct diagnosis of the current situation was provided and a suitable prescription was prescribed to solve the problem, the scope and depth of the crisis would be reduced, and the crisis could be resolved faster (Bobba and Hubé, 2021). For example, long after the crisis began, it became clear that one of the researches that led to the adoption of austerity policies by European countries had gross errors in reasoning and conclusions (Vachudova, 2021). The study concluded that countries whose debt levels have exceeded 90% of their production rates in recent decades are at risk of a sharp decline in economic growth. Based on this conclusion, many policymakers worldwide, especially in Europe, have justified austerity policies in indebted countries (Cadier, 2021).

But another aspect of the crisis was that the leaders of the right-wing populist parties, along with a section of the masses, saw the situation as rooted in other issues. This economic crisis, the primary pressure on the middle and weak classes of the society, has caused severe anger and dissatisfaction among these sections. This dissatisfaction has manifested in distrust of EU leaders and officials and increasing extremist tendencies (Blokker, 2021b). In Europe, many governments, including in Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Greece, and Poland, have lost the elections to populist parties. European citizens' trust in European authorities and institutions has also been severely diminished, and their ability to solve problems has been questioned (Maatsch and Miklin, 2021).

On the other hand, the emergence of extremist and divergent tendencies in crisis-stricken countries has raised concerns among the officials of these countries. Greece, for example, is concerned that the spread of the economic crisis and, consequently, the increase in racial discrimination and violence against immigrants has worried many refugee protection institutions in the country. "The financial crisis and the economic downturn have bent the country, while many blame the immigrants," said the head of an NGO in Greece (Scheiring, 2021). This extremist and racist attitude has strengthened the extreme right and increased its popularity. The dramatic increase in attacks on immigrants is a testament to this fact (Hesová, 2021). In the Italian elections, the emergence of the so-called five-star movement, which had different tendencies from the other

two major parties in the country, surprised political observers (Stanley and Cześniak, 2022). This wave gradually spread to other European countries.

Jonny (Csehi and Zgut, 2021) argues that "Europe is struggling to maintain its cohesion in the face of the rise of xenophobic and populist parties that emerged in the early 1980s. In the European Constitution, and even among the original reasons for the creation of the European Union, there was hope that authoritarian, xenophobic, and racist regimes in continental Europe would never be repeated as we had seen in the 1940s. However, after a while, the reality shows itself again. In fact, Europe is a union of governments. So it is the national elections that determine the governments, followed by the European Union, the European Commission, and the European Parliament (Orenstein and Bugarič, 2022).

Some experts believe that Europe is struggling to maintain its cohesion in the face of the rise of xenophobic and populist parties that emerged in the early 1980s (Bobba and Hubé, 2021, Vachudova, 2021, Cadier, 2021). The European Constitution, and even among the earliest reasons for the creation of the European Union, was the hope that authoritarian, xenophobic, and racist regimes in continental Europe would never be repeated, as we had seen in the 1940s (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021). But after a while, the reality shows itself again. In fact, Europe is a union of states. So it is the national elections that determine the governments, followed by the European Union, the European Commission, and the European Parliament. Therefore, it is difficult for European Union authorities to watch the results of democratic elections, offer suggestions or warnings, and be careful of what happens in a country (Sińczuch et al., 2021). This is what countries like Hungary, Greece, and Poland are facing. This is not pleasant for European Union because it violates their fundamental values (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021). However, in due time, the governments must pass their own laws and take responsibility for the mainly political problems that are the main reason for the increase of these extremist tendencies and movements (Maatsch, 2021).

Dissatisfaction with the inefficient management of governments in dealing with the economic crisis, high unemployment, low economic growth, and declining social welfare are all issues that pave the way for the propaganda of far-right groups. In Greece, for example, the Golden Dawn party, a neo-Nazi party, has seen a gradual increase in popular support since the economic crisis, and in the 2012 parliamentary elections, they won about 20 percent of the seats in

parliament. Today, their popularity has decreased with the improvement of the situation in Greece (Melito, 2021).

Economists believe that the current trend of populist rise to power in developed countries is one of the inevitable stages of globalization (Csehi and Zgut, 2021, Hesová, 2021, Melito, 2021, Stanley and Cześniak, 2022). Globalization from the end of World War II to the mid-1970s increased the economy's overall size and increased each individual's share. This trend continued at a slower pace for developed countries and much more rapidly for developing countries in the later years of the twentieth century (Csehi and Zgut, 2021). This improvement was so much so that at the beginning of the 21st century, no one doubted the positive effects of the formation of trade unions or the process of globalization and privatization of various industries and economic sectors, and the opinion of the society, especially economists and policymakers in this field, seemed very uniform (Hesová, 2021). But in these two decades since the beginning of the 21st century, things have changed for the worse regarding speed and intensity (Maatsch and Miklin, 2021). The coming to power of the populists or the attempt to prevent them from gaining control will be the predominant aspect of political and economic activities, especially in developed countries (Hesová, 2021). Leaders of right-wing populist parties and a section of the masses attribute the economic crisis to inequality, globalization, and immigration (Chrostowski, 2022, Hesová, 2021, Melito, 2021). Immigration is considered the common denominator of economic and social crises in Europe, and this is where we enter the second crisis, the social crisis.

### **5.1.2 The Social Crisis**

The crisis of illegal immigration and migration in general is one of the larger dimensions of the social crisis in Europe. Europe, which was considered one of the immigrant sending lands in the past centuries, has witnessed a significant leap in the field of migration during the twentieth century and has become one of the first migrating goals in the world (Cadier, 2021). In the post-World War II period, Europe showed significant interest in attracting foreign immigrants, especially from southern Europe, the Mediterranean, and Asia, to rebuild its economy and revive its position in the international system (Maatsch and Miklin, 2021). During this period, the economic aspect and the need for foreign labor were the dominant aspects of the immigration

process to Europe, which took place in the form of agreements between immigrant sending countries and the host countries (Orenstein and Bugarič, 2022).

Since the early 1960s, immigration has transformed European countries into multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural societies (Maatsch, 2021). Immigrant communities in Europe have been formed from the beginning in the form of island life and alien biosphere (Hesová, 2021). The main reason for this situation was the refusal of European countries to accept their position as migrant-oriented countries (Chrostowski, 2022, Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021, Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville, 2022, Orenstein and Bugarič, 2022). Europeans saw migration as a temporary phenomenon and believed that migrants would one day return to their home countries, but the continuation of the migration process made Europe one of the largest immigrant communities (Sińczuch et al., 2021). Due to the economic position of Europe and the various wars in Asian and African countries, the entry of migrants to European countries is expected to continue to increase (Szente, 2021). The reality of the existence of immigrants and the multiethnicity and multiculturalism of European countries made the management of this phenomenon through the social integration of immigrants more and more critical (Vachudova, 2021). The transformation of social cohesion into the discourse of immigration policy in European countries in the 1980s illustrated this point (Melito, 2021). However, the European practice has not been developed in this field, and each European country, following its distinct traditions, historical experiences, and cultural heritage, has followed a different approach to establishing a link between the host community and the immigrant community living in that country (Maatsch, 2021). The emergence of right-wing populist parties in the European Union has also been affected by the presence of immigrants. In fact, the new wave of the emergence of these parties has been a reaction to the new waves of mass migration to European countries due to wars in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan (Koposov, 2022). Regarding the general dissatisfaction of each country's people towards the immigrants, the extreme right-wing parties are trying to use this issue to their advantage. These parties try to attract voters' attention by linking social and economic problems and issues to immigrants and obliging them to accept the customs of the host countries (Cadier, 2021).

Following the 9/11 attacks, right-wing populist parties took advantage of the fear and vulnerability of terrorist attacks in various parts of the world. They identified Muslims, who make up the majority of immigrants in European countries, as a threat to the security and values of European countries (Blokker, 2021b). Some experts believe that the continued migration to Europe

and the growing presence of Muslims has become a pretext for far-right parties to win parliamentary elections in countries such as Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands, France, and Poland (Csehi and Zgut, 2021, Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021, Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville, 2022). The Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, for example, has always used an anti-immigrant sentiment in the country to increase its vote in elections and claims that its ideological roots go back to the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment, always defending these ideas and principles against immigrants. This party occupied third place in the 2010 elections using anti-immigration and anti-Islamist slogans. In the 2017 election, they also won 20 seats in parliament (Csehi and Zgut, 2021).

The rhetoric of right-wing populist parties has encouraged intolerance towards Muslims and other minorities, and the reputation of these parties has prompted other political groups to take a stricter stance on the issue of immigration. In many cases, this has led to more stringent immigration policies, which increase immigrants' vulnerabilities (Cadier, 2021). In Austria, for example, the Constitutional Court outlawed parts of the 2004 asylum law. In Spain and Greece, restrictive measures have been taken to combat illegal immigration as part of the fight against terrorism. The Lega Nord party of Italy has also argued for security when defending the construction of mosques. The French National Front has also warned that the country's Muslims are loyal to a larger community of believers and pose a threat to national sovereignty (Cadier, 2021, Chrostowski, 2022, Csehi and Zgut, 2021, Hesová, 2021). In many cases, right-wing populist parties have been able to bring other groups, even left-leaning and moderate parties, closer to their goals and use the components of identity as a unifying factor with other parties (Koposov, 2022).

## **5.2 SECOND STAGE**

After describing these crises facing Poland and European countries, we turn to the second stage of the chaos theory. Of course, in describing these crises, we made references to the causes and roots of these two crises from the point of view of right-wing populist parties. EU leaders, political analysts, political analysts, and political parties, including right-wing populist parties and their leaders, have acknowledged the existence of economic and social problems in the European Union. But the central issue in the second stage is the causes of the crisis. There are three questions

at this stage, which are being answered by right-wing populist parties, and their answers are very close to those of the masses:

**If there is a crisis, what are its reasons?**

In answer to this question, right-wing populist parties attribute the economic crisis to inequality and class divisions, globalization, and the migration of non-Europeans to Europe (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021, Maatsch and Miklin, 2021). According to economists, all three of these cases inevitably occur, no one can prevent them, and only the economy, society and government can be modernized and reformed in accordance with such issues so that they can adapt to the conditions (Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville, 2022, Szente, 2021). But from the views of the right-wing populist parties and part of the masses of the people who have been harmed, policies should prevent these issues or even believe that their countries should be returned to the past (Maatsch, 2021). The past is a vague ideal condition that no one has a clear idea of, and there seems to have been no problem. Is the root of the problem related to society, or is it merely the mental and individual influences of the theorist? In response to the second question, it should be said that these groups and their supporters consider the root of economic and social crises to be related to society; that is, from the point of view of right-wing populist parties, the mentioned problems are real and not merely mental and individual effects. If the theorist came to the conclusion that the problem is social, then is the problem the product of conditions that human beings can change, that is, are they conventional and artificial causes, or are they natural causes?

Since right-wing populist parties do not see the root of the crisis as merely their own mental and individual issues and see them as a social reality, they do not consider the causes of the crises as natural causes but as artificial ones. According to them, these crises are due to the incompetence of governments, politicians of European countries and managers of the European Union (Maatsch and Miklin, 2021). These parties and groups believe that migration, globalization and inequality can and should be controlled by European governments (Hesová, 2021).

### **5.3 THIRD STAGE**

The third stage is the stage of community reconstruction. If a person recognizes the political situation of his land irregularly, it means that an orderly and correct system can be established; So,

the main question in the third stage is, if this situation is problematic, what is the right situation? (Spragens, 1976)

Concerning the European right-wing populist parties, it must be said that these parties see the right situation or the ideal society of their choice in the historical and, of course, imaginary past of European societies, a past that paints an incomplete picture for people. In the historical and fictional past of Europe, there was no wave of globalization, economic inequalities, class divisions, and unemployment rates were very low, immigration to European countries was very low, and illegal immigration was non-existent. These characteristics, which are evident in the imaginary past drawn by right-wing populists, are the characteristics of their ideal society (Hesová, 2021, Kopusov, 2022, Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville, 2022). These parties see the attributes of their utopia in the past and not in the future, so they seek to rebuild the history of European societies from their perspective. Good society with the characteristics of a right-wing European populist current is as follows: First, the wave of globalization does not affect this society. Second, there is no or minimal class gap, inequality, and unemployment; third, there is no illegal immigration, and legal migration either does not exist or is very limited (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021).

The view of the right-wing populist parties, the method of rebuilding political society, is radical because it is imaginative and abstract (Maatsch and Miklin, 2021). These parties seem to be very rational in their conclusions. They paint a picture of their society by observing its failures and then by imagining a society in which these failures do not exist (Melito, 2021). They often want significant changes, but their ideas go beyond their reach (Scheiring, 2021). The plans presented by these groups are deceptive and sometimes even justify violence (Stanley and Cześniak, 2022). These parties and groups consider political norms, that is, the criteria for rebuilding their imaginary society, based on their tastes and preferences (Csehi and Zgut, 2021).

## **5.4 THE FOURTH STAGE**

According to Spragens (1976), this is the last of the four stages of the chaos theory. This step is to provide treatment. The solutions offered by populist parties are also aimed at restoring the characteristics of the past European societies, which are logical and efficient from the point of view of the party leaders. These solutions include:

1. Globalization and the cultural effects of countries on each other must be countered through the government's greater involvement in cultural affairs (Scheiring, 2021).
2. In order to support domestic industries, reduce the unemployment rate (Bobba and Hubé, 2021) and, of course, reduce the class gap (Hesová, 2021), the import of many goods should be limited (Hesová, 2021), and customs import tariffs should be increased (Scheiring, 2021).
3. Immigration to European countries must also be reduced to reduce the unemployment rate (Szente, 2021).
4. Instead of European convergence, nationalism should be emphasized (Stanley and Cześnik, 2022), and, if necessary, a referendum on leaving the EU should be held (Cadier, 2021), and the people should be encouraged to vote in favor of this referendum (Bobba and Hubé, 2021).

In this study, in the results chapter, the critiques of many studies on these proposed solutions were examined (Blokker, 2021a, Cadier, 2021, Csehi and Zgut, 2021, Kuposov, 2022, Maatsch and Miklin, 2021, Orenstein and Bugarič, 2022, Stanley and Cześnik, 2022). According to the reviews of these criticisms, it can be said that the studies focused more on the unattainable aspect of the political promises of the right-wing parties. The solutions presented in these studies were:

- The global economic crisis, the immigrant crisis, Donald Trump's election victory, and Britain's exit from the European Union (Bergzeit) are the external factors contributing to the spread of populism in Eastern Europe (Blokker, 2021a).
- The US financial crisis, which began in 2008, quickly became a global economic crisis, threatening weak European governments (Maatsch and Miklin, 2021).
- Between 2008 and 2012, Europe was plunged into a financial and economic crisis that accelerated the process of divergence among its members (Žuk and Žuk, 2021).
- The gap between rich and poor, south and north, borrower and lender, also accelerated the confrontation between the European and American approaches between Eastern and Western Europe (Marino et al., 2019).
- More than a decade after joining, the new members in Eastern Europe feel their economic situation has not improved, but they have also come under pressure from

powerful union members. In such a case, they are unwilling to give their national sovereignty to a transnational organization (Taras, 2019).

- The European Commission's regulatory and austerity policies on national economies and sanctions on Eastern European countries have provoked a backlash among the Visegrad group in Central Europe. The direct reflection of the economic crisis with the rise of some populist parties in Europe, including the populist Fidesz parties in Hungary, the ANO Party in the Czech Republic, and the Law and Justice Party in Poland (Paquot, 2018).

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

This study investigates the increase in the political influence of right-wing populist parties in Poland based on the chaos theory of Spragens (1976). As described in this study, solutions offered by right-wing populist parties in Europe countries are somehow similar to each other. Therefore, we examined the trends of the spread of populism in European countries and generalized these to similar trends in Poland. Then, using the framework of chaos theory, we analyzed the reasons for the formation of these movements.

The results of our study showed that far-right parties and movements usually take advantage of existing problems and dilemmas to advance their goals and successes and try to magnify problems to achieve their goals. Populist parties in Poland have been attempting to create a reasonable discourse on the conditions and situation created by the economic stagnation and resource crisis in these societies and advance their goals. The global financial crisis of 2008 helped the populist parties in Europe ride this wave. They attributed the ineffectiveness of their governments to the traditional ruling parties with slogans against the neoliberal economy and inequality and corruption, and they wanted to stabilize the welfare state with some socialist tendencies. Populist parties have criticized the unequal distribution of resources and incomes and the reduction of job opportunities for the indigenous peoples of their country, citing the presence of large numbers of immigrants as an important factor in this strategy.

Considering the phenomenon of populism as a result of crises (Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville, 2022), at the same time as the economic crisis and then the refugee crisis in Eastern Europe, far-right parties were able to establish and maintain their position in the power structure

and government formation with populist tendencies in Poland. Populist parties in Poland have also put much emphasis on preserving the identity of such communities and strongly oppose the multicultural approach and the fading of their national identity (Chrostowski, 2022). Populist parties consider the presence of foreign immigrants, especially Muslims in Eastern Europe, to seriously threaten the security of people in such societies and weaken their national identity. According to them, the European Union has not had a brilliant record in preventing the escalation of the crisis in these societies (Koposov, 2022). Populist parties in Poland carry a legacy of ideas of communism and socialism, which are attributed to authoritarian political views (Williams, 2021).

An example of the impact of the anti-immigrant approach of the populist parties on their victory and coming to power in the Polish government and other European countries between 2010 and 2018 can be seen. By taking the initiative and taking advantage of the conditions of the society, they tried to magnify the inefficiency and corruption of the traditional politicians and parties and challenged their performance to win the elections and fit into the power structure. Populist parties in Eastern Europe are diverse and cover many discourses, including xenophobia, racism, nationalism, hatred of immigrants, anti-Islamism, and the humiliation of liberalism (Koposov, 2022). Economic, social, and cultural crises, especially the immigrant crisis, helped populists sow the seeds of concern, fear, and despair in the hearts of the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe and present themselves only as of the savior and problem solver.

The results of our findings based on chaos theory show that the spread of populism and the growth of far-right parties over the past decade in Poland is influenced by internal variables such as economic, social, and security factors. Events such as economic crises, immigration, and identity crises have also added to the internal turmoil in Eastern Europe countries and Poland. On the other hand, events such as the referendum on Britain's exit from the European Union (Brexit) and the victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential election in 2016 as accelerating factors and external variables play a crucial role in intensifying and spreading populism among the Visegrad countries and Poland.

The existence of right-wing populist parties and their rise to power can pose significant challenges to political and social systems in Europe. Although their presence may not lead to a democratic crisis, the success of these parties could change the political climate in Europe (Sińczuch et al., 2021). The following are the consequences of these parties gaining power:

- **Intensification of anti-immigration:** Right-wing populist parties, after abandoning their anti-Semitic policies in the past decades, have adopted anti-immigrant policies, especially anti-Islam. A new generation of these parties emerged in the aftermath of 9/11. In order to gain political legitimacy, the leaders of the right-wing populist parties present themselves as defenders of national values against Islamization. The propaganda of these parties against immigrants and Muslims, while legitimizing violence against immigrants, has led to a change in the composition of the supporters of these parties and an increase in the inclination of the educated and officials of European countries to these parties. The continued presence of these parties in these countries could provide grounds for further violence and the application of discriminatory laws against immigrants in European countries, most of whom are Muslims (Koposov, 2022).
- **Emphasis on nationalism and opposition to integration in Europe:** Right-wing populist parties believe that the European Union and the European integration process constitute a significant threat to countries' national identity. Right-wing populist parties are among the strongest critics of European integration among the wide range of European parties (Chrostowski, 2022). Although some right-wing populist parties acknowledge the existence of shared identity and cultural elements in Europe and even consider European integration useful in some areas, they all oppose the creation of a unified political unit called the European Union and believe that the sovereignty and national independence of states must continue to be maintained (Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021).

Voters in these parties are unaware that populist policies are detrimental to long-term economic growth. Populist politicians adopt policies that are appealing at first glance and seem to benefit voters in the short term, but experience has shown that they are detrimental to economic growth in the long run (Csehi and Zgut, 2021, Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021, Melito, 2021). But Why do voters vote for a populist candidate? A simple answer may be that voters are short-sighted and prefer short-term interests to long-term interests (Orenstein and Bugarič, 2022). Another explanation may be that voters are not sufficiently aware of the effects of different policies

and, therefore, can not distinguish between good and bad policies and politicians (Csehi and Zgut, 2021).

Finally, the question is, what is the alternative to right-wing populism? The answer lies in an approach that seeks to involve the currently deprived people and, simultaneously, prevent the rich and powerful from leaving the system (Bobba and Hubé, 2021); Therefore, a new kind of social contract is needed. In southern European countries, this new social contract needs widespread support. This support can only be created by creating justice through reforming finances and taxes. Passionate speeches will definitely not be enough. There should also be a mechanism for approving and implementing these new social arrangements. This mechanism could be in the form of a grand coalition formed at the ballot box, or communities could formally renegotiate their constitutions and revise them.

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