POPULIST POLARIZATION IN ITALIAN POLITICS, 1996-2016
An assessment from a Latin American analytical perspective

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A mi familia

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Summary

This study goes beyond the analysis of the causes of the emergence of populist actors in the party system, focusing instead on those cases in which populism and its counterpart anti-populism, translate into an ideological and discursive divide that contributes to structuring a certain party system. When populism/anti-populism emerges as a political cleavage, the factors behind parties' political choices in general and electoral coalition preferences in particular, can be affected. For this new cleavage to start to polarize, a change in the political opportunity structure is needed. In fact, when the political opportunity structure opens as a consequence of events external to the party system new actors may enter the system, producing a change in the dynamic of competition. Moreover, considering the organizational density of the parties in the system, defined as the power of penetration of a given party, in terms of both intensity and reach, this dissertation can shed light on the likely duration not only of the parties but also of the cleavage.

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Introduction

"Le prossime elezioni saranno un plebiscito, un referendum fra il vecchio e il nuovo, fra il popolo con i suoi diritti e i poteri forti, i signori dello spread, i signori delle banche, i signori della finanza" (…) lo scontro non è più tra destra e sinistra, lo scontro è tra il popolo con i suoi diritti (…) contro i poteri forti" [1] - Matteo Salvini on Facebook Live streaming May 27th, 2018.

Populism is a hot topic today. It seems to have proliferated in countries around the world; in some of them, populist parties won seats in the legislature and, in others, they are even part of government coalitions, sometimes heavily affecting the internal dynamic of political competition.

The literature on the causes of populism focuses on various factors, which, for the sake of simplicity, can be divided into two groups: mass society theories and economic theories (Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017). While mass society theses link the emergence of populism to threats to culture and feelings of identity loss, economic theses employ a Downsian spatial and materialist conception of political representation to explain the emergence of populist political options (Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017, pp. 268-69). Even though both these theories are surely useful to explain the emergence of populist parties, my interest lies in those cases where the populist/anti-populist cleavage polarizes the political system. For this reason, I develop a different theoretical frame, which nevertheless stays in relationship with some of the aforementioned arguments.

This theoretical framework partly relies on the long tradition of study and academic empirical analysis of populist regimes in Latin America. To develop my argument, it is quite important to make a link with the literature on Latin American populism. Latin America is the region with perhaps the longest tradition of populism in the world, from the classical populism of Perón in Argentina in the 1970s to the neoliberal populism Fujimori in Peru the 1980s and Chavéz's radical left populism in Venezuela in the 2000s (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014; López Maya

[1] "The next elections will be a plebiscite, a referendum between the old and the new, between the people with their rights and strong powers, the lords of the spread, the lords of the banks, the lords of finance...the clash is no longer between right and left, the clash is between the people with their rights...against the strong powers".

2011). Moreover, in viewing those three waves of populism within the region, it can be observed that each generated a very clear pattern of political competition: a new cleavage between those in favor of the populist forces and those against. To what extent does this argument travel to other regions? I think we can adapt this idea to better understand the political situation in certain European countries.

This study goes beyond the analysis of the causes of the emergence of populist actors in the party system, focusing instead on those cases in which populism and its counterpart anti-populism, translate into an ideological and discursive divide that contributes to structuring a certain party system. When populism/anti-populism emerges as a political cleavage, the factors behind parties' political choices in general and electoral coalition preferences in particular, can be affected. For this new cleavage to start to polarize, a change in the political opportunity structure is needed. In fact, when the political opportunity structure opens as a consequence of events external to the party system new actors may enter the system, producing a change in the dynamic of competition. Moreover, considering also the organizational density of the parties in the system, defined as "the power of penetration of a given party, both in terms of intensity and reach" (Sartori 2005a, p. 8), this dissertation can shed light on the likely duration not only of the parties but also of the cleavage.

This happened in Italy starting in 1994. When Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia (FI) entered the party system with more that the twenty-five percent of the vote and the Lega Nord gained electoral relevance in the northern regions, the structure of the party system and the patterns of political competition started to change. The aforementioned re-structuration of the party system was a consequence of two features of these very parties. First, both FI and the LN were *populist* parties (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2005; 2010; Cento Bull and Gilbert, 2001; McDonnell, 2006; Zaslove, 2011a). Second, as mentioned above, on the occasion of the 1994 election and in the following, both parties were able to gain a relevant share of popular vote and keep it.

Later, since the 2013 general election, because of the Great Recession, another populist movement emerged, changing the composition and dynamics of the whole system: the Five Star Movement. Near the same time, a more coherent anti-populist discourse also started to emerge. This anti-populist discourse was interpreted by two actors. First, the technocratic government led by former EU

bureaucrat Mario Monti started to develop an anti-populist discourse with elitist features. Additionally, with the ascension of Matteo Renzi in the Democratic Party (PD) and during the electoral campaign for the constitutional referendum of December 2016, the center-left PD also started to develop an anti-populist discourse.

The populism/anti-populism political cleavage

The object of this dissertation is analyzing the factors that may enable populism to become a salient dimension of political competition. In line with that aim, I conceive of populism/anti-populism as a political cleavage that may structure the party system by itself or, more frequently, with other cleavages.

For populism/anti-populism to be conceived of as a cleavage, populist actors need to obtain a significant part of the general vote share. For this reason, it is important to understand under what conditions the populist message can attract and win over an important sector of voters. In other words, I try to respond the following question: what are the factors that contribute to the emergence of a political divide between populism and anti-populism which, under certain circumstances, can become as relevant as—or even more relevant than—the classic left-right divide?

By acknowledging the literature on Latin American populism, I realized that an important factor to consider is the formation of a new political cleavage between populist and anti-populist forces. Furthermore, as explained later, the literature on party system collapse—one of the factors that led to the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage—has not been considered by the European literature on the causes of populism.

To build theoretically the dependent variable of this study—the polarization (or emergence) of the populism/anti-populism political cleavage—I employ three key concepts in political science. First, I use the concept of partisan polarization. Polarization in political science is a fuzzy concept. For the purpose of this work, following Sartori, I maintain that a party system is polarized if the two extremes of the competition axis are occupied. As a consequence, the opposite conceptual pole of polarization is convergence. Even if I am employing a conceptualization of the phenomenon close to Sartori's, there is one important difference. In this

dissertation, polarization is *normatively* neutral. In other words, whether polarization is good or bad for the stability of a certain party system or for democracy is treated as an empirical question.

This statement is the consequence of the fact that at least one cleavage needs to be polarized for the party system to function. If no polarization is present in the system, voters would be unable to distinguish among different political options (Lupu, 2015). In other words, a certain degree of polarization is essential for giving voice to and adequately representing the ideas and interests of different segments of the electorate.

The second concept needed for the theoretical building of the dependent variable is populism. Populism is a contested concept. The concept also carries a negative bias. This is mainly due to the fact that, at least in Europe, populism has often been identified with the radical right (Stavrakakis, 2018). This led to conceptual confusion, since nativism and authoritarianism are attributes of (populist) radical right parties, not intrinsic characteristics of populism. In fact, in Latin America, populism has adopted a rather inclusionary, egalitarian cast (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013a; 2017). Even in European countries, there are numerous examples of populist parties that adopt an inclusionary discourse such as Synaspismós Rizospastikis Aristerás (SYRIZA) in Greece and Podemos in Spain. Inclusionary populism can be a corrective for democracy, since it helps bring into the realm of politics sectors of the population that were excluded before, restoring the importance of the participatory component of democracy (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Stavrakakis, 2018). When relevant populist options emerge in countries and start to structure the party system, mainstream parties (sooner or later) react. As Stavrakakis points out, populists are never the only ones that create narratives of crisis, since mainstream voices articulate their own crisis narratives, pointing to particular causes and solutions (2018, p. 35). But the major contribution of Stavrakakis is underlining that “given that very few political forces self-identify as ‘populist’, there is a huge need to also study anti-populism and incorporate this inquiry into the study of populism proper” (2018, p. 35). In other words, when populism takes the shape of a cleavage, it looks inevitable that mainstream parties adopt a kind of anti-populist discourse. In a certain way, it can be said that the effect of populism on democracy depends also on the behavior of the other side, i.e., anti-populism.

As mentioned before, in Latin America we have seen the rise of populist forces that polarize the electorate between those in favor and those against. A clear example lies in the polarization of the chávismo/anti-chávismo political cleavages in Venezuela from the late 1990s (McCoy and Diez, 2011, p. 59).

In order to describe what I mean by populism/anti-populism cleavage, I need to provide a definition of populism. As stated above, populism has certainly been a contested concept, and, to some degree, remains so. However, the ideational definition has gained strength among scholars. Following the ideational definition, I define populism as a "thin centered ideology that conceives society as divided into two antagonistic and homogeneous groups the 'pure' people and the 'corrupt' elite and that maintains that politics should be the expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (Mudde, 2004; Stanley, 2008; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Defining populism as an ideology has at least two advantages. First, it can account for both the elite and mass level. In other words, for populists to become electorally relevant, there needs to be a demand for populism, but, at the same time, there must be a supply of credible populist alternatives. The demand side is a consequence of structural changes which contribute to activating populist attitudes in the masses, while the supply side refers to those conditions that favor the performance of populist actors in the political and electoral arena (Mudde and Rovira Kalwasser, 2017, p. 99; see also Hawkins, Pauwels and Read, 2107). Second, conceptualizing populism as a set of ideas allows us to detach the appearance of the phenomenon from the appearance of a charismatic leader (see Weyland, 2001). This link between the appearance of a charismatic leader and the emergence of populism seems problematic, since it underestimates the number of cases. More in detail, the explanation seems flawed because not all populist forces are led by charismatic leaders and, on the other hand, because it overlooks the fact that in the electorate, there may be demand for populism independent of the presence of a populist leader (see Mudde, 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

Last, to construct theoretically the dependent variable of this study, we need the concept of cleavage. The concept of cleavage was used for the first time in the classic work on the emergence of Western European party systems by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). The authors define cleavages as dichotomous divisions of society into two opposing camps that are determined by the position of individuals

in the social structure (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; see also Bartolini and Mair, 1990). As this division is very deep, it ends up configuring alignments between the two sides of society and political parties. Following this strand of literature, cleavages need to fulfill three requirements. First, there needs to be an empirical referent of the concept, which we can define in social-structural terms. Second, cleavages feature a normative element, that is, the set of values and beliefs which provides a sense of identity and role to the empirical element and which reflect the self-consciousness of the social group(s) involved.

Third, there is the necessity of an organizational/behavioral element that is the set of individual interactions, institutions, and organizations, such as political parties, which develop as part of the cleavage.

Even though this "sociological" definition of cleavages has been widely accepted, it is worth remembering that Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) explanation for the formation of party system referred only to some Western European countries. As a consequence, the majority of the countries outside Western Europe have not gone through the same development pattern.

Moreover, a more recent strand of literature started to argue that, mainly with respect to the variety of party systems around the world, some of the contraposition in their party systems are not clearly anchored to rival social blocs (Kitschelt, 2007; Roberts, 2016). Any competitive party system must "cleave" the electorate as rival parties mobilize support, and cleavages constructed in the political arena between rival party organizations, without reference to social group distinctions, are not necessarily unstable alignments (Roberts, 2016, p. 56). In other words, some party systems are structured along divides that are not rooted in society, but they can endure over time (Kitschelt, 2007) and are not necessarily more unstable that traditional cleavages. This particular kind of cleavage is called political cleavage (Roberts, 2016).

Some of the former communist parties provide a good case in point. Indeed, in these countries, historical legacies of communism made it difficult for former communist parties to develop party systems based on solid social divisions. At the same time, Kitschelt maintained that "the clash of interests between relative winners and losers of transition would lead to the alignment of the main axis of competition between parties which offered pro-market, cosmopolitan, and internationalist policies, and parties which offered particularist, interventionist and

anti-integrationist policies" (1992, p. 16). In other words, if communist legacies inhibit, per some scholars, the formation of stable cleavages at both the social and party system level, at the same time, they allow political actors to establish a more immediate type of linkage with voters. This division can be conceived of as a liberal/communist divide at the party system level.

Another example is related to the structure of the Chilean party system after the return to democracy in 1989. As Tironi and Aguero (1999) suggest, the origins of the configuration of forces in the Chilean party system, needed to be found not in the social cleavages, mainly class, that had structured the system before the military took the power. Instead, the origin of the bipolar competition pattern within the Chilean party system was a consequence of a new political-cultural divide, namely authoritarianism/democracy (see also Tironi, Agüero, and Valenzuela, 2001).

In sum, in line with examples of political cleavages such as the communism/anti-communism divide or authoritarianism/democracy in Chile, I maintain that the dependent variable of this study, the populism/anti-populism cleavage, is a political divide. I define the populism/anti-populism cleavage as a political cleavage, since the division in the system has no sociological roots but at the same time represents a frontier that involves "the construction of antagonisms and the drawing of political frontiers between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'" (Howarth, Norval, and Stavrakakis, 2000; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2018).

Theoretical argument

With respect to the factors that enable the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage I rely on a theoretical framework that considers three factors. First, the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties, in many cases due to inter-party agreements, results in a perception that the parties are not fulfilling their role of representation. Moreover, the breaking of massive corruptions scandals further undermines the linkages between voters and parties, since the voters perceive that the scandals touch the totality of the political elite. When these two factors occur simultaneously, the unresponsiveness of the part system reaches its most extreme level. Since the whole system is no longer able to represent the ideology and the interests of the electorate, the party system

collapses. The collapse of the party system represents the third factor in my theoretical framework. A party system collapses when the principal type of linkage between voters and parties breaks down and the other types are not able to replace it (Morgan, 2011). During the period analyzed, a populism/anti-populism cleavage started to structure the system. Extreme levels of unresponsiveness led to the collapse of the system: voters feel that the whole system is unresponsive, and, in turn, the party system cannot establish new linkages to connect with voters and adapt to their needs. In the Italian case after the collapse of the party system, electorally relevant populist options emerged. In this sense, the collapse of the party system represents a critical juncture. Critical junctures in historic institutionalism are defined as brief phases of institutional flux during which more dramatic change is possible (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, p. 341). These phases occur in between long periods of path-dependent institutional stability. In the same way Pierson stresses that "junctures are 'critical' because they place institutional arrangements on paths or trajectories, which are then very difficult to alter" (2011, p. 135).

When the system collapses, there are no linkages between voters and parties. After the collapse in Italy, relevant populist options emerged, giving shape to a new political cleavage, which I call the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

The collapse of the party system opens the political opportunity structure and can permeate the institutions and allow the entrance of new political actors. In other words, the collapse represents a sort of big bang that reverts the system to scratch. At this point, there is no certainty with respect to the path that will be followed. It is worth underlining that I am not assuming that the collapse of the party system is either a sufficient or a necessary factor for the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. Instead, representing a critical juncture, it opens the political opportunity structure in such a way that permits new forces to enter the system and changes the patterns of partisan competition.

The Italian case

In selecting a single case I am performing both theory-building and theory-testing exercise. First, I develop a theoretical frame to account for the causes of the

emergence of the so-called populism-anti/populism cleavage. Secondly, I test my argument for one case: Italy between 1994 and 2016.

There are two reasons for selecting this case. First, at least some of the explanatory factors I use in my theoretical framework have been mainly used to analyze Latin American cases, especially the collapse of the party system. Indeed, the cases of party system collapse, namely Venezuela, Colombia, Peru[2] and Bolivia, and Italy are all Latin American, except for Italy.

The literature on Europe has not worked much with the concept of the collapse of the party system. The emblematic cases are Bolivia in 2006 with the election of Evo Morales and Venezuela in 1999 after the election of Hugo Chávez (Coppedge, 2005; Ellner, 1999; López Maya, 2011).

As I show below, bringing this type of literature to the analysis of the Italian case is interesting because it can shed new light on the causes of the emergence of electorally relevant populist options, different from the ones studied before.

In other words, since party system collapse is such a crucial piece in my theoretical frame, I decided to construct a framework to explain the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage and apply to a non-Latin American case: Italy. I am interested in seeing whether my argument, with some adaptation, can "travel" outside of the region. In other words, employing a strand of literature that has so far been used to explain Latin American cases, my objective is to test its validity in a different case.

The second reason behind the selection of the Italian case is linked to the characteristics of this study. There are plenty of studies on populism that focus on the Italian case (Diani, 1996; Betz, 2001; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005; Caiani and Della Porta, 2010; Albertazzi and Mueller, 2013). These studies are very insightful with respect to some populist parties, such as Forza Italia (Edwards, 2005; McDonnell, 2013) and the Lega Nord (LN) (McDonnell, 2006; Zaslove, 2011; McDonnell and Vampa, 2016). Moreover, studies proliferated focusing on another populist actor which emerged on the national scene after the 2013 election: the Five Star Movement (Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013; Mosca, 2014; Lanzone, 2014; Ceccarini and Bordignon, 2016). However, the Italian party

[2] While for Seawright (2012), Peru represents a positive case of party system collapse, for Morgan (2011) Peru cannot be classified as collapse since the previous party system was not institutionalized.

system has not been studied in a longitudinal perspective that allows mapping the parties and the political cleavages that structure the system. Mapping both populist and non-populist parties, their evolution and their organizational characteristics shed light on possible divides that one may overlook focusing only on one or a type of parties.

In sum, with this study I intend to fill a research gap and provide a theoretical framework that advances understanding of the populist (and anti-populist) phenomenon from the 1990s to the present. The other novelty of this study is that the theoretical building blocks I employ have been rarely used to analyze a non-Latin American case.

As mentioned above, Italy constitutes a positive case, since the so-called populism/anti-populism cleavage started to structure the party system in 1994. From the 1994 parliamentary election until today, populist parties have kept their total vote share above forty percent.

Moreover, Italy represents an interesting case due to the different sub-types of populism it features. In other words, the populist pole in Italy changes its configuration over time, featuring four subtypes of populist ideologies such as neoliberal populism (Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia and Popolo della Libertà), regionalist populism (Lega Nord from 1994 to late 2000s), radical right populism (the Lega Nord from 2010 to today). To these subtypes of populism, we add the Five Star Movements (M5S), noteworthy in the fact that its brand populism is unattached to any clear full ideology. For this reason, some scholars talk about its "pure populism."

In Italy, populists achieved a role in government five times during this period—9 of 17 years. The two populist forces in the system up to 2011 were both situated on the right of the partisan axis of competition. However, they attached to different host ideologies. The LN, under the leadership of Umberto Bossi, was a regionalist populist party which at some point, after the breakdown of the first Berlusconi government in 1995, advocated for the independence of the northern regions of Italy. Toward the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the party started an ideological shift, becoming a populist radical right party. Since then, the core ideological shift of the party carried a focus on nativism and authoritarianism, while keeping the discursive populist component. In other words, while until the late-2000s, the "us" category was represented as the "hardworking northern

people," when rightist radicalism came to be the main ideology of the party, the inner group was represented by Italians, mainly those hit by the economic crisis of the 2010s, without any geographical limitation. On the other hand, there was a change also in the "others" category. While at first, the professional politicians in Rome who were blamed for privileging the "lazy" southerners who were the others, once the LN became a populist radical right party, the "others" became the immigrants who arrived illegally, stole jobs from Italians and behaved violently (Bobba and McDonnell, 2015).

Moreover, the NGOs that rescued migrants in the Mediterranean Sea are equated with the smugglers that bring them illegally to Italy. From the organizational point of view, the LN displays a high level of organizational density, since within the party there is a system of checks and balances that counterbalance the discretion of the founder-leader.

With respect to Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia and Popolo delle Libertà (2007-2013), the main coalition partner of the populist right-wing governmental coalitions from 1994 to 2011, the party ideology has been described as neoliberal populism (Mudde, 2007, p. 47). According to FI/PdL, its people, the decent, ordinary, family-oriented Italians, were under threat from the undemocratic, immoral elites of the left: the intelligentsia, the judiciary and those parts of the media not owned by Berlusconi, all of whom were also said to have joined forces to impede economic growth due to their supposed continuing attachment to communist and "anti-Italian" values (Bobba and McDonnell, 2015, p. 162–63). FI and, later the PdL, from an organizational point of view, were personal parties characterized by a low level of organizational density thanks first to the founder-leader's dominance of the party and perceived centrality to its survival and second to the relationship between the party and the members, which saw active membership discouraged and organization at the local level extremely limited/nonexistent (McDonnell. 2013; Kefford and McDonnell. 2018). This type of extremely leader-dominated party was new in Italian politics.

In 1998, another populist party joined these two rightist populist parties, this time on the left side of the political spectrum. Italia dei Valori (IdV) was a leftist populist party that put particular emphasis on the anti-corruption. Being a single-issue party, it did not have a clear thick ideology. The founder was former Mani Pulite judge, Antionio di Pietro, and the party reached its highest electoral

performance in the European election of 2014, obtaining 8 percent of the vote. After the loss, di Pietro abandoned the party, which has since become electorally irrelevant. From an organizational point of view, like Silvio Berlusconi's parties, the IdV can be categorized as a personal party, displaying a low level of organizational density. While the FI, the LN and, later, IdV filled out the populist pole, the anti-populist pole did not emerge, at least during the 1994-2011 period.

The discourse that the non-populist parties articulated in opposition to the populist center-right coalition did not reject the populist component per se, but instead critiqued Silvio Berlusconi. Anti-Berlusconism focused on policies implemented by the center-right coalition leader and against the new style of leadership embodied by Berlusconi. During almost 20 years (1994-2011), Italian politics were based more on an *anti* instead of an *alter* dynamic of competition (De Giorgi and Ilonszki, 2018).

Things changed in the 2011-2016 period. After the Great Recession and partly as a consequence of the neoliberal adjustment measures implemented by the technocratic government of former EU Commissioner Mario Monti, a new populist actor emerged, the Five Star Movement (M5S). The Movement was different from the other populist forces for at least one reason. It was not ideologically close to the other populist parties along the left-right axis.

The M5S cannot truly be placed along that axis, given the extreme ideological heterogeneity of the members of the Movement (Bobba and McDonnell, 2015, p. 169). For this reason, the populist component is prevalent, and the party is defined as "pure populist" (Tarchi, 2015; Manucci and Amsler, 2017). This is quite uncommon since populist ideology tends to be associated with a host ideology (Bobba and McDonnell, 2015). Quite intentionally, at the organizational level, the movement is more similar to FI and the PdL that to the LN. It was similar to Silvio Berlusconi's parties in the sense that it relies heavily on the leadership of comedian Beppe Grillo. Even if there are surely organizational differences between the two parties, both feature a low level of organizational density.

Between 2011 and 2016, a more coherent anti-populist pole consolidated. First, the technocratic government led by Mario Monti developed an elitist and essentially anti-populist discourse, criticizing the irresponsibility of the administrations prior to the crisis in managing the economic and financial emergence. Elitism represents the opposite conceptual pole of populism. In fact,

elitist discourse reversed the populist dichotomy between people and elites since, for elitists, technocrats are more likely to solve the country's problem because they are experts and they know better. On the other hand, though, some scholars hold that populism and technocracy are not totally in conflict. For instance Leonard notes that populism and technocracy are "two contradictory and mutually reinforcing forces" (2011). In other words, beyond the evident opposition between populism and technocracy, there is an underlying complementarity between the two (Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti, 2017). The authors underlined that "this complementarity consists in the fact that both populist and technocratic forms of discourse are predicated on the critique of a specific political form, which we refer to as party democracy" (Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti, 2017, p. 3–4). The main characteristics of party democracy are the mediation of political conflicts through the institution of political parties and the idea that the specific conception of the common good that ought to prevail and therefore be translated into public policy is the one that is constructed through the democratic procedures of parliamentary deliberation and electoral competition (Manin, 1997; Mair, 2013; Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti, 2017). With the transformation of catch-all parties in cartel parties there was a weakening of the parties' representative over their government function (Katz and Mair, 1995; Caramani, 2017).

Moreover, another actor in the system started to adopt an anti-populist discourse. In fact, since the election of Matteo Renzi as secretary of PD and especially during the campaign for the 2016 constitutional referendum, opposed by all the populist parties (FI, the LN and the Movement), the PD also started to develop an anti-populist discourse. The constitutional referendum was portrayed as a sort of battle against the populist front, and the leader of the PD tried to distance himself from the establishment. In fact, European leaders, the OCSE, the FMI and the European agencies were in favor of the referendum. In doing this, he also tried to reclaim "the people," enabling a further moralization of the political debate in the country. In fact, while populism is not the only ideology that sees politics as a contraposition of the "people" and the "elite" its key feature is morality. As Mudde (2018) observes, "populism is based on morals and that creates a whole different interaction, because if you are 'pure' and the other person is 'corrupt', compromise leads to corruption of the pure. Corrupt people are not legitimate opponents, and that is an important difference." In this

circumstance, anti-populism is based on the same moral distinction as populism. I name this type of anti-populism basic anti-populism. In fact, it is characterized by the strategy of “fighting fire with fire”, i.e., discursively attack populist parties on the basis of a moral evaluation.

Methodology

From a methodological point of view, this argument is illustrated through a single case study which, in general terms, contributes to constructing and validating theoretical propositions (George and Bennett, 2005; Bennett and Elman, 2007; 2006; Levy, 2008; Mahoney and Goertz, 2006).

As Levy (2008) notes, even though there is a quite widespread use of case studies in social sciences, there is no an agreement on a proper definition. For George and Bennett, a case study is a “an instance of a class of events” which is also “the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events” (2005, p. 5). This conceptualization of case study is explicit in “structured comparisons” as the use of a set of theoretical questions or propositions to structure an empirical inquiry on a particular analytically defined aspect of a set of events (George 1979).

In line with this perspective, Gerring defines a single case study as the intensive study of one case where the purpose of that study is, at least in part, to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population). However, as Gerring (2006) observes, it is important to distinguish between case studies and “single outcome studies.” While the former aim at some degree of generalization, the latter aim to explain or interpret a single case but not to generalize beyond the case, involving a purely idiographic analysis of a single historic episode (see Levy 2008, p. 3). This reasoning is in line with the rejection of the assumption that Dogan and Pelassy (1990) make about the lack of generalizability of single case studies like this: “One can validly explain a particular case only on the basis of general hypotheses. All the rest is uncontrollable, and so of no use” (p. 121; see also Diamond, 1996, p. 6). However, this depends on the type of single case study. As maintained before, in fact, single outcome studies can perform only a theory testing function while case studies can perform also a theory building role, being at least in part generalizable.

To illustrate this point, I first gathered and analyzed the parties' manifestos and other primary sources. With these two sources, and the analysis of secondary literature, I was able to distinguish between populist and non-populist parties for the 1994-2016 period. Moreover, these sources also allowed me to distinguish which host ideology was used in the populist party discourse. Specifically, I used parties' leaders' public speeches in parties' conventions and social media, broadcasting and newspaper reports.

With respect to the organizational features of the parties, I relied on secondary literature, which allowed me to determine whether the Italian parties between 1994 and 2016 were characterized by a high or low organizational density. Even if organizational density accounts for just one aspect of the organizational characteristics of parties, the analysis of secondary literature can give us insight on other structural characteristics of the parties.

To a certain extent, my dissertation stays in close relationship with a long tradition of Latin American literature that takes in-depth case studies as the basis for novel theory. For example, Gino Germani (1978) analyzes European fascism and the extent to which it can illuminate the Argentinian case. He developed a new theory that argues that fascism proper should be seen as primarily a middle-class reactionary movement, while lower-class authoritarianism of the Argentinian sort demands a separate category, which Germani calls national populism. More recently, also researching Argentina, Ostiguy (2009) demonstrates the emergence of the high/low divide that, at least partially structures the political space.

The structure of the book

The dissertation is structured as follows.

Chapter One is dedicated to the construction of the dependent variable, i.e., the emergence/polarization of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. As stated before, to theoretically construct the dependent variable, I employ three key concepts in political science: polarization, populism and cleavages. Following Sartori, I maintain that a party system is polarized when both poles are occupied. Unlike Sartori's, the conceptualization I adopt does not carry a normative bias, i.e., whether polarization is good or bad for the stability of the party system and for democracy is treated as an empirical question. Second, to characterize the

populism/anti-populism cleavage, I employ the ideational definition of populism. Following this definition, populism is defined as a set of ideas which represents, on the one hand, "the people" as a morally pure unified subject in contraposition to "the elite," which is morally bad and corrupt. Third, I maintain that populism/anti-populism is a political cleavage. Political cleavages are different from classical sociological cleavages, à la Lipset and Rokkan, since the former structure the party system without necessarily representing a fracture at the societal level. In other words, a political cleavage may not represent a division within society. After the analysis of the three concepts employed to build the dependent variable of this study, I focus on the organizational characteristics of the parties within a system. Considering party organization is relevant since the object of this study is a political cleavage. In fact, considering the types of parties that compose the populist and anti-populist poles, it is possible to make inferences about the duration of the cleavage. More specifically, focusing on the literature on party organization, I argue that parties that are more organizationally dense have greater odds of survival than those parties that lack organization and heavily rely on the founder-leader.

In Chapter Two, I explain the theoretical argument, pointing out that the simultaneous occurrence of two factors, namely the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties and the breaking of massive corruptions scandals, may undermine the responsiveness of the party system and result in a collapse. More in detail, programmatic convergence orphans a relevant portion of the electorate, who may feel unrepresented and vote for a populist candidate that depicts himself as a political outsider, totally detached from the country's elite. In this same manner, when the majority of a country's political class in involved in a corruption scandal, there are greater odds that a new political actor enters the system on the basis of a populist discourse which helps depict the "old" political class as morally (and financially) corrupt as a whole. When there is a simultaneous occurrence of programmatic convergence and massive corruption scandals, the party system experiences a collapse. In this theoretical framework, the collapse of the party system represents a critical juncture. It relaxes the institutional boundaries for the entrance of new actors in the system, enabling the emergence of the populism/anti-populism political cleavage.

Chapter Three and Chapter Four are the empirical chapters, and they cover the period in Italian politics between 1994 and 2016.

In detail, in Chapter Three, I analyze the period between 1994 and 2011, which was characterized by the emergence of a populist pole formed by Forza Italia, the Northern League and Italia dei Valori. Analysis of this period reveals two things. First, from the beginning of the Second Republic, the dynamic of partisan competition started to change. The entry of new actors in the system not only reshuffled the classic left-right axis after collapse of the previous party system but there was also an emergence of an electorally consistent populist pole, mainly represented by the two main parties on the right of the political spectrum. Second, notwithstanding the formation of this populist pole, during this period there was no clear emergence of an anti-populist pole. Instead, the political left started to develop a discourse that featured anti-Berlusconi rhetoric. Things started to change after the Great Recession.

Chapter Four focuses first on Mario Monti's technocratic government that, from 2011 to 2013, implemented economic neoliberal adjustment measures and on the emergence of the third populist actor in the system, the Five Star Movement. This chapter makes two observations. First, the populist pole changed its configuration with the entrance of the M5S. Both the ideological and organizational characteristics of this party had effects on the dynamics of the party system. The second is related to the consolidation of the anti-populist pole. The technocratic government started to develop an anti-populist discourse with emphasis on the irresponsibility of the populist forces that were frequently in government during the previous twenty years.

Finally, in the conclusion I summarize the major theoretical and empirical contributions of this dissertation, its theoretical implication, and thoughts on the future research agenda. In summary, this dissertation makes both theoretical and empirical contributions. With respect to the first type, this study contributes to the literature in at least two ways. First, this study is different from those which seek to explain the emergence of populist parties. In fact, its main objective is studying the conditions under which populism and anti-populism can structure a party system. This area has only recently started to be explored and no studies

exist on Italy.[3] It is a perspective that sheds light on the dynamics that occur within the party system in the long run. The second theoretical contribution of this dissertation is linked to the factors that enable the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. Some of the factors that I used to construct the theoretical framework, especially the collapse of the party system, have been employed mainly in a non-European context, with a special focus on Latin America. In sum, this dissertation represents a theoretical contribution for at least two reasons. First, going beyond the more studied question about the causes of populism, its object is studying the determinants of the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. Moreover, constructing of theoretical contributions that have been so far used for explaining Latin American cases, this study seeks to adapt it and see the degree of its application for another case. Beside these two theoretical contributions, this also fills two empirical gaps. First, even if there are many studies that focus on Italian populist parties, I contribute to this literature by systematizing a long period of time, giving a global overview of the populist phenomenon in Italy. Second, focusing on the organizational characteristics of the parties in the system, both populist and non-populist, I am able to make inferences on the duration of the cleavage. Since the populism/anti-populist cleavage at least partially structures the party system, this is relevant for making inferences on the future dynamic of partisan competition within the system.

[3] To my knowledge, the only non-Latin American case studied is Greece (Stavrakakis and Katsamebekis, 2018).

Chapter 1

Populist Polarization: Cleavages and the Transformation of the Party System

What do the 2015 legislative election in Greece, the 2016 presidential election in the Unites States and the 2018 general election in Italy have in common? In Greece, one of the countries hardest hit by the Great Recession, the outcome of the 2015 election was the formation of a government coalition comprising SYRIZA, a radical leftist populist party (Stravakakis, 2014), and ANEL, a rightist populist party (Andreadis and Stavrakakis, 2017). In the United States, Donald Trump, a political outsider at odds with the Republican Party, secured the presidential nomination and won the presidency by using a populist discourse. In the same election cycle, his opponent and "official" Democratic Party candidate, Hillary Clinton, struggled to secure the nomination when a radical, populist senator, Bernie Sanders, became a surprise primary challenger (Oliver and Rahn, 2016). In Italy after the 1994 party system collapse, two electorally strong populist parties emerged: the Lega Nord and Berlusconi's Forza Italia. Later, as a consequence of the economic crisis of 2009, comedian Beppe Grillo formed a third populist force in the Italian party system, the Five Star Movement (Bobba and McDonnell, 2015). The common denominator between Italy, the U.S. and Greece, is the growing presence of populist polarization, defined as the tendency of relevant political forces to move towards the extremes of the political spectrum. In this sense, the opposite of polarization is the convergence of the most relevant parties toward the same ideological position. Polarization is a key concept for understanding these three empirical observations as well as many political developments around the world. More in detail, these are examples of a particular type of polarization, which takes place along what I define the populist/anti-populist axis (see also Stavrakakis, 2014; Pappas, 2014; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2018).

In fact, in these party systems the conflicts that structure the party competition goes beyond the classic left-right classic divide. As Lipset and Rokkan (1967) pointed out in their classic work, the cleavages that can structure a party system are multiple. It would therefore be mistaken to conceptualize and measure

polarization only on the left-right continuum. If in a certain party system parties compete alongside multiple axes, polarization, as a feature of the system, needs to be addressed with respect to every line of conflict within the system.

In this chapter I develop the main concepts of the theoretical framework of my dissertation. In effect, I analyze how three concepts, polarization, populism and cleavage, are used to construct the dependent variable of this study: populist polarization.

The chapter is divided in four sections. In the first section I analyze the concept of polarization in the political science literature. Following Sartori's typology of pluralist polarized party systems, I examine the challenges in the study of polarization in political science. Moreover, I develop a conceptualization of polarization which has the main advantage of avoiding dealing with normative assessments.

In the second section I discuss the concept of populism. Given that populism is a contested concept, I first present the four most common definitions: the structuralist, the economic, the political-institutional and the ideational. Second, I explain and analyze the reasons why I find the ideational approach more convincing. Furthermore, after presenting the other relevant definitions of populism, I deal with some of some of their main weaknesses.

The third section is dedicated to the concept of cleavages. First, I differentiate between the "traditional" or sociological definition and the political definition of cleavage. After this, I explain the theoretical and empirical relevance of populism/anti-populism cleavage.

In sum, the object of this chapter is to define the concept of populist polarization. I define populist polarization as the situation in which a party system is polarized not only on the classical left-right axis, but also on the populist/anti-populist one. Even though polarization has been studied almost exclusively as a left-right phenomenon, a system may be polarized along other axes (e.g. center vs. periphery, rural vs. urban). My interest in this study is analyzing polarization on the populism/anti-populist axis. This phenomenon is relevant both theoretically and empirically. From a theoretical point of view, it is relevant to exposing the link between polarization and populism and thereby going beyond the limitations of analyzing polarization only as a left-right feature. Empirically, populist polarization it is gradually gaining relevance in many geographical areas, especially in

Southern Europe (Stavrakakis, 2014) and in some countries in Latin America (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014), and in different socio-economic contexts where it helps to explain the current political situation, but it may have further applications still.

Conceiving of populism-populism as a political cleavage assumes that it lasts in time (Rae and Taylor, 1970; Kitschelt, 2007). While it is safe to assume that this political cleavage endures as long as the ideological and discursive antagonism lasts, I believe that the organizational characteristics of the parties may also affect its duration and its characteristics. In the last part of the chapter, I will develop a framework that attempts to establish a link between the ideational approach to populism and the organizational features of populist forces. I thereby contribute to filling a gap within the ideational approach, which needs to incorporate the organizational variable to the study of populism. The organizational variable matters because from the type of organization we can make inferences on the chances of survival of populist parties.

1.1 Polarization in comparative politics

Polarization is an essential concept for understanding the contemporary political world. From the emergence of SYRIZA in Greece to the election of Trump in the 2016 U.S. presidential election to the election of Órban in Hungary from 2010, it looks like the distance between the extreme poles of the political space is becoming increasingly relevant around the world. Venezuela provides a clear illustration: from the first election in 1999 and even after its death in 2013 and the election of Maduro, the political field is divided between those in favor of the *chavismo* and those who are against it. Nevertheless, polarization is also a contested concept.

A basic definition of polarization in political science is provided in the Dictionary of Politics, which refers to the phenomenon “any general move of political actors from centrist to extreme political positions” (McLean, 2003, p. 407).

Later in this chapter I analyze the relevant definitions in political science and comparative politics but, for now, in general terms we can maintain that polarization in political science refers to a situation in which the parties, the electorate or both are deeply divided and engage in a highly confrontational competition (Sartori, 2005). As I show later, what is missing from this description

is agreement on a more specific definition and, consequently, means of measurement. Thus, if we really want to grasp this phenomenon, we need to go back to its conceptual origins. The first to develop an analytical framework to understand polarization was Giovanni Sartori in his seminal 1976 book on different types of party systems. In the following section I first describe in detail the characteristics of Sartori's pluralist polarized party system.

The following section is dedicated to a critical analysis of Sartori's conceptualization. Last, in the third section, I describe two challenges that I encountered in the study of polarization in political science: conceptual confusion and measurement problems.

1.1.1 Sartori's conceptualization of partisan polarization

As I mentioned above Sartori formulated the first conceptualization of polarization in political science. The typology that Sartori created classifies party systems on the basis of three characteristics: the number of relevant parties in the system (fragmentation), the ideological distance between the parties (polarization), and the dynamic of the inter-party competition. Sartori describes the polarized pluralist party system as a system formed of five or more relevant parties with great ideological distance and a centrifugal type of competition between them. Sartori claims that in this type of party system, the relevant parties occupy both extremes of the left-right axis as well as the political space at the center (Sartori, 2005 p. 119). The system is multipolar in the sense that its competition mechanics depend on a political center, which needs to deal with an opposition on the left and right. While in a *moderate* pluralist party system the distribution of power is represented by a normal curve slightly skewed toward one of the two sides of the left-right axis, when a party system is *polarized* the distribution appears to be bimodal with two peaks at the far left and right ends and a dip in the middle.

Consequently, the two types of party systems result in different types of competition. While the moderate pluralist party systems favor centripetal competition, polarized pluralist party systems favor centrifugal competition because their multipolar mechanics that cannot be accounted for by dualist competition (Sartori 1976; 2005). As Dalton (2008) points out, in the former type

of system, parties converge on the center to compete for the median voter, while in the latter parties are more dispersed along the political continuum.

Sartori clarified his approach by identifying eight features of a pluralist polarized party system (1976; 2005). The first is the presence of anti-system parties. This kind of party does not accept the existing political regime and aims at changing it. Sartori maintains that such parties undermine the legitimacy of the regime which they oppose. He identifies anti-system parties mostly with communists and fascists. Even though Sartori uses a broad definition for anti-system parties, “they share the property of questioning a regime and of underlining its base of support” (2005, p. 117). Sartori wrote his book in the mid-1970s, when the international and historical conditions were quite different from today. It is worth noting that Sartori maintains that the tactics of anti-system parties are irrelevant to his concept. This is a relevant point considering that when Sartori wrote, many of the communist parties in Western Europe were playing by the rules of democracy. Nevertheless, following Sartori this “do not alter the test: they pursue and obtain a delegitimizing impact” (2005, p. 118).

The second feature of polarized systems, as stated above, is the presence of bilateral oppositions and of a political center. The interaction of these two components result in a multipolar system characterized by a bimodal distribution of the power in the system. This a crucial point. When the opposition is unilateral, no matter how many parties oppose “they can join forces and propose themselves as an alternative government” (2005, p. 118). On the contrary, in a polarized party system the oppositions are mutually exclusive and cannot join forces.

The third characteristic consists in the presence of a center party. This, according to Sartori, means that the electoral and ideological confrontations are not bilateral but triangular. The system is then multipolar in the sense that the party in the center of the system needs to compete with both the party situated at the right and at the left pole (2005, p. 119).

Fourth, Sartori notes that the pull by the parties situated at one pole may be more pronounced than the pull exerted by the parties situated at the other pole, causing competition to appear bilateral. Nevertheless, the most important feature when we talk about polarization is that in all cases the lateral poles of the system

are literally “two poles apart, and the distance between them covers a maximum spread of opinions” (2005, p. 120).

The fifth feature refers to, as we noted above, the prevalence of centrifugal impulses over the centripetal ones. The system tends to a progressive weakening of the ideological center that loses its electoral weight due to the strengthening of the extremes.

The sixth feature Sartori finds in polarized pluralism is its congenital ideological structuration. In this context, ideology is intended as a *forma mentis,* i.e., a means of perceiving and conceiving politics and, consequently, a matter of principle. In other words, the key dimension of the confrontation is ideology. Sartori maintains that the common characteristic of the parties in the system “that all parties fight all another with ideological arguments and view one another in terms of ideological mentality” (2005, p. 121).

The seventh characteristic of pluralist polarized party systems is the presence of irresponsible oppositions. Sartori claims that is probable that an opposition behaves responsibly if the other actors expect it to have a chance of keeping its promises, while, on the other hand, an opposition is more willing to be irresponsible if it is unlikely to govern. In this kind of system, the alternation of the possible allies of the center party is mostly constrained by ideological limitations (Sartori 1976; 2005)

The last feature refers to what Sartori calls the policy of outbidding (2005, p. 123), i.e., the excessive promises of the parties situated at the poles of the system. If extremes parties can promise whatever benefit or policy without having to be responsible for it, then these parties do not compete fairly. In fact, Sartori points out that political competition needs to be based, not only on the presence of more than one party, but also on a minimum degree of fair competition and mutual confidence among political actors.

In sum, according to Sartori, a pluralist polarized party system is a system characterized by the presence of anti-system irresponsible oppositions on both the left and right that are situated at the ideological extremes of the left-right axis and that, with the presence of a political center, create centrifugal, multipolar competition. Moreover, this competition is strongly exercised on ideological bases. To illustrate these characteristics Sartori uses the examples of Italy in the

mid-1970s, the Fourth French Republic in the 1950s, Chile before 1973 and the Weimar Republic.

1.1.2 Analyzing Sartori's definition

Even though Sartori's definition is surely one of the most authoritative in the comparative politics field, two aspects of it deserve a closer look. First, Sartori's conceptualization is affected by a negative bias. It is important to state that Sartori maintains that the pluralist polarized party system is less stable than the pluralist moderate party system. Given that in both types of party systems, the fragmentation is the same (five or six relevant parties), for Sartori the polarization produces instability and danger for the regime (see also Sani and Sartori, p. 1980).

The examples of pluralist polarized party systems in Sartori's book are the Weimar Republic, Chile before 1973, the Second Republic in Italy and the Fourth French Republic in the 1950s. It is worth noting that in two of these cases the political regime broke down (Germany and Chile), while the other two were characterized by a chronic political instability (Italy and France). In the Weimar Republic, the system basically presented two options at the poles of the political spectrum, the Communists and the National Socialists, with an almost absent political center. The Chilean case was different; only there did Sartori see the centrifugal competitive dynamic as leading directly to the downfall of the system. In the Chilean case, the country was characterized by a long period of democracy political stability—at least in comparison with the other countries in the region. However, Sartori (1976) maintained that in 1973, the level of political polarization and fragmentation increased, causing Pinochet's military coup and the consequent breakdown of the democratic regime (Sani and Sartori, 1983).

For Sartori, then, the pluralist polarized party system is highly instable with high chances of collapse of the party system and the breakdown of democracy, or at least low-quality democracy. This negative view about polarization is shared by most of Sartori's successors. It is not surprising, then, that also most of the subsequent literature on polarization focuses on its harmful consequences for the democratic regime (Fiorina and Abrams, 2008; Hetherington, 2009; Layman, Carsey and Horowitz 2006; Torcal and Martini, 2013). Partisan polarization has been associated with phenomena such as democratic backsliding, corruption and

economic decline (Frye, 2002; Valenzuela, 1978). As I will explain later in more detail, polarization is not always and necessarily a damaging phenomenon; excessive convergence can be as problematic as excessive polarization.

The second feature that I would like to discuss in Sartori's definition is related to the presence of anti-system parties at the poles. According to Sartori (1976; 2005), pluralist polarized party systems feature anti-system parties at the extreme poles. Following Mudde, anti-system parties differ from radical parties. Anti-system parties are those parties that reject democracy as the best political regime and aim to change it (2007a, p. 22-24). On the contrary, radical parties are situated at the extremes of the left-right axis but their aim is not overthrowing democracy. In sum, it is true that radical parties can be a challenge for democracy because of their extremist traits, but they are different from anti-system parties because they—at least in theory—do not intend to undermine democracy (Mudde, 2007; 2011). In fact, anti-system parties can be referred to, in terms of Linz's terminology, as semi-loyal opposition actors, i.e. those parties that sit on the fence of democracy, sometimes ignoring, sometimes observing the consensus (1978, pp. 27-31). On the other hand, radical parties are loyal to the democratic system, but radical in their ideology, in the sense that they tend to place themselves near to the poles of the axis of competition without questioning the political regime as such.

When one thinks about the anti-system category, it is worth noting that this can develop because of the presence of parties in the system that are conveying an anti-system message, i.e. parties that are semi-loyal to the democratic regime. However, at the same time, the anti-system can also be a consequence of the anti-systemic attitude of a part of the electorate.

A good example of the difference between extreme and radical parties are populist radical right parties. Unlike the extreme right of the 1930s, the populist radical right is democratic, in that it accepts popular sovereignty and majority rule. It also tends to accept the rules of parliamentary democracy; in most cases "it prefers a stronger executive, though few parties support a toothless legislature" (Mudde, 2015, p. 295).

However, as stated above, we can observe the emergence of the populist radical right ideas both at the party system level—the offer side—and in the electorate—the demand side.

With respect to this, the study of the populist radical right has been dominated by the normal pathology thesis. This thesis translates into the belief that the populist radical right represents a sort of pathology of contemporary Western democracies, which has only limited support under "normal" circumstances. Within this paradigm, mass demand for populist radical right parties is the main puzzle and can only be explained by some form of modernization theory related crisis (Mudde, 2008, p. 11). However, this thesis does not pass the empirical test. As Mudde has pointed out, "the key features of the populist radical right ideology – nativism, authoritarianism, and populism – are not unrelated to mainstream ideologies and mass attitudes" (2008, p. 11). Populist radical right ideas are not alien to the majority of the Western European population (Mudde 2010, p. 1178). For this reason, Mudde (2010) refers to the populist radical right as a pathological normalcy since is connected to mainstream ideas, shared mass attitudes and policy positions. This makes demand for populist radical right politics an assumption rather than a puzzle (Mudde, 2008, p. 1). While this argument holds true for the European context, it is an open question whether similar occurs in Latin America and the United States. In fact, the rise of Trump in the U.S. and Bolsonaro in Brazil could indicate a difference.

It is worth noting that Sartori wrote this book in the mid-1970s, when the international and historical conditions were totally different from today. The world was still divided into two blocs and the bipolar ideological confrontation ruled. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the so-called end of the ideological bipolarism and the hegemony of the neoliberal model, the anti-system options in the party system seem to have declined. In fact, the presence of anti-system parties has notably shrunk in the last fifty years. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this kind of party, at least in Europe, has almost disappeared.[4] Has polarization too? A glance at the current political situation in many countries suffices to show that it has not. In fact, even if the parties situated at the extreme poles of the left-right axis do not necessarily want to change the political regime, they can be considered radical with respect to their policy positions. What is important is keeping the presence of anti-system parties and polarization on two different analytical planes. Radical parties, i.e., those parties situated at the poles of the

[4] Golden Dawn (XA) in Greece is one of the few exceptions (Georgiadou, 2013).

system, do not necessarily aim to destroy the democratic regime, while, on the other hand, it is possible that a party that is not ideologically radical may be interested in changing the regime. It is important to remember that a system may be polarized even without the presence of anti-system parties.

1.1.3 Assessing Sartori's definition: a critical review

Even though I maintain that there are some issues with Sartori's definition, I still rely on his definition and propose my own conceptualization, clarifying some aspects. An important aspect of Sartori's work, with which I agree, concerns the view of polarization as a phenomenon driven by parties and political competition, rather than by voters and conflict at the mass level. At this point a specification is in order. Polarization in political science has been studied from various points of view. Different types of studies have focused on partisan polarization (Dalton, 2008), polarization in the electorate (Layman and Carsey, 2002; Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008; Stanig, 2013; Lelkes 2016) or both (Bermeo, 2003). Partisan polarization and electoral polarization reflect the degree of ideological differentiation between political parties in a system (Sartori, 1976; Dalton, 2008) and the mass electorate respectively.

It should be noted that these are two separate phenomena that may, in certain environments, influence each other but are not necessarily connected. Because the two phenomena are not always linked, we can assume that their causes and the mechanisms that lead to them may be different. Since I adopt a Sartorian conceptualization in this work, I focus only on partisan polarization. In fact, given that the aim of this research is looking for the determinant of populist polarization we can assume that it is the agency, i.e., the political actors, who have the main role in polarizing the party system.

As stated above, in this work I developed a conceptualization of polarization that for the most part follows Sartori's but differs in some respects. In this work I consider a party system as polarized when a) both poles are occupied by relevant parties and b) the dynamic of competition is centrifugal. There are essentially two differences to Sartori's, one theoretical and one normative.

Normatively, I do not share Sartori's dim view of partisan polarization. Instead, I treat the issue of whether polarization is good or bad for the party system and the political regime as an empirical question. Neither polarization nor

convergence can be considered bad per se. True, an *excessive* level of polarization can be harmful for regime stability. Yet, in the absence of polarization, excessive convergence can also imperil democracy. Convergence should be thought as the shift toward the ideological center of the most relevant parties. The consequence of the convergence of the relevant parties in a system is the low electoral and ideological relevance of the poles of the system. One illustration is Venezuela in the 1980s. As Morgan's (2011) study about party system collapse shows, at the beginning of the 1980s the two main parties—Acción Democrática (AD) and Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI)—started a process of progressive convergence until their ideological positions were undifferentiated to the voters, who started to feel orphaned and unrepresented by the two main parties. It cannot be said then that the absence of polarization is good for the party system because polarization counteracts convergence and excessive convergence is also unsafe for the stability of the system. It is very clear that in Venezuela, the convergence between these two parties was also reinforced by the formal interparty agreements such as the "Punto Fijo," which was formalized in 1958 and led to the national unity government led by AD's Betancourt (Coppedge, 2005, p. 290). Even if the integrity of elections was never questioned, critics began to call the system a *partidocracia* (partyarchy) rather than a democracy (Coppedge, 1994).

What we can we state then? On the one hand, if a party system is polarized it does not necessarily mean that it is unstable or that democracy is at risk, but on the other hand, problems *may* arise if either polarization or convergence reaches extremes levels. In fact, when mainstream parties cannot offer different programmatic positions to their voters, the linkage between voters and representatives weakens and can eventually break, leaving the former unrepresented (Lupu, 2014; Roberts, 2017). Therefore, we should be careful when analyzing polarization and developing arguments about its impact on democracy.

How, then, can we determine whether polarization is dangerous or not? There are three possible, non-exclusive answers to this question.

First, it can be answered that this is an empirical question. In fact, judging whether polarization is dangerous or not is just a matter of the context in which it

takes place. This means that the implications of polarization on democracy and the stability of the party system need to be assessed empirically.

Second, we need to consider polarization as a matter of degree. The right question when we analyze a party system is not whether it is polarized or not but the degree to which it is polarized. I agree with Sartori and with most scholars that *excessive* polarization may lead to problems for the stability of the system or the political regime. Nevertheless, a moderate amount may make the system more functional. As a consequence, it may be helpful to consider polarization as a continuum. In fact, studying polarization as a dichotomist concept, at least on the left-right axis, would allow us to classify political systems only as convergent or polarized. Studying polarization as a gradual phenomenon allow us to distinguish different degrees.

The third aspect that we need to consider is related to the analytical and empirical difference between extreme parties and anti-system parties. One the one hand, if the system features anti-system parties, the probability of perilous consequences for democracy are higher.

To use the language of Linz (1978), if the parties at the extremes of the axis are ideologically distant but willing to play by the rules of the democratic game, then chances are lower that polarization—even high levels of polarization—will damage the system or the regime. On the other hand, if the parties at the extreme poles are disloyal or semi-loyal, then there is the possibility of grave consequences for the system and, in some cases, for democracy itself (Linz, 1978). In sum, to answer the question about the consequence of party polarization we need also to consider the type of parties situated at the poles. Together with Linz, Arturo Valenzuela (1978) argues that the breakdown of democracy in Chile in 1973 was due mainly to the polarization that resulted from the transformation of a pragmatic political center into an ideological one, thus preventing accommodation, compromise, and, finally, respect for the rules of the democratic game.

A final clarification needs to be made with respect to the relationship between polarization and fragmentation. The latter is normally defined as the number of parties in the system (Sartori, 2005; Dalton, 2008). Even though some scholars argue that there is a high correlation between party polarization and party fragmentation based on the assumption that the number of parties reflects the

degree of polarization within a party system (Wang, 2014, p. 688), Sartori and others have reiterated that polarization is not a positive, linear function of fragmentation.

Low levels of polarization can be found in highly fragmented party systems; meanwhile high levels of polarization can be found in non-fragmented party systems (see Dalton, 2008; Pelizzo and Babones, 2007). A two-party system such as the Unites States, which patently grew more polarized during the 2015 election season, provides a clear example of the empirical distinction between polarization and fragmentation. Therefore, in line with Sartori, I maintain that polarization, intended as the ideological distance between the parties at the poles, may occur also in two-party systems.

In sum, I adopt a Sartorian definition of partisan polarization with two main differences. I do not take Sartori's and others' negative stance on polarization. Excessive polarization and excessive convergence both may be harmful for the system. In fact, a certain degree of polarization is useful for voters to distinguish parties' policy stances and differentiate them (Lupu, 2011). Also, I claim that a party system may be polarized even without the presence of anti-system parties, defined as parties that are not loyal to democracy. When there are parties that are radical in their policy proposals without wanting to take down the democratic regime, a party system can be conceived as polarized. Therefore, I identify a party system as polarized when there are political options situated close to both poles, independent of their stances towards the democratic regime and of the numbers of parties in the system.

That said, in the next section I describe two challenges that I found in studying the phenomenon of polarization in political science.

1.1.4 The two challenges in the study of polarization

The first challenge found in studying polarization is the conceptual confusion that surrounds this phenomenon. Since Sartori's seminal work, many definitions have proliferated, leading to conceptual confusion.

The conceptual confusion is twofold. First there is conceptual confusion arising from problematic conceptualizations. Even when the definition of the phenomenon is explicit, partisan polarization, like many other widely used concepts in political science, is poorly defined and over-stretched (Sartori, 1970).

In fact, although Satori's book is widely cited and constitutes a seminal book on party systems, alternative conceptualizations have proliferated in studies of the topic.

Given that the definition in many cases is missing, it looks like it is taken for granted as if the conceptualization was widely shared, which is not the case. Even when the definition of the phenomenon is explicit, partisan polarization, like many other widely used concepts in political science is poorly defined and over-stretched (Sartori, 1970). In fact, Persily is right stating that "polarization (…) is quickly becoming a catchall for whatever ails (…) politics "(2015, p. 4). The same author defines polarization saying that is simultaneously represented by three phenomena; hyper-partisanship, gridlock or the inability of the system to perform basic policy-making functions due to the obstructionist tactics (2015, p. 4) and incivility, i.e., "the erosion of norms that historically constrained the discourse and actions of political actors or the mass public" (2015, p. 4). While this definition identifies attributes or empirical referents, it lacks the first level, which is central to saying what a concept really is (see Sartori 1970).

This happens mostly in the American politics literature, which is probably the most developed literature on polarization (Hetherington, 2001; Abramowitz, 2010; Persily, 2015). According to Sartorian definitions, partisan polarization has to do with the variation in the ideological distance *between* parties and more in detail, one necessary condition for a party system to be polarized is the existence of extreme parties on both sides of the left-right spectrum. Given that the American literature is mostly empirical, it partially lacks conceptual clarity and sometimes there is the risk of conceptual overlapping. Almost all the studies on polarization in the U.S. are based on the measurement of "all unanimous roll call votes taken during each Congress to locate each member on a liberal-conservative scale that ranges from -1.0 to 1.0; the higher the score, the more conservative the member" (Jacobson, 2013, p. 690).

Also, Abramowitz states that "ideological polarization in Congress is defined by consistency in voting across issues" (2010, p. 35). Seen from this light, polarization rises when there is a larger proportion of legislators who take consistently liberal or conservative positions on issues. Measuring polarization like that is confusing because the spread between the parties increase even if one party move toward one pole and the other maintains the same position or,

for instance, if both parties grow more conservative at a different pace. This is quite evident during the 1990s and 2000s where the Republicans grew more conservative and the Democrats tended to maintain a moderate position (Jacobson, 2013, p. 691). As pointed out above, while polarization is defined as the shifting of the relevant parties toward both ends of the political spectrum. Conversely, the shift of the relevant parties toward one pole should be defined as outflanking. Another example of outflanking is the emergence of the so called Third Way (Giddens, 2001; 2013) in the U.K. during the Blair administration.

Giddens uses “Third Way” to refer to a “framework of thinking and policy making that seeks to adapt social democracy to a world which has changed fundamentally over the past decades” (1998, p. 26). In persisting with the economic policies of Margaret Thatcher, under the government of Tony Blair, the Labor party shifted its position towards the center of the political spectrum, moving closer to the Conservatives.

For Sartori (1976; 2005), one of the defining attributes of polarization is that the *two poles* are occupied. Indeed, Sartori argues that polarization truly occurs when both ends of the left-right spectrum are involved. In fact, if there is only one extreme party, it can be brought into an opposition coalition that can offer a government alternative to the ruling coalition. When polarization occurs, the parties at the poles differ in their ideology and cannot form a government alternative to the ruling coalition. As Sartori pointed out, political systems with those characteristics could hardly be viable “because the unmoderated and ideological politics results in a paralysis or in a collapse”. The only way to avoid jeopardizing democratic stability would be to incorporate the anti-system parties in the political order (1976, p. 176).

Another example of the problems of the American politics literature on polarization consists in the assessment of the negative conceptual pole of polarization. Most of this literature, defines the opposite of polarization as the ideological coherence within parties (Perisly, 2016). Nevertheless, if we consider partisan polarization as the ideological distance between the parties in a system, the opposite conceptual pole is convergence, i.e. the ideological proximity between parties, not coherence in terms of voting behavior in Congress.

This, as stated before, is a consequence of the measurement choices that, without a proper and clear conceptualization, may lead to conceptual overlapping

and confusion. The second challenge I found in studying polarization is strongly connected to the first one. Given that the concept is at times stretched or erroneously interpreted, there is no agreement on the measurement. These measurement problems go even beyond the U.S.-focused writings and the fact that most of those scholars measure polarization as intraparty coherence. Partisan polarization has been measured mainly using mass surveys (Morgan, 2011; Lupu, 2013; Dalton and Anderson, 2011), expert surveys (Hubert and Inglehart, 1995; Benoit and Laver, 2006) or through the analysis of party manifestos (Budge, Robertson and Hearl, 1987; Caul and Gray, 2000). Each measurement has its advantages and disadvantages.

Mass surveys are perhaps the most used to measure polarization in the party system. Through mass surveys voters estimate the position of the relevant parties in the system answering to this question:

"In politics people often talk of 'left' and 'right'. Where would you place the following parties on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'left' and 10 means 'right'?" (CSES module 4).[5]

The standard deviation of the mean of each party represents the average distance between the relevant parties which, in turn, is partisan polarization. Based on this data, Dalton (2008) has combined the relative position of each party on the left-right scale from a question in the CSES survey and weighted by the electoral size of parties in terms of vote share. The inclusion of both these elements constitutes the main advantage because the presence of a large party located to the extreme would mean a more polarized system (Dalton, 2008, p. 906). Regarding the disadvantages, this measurement is based on voters' opinion and therefore it represents the voters' perception of the partisan polarization rather than an objective measurement.

It could be the case that, for instance, voters perceive a certain party as situated as the extreme of the left-right spectrum because of features other that its ideology, such as the political style of its leader.

Expert surveys classify the position of the parties of the system according to the opinions of scholars and political pundits. One of the most used is the

[5] Dalton's Index is constructed using CSES survey; however, the question used to measure the position of the parties in the left-right axis also appears in other surveys.

database of Chapel Hill University (CHES). This measurement is quite popular partly thanks to its sheer accessibility—the mean judgements of specialists about left–right locations or particular policy positions can be used as reported without tedious data-processing. Also, expert judgements are also perceived as authoritative (Budge, 2000, p. 103).

Nevertheless, it has some disadvantages. First, these measurements share the same problem as Dalton's index, i.e., it is more a perception of the experts than a direct measurement of what parties say during campaigns and do once in government. Budge (2000) highlights further limitations; he claims that we actually do not know a) what constitutes the "party" whose position is being judged—is it the leaders, activists or voters or all three combined?—b) the criteria experts base their judgements on, particularly when making a general left–right classification (Huber and Inglehart, 1995, p. 78), c) whether judgements refer to intentions and preferences or overt behavior, an important distinction when most theories use declared or implicit party preferences to explain overt behavior, and d) what time period judgements of policy position are based on—the instant at which the survey is administered? The election or inter-election period in which the survey is conducted?

Furthermore, experts' surveys are a relatively new measurement tool for measuring party positions, implemented only since the 1990s. For this reason, it is impossible to employ them to measure party positions for periods prior to that.

The third option is the use of party manifestos to estimate parties' left and right positions (Budge Robertson and Hearl, 1987; Caul and Gray, 2000; Klingemann, 2005). The more common measurement of party positions using the manifestos of parties is the RILE index developed from the Manifesto Project. This index is the result of the sum of 13 coding categories seen as being on the "left", 13 seen as being on the "right", and the subtraction of the percentage of aggregated left categories from those of the right. The index range is [-100 to +100] which respectively represent extreme left and extreme right. The RILE scale is thought to be more reliable than any single coding category, since it is likely that most of the stochastic variation in text coding will result from different coders allocating the same text unit to different categories on the "left" or the "right" (Mikhaylov, Laver and Benoit, 2008, p. 9).

The main advantage of using manifestos is that, contrary to mass or expert surveys, it constitutes a more “direct” measurement because it is based on a direct source and not on a perception of citizens or experts. However, as Dalton points out “the comparative manifesto project focused on the salience of issues rather than party positions, and thus there is debate about the validity of this methodology” (Gabel and Huber, 2000; Harmel, Tan, and Janda,, 1995; Laver and Garry, 2000) In other words, these studies highlight that given that polarization represent the ideological spread between the parties at the poles, measuring it on the basis of issues rather than on the actual position of the parties on the left-right axis may be problematic (Dalton, 2008, 904).

Even if there are differences between them, these three measures have at least one relevant aspect in common. They understand polarization only as a matter of left and right. Therefore, one might think that the only reliable conceptualization and measurement of partisan polarization in a system is related to the left-right cleavage. However, this is not always the case. Even if there are many party systems that are structured only around the left-right cleavage, there are systems in which other cleavages are preponderant and, in some cases, more relevant (Downs, 1957; Dalton, 2008; Andreadis and Stavrakakis, 2017). In other words, these measurements are not that useful in capturing the current situation in some political systems, where other cleavages are as relevant as the left-right divide. The object of this work is what I and other scholars have called the populism-anti-populism cleavage (Pappas, 2014; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014; Andreadis and Stravrakakis, 2017). This is strongly linked to the classic literature on cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Bartolini and Mair, 1990). This literature stresses that there are other political divides that structure the party system. In other words, other cleavages may be polarized. This means that conceptualizing and measuring partisan polarization only in the left-right axis may not be enough in certain circumstances. To obtain an accurate understanding of polarization first we need to map the party system to see which the relevant cleavages are.

1.2 Populism and Populist Polarization

In 2017 the Cambridge Dictionary declared populism its word of the year. In the news many national elections are been depicted as a battle between populists

and political options that defended the status quo. However, in the public debate the concept is often poorly defined and employed out of context. Even in the academic literature, most definitions of populism lack conceptual clarity and are often conflated with other concepts such as nativism. Even when employed properly, it remains a contested concept (Weyland, 2001; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Mudde, 2017a).

In the first part, I analyze other relevant definitions in the literature and their main weaknesses. I analyze the structuralist, the economic and the political-institutional definition.

In the second explain the definition of populism I use in this work and the main reasons for this decision. This matters because populism is a contested concept and in the political science literature there is no agreement on a common definition. Before continuing, it is worth mentioning that in this work I follow the definition of Cas Mudde who defines populism as a "thin-centered ideology that considers society ultimately divided into two homogeneous groups the 'pure' people versus the 'corrupt' elite, and which argues that politics should be the expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (Mudde 2004, 2007; Stanley, 2008; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). Even though, for reasons that I specify below, I find the ideational definition more convincing, in the political science literature the concept of populism is extremely contested. In fact, despite widespread diffusion of this definition, "we are even further from a definitional consensus within the scholarly community" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 4).

1.2.1 The structuralist, the economic and the political-institutional definitions of populism

The origins of the structuralist definition of populism can be found in the seminal work of Gino Germani (1956). Germani was an Italian sociologist who travelled to Argentina after the establishment of fascism in Italy and started to analyze Peronism. According to him, Peronism should be thought as a "left fascism" in light of the popular bases which this movement mobilizes and politicizes and the anti-pluralist modalities of the regime (1956).

Scholars who have used the structuralist definition (Germani, 2003) conceive of populism as a multi-class coalition that stresses redistributive policies. The

structuralist conceptualization “assumes that the emergence of populism is the product of certain transformations at the socio-structural level” (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015, p. 495). Populism is then a consequence of a model of economic development that favors the emergence of heterogeneous social classes that includes some marginalized sectors. In the words of Germani, “populism itself tends to deny any classification in a right / left dichotomy. It is a multiclass movement, although not all multiclass movements can be considered populist” (Germani, 2003). In turn, these social classes pave the way for the emergence of a populist leader who creates a multi-class movement or party with a strong anti-elitist stance. For example, the urban demographic explosion that occurred in Latin America during the 1930s as a consequence of the massive migration from the countryside to the cities generated masses that were for the first times available to participate in the political life of those countries. As Germani (2003, p. 99) pointed out “these masses were socially mobilizable may be politically activated by some kind of populism, supported by the attraction of a charismatic leadership”. The populist phenomenon is conceptualized here following a family resemblance strategy. While the application of the classic Sartorian ladder of generality assumes that a certain concept has clear boundaries and defining attributes (Sartori, 1970), family resemblance at times, relaxes these assumptions (Collier and Mahon, 1993). The idea of family resemblance entails a principle of category membership different from that of classical categories, in that there may be no single attribute that category members all share (Collier and Mahon, 1993, p. 847).

In defining populism, Germani underlined that populism usually includes contrasts such as a claim for equal political rights and for universal participation for ordinary people, but fused with some kind of authoritarianism, under a charismatic leadership. It also includes socialist demands (or at least, a claim for social justice) the vigorous defense of the small property, strong nationalist components and rejection of the importance of the class. It is accompanied by the affirmation of the rights of the common people as contrary to the interests of the powerful privileged interest groups, usually considered hostile to the people and the nation.

Any of these elements can be emphasized according to hostile and social conditions, but they are all present in most populist movements” (2003, p. 114).

In conclusion, following the author, populist experiences share some quite evident commonalities even though there may be no trait that all family members, as family members, have in common (Collier and Mahon, 1993, p. 847). This type of definition has been quite influential for scholars who study Latin America and has been employed to understand the case of Vargas in Brazil and Haya de la Torre in Peru (Conniff, 1999).

In my opinion, this type of definition is unconvincing for several reasons. To begin with, it does not allow us to distinguish populism from the other political forces that form broad constituencies in order to be competitive at the national level. It is supposed that every force that intends to win elections is formed by multi-class coalitions since this is a characteristic of all modern catch-all parties (Kirchheimer, 1966), such as the Christian Democrats (DC) and the Social Democrats. In addition, even though this conceptualization of populism can account for the emergence of populist leaders in some Latin American countries, such as Perón in Argentina (Ostiguy, 2009) or Vargas in Brazil (Conniff, 1999), or in Western Europe, e.g. Berlusconi in Italy, it does not explain why populism did not emerge in some other countries of the region that experienced the same socio-structural transformations. Moreover, this definition focuses only on certain kind of policies, i.e. those policies that were implemented during the substitution of importations (ISI) period. Last, defining populism as a specific type of political regime implies that populists are always supposed to be in the government and that populism cannot exist in the opposition.

The second definition conceives of populism as an economic approach which supports growth and redistribution but overlooks inflation and balance sheet deficit risks (Dornbusch and Edwards, 1995). This approach was particularly dominant in studies on Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s. Dornbusch and Edwards (Dornbusch and Edwards, 1990a, 1995), analyzing the history of Latin American economy, maintained that this was characterized by the cycles that they define as “dramatic”. The origin of those cycles is in the existence of “populist macroeconomic policies for distributive purposes” (Dornbusch and Edwards, 1990a, p. 247). It is worth underlining that the redistributive focus of populism is a central point of the “economic” definition of populism.

Fleshing out the term “populist macroeconomic policies”, the authors refer to “expansive fiscal and credit policies that over evaluate currency to accelerate

growth and redistribute income" and that are implemented "with no concern for the existence of fiscal and foreign exchange constraints"(Dornbusch and Edwards, 1990b). At this point, the cycle follows up with a short period of economic recovery that gives space to unsustainable macroeconomic pressures that, in turn, lead to the plummeting of real wages and severe balance of payments difficulties (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 4). The unsuitability of the so-called populist macroeconomic measures is due to the increase of real wages without a correspondent increase in prices. Even though inflation rises, populist policymakers reject devaluation "because of a conviction that it reduces living standards and because it will have further inflationary effects without positively affecting the external sector" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, p. 4).

When a country finds itself in deep macroeconomic distress, there is no option left but to implement a drastically restrictive and costly stabilization program often with the help of international financial institutions such as the IMF or the World Bank.

In sum, populist leaders promote non-efficient economic policies using state resources to finance redistribution. These policies are successful in the short term but in the long run result in debt and inflation. Such policies, Dornbusch and Edwards maintained, ultimately fail, and when they do the major cost is on the groups that were supposed to be favored (1990a). In fact, major economic crises happen, and the state is obliged to implement painful stabilization programs.

In general terms, Dornbush and Edwards (1990) pointed out that with the exception of Colombia populist macroeconomic policies have been implemented in Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Mexico and Nicaragua. Two examples of populist macroeconomic measures are those implemented by Allende in Chile and Alan García in Peru. These are depicted as similar cases in which policymakers viewed the objective situation of their economies the same way, proposed that strongly expansionary policies should and could be carried out, and rationalized that constraints could be dealt with (Dornbusch and Edwards 1990b, p. 248). Also, in both cases foreign constraints and high inflation forced painful neoliberal adjustment programs that, in turn led to political instability and, in the case of Chile, to a coup.

This definition of populism maintains that the phenomenon is inherently linked to certain macroeconomic policies has at least one main weakness. It does not account for different types of populism. In fact, interpreting populism as a specific economic approach focuses only on leftist populism and does not help to explain neoliberal populism like the governments of Menem in Argentina, Fujimori in Peru or Berlusconi in Italy. In these cases, populist policy-makers did not implement macroeconomic policies with the objective of redistribution. Instead, in contexts like Argentina and Peru during the late 1980s and early 1990s, characterized by balance of payments shortfalls and high inflation, Fujimori and Menem campaigned in favor of policies that would allow a gradual stabilization against right wing opponents, respectively Mario Vargas Llosa and Eduardo Angeloz, who proposed orthodox solutions. However, once in power they implemented neoliberal policies, performing what has been called “bait and switch” (Stokes, 1997, p. 1999).

The third definition is the political-institutional. It conceives populism as a “political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers” (Weyland, 2001, p. 14; see also Roberts, 2006). This close, personalized relationship ignores established intermediary organizations or takes them as secondary to the personal will of the leader. Seen thus, populism would be a transitory phenomenon that disappears as soon as the leader disappears. This definition is particularly common when conceptualizing populism in Latin America and in non-Western Europe contexts. Weyland (2001), using classical Sartorian concept building as a foundation, sketched the tradeoff with respect to the radical and the cumulative concepts. The main advantage in building concepts using the classical strategy is that classical concepts minimize border conflicts by relying on minimal definitions that focus on one domain and stipulate as few definitional characteristics as possible (Weyland 2001, p. 2). One of the main critiques that Weyland makes of previous definitions of populism is that “most of the traditional definitions of Latin American populism were cumulative concepts that encompassed several attributes of different domains. In particular, they assumed a close connection between populist politics and its social roots, socio-economic background conditions and/or substantive policies, especially expansive economic programs and

generous distributive measures" (Weyland 2001, p. 5). This critique is directed towards those conceptualizations of populism such as the sociological and the economic which see populism as intrinsically linked to some necessary background conditions. On the contrary, Weyland locates populism in the sphere of the domination of power relations rather than as necessarily related to the distribution of material resources. Populist leaders embrace anti-elitist rhetoric and are defiant toward the status quo, relying on the friend-enemy dichotomy which is typically political (Weyland 2001, p. 11). One of the contributions of Weyland's work is that he systematized the conceptualization of populism. Moreover, maintaining that populism does not need a specific socioeconomic context to emerge and flourish furnishes important insights into the relationship between populism and neoliberalism which has been previously neglected.

Considering populism as a strategy means conceiving of it as an instrument the leader wields to win and exercise political power. Even though this definition makes clear that populism could lead to different types of policies, there are at least three the problems with it.

First, this definition focuses only on the populist leader, while populism can also express itself through other types of political entities, such as parties or social movements (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014). Holding that only personalistic leaders can embrace populism means that the number of possible cases shrinks considerably. The second weakness is related to the top-down directionality of populism. I do not intend to dismiss the fact that in most cases populism is a consequence of the actions of the leader but, in some cases, populism is enacted by the will of the base generating a bottom-up dynamic. One clear example of this dynamic is Podemos in Spain. is the party formed as due to the push of a social movement — los Indignados or 15M — striving to create a more participative democracy than the essentially two-party system formed by the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and the Partido Popular (PP) (Ramiro and Gomez, 2017; Kioupkiolis, 2016). The third weakness is related to the survivor of populism without the leader. In fact, this approach does not explain why populism, in some cases, survives the retirement or the death of the leader. A clear example is *Chavismo* in Venezuela after the death of Chávez in 2013.

It is worth noting that the precedent differences are analytical, i.e. differences relative to the definition and to the attributes that are present in a manifestation

of populism, but populism is a contested concept on another level too. From a normative point of view, some scholars conceive populism as a pathology or disease (Pasquino, 2013) while others define it as a truly democratic force (see Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2018). For the purposes of this work, I maintain that whether populism is a danger to democracy is mainly an empirical question. To answer this question, we should analyze the threat each manifestation of populism may pose democracy individually. The often negative stance on populism arises from the fact that at least in Western Europe populism has mostly appeared joined with nativism and authoritarianism in the form of populist radical right parties (Mudde 2011, 2013; Stavrakakis, 2018). Parties like the Front National in France, the Lega Nord (FN) in Italy and Fidesz in Hungary are currently at the center of the political and journalistic discussion for being in some respects at odds with *liberal* democracy. However, even though populism can generate some frictions with liberal democracy, mostly for conceiving of the people as a monolithic, unified subject and not recognizing the rights of minorities (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018), nativism has been the real game-changer in some Western European countries during the last two decades. It is true that populism exploits the tension in liberal democracy between majority rule and minority rights. Populists "criticize violations of the principle of majority rule as a breach of the very notion of democracy, arguing that ultimate political authority is vested in 'the people' and not in unelected bodies" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 82).

However, populism and nativism are often conflated in the public and sometimes even in the academic debate. For example, the Cambridge Dictionary argues that "what sets populism apart (…) is that it represents a phenomenon both truly local and truly global, as populations and their leaders across the world wrestle with issues of immigration and trade, resurgent nationalism and economic discontent". However, the anti-immigration stance is not a defining attribute of populism, neither if populism is defined as an ideology nor if it is defined as a political strategy. This conceptual confusion was patent in the coverage of national elections in several countries such as Netherlands, Austria, Italy and France—in which the populist parties were radical right parties—which have been depicted as a contest between populist forces and the status quo. Radical right parties' core ideology is not populism but nativism, which is defined as "an

ideology that holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ('the nation'), and that non-native people and ideas are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation state (Mudde, 2011, 2015). As a consequence, even though populism is surely a component of the radical right experience in Western Europe, it is secondary to nativism.

1.2.2 The ideational approach

The ideational approach has been gaining ground in the academic debate on populism (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2018; Hawkins et al., 2018). Scholars employing this approach focus on one particular characteristic of populism: its ideas. More specifically, the ideas, which are common to the discourse of populist actors, manifest themselves in a "shared way of seeing the political world as a Manichean struggle between the will of the people and an evil, conspiring elite" (Hawkins et al., 2018, p. 2). In other words, the ideational approach sees populism as "first and foremost a moral worldview that is used to both criticize the establishment and construct a romanticized view of the people" (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 496).

In sum, the ideational definition represents a minimal definition that sees populism as a political discourse that posits a struggle between the people and their will versus a conspiring elite.

Within the ideational strand of literature, scholars have developed different approaches, focusing on discourse (Laclau, 2005; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2018), ideology (Stanley, 2008; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017), frame (Aslanidis, 2016a; Caiani and Della Porta, 2010) and mode of identification (Panizza, 2005) of the populist ideas.

Even if all these conceptualizations fall under the ideational approach, there some minor differences especially between those who define populism as an ideology and those who define it as a discourse. Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser observed that the "argument that that populism should be defined in ideational terms [is] very similar to the discursive definition used among some Latin Americanists" (2017, p. 514). More in detail, the ideational approach to populism is close to the conceptualization of Ernesto Laclau and other scholars (Mouffe, 2005; Stavrakakis, 2014; Stavrakakis, 2017). Both approaches in fact normally address cases like chavismo in Venezuela and SYRIZA in Greece.

As mentioned above, the so-called discursive conceptualization of populism belongs in the ideational category (Hawkins *et al*., 2018, p. 4). Indeed, both approaches—the Laclauian and the view that populism is a thin ideology—place populism in the realm of ideas and highlight the popular identity and the antagonistic relationship with a morally corrupt elite. However, there are some differences. Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) highlight three of them. First, the Laclauian approach to populism carries a strong normative stance with its talk of populism's goal of "transforming politics and break[ing] with the liberal status quo" (2017, p. 516). On the contrary, the approach that conceives of populism as an ideology is more prone to enable the generation of empirical knowledge and avoids making normative judgments (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012).

Moreover, Laclau tends to see populism as the only democratic discourse that is capable of "unifying and inspiring large majorities around a transformative project" (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, p. 516). However, the reason for limiting this redemptive feature only to the populist discourse is unclear. Mudde's approach considers other types of redemptive discourse, such as a pluralist one. Lastly, seeing populism as an ideology separates from an analytical point of view the existence of populism and its rhetoric from its effects on politics (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Laclau, on the contrary, "tends to limit populism to movements that attract a numerical majority" (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, p. 516). Indeed, his notion of discourse blurs the difference between populist ideas and how they play out in the political domain. This becomes a problem since it excludes from under the populist umbrella minoritarian movements such as, in some countries, a populist radical right without charismatic leadership (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

Keeping in mind that the ideational approach unifies all those conceptualizations that see populism as a set of ideas, following the conceptualization elaborated by Cas Mudde (2004, 2007b), I define populism as a "thin-centered ideology that considers society ultimately divided into two homogeneous groups the 'pure' people versus the 'corrupt' elite, and which argues that politics should be the expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people"(Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012, 2017).

Ideology is the *genus* of the concept. Populism is defined as a "thin" ideology which can be associated with "thick" or "full" ideologies such as communism,

socialism or fascism (Mudde 2017, p. 30). Accordingly, the internal barriers that the populist discourse creates are different depending on the type of populism, i.e. the host ideology to which populism cleaves. In other words, populism has a restricted morphology, which necessarily appears attached to—and sometimes even assimilated into—existing ideological families (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). Conceiving of populism as an ideology is similar to understanding it as a frame through which individuals, both politicians and individuals, comprehend political reality.

This definition, then, conceives of populism as an ideology that is employed by political entrepreneurs but also shared by social groups that have reasons for adhering to this worldview. Conceiving of populism as an ideology means that it is not always imposed in a top-down dynamic. On the contrary, the populist set of ideas is also shared by some social groups that have an interest in doing so. By conceptualizing populism as an ideology, we can understand that its rise and fall are "related to both the supply-side and demand-side factors" (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 497). Following Sartori (1970), defining a concept means also saying *what* the concept *is not.* In other words, this definition of populism only makes sense if there is a non-populism. Populism as an ideology has from a theoretical point of view two direct opposites: elitism and pluralism. Elitism shares populism's monistic view of society being divided into two homogeneous, antagonistic groups but holds an opposite view on the virtues of the groups (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013, p. 499). Elitists believe that they are superior in moral, cultural and intellectual terms (Bachrach, 1967). Pluralism, on the other side, rejects the monism of populism and elitism, maintaining that society is divided into a broad variety of partly overlapping social groups with different ideas and interests. To pluralists, diversity is a strength, and power is supposed to be distributed throughout the society to prevent specific groups from imposing their will.

Following Ochoa Espejo, the key in distinguishing between populists and pluralists (or liberal democrats) is to determine *who* the people are and who legitimize the state. Pluralism, on the one hand, frames its appeal in a way that guarantees and requires that the people be unbounded and open to change both in fact and in principle. On the other hand, populists reject any limits on their claims to embody the will of the people (2015, p. 61). This difference between

populism and pluralism has to do at the same time with openness and self-limitation because if “the people can (and probably will) change, then any appeal to its will is also fallible, temporary and incomplete” (Ochoa Espejo, 2015, p. 61). One of the examples she treats is Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), presidential candidate for the Leftist PRD party in Mexico and leader of the Coalición por el Bien de Todos (CPBT) in 2006. When he lost the national election by a thin margin, he refused to accept the tribunal’s ruling. First, he and his supporters engaged in act of civil disobedience. Later, after rejecting the tribunal’s final ruling, he took an alternative oath of office and assumed the title of “Legitimate President”, organizing a “shadow” government (Ochoa Espejo, 2015, p. 79).

More features of the ideational conceptualization of populism merit discussion. To start with, it is important to examine how the people are defined. For populists, people are not only pure but also the only legitimate guardians of democracy. Populism has a monolithic conception of the “pure people”. The people are conceived of as a corporate body and they are assumed to have the same interests and a common will (Canovan, 2002). Populists, then, have given different interpretations of “the people”. As Kriesi (2014) points out, populism’s meaning varies with the understanding given to “the people” i.e. to the idealized conception of the community (the heartland) to which it applies (see also Hawkins, 2010). Mudde defines them as a “mythical and constructed sub-set of the whole population” or “an imagined community” (2004, p. 546).

Moreover, populism is conceived of as a contraposition of two homogenous groups: the people, who are pure, and the elite, who are corrupt. The pure people and the corrupt elite are constructed categories that can vary over time and space. Depending on which enemies populists blame for the condition of the country, we can identify different types of populism.

In other words, populism is defined as a thin ideology because it is only the confrontation between “us” and “them” that is given. The exact identity of these two categories, on the other hand, changes and this changing allows us to identify different sub types of populism. These categories are what Laclau (2005) calls “floating signifiers”, i.e. empty containers with no clear meanings. Looking at the three waves of Latin American populism, we can see examples in the conceptualizations of “the people” and “the elite” (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014).

The so-called first wave of populism in Latin America, between the 1940s and the 1960s, saw the rise of populist leaders such as Perón in Argentina and Vargas in Brazil. In their discourse, the people consisted mainly of the natural base of the left, the urban and the rural poor. At the same time, the elite were depicted as those "that opposed the expansion of the state, the nationalization of the economy and the implementation of protectionist trade policies". (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 498). The second wave of Latin American populism, which was characterized by the use of neoliberal discourse, the people were seen as a passive mass of individuals. On the other hand, the "corrupt elite" was represented by "those actors who profited from the state-led development model and were opposed to the implementation of the policies of the so-called Washington Consensus (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 498).

Finally, in the third wave, beginning at the end of the 1990s, populist leaders strongly opposed free-market policies, instead appealing to the ideology of Americanismo. The people then became all those discriminated against and excluded, while the elite became "the defenders of neoliberalism and the political actors who support a Western model of democracy that is not suitable for Latin America" (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 499). These are clear example of how "floating signifiers" have been used in the different Latin American populist experiences.

Last, another important element in this definition of populism is its assumption that politics should be expression of the general will of the people. This, in turn, reveals a particular perspective on democracy. Stating that populists believe that politics should be the expression of the general will of the people means that populists take "government of the people" literally and are prone to refuse all checks and balances on the popular will (Kriesi, 2014, p. 363).

Populists also have a tendency to reject all kinds of intermediary institutional bodies between the people and the decision-makers and have a strong anti-institutional impulse (Canovan, 1999). This ideological definition is useful because it allows us to account for the variation in time and space in the definition of "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite." A corollary of this advantage is that we can distinguish different subtypes of populism such as exclusionary or inclusionary populism (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013a) or populist radical right parties in Western Europe which flourished in the last two decades (Mudde,

2010; De Lange, 2007). Being able to distinguish between different sub-types of populism allow us to map the configuration of the populist/anti-populist cleavage, which is one of the aims of this research.

1.3 The populism/anti-populist cleavage

Academic contributions on populism are abundant. In Western Europe, there is a developed scholarly tradition on the fortunes of the so-called populist radical right (Mudde, 2015; Mudde, 2011; Bale et al., 2010; Betz, 1993). Events such like Brexit and Donald Trump's election have been largely analyzed through the lens of populism. However, with some exceptions (Ostiugy, 2009; Pappas, 2014; Stavrakakis, 2014; Stavrakakis, 2018; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis. 2018), few studies focused on populism from the perspective to its capacity to structure political competition in a certain party system. In other words, few of these studies are interested in answering the question about the determinants of the configuration of populism and its counterpart (anti-populism) as a political cleavage. As Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2018) pointed out "while aspects of this antagonistic dialectic between populism and anti-populism have been occasionally discussed in the relevant literature (…) its real nature and implications have not been properly investigated". Looking at Latin America, in those countries in which populist leaders held power for a long period of time, such as Argentina and Venezuela, a new cleavage emerged between those for and against. In fact, it is impossible to understand Argentinian politics without considering the Peronism/anti-Peronism divide, or Venezuelan without the opposition between chavistas and anti-chavistas.

The aim of this section is to explain that populism/anti-populism, in certain circumstances, should be understood as a specific type of cleavage. However, first it is necessary define what cleavages are. In political science, two different types of cleavages structure the party system: the sociological and the political. After explaining the characteristics of these two types of cleavage, I present my own conceptualization of populist polarization, which is a situation in which the populism/anti-populism political divide gains traction and become crucial in structuring the political space.

1.3.1 Cleavages in Political Science

How can polarization and populism explain the current political landscape in some countries? As we have seen, these two concepts have not been analyzed together, at least in the Western European literature and they require a concept that helps bridge them. I believe the concept of cleavages can join the two together. Roughly speaking, cleavages are divides that organize political competition at least in Western European party systems. When cleavages polarize, they structure the system. As a consequence, seeing populism anti/populism cleavage and analyzing its polarization can gives us insights on the structure of certain the party system.

In what follows, I discuss the literature on cleavages in political science and I characterize the populism/anti-populism divide as a political cleavage.

Without a doubt, cleavage is one on the classic concepts in modern political science. It was introduced by the seminal work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) on the origins and the stabilization of the Western European party systems.

Even though the term was coined by Lipset and Rokkan, the literature on cleavages can be roughly divided into two strands: on one side some scholars, following Lipset and Rokkan (1967), advocate for a sociological (or classical) conceptualization of cleavages. On the other hand, a more recent and less European strand maintains that cleavages can just be conceived of as political fractures without clear social correlates (Roberts, 2016; Sitter, 2002).

Let us see in detail the features and the differences between these two conceptualizations.

1.3.1.1 Sociological cleavages

The concept of cleavage was first developed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). Cleavages are, according to the authors, dichotomous divisions of society in two opposing camps that are determined by the position of individuals in the social structure. Most contemporary European parties, they argue, have their origins in the radical socio-economic and political changes that occurred between the mid-19th century and the first two decades on of the 20th (Caramani, 2008, p. 319). More specifically, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) maintained that two historical events were crucial: the Industrial Revolution and the National Revolution. While the

former refers to changes related with the processes of industrialization and urbanization, the latter is linked to formation of nation-states and liberal democracies (Caramani, 2008, p. 319–20). These two historical processes produced divisions that, in turn, generated political parties.

These two revolutions created socio-economic and cultural fractures that Lipset and Rokkan (1967) named cleavages. Modern party families are then the result of the political translation of social divisions in systems in which conflict is increasingly settled through vote (Caramani, 2008; Kitschelt, 2007).

The National Revolution of the early 19th century, produced the center-periphery and the state-church cleavage. The first fracture resulted from the conflict generated by those who resisted the centralization and the cultural standardization of the nation-state. The state-church fracture represented the conflict between those who supported a secularized state and those who advocated for the aristocratic privilege and for church control of education. From here emerged respectively the liberal and the conservative parties.

The Industrial Revolution, in turn, generated the rural-urban and the workers-employers cleavage. The rural-urban fracture is the product of the conflict between the industrial and the agricultural sectors of the economy with respect to trade policies. The workers-employers represents the fight between the capital owners against the emerging working class with regards to issues related to job security. The parties that emerge from this division are the mass parties—mainly socialist and communist parties confronting elite parties.

Party systems, therefore, emerged and stabilized around those cleavages which are basic social fractures which are deep structural divides that persist through time (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967).

As these divisions are very deep, they end up configuring alignments between the two sides of society and political parties. Parties, then, for Lipset and Rokkan (1967) integrate local communities into the great project of the nation. Also, parties act as the main agent of political mobilization, bringing to light the latent conflicts in the society in which they are inserted and forcing citizens to ally with each other.

The study of political parties has, for this sociological approach, immense importance, since it is they that will gather and stimulate not only the appearance of social fractures or cleavages, but the mobilization around these cleavages and

the subsequent electoral behavior. But, as Lipset and Rokkan (1967) strive to make clear, not all a society's conflicts and controversies come to polarize the political scene, since some will remain latent.

Among the scholars that have tried to give Lipset and Rokkans' conceptualization of cleavage a bit more of specificity, Bartolini and Mair pointed out that a cleavage needs to feature at least three necessary attributes. First, it requires an empirical element, which identifies the referent of the concept and which can be defined in social-structural terms. Second, cleavages feature a normative element, the set of values and beliefs which provides a sense of identity and role to the empirical element. This set of values and beliefs also reflects the self-consciousness of the social group(s) involved. Lastly, there is the necessity of an organizational/behavioral element. This element refers to the set of individual interactions, institutions, and organizations, such as political parties, which develop as part of the cleavage (1990, p. 215). In sum, maintaining that a proper cleavage needs to possess all three characteristics, for Bartolini and Mair a cleavage "has therefore to be considered primarily as a form of closure of social relationships" (1990, p. 216).

Following this strand of literature, cleavages have three characteristics. First a cleavage is a division that has its roots in sociological differences such as status, ethnicity or religion. Second, there must be a sense of collective identity involved, in the sense that the members of the group are aware that they share the characteristic on which the cleavage is grounded. Third, a cleavage must find organizational expression, for instance through a party or a trade union (Mair, 1997).

With respect to the stabilization of the party systems, Lipset and Rokkan observed that, despite the foment Western society has experienced during the 20th century, "it is noteworthy how little the formal party systems have changed, though their programmatic content is different. Essentially the cleavages have been institutionalized (…) since the contemporary party systems still resemble those of pre-World War I Europe" (Karvonen and Kuhnle, 2001, p. 6). The freezing hypothesis, an admittedly minor part of Lipset and Rokkan's contribution, has been at the center of a debate at least for the 1960s onwards. The discussion started in the mid-1970s when in the Western world saw the emergence of the so-called post-materialistic issues like environmentalism, the use of nuclear

power, gender equality and minority status (Inglehart, 1997; 2000) As Lipset pointed out these issues “have been perceived by some social analysts as the social consequences of an emerging third ‘revolution’, the Post-Industrial which introduced new bases of social and political cleavage” (Karvonen and Kuhnle, 2001, p. 7). Following the work of Inglehart (1997), scholars began to point out the emergence of new social divides. These new divides separated those employed in the production of material goods from those employed in the post-industrial economy, whose higher education levels often correspond with greater concern with quality of life issues. This new divide at the sociological level, in certain party systems, has been represented by different groups such as the Green parties or the New Left. This partial rearrangement within some Western European countries surely fostered new parties and realigned bases of support, even though the old cleavages continued to be relevant. In more general terms, following Mair, the freezing hypothesis advanced by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) can be interpreted in two different ways. In one view, the Lipset-Rokkan argument remains valid considering “the presence in contemporary competitive politics of many of the traditional party alternatives as well as (…) long-term party organizational continuity over time” (2001, p. 27). The other approach proposes that to validate the freezing hypothesis, it is necessary to “establish that cleavages persist, and that contemporary mass politics continues to be grounded among traditional social oppositions” (Mair, 2001, p. 27). For the first group of scholars, the freezing hypothesis remains more or less valid, while for the other, it is no longer effective., Looking at electoral and partisan stability at the aggregate level through the 1980s, there is a tendency towards continuity in those patterns, at least in the majority of the studies (Pedersen, 1979; Maguire, 1983; Bartolini and Mair, 1990). However, other studies evaluated the freezing hypothesis rely on the social structural determinants of voting preferences (Inglehart, 1984; Kriesi, 1998). These studies show the gradual decay of cleavage politics, at least in the social-structural sense of the term.

This process responds to the party adopting a less choosy and a more catch-all approach. At the same time, the social structure experiences a dramatic change, with the erosion of both class and religious identities during the recent decades (Mair, 1997). This erosion, in turn, resulted in more fragmented

collective identities. In sum, it can be said that the evidence in favor of and against the validity of Lipset and Rokkan's hypothesis of cleavage freezing is mixed.

To conclude, a cleavage needs to satisfy three conditions, namely the existence of stable and aligned demographics, shared attitudes and party choices. Although this conceptualization of cleavage is the most employed, at least to explain party systems in Western Europe, another, more recent conceptualization has emerged. In the next section I examine the so-called political cleavages.

Although is true that all sociological cleavages arguments came from the literature on Europe, there have been cases where the same type of argument has been used to understand politics beyond Europe, such as Chile. Unlike the rest of Latin America, Chile has often been considered a paradigmatic case of partisan competition around social and religious cleavages, at least until the *coup d'état* of 1973 (Dix, 1989; Scully, 1992; 1995; Mainwaring and Torcal, 2003).

1.3.1.2 Political Cleavages

As mentioned above, the second strand of literature refers to cleavages as political fractures that structure party systems even without clear sociological correlates. This type of fracture has been named a political (Levitsky et al., 2016) or non-structural cleavage (Sitter, 2002).

It is true that the European scholarly tradition presumes that cleavages are grounded in sociological distinctions of class, ethnicity, religion, or region (Roberts, 2016, p. 56; see also Deegan-Krause, 2007). However, it is worth remembering that Lipset and Rokkan also acknowledged that "the possibility that the parties themselves might establish as significant poles of attraction and produce their alignments independently of the geographical, the social and the cultural underpinnings of the movements" (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, p. 3).

In general terms and in line with the reasoning on party system change, it is worth noting that the classical conception of cleavages à la Lipset and Rokkan is facing challenges on at least three fronts. First, while Lipset and Rokkan focused their work on the origins of party systems in Western European countries, there are new cases of party system formation in Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. In the second place, new data and methods have emerged to measure the presence of cleavages. Third, a new conception and understanding of the

term “cleavage” has arisen (Deegan-Krause, 2007). With respect to the last point, the conceptual tie between political cleavage and social divisions is not necessarily maintained in all uses of the concept (Zuckerman, 1975, p. 235). Daalder for example, analyzing the five types of cleavages in Europe, maintained that two — nationality and regime — have no necessary ties to divisions within the society. Also, Dogan differentiates political cleavages from the broader category of political divisions, pointing out that the former persists over time and have extensive membership, as shown in electoral behavior (see also Zuckerman, 1975, p. 235). In his definition, political cleavages do not need to have sociological roots. Geoffrey Roberts in his *Dictionary of Political Analysis* defines a cleavage as “the condition of division between members of a political group or political system, and thus the opposite of consensus” (1971, p. 33).

Zuckerman maintains that “though in the embryonic form, the literature exhibits a modicum overlapping usage which permits the development of a typology of a political cleavage as well as the distinction of political cleavage within the general category of political division” (1975, p. 236). In a similar vein Kitschelt (2008) constructed a typology with the aim of differentiating between divides and cleavages. He used two criteria: the durability of the issue division and the centrality of the division for the organization of the party system (Kitschelt, 2007, p. 532). For the interest of this study it is worth noting that Kitschelt assumes the possibility of cleavages that do not necessarily reflect social divisions. For Kitschelt, political partisan cleavages feature high durability and an intermediate level of centrality of division for the organization of the party system (2008, p. 532).

A certain strand of scholarly thought then admits that merely political divisions, which may or may not have sociological roots and still structure the party system. Moreover, since any competitive party system must “cleave” the electorate as rival parties mobilize support, cleavages constructed in the political arena between rival party organizations – without reference to social group distinctions – are not necessarily unstable alignments (Roberts, 2016). An example that Roberts uses to underline this last point is the structuration of the American party system. The fact that Republicans and Democrats have no subjacent social divides has not prevented competition along a stable axis or political cleavage in the US party system. This political cleavage surely has weak

sociological roots, but it stands on parties' programmatic brands or "reputations," and it sorts voters into rival partisan camps according to their policy preferences (Roberts, 2016; Sniderman and Stiglitz, 2012).

Another example of political cleavage lies in Latin America. In Chile, some scholars think the so-called democracy-authoritarianism cleavage shaped political competition in the system. From an organizational point of view, the two opposed coalitions, "Concertación" and "Alianza," are descendants of the coalitions after the return to democracy (Tironi and Agüero, 1999). Starting with the plebiscite of 1988, a political divide emerged at the party system level. The reproduction of this political-cultural divide was helped by the instauration of the binominal electoral system (Tironi, Aguero and Valenzuela, 2001). Analyzing the post-Pinochet political system, Tironi and Agüero maintained that the origins of that configuration needed to be found not in the social cleavages, mainly class, that had structured the system before the military took the power. Instead, the bipolar competition pattern within the Chilean party system was a consequence of a new political-cultural divide, namely authoritarianism-democracy (see also Tironi, Agüero, and Valenzuela, 2001). In other words, from the restoration of democracy in 1989 until perhaps the constitutional reform in 2017, "social cleavages seem to explain less about new patterns of political competition than a purely *political* cleavage shaped by party elites with opposing positions on the 1973 coup, Pinochet's legacy and democracy" (Bonilla *et al.,* 2011, p. 10; see also Torcal and Mainwaring, 2003).

Some former Communist countries also provide a good case in point. Evans and Whitefied (1993), for instance, examine the emerging structure of party competition in new democracies in Eastern Europe. Their analysis shows that in some countries "the constraints under which market transition is taking place are likely to result in a lack of structured competition based on socio-economic cleavages of the sort to be found in Western Europe" (Evans and Whitefield 1993, p. 522).

In more general terms, the so-called missing middle approach "proposes that the communist legacy has led to individuals lacking institutional or social structural identities from which to derive political interest other than those of the nation or mass society" (Evans and Whitefield, 1993, p. 534).

Historical legacies of Communism, then, made hard for former Communist parties to develop party systems based on solid social divisions. At the same time, Kitschelt maintained that “the clash of interests between relative winners and losers of transition would lead to the alignment of the main axis of competition between parties which offered pro-market, cosmopolitan, and internationalist policies, and parties which offered particularist, interventionist and anti-integrationist policies” (1992, p. 16). In other words, if Communist legacies may have, for some scholars, inhibited the formation of stable cleavages at both the social and party system level, at the same time, they allow political actors to establish a more immediate type of linkage with voters. This division can be conceived of as a liberal-communist divide at the party system level.

In sum, cleavage in political science has been conceptualized in two ways. The classic or sociological definition of cleavages describes them as competitive alignments based on major social divisions (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Bartolini and Mair, 1990). More recently, other conceptualizations have developed. Among these alternative definitions, some scholars started to point out that some party systems are structured by fractures with low or absent sociological ties.

One last point needs to be made. Political cleavages are not necessarily less stable than classic ones. The stability in the pattern of competition within some party systems, such as Chile after 1989, Greece and Italy during the Second Republic and in recent years, demonstrates that even when strong cleavages are not present, their absence does not prevent the system from forming a remarkably stable competitive axis. Also, with regards to the former Communist party systems, Sitter pointed that “non-structural cleavages that focus on regime change or approaches to nationalism may be as significant as the socio-economic cleavages generated by the process of economic transition” (2002, p. 430). With respect to the stabilization of the vote in the former communist region there is also evidence that “[v]alues are definitely more effective in sustaining party loyalty than are the effects of socio-demographic traits unmediated by those value orientations” (Toka, 1998, p. 607). In other words, there are studies that show that the combination of values and structure does not stabilize preferences more than values do (Enyedi and Deegan-Krause, 2007, p. 5). Enyedi and Deegan-Krause (2007) observed that, even in Western Europe, countries such as Ireland have reached a considerable degree of electoral and party stability,

developed despite weak structural bases and personality-centered electoral systems (see also Mair, 1997).

In any case there is no a priori reason why such 'non-structural' cleavages (that lack the objective element) should not be as divisive or decisive as structural cleavages (Sitter, 2002, p. 430).

1.3.2 What is the populism/anti-populism cleavage?

In the last 20 years, several countries have witnessed political changes at the party system level that have undoubtedly increased partisan polarization, especially along the populism/anti-populism divide. For instance, populist radical right parties that have gained electoral power in European party systems since the 1980s cannot be explained only by the polarization of the left-right axis because that cleavage rests on disputes about the role of the state regarding socio-economic issues (Kriesi, 2014). Nevertheless, populist radical right parties do not necessarily focus on economic issues; rather, they try to politicize the topic of immigration. It is important, then, to consider another axis that has already been taken into account by some other scholars (Pappas, 2014; Andreadis and Stavrakakis, 2017). The axis that helps us understand the present situation in some countries in Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Latin America is what I call populism/anti-populism.

Following the preceding argument, I maintain that to understand the political situation not only in Western Europe but also in Latin America, and probably elswhere, it would be useful to consider partisan polarization along a different cleavage, overcoming the traditional left-right socio-economic and other classic cleavages (e.g. state-church conflict or center-periphery). This cleavage is not completely new in the literature, but even if populism has been a recurrent topic on the academic agenda during recent years, the importance of this divide in structuring party systems has been largely underestimated (see Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2018) with some notable exceptions (Ostiguy, 2009; Stavrakakis et al. 2018; Stavrakakis, 2018).

In analyzing the social divisions in Western Europe, Hanspeter Kriesi (2004; 2008; 2014) observed that even though Lipset and Rokkan's freezing hypothesis does not seem to hold, this has not necessarily led to an end of the structuration

of politics by cleavages. The author observes a new division operating mainly at the middle-class level, which is shown by the contraposition between those defending individual autonomy and an egalitarian distribution of resources (Kitschelt, 1994) and those who, by contrast, are characterized as warmer to the idea of free market and who "have an idea of community which is more authoritarian, paternalistic and organization-centered" (Kriesi, 1998, p. 169). This division is similar to the "new values" cleavage (Inglehart, 1984) that produced the new left in the mid-1960s, but, as the author pointed out, "it is not able to fully account for the enormous political implications which contrasting value-orientations have today" (Kriesi, 1998, p. 165). Against the mobilization of New Social Movements during the 1960s, a conservative counter-revolution gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s, when the issue of immigration offered a possibility for right-wing parties to mobilize the anti-universalistic counter-potential against the libertarian left (Bornschier, 2012, p. 123). Those who support this counter-revolution (Ignazi, 1992) against universalist values are called globalization's losers and we expect them to seek to protect themselves through protectionist measures and through an emphasis on national independence (Ignazi, 1992). Winners, by contrast, who benefit from the increased competition, should support the opening up of the national boundaries and the process of international integration (Kriesi et al., 2006, p. 922).

While I agree with Kriesi about the existence of a two-dimensional space of competition in most Western European countries, the conceptualization of populist/anti-populist cleavage I propose is different from Kriesi's (2014) integration/demarcation for at least two reasons.

First, unlike the integration/demarcation cleavage the populism/anti-populism one is a *political* cleavage. As explained above, political cleavages are not necessarily rooted in sociological fractures like Lipset and Rokkan's classic cleavages. On the other hand, integration/demarcation for Kriesi is a cultural divide that represents changes at the societal level that started during the 1960s. In fact, building on the classical theory on cleavages, Kriesi includes the social structure as a major and necessary constituting element.

The globalization or integration/demarcation cleavage for Kriesi "partially overlaps with some of the topics of the traditional divides related to anticlericalism, nationalism, and traditionalism, but embraces many new topics

as well, like environmentalism, euthanasia, international equality, European integration, etc." (Enyedi and Deegan-Krause, 2007). As a consequence, the globalization cleavage that Kriesi proposed is not fully orthogonal to the classical divides. However, given the different natures of populism/anti-populism and integration/demarcation, it can be the case that the two cleavages may co-exist in a given party system.

The second difference is related to the fact that even if Kriesi's conceptualization is very useful for understanding certain aspects of current political dynamics, Kriesi's "adaptation hypothesis" assumes that "the new conflict can be expected to reinforce the classic opposition between a pro-state and a pro-market position while giving it a new meaning" (Kriesi et al., 2008, p. 13). In fact, he states that the most probable impact of globalization on the party system would be an "intensification of political conflicts within mainstream political parties as a consequence of their attempt to redefine their ideological profiles" (Kriesi et al., 2008).

Basically, in most the cases, the party system responds to globalization challenges by just adding new issues to the left-right cleavage, not by changing its structure. I am not quite convinced. An important feature of my conceptualization refers to the full neutrality of the populism/anti-populism dimension with respect to the classic left-right axis.

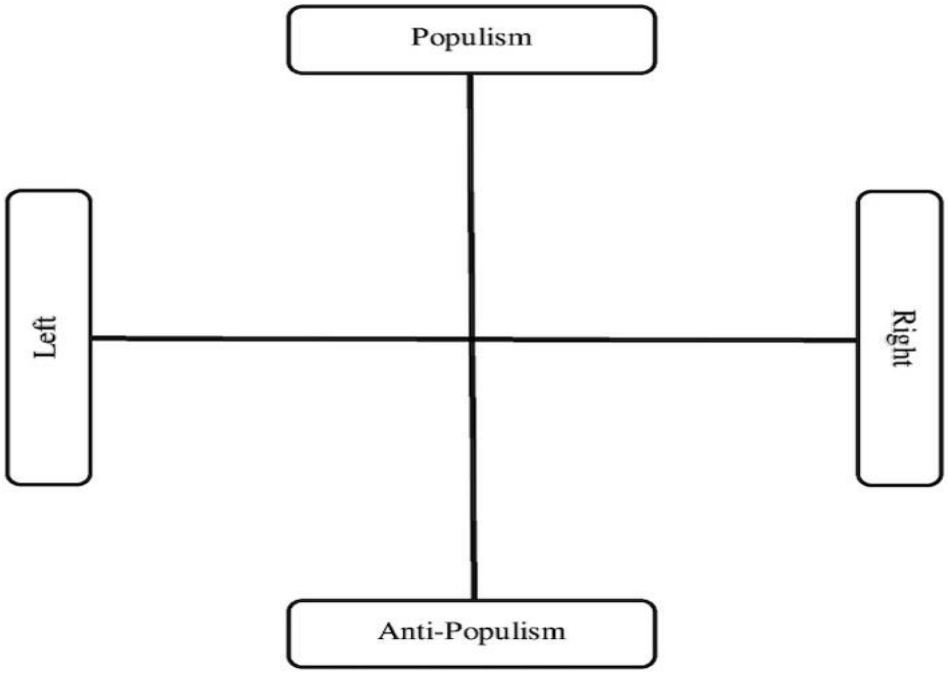
By contrary, the conceptualization of the populism/anti-populism cleavage that I propose more resembles the high-low divide characterized by Pierre Ostiguy (2009). In various contributions (2009, 2017), Ostiguy maintained that certain party systems around the world are partially structured by a divide that he called high vs. low. It could be also the case that the high-low divide completely structures an entire party system, as in Argentina and Venezuela. Ostiguy's high and low axis is formed by two components: the socio-cultural and the political-cultural. High and low are defined as "ways of relating to people" and they "include issues of accents, level of language, body language, gestures, ways of dressing, etc." (Ostiguy, 2009, p. 55). As a way of relating to people, they also encompass the *way* of making decisions."

There are, however, some differences. First, Ostiguy named this dimension low-high. This difference is not substantial because the author pointed out that the low-high category represents the populism/anti-populism debate. The reason

why he decided not to name the categories populism/anti-populism is related to the fact that the term “low highlights the neutrality of populism, often forgotten in the heat of debates, with regard to left and right […] while ‘populism’ is generally mentioned in isolation from the countervailing political (and normative) reaction it generates; the low is actually one of the two poles of what is a dimension scale” (Ostiguy, 2009, p. 4). However, if populism is defined as a set of ideas, it is surely possible to place the political actors on a continuum and say that one is one or less populist than another. The main difference between the populism/anti-populism cleavage and high/low is that while the former refers purely to the ideology and discourse, the latter includes heterogenous aspects such as politicians’ way of speaking, their dress, etc. Another relevant piece of work which employs the populism/anti-populism divide to analyze the system of competition among political actors. In a recent contribution, Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2018) in analyzing post-authoritarian Greece maintained that alongside the classic socioeconomic cleavage (left-right) the populist/anti-populist discursive divide structured the party system from 1974 until the 1980s, when the socialist alternative Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) shifted from populist to anti-populist positions similar to New Democracy’s (ND). In this way, with the disappearance of the populist pole and the convergence of the two main alternative on the same positions, the cleavage faded. However, this condition did not last long. In fact, despite the privileging of consensus by traditional political parties, the sociopolitical field started to become more contentious after 2008. The economic crisis had a profound effect on the political system and was a critical juncture that reactivated the populism/anti-populism divide with the rise of the populist radical-left SYRIZA as an electorally relevant force capable of channeling popular discontent towards the austerity measures imposed to the country by both Greek and European elites. The January and September 2015 national elections saw the collaboration of SYRIZA and the populist right-wing Independent Greeks of ANEL (ANEL), who also opposed the austerity measures. Among other insights, mainly into Greek politics, Stavrakakis and Katsambekis’ contribution (2018) is particularly relevant for at least two reasons. First, it refers only to the discourse of the political leaders, leaving aside other characteristics that could be strongly influenced by the context, such as ways of speech and dress. Secondly as the authors pointed out, they started to

fill a gap in the literature by analyzing the role of anti-populism, which has never been studied as such since "bringing it to the fore [allows studying] populism and anti-populism together and focusing on their mutual constitution from a discursive perspective" (Stavrakakis et al., 2017).

Figure 1.1: Political space of competition in party systems with populism/anti-populism and left-right



Having acknowledged the differences and the similarities between other "new" cleavages in the literature, I maintain that there are some party systems where the parties compete only on the socioeconomic left-right axis; in other words, in some places, this cleavage is the only one that structures the system. In other cases, as shown in figure one, the left-right axis and the populism/anti-populism axes are both relevant while in others, the only relevant axis of competition is populism/anti-populism. This is relevant to polarization at least in two different ways.

The first is conceptual. As observed earlier, the concept is widely used, but not well defined. Acknowledging that a certain degree of polarization is needed for a cleavage to emerge and structure the system means avoiding those interpretations that consider polarization as a dichotomic concept, a feature that a certain party system may have or not. In other words, to effectively structure a

party system, there may exist some degree of polarization on one or more axis of competition. If no polarization is present, then the divide is not relevant for the partisan competition. This observation stresses even more the neutrality of the concept.

The second argument is normative in the sense that some degree of polarization is necessary because it fulfills a basic function for the party system, strengthening party brand and bolstering party attachments (Lupu, 2015). For instance, in new democracies, mass partisanship may "institutionalize party systems, stabilize elections and consolidate the democratic regime" (Lupu 2015, p. 332; see also Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). This rejects the negative connotation often attributed to the concept. As recalled earlier, it is not polarization per se which is dangerous for the party system or the political regime. On the contrary, extreme convergence can be as dangerous as excessive polarization for the stability of the party system.

Furthermore, introducing the concept of polarization is relevant because if we are interested in studying partisan polarization, it is important to know where to search. In other words, if we do not first understand the competition dynamics of a certain party system, we will not be able to say whether it is polarized or not because it could be either polarized on the left-right axis, on the populism/anti-populism axis or on the both of them.

As the populism/anti-populism cleavage is a political cleavage, i.e. a divide that does not necessarily have sociological roots, to be differentiated from an issue-based divide, it needs to have strength and duration in time. As a consequence, I determine whether a case satisfies the following two facets of the emergence of the cleavage. To determine whether the cleavage is really structuring the system, identifying the presence of populist parties is insufficient. In many party systems, there are populist parties, but ones too weak to frame the discourse in a polarizing manner and to stir up the reaction of non-populist parties to develop an anti/populist discourse. Things change when populist parties are electorally relevant. In these cases, populist options are able to gain broader consensus and non-populist alternatives will need to develop a counter-ideology to frame the political situation of "crisis" (see Meguid, 2005).

To measure the pervasiveness of the divide, I track the percentage of the national vote that populist parties win. I establish this threshold at forty percent or

more of the total. Moreover, this vote share must be maintained for two consecutive national (presidential or parliamentary) elections. In other words, for the populism/anti-populism to emerge and structure a certain party system, the sum of the vote share of the populist parties in the lower chamber needs to equal or exceed the forty percent of the total vote share in two consecutive elections.

In the case of a government coalition, the coalition is considered populist if the populist party (or parties) is preponderant within the coalition. Even though thresholds are arbitrary, I maintain that the forty percent threshold is high enough to consider only those party systems in which populist parties play an important role in the electoral arena. Furthermore, by insisting that the vote share threshold must be reached and maintained for two consecutive national elections, I weed out those ephemeral parties that may appear and disappear between an election and the following. With regards to the anti-populism pole, it may take time to effectively constitute a coherent discourse.

Having described the characteristics of the populism/anti-populism cleavage, this last section is dedicated to establishing a link between the organizational strength of parties and the possible implications for the future of the cleavage. As pointed out above, conceiving of populism as an ideology allows acknowledging that it can be manifested by different political actors such as leaders, parties and social movements (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). What are the implications of this statement? Although its answer is not exhaustive, this last section attempts to construct a bridge between the ideational approach of populism and party organization that, with some exceptions (see Heinisch and Mazzoleni, 2016; McDonnell, 2013; Kefford and McDonnell, 2018), has not been analyzed. More specifically, the aim of this section is giving some insight into the longevity of populist parties on the basis on their organizational characteristics. Literature on party organization is broad and parties could be classified on the basis on multiple characteristics that have do to with their organization e.g. the characteristic of their members, their leadership or their internal structure. I will focus only on one of these aspects, namely the organizational density (or strength) of parties. This is relevant because if populism is conceived of as a cleavage, the persistence of the divide is linked, among other factors, to the duration of populist parties in time.

1.4 Party organization in comparative politics

As mentioned above, populism/anti-populism is a political divide embodied by two antagonistic factions at the party system level. Since one of the aims of this work is to make inferences about the duration of the cleavage, analyzing the parties' ideology alone is not enough. The antagonistic discursive interplay between populism and anti-populism is a key factor in maintaining the cleavage, but since populism and anti-populism are embodied by parties, some of the characteristics of these parties may have an impact on the persistence of the cleavage.

To understand this, I need to focus on the precedent studies of evolution of the partisan organizations. Second, I show how this variable is useful to comprehend the configuration of the cleavage and its duration.

Parties are the principal vehicle for representation in modern democracies. "In democracies, they (political parties) represent the principal instrument through which segments of the population compete to secure control of elective institutions, and through them to exercise predominant influence over public policies" (LaPalombara and Anderson, 1992, p. 393).

However, parties vary in many aspects (Sartori, 2005a). For instance, the literature on political parties in Western Europe have classified parties by characteristics such as their structure and their procedures. Following Giovanni Sartori (2005a), there are three main criteria to classify parties: historical, functional and structural-organizational (see aso Ignazi, 1996, p. 550).

First, parties can be classified following their historical evolution.

Second, it is possible to classify parties by the functions they perform. Given that parties fulfill different functions, a vast body of literature distinguishes among parties or some specific goal that they pursue (Neumann, 1956; Kirchheimer, 1966; Panebianco, 1988; Katz and Mair, 1995). Lastly, different types of parties developed different internal organization and rely in different manners on organizational resources such as members, supports or leaders (Duverger,1954; Art, 2011).

While the three types of categorizations can be employed, I analyze the four party models that Katz and Mair (1995) elaborated: cadres parties, mass parties, catch-all parties and cartel parties. In doing so, I am able to categorize parties by

their historical evolution, the main function they perform and their internal structure.

1.4.1. Types of party models

Cadres (or elite) parties historically were the first type of party. The model developed in Europe when suffrage was highly restricted. This kind of party does not particularly stress the function of representation since elected members of the parliament could count on their own mobilization resources and their personal constituencies, and there was little need of a proper organization on the ground. However, as Katz (2008) noticed "within parliament the advantages of working in concert […] led to the evolution of parliamentary party organizations, frequently cemented by the exchange of patronage" (225). As a consequence, the organization on the territory was embryonal and "at the level of the electorate the concept of party membership remained ill defined" (Katz, 2008, p. 225). Since as stated before, the MPs could count on their personal organizational resources, there was no need for a party central office as those resources often relied on clientelist linkages. Cadre parties are described as parties with minimal organization outside of the legislature (Duverger, 1954, see also Wolinez, 2002, p. 140). In a context of low political participation, a loosely structured, elite-centered organization was crucial for the longevity of this kind of party and for the stability of the party system.

When, after the process of industrialization that started in the second half of the 19th century, especially with the entrance into the political arena of the masses, this type of organization could not survive.

In the second half of the 19th century, mass parties emerged. Mass parties were the result of leaders developing parties set on being competitive and winning elections. While cadre parties maintained that they spoke on behalf of the nation, mass parties explicitly speak in favor of one determined group and frequently build their organizational structure on the pre-exiting organizational structure of the group they represented (Katz, 2008, p. 225). On the internal structure point of view, the strength of mass parties was in numbers. In practice, even if mass parties represented the interests and the ideology of a limited group, membership in mass parties reached significant numbers. Consequently, unlike

cadre parties, mass parties needed highly-developed organizations which aspire to enlist a large percentage of their voters as party members.

Although mass parties attained electoral success in many countries, it was evident that not all the groups desirous of parliamentary representation could count on constituencies sufficiently large enough to support a mass party (Katz, 2008). Furthermore, the party congress began to play too large a role in the party's public engagement. Mass parties lasted while they were able to profit from a structural change, namely the extension of the suffrage. To benefit, they adapted their internal organization to absorb the demands of the new electorate. However, this type of party then was no longer viable and nowadays there are almost no parties that maintain this organizational structure.[6]

At this point, another type of party emerged, the catch-all parties (Kirchheimer, 1966). Building on the work of Neumann and Duverger, Kirchheimer focused on the transformation of parties of mass integration into ideologically bland catch-all parties. With the objective of gaining ground in the political arena, some of those parties gave up to the efforts of encadrement of the masses and downplayed ideology while focusing on attracting the support of broader portions of the electorate. The success of these parties pushed other parties to do the same and this, in turn, led to a change in Western European party systems (see also Wolinetz, 2002). This new type of party has the characteristics of mass party with regards to members, branches and congress but cultivates direct connection with the electorate rather than one mediated by external party organizations (Katz, 2008, p. 303). With respect to their function, catch-all parties focus on the task of contesting elections to the detriment of the others. Lastly, catch-all parties started to rely on political professionals such as media, consultants and pollsters (Katz, 2008, p. 304). Catch-all parties are, in most cases, similar to what Panebianco (1988) named electoral-professional parties. Even if those parties usually rely on a formal organization, the emphasis shifted so sharply to the party in office that the membership became superfluous. While catch-all parties were able to maintain themselves for half a century, other structural developments required an adaptation of organizational strategies.

[6] PT in Brazil (Samuels and Zucco 2018) and Frente Amplio in Uruguay (Yaffé 2004).

Towards the end of the 20th century, the catch-all party type entered a phase of crisis as a consequence of a series of developments. First, increasing public debts forced ruling parties to make a choice: cutting welfare or increasing taxation. Second, globalization eroded party loyalties and membership since it reduced the ability of governments to control their economies (Katz, 2008, p. 304). Last, technological changes increased the costs of electoral competitiveness. Analyzing these changes, Katz and Mair (1995) suggested that a considerable number of parties shifted toward what they called cartel-parties. This has implications both for the functions performed and for their internal organization. With respect to the former, “the parties reduce their relevance in their role of bringing pressure to bear on the state on behalf of civil society (representative function) in favor of a part of their role of governors, defending policies of the state, becoming agents of the state rather than of society” (Katz, 2008, p. 304; see also Katz and Mair, 1995).With respect to their internal organization, cartel parties tend to increase the formal powers of party members and in some cases allow the participation of supporters. This decreases internal democracy since it disempowers activists who are believed to be more doctrinaire and policy-oriented and less willing to accept limitation. Moreover, “cartel parties also tend to replace the staff of the party central office with hired consultants, both further privileging professional expertise over political experience and activism and removing another possible source of challenge to the leaders of the party in public office (Katz, 2008, p. 305).

Katz and Mair (1995) also underline the importance of the relationship of parties with the state. Cartel parties are a result of the trend towards symbiosis between the parties and the state.

In sum, on the basis of their historical evolution, functions and structural organization, four main party models can be identified: cadre parties, mass parties, catch-all parties and cartel parties. Each one has a specific form of organization and functions that gave parties longevity.

It is worth noting that the types of parties listed above are not exhaustive of all the typologies.

Therefore, while I agree with Gunther and Diamond (2003) that the problem with these typologies is that they “do not adequately capture the full range of variation in party types found in the world.” In fact, “[they] are based on a whole

variety of definitional criteria [and] have not been conductive to cumulative theory building" (2003, p. 168).

However, for the aim of this study, these party models are useful for thinking about the influence of partisan organization on the duration of political parties. In fact, they are examples of types of partisan organizations disrupted by the occurrence of a structural change. At that point, a party's survival depended on adjusting its internal organization and primary functions.

1.4.2 Party organization and populism

Even though the organizational characteristics of parties are well studied, the literature on the link between partisan organization and populism is not well-explored. Populism is quite a contested concept and most of the widely used conceptualizations insufficiently stress the importance of the organizational component.

Both the most employed conceptualizations of populism, the political-institutional and the ideational, for different reasons, do not deal enough with parties' organizational features in their analysis of the phenomenon, with few exceptions (Heinisch and Mazzoleni, 2016; Stanley, 2011; Mudde, 2007; McDonnell, 2013; Kefford and McDonnell, 2018).

On the one hand, it looks like many scholars, mostly those close to the so-called political-institutional conceptualization, tend to overemphasized the role of the leader as they define populism as "political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercise government power based on direct, unmediated, un-institutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers" (Weyland, 2001, p. 14; see also Roberts, 2006). On this view, the two main features of populism are the type of political actor who exercise power and the political actor's ability to mobilize a base (Weyland, 2017). With regards to the first aspect, populism is conceived of as a political strategy that revolves around an individual politician (Weyland, 2017, p. 56). With respect to his or her ability to mobilize, because populists tend to view widespread mass support as the legitimate basis of rule, they act mainly through TV and increasingly through social media (Weyland, 2017, p. 57-58).

On the other hand, the ideational approach, as I explained earlier in the chapter, defines populism as a "thin-centered ideology that conceives politics as ultimately divided into two homogenous groups: the 'pure' people and the 'corrupt' elite and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté general* (general will) of the people" (Mudde, 2004; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; Stanley, 2008). Populism, like other ideologies, relies on core attributes or ideas. Scholars agree that the defining ideas of populism are four (Mudde, 2004; Hawkins, 2009; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). First, populism is people-centered, or, to use Canovan's words, prizes "government of the people, by the people, for the people" (1999, p. 10). Second, the people are always in contraposition to an elite, defined as morally corrupt (Mudde, 2004; 2007). Third, populism entails a (moral) distinction between the "good" people and the "corrupt" (or "bad") elite (Mudde, 2004). Fourth, the populist movement or party, claims to represent the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people (Mudde, 2004).
The ideational definition gives us insights on the organizational features of populist actors.

Scholars agree on the fact that, even though populist forces are often led by charismatic leaders and organized in highly centralized and personalized parties and hence it can be maintained that populism has an elective affinity with a certain kind of organization, these are not defining properties (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018). In fact, populism can express itself not only through a charismatic leader but also through a party such as the Lega in Italy and the FN in France. Moreover, populism can manifest through a social movement such Podemos or the Indignados/M-15 movement (Aslanidis, 2016a; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 42). Obviously, these organizational forms are ideal types. There can be hybrids. One of the most cited examples is the MAS in Bolivia. The MAS embodies simultaneously the charismatic leadership of Evo Morales, social movements that oppose neoliberal policies and a search for representation of previously excluded ethnic groups. Also, the MAS is a political party which Morales created to run for election in 2006 (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2016, p. 57).

That said, the ideational approach assumes that populism can manifest itself through different organizational channels. Starting from this point, the degree of

organizational density of populist parties can give us some insight into the future of the cleavage.

The relevance of considering the literature about party organization in studying the populism/anti-populism cleavage is linked to the fact that the aim of this research is to explain the determinants of the emergence of populism conceived of as a political cleavage. What are the implications of considering the antagonism between populist and anti-populist parties as a political cleavage?

First, considering the characteristics of the organization combined with the populist (or non-populist ideology) can give us insights into the organizational diversity among populist forces.

Furthermore, as seen above, one of the characteristics of the cleavages is durability (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Kitschelt, 2007). This is straightforward if we consider traditional sociological cleavages. This kind of cleavage is durable by definition, since changes at the sociological level are slow. However, if populism/anti-populism is a political cleavage, we need to make inferences about its durability. Which characteristics of the parties in the system can give us insight into their durability?

Part of the answer relies on the fact that it is the ideological contraposition between populist and anti-populist parties that keeps the dynamic of the political cleavage working. However, focusing also on the organizational characteristics of populist actors, we can make inferences about the duration of some of these populist options and, consequently, about populism as a cleavage.

Political parties, from the point of view of their organization are classified on the basis of different characteristics. Literature on party politics includes a significant number of party typologies based on their ideology, organizational features and their changes.

However, parties may be able to fulfill their main representation task through different organization strategies. In other words, the parties within the system have greater chances to last if they are organizationally dense, regardless of the specific organization strategies.

Following Sartori, I define organizational density as “the power of penetration of a given party, both in terms of intensity and reach” (2005a, p. 8). A party’s organizational density refers to its organizational network which “goes far beyond the party itself for it includes all the ‘space’ that a party is able to occupy de facto,

and no matter under which form, in whatever setting" (Sartori, 2005a). Obviously, there are many different types of organizational networks.

However, for present purposes I maintain that a party is characterized by organizational density if the party has roots in the territory and if its mobilization capacity goes beyond the electoral periods. In other words, a party has high organizational density if the power of the leader is limited by a sort of internal checks on his or her will.

This variation is depicted in Figure 1.2, which differentiates between high and low levels of organizational density and the presence (or absence) of populist ideology.

Table 1.2: Party typology (organizational density and presence of populist ideology)

Organizational Density / Populist Ideology	High	Low
Yes	Populist Organic Parties	Personal Populist Parties
No	Organic Parties	Electoral Parties

The upper left quadrant is labeled personal populist parties, which denotes the tendency of those parties that, while adopting a populist ideology, do not develop a dense organization, i.e. power is concentrated in the hands of the leader and there is nobody to counterbalance her power. One example is Geert Wilders's PVV in the Netherlands. The Party of Freedom (PVV) is classified as an example of populist radical right populism (Mudde, 2013). On the organizational side, it can be classified as personal parties since "Wilders dominates the PVV in terms of selection and training of candidates, planning political strategy and articulating the party's program and ideology" (Vossen, 2011, p. 197-180), making the PVV is a sort of electoral vehicle (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 44).

A second type, populist organic parties, is found in the upper right quadrant of Table 1.2.

The defining feature of populist organic parties is that those parties, while adopting the populist ideology, develop organizational characteristics that make them not fully dependent on the leader. Indeed, they grow other organs that share power with the leadership and build an institutionalized mechanism for candidate selection. The SVP in Switzerland and the National Front in France are paradigmatic cases of populist organic parties. Both of these parties, in fact, have built a solid party organization with several associate organizations and branches (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 52–53).

An alternative organizational pattern is found in the lower left quadrant. Electoral parties are the obverse of populist organic parties, as they lack both the populist ideology and high organizational density. Uribe's Partido de la U in Colombia was not an organizationally dense party, but an electoral vehicle for the leader. Moreover, Uribe's discourse cannot be categorized as populist since it lacks the anti-elitism component.

A final category, organic parties, is found in the lower right quadrant of Table 1.2. Organic parties do not share populist ideas, and the power of the leader is limited by other organs that function as counter-weights. Classic European social democracies such as the German SPD or the French PS constitute fine examples.

In Italy, as I develop in more detail in chapters three and four, despite the importance its leadership has always had in the Lega, the party has also had the organizational density to offer an effective check, at least when compared to other populist parties. On the other hand, both FI and the M5S, for instance, are dependent on their leaders but, unlike the Lega, this dependency is unfettered by a dense organization. However, this typology travels outside of the Italian context. For example, in other countries, we can classify populist parties on the basis of their organizational density. While the FN in France is an example of organic populist party since organizational characteristics of the party balance Marine LePen's, and previously Jean-Marie LePen's, discretion. On the other hand, Geert Wilder's PVV in the Netherlands or the Palmer United Party (PUP) in Australia are personalist populist parties since they are totally dependent on their leaders.

To sum up the argument, those parties that have high organizational density are less dependent on their leaders and, as a consequence, have greater

durability than a party that has no organization to curb the discretion of the leader. While one-man leadership surely makes a party or movement more manageable, since there is no room for collective decision-making that could make coalitions formation more complex, it hurts the long-term viability of the party.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I theoretically constructed and analyzed the object of my research, namely the populism/anti-populism cleavage. To do this, I relied on three strands of literature in political science. First, following the literature on cleavages, I maintain that the populism/anti-populism cleavage needs to be conceived of as a political cleavage, i.e. a fracture in the system that structures competition between parties but does not necessarily have sociological roots. Second, following a Sartorian conceptualization of partisan polarization, I maintain that for a cleavage to emerge and structure the system requires a certain degree of polarization. Since polarization is necessary for cleavage to emerge and the system to function properly, I do not believe that the polarization of the party system is per se a dangerous for the stability of the system or for the democratic regime. Extreme polarization may be dangerous, as is extreme convergence. In other words, I do not adhere to a normative conceptualization of partisan polarization. Third, since populism is a highly contested concept, I explained the reason why I find the ideational approach proposed by Cas Mudde (see also Stanley, 2008; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwaaser, 2013; Stavrakakis, 2014) most convincing. This conceptualization treats populism as an ideology or discourse that sees society as divided into two homogeneous and morally distinct groups: the pure people and the corrupt elite. Moreover, populism holds that politics needs to be the expression of the general will of the people. Conceiving of populism as a set of ideas almost always attached to full ideologies allows distinguishing between different types of sub-populism. This approach also goes beyond the description of populism as linked to the emergence of a charismatic leader (see Weyland, 2001; Roberts, 2006). In the last part of the chapter, I proposed a closer look on the relationship between populism as an ideology and the organizational characteristics of political parties.

With this objective in mind, I elaborated a typology that accounts, on the one hand for the type of thin ideology of parties — whether they are populist or not —

and, on the other hand, parties' organizational density. First, this a useful reminder that populism is not a phenomenon that is always related to the emergence of charismatic leadership. Even though there is an affinity between charismatic leaders and populism, this is not always the case. Populism, in fact, can manifest itself though other mobilization options, such as political parties or social movements.

The thrust of this observation is to facilitate inferences about the duration of the populism/anti-populism cleavage, since we can assume that both populist and anti-populist parties are more durable when they develop an organization that somehow limits the discretion of the leader. On the contrary, when parties rely only on their leaders, the odds of the cleavage enduring fall. In the next chapter, I will introduce my theoretical proposal for the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage, the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties, the occurrence of massive corruption scandals and party system collapse.

Chapter 2

Programmatic Convergence, Massive Corruption Scandals and the Collapse of the Party System

2.1 Introduction

In 1994, something spectacular happened in Italian politics. Forza Italia, founded only eight months prior by the entertainment businessman Silvio Berlusconi, became Italy's largest party by gaining 21 percent of the total vote. Through the formation of electoral alliances with another relative newcomer, the populist Lega Nord (LN), in the north and with the former fascist party Alleanza Nazionale (AN) in the south, the center-right coalition obtained 46 percent of the national vote and Berlusconi was appointed prime minister. Only few years before, the protagonists of Italian politics were completely different. The main party since the post-war, the Christian Democrats (DC), vanished and the Socialist Party (PS) dropped more than ten points, while the Communists (PC) split in two different parties, the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and more extreme Rifondazione Comunista (PRC).

How can we explain this dramatic change in Italian politics? What implications did this change have for the Italian party system over the last twenty-five years? To answer these two questions, in this chapter I develop a theoretical framework which is useful for explaining the processes that led to the change of the political opportunity structure which, in turn, created a fertile soil for the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

My central theoretical claim is that the emergence of the populism/anti-populist cleavage in Italy during the 1994-2016 period was driven by a sequence of three factors during the prior decades, strongly linked to the high levels of unresponsiveness in the Italian party system. First, although one must acknowledge the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties, programmatic convergence alone is insufficient for explaining the change in the political opportunity structure. Only after massive corruption scandals, which affected a significant portion of the country's political elite broke, did the electoral opportunity structure change sufficiently to produce the critical juncture — the collapse of the party system — that, by relaxing the institutional boundaries,

enabled the emergence of electorally relevant populist parties and as I show later, of the so-called populism/anti-populism cleavage.

In general terms, the populism/anti-populism cleavage is more likely to emerge in party systems with high levels of unresponsiveness. Some of the factors that can indicate that a party system is unresponsive are the convergence of mainstream parties and the breaking of massive corruption scandals. When the levels of unresponsiveness in the system reach extreme levels, the party system can experience a collapse (Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012). One of the primary function of parties is to represent the interests of the voters. This task can be fulfilled through different types of linkages such as the programmatic, charismatic and clientelist, as described by Kitschelt (2000). When the principal linkage breaks down and a secondary fails to replace it, the entire party system collapses.

In the case of a collapse of the party system parties find themselves completely unable to perform their basic expressive function and, as a consequence, voters do not feel represented by any of the political options in the system (Morgan, 2011).

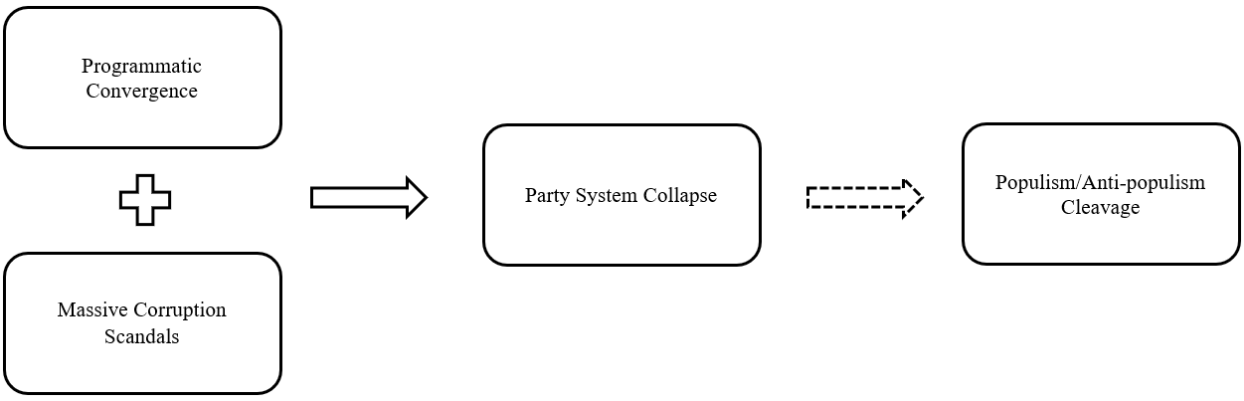
In the case of a party system collapse, the linkages between parties and voters break down, meaning not only a dramatic restructuring of the system but potential instability and conflict in the democratic regime (Morgan 2011, p. 6). The collapse, then, represents a sort of critical juncture (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007) which opens the political opportunity structure to the dramatic change of the inter-party patterns of competition. One of the possible consequences is the emergence of the so-called populism/anti-populism cleavage. In fact, the populist discourse may re-build the broken linkages on the basis of a discourse that pits “the pure people” against “the corrupt elite”.

In sum, the consequences of collapse qua critical juncture depend highly on the actions of the relevant actors in the system. As pointed out above, when the level of unresponsiveness reaches its peak and the system collapses, the political opportunity structure changes. This, in the Italian case, had implications both on the offer and on the demand side. On the former, the institutional barriers of the system lowered and allowed the entrance of new actors articulating a populist discourse. On the demand side, there was the activation of the populist attitudes in the electorate.

It is worth noting that the two factors that favored the collapse, namely the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties and the breaking of massive corruption scandals, especially when they take place simultaneously, are particularly useful to the populist discourse. In fact, both factors allow new actors in the system to depict other parties as morally (and eventually economically) corrupt.

The following figure (2.1) shows the argument in brief.

Figure 2.1: Determinants of the emergence/polarization of the populism/anti-populism cleavage



The rest of the chapter is organized as follows.

In the first section, I analyze the effect of the programmatic convergence of the mainstream parties and the role of corruption scandals in triggering the collapse of the party system and eventually the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

More specifically I maintain that two factors, which are symptoms of the unresponsiveness of the party system — the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties and the breaking of massive corruption scandals affecting the elite as a whole — happening simultaneously, lead to the collapse of the system (Morgan, 2011).

The collapse of the party system represents a critical juncture which produces a change in the political opportunity structure, facilitating the emergence of electorally relevant populist political options within the party system as well as the decay of the traditional political parties. On the one hand, programmatic convergence orphans voters if established parties do not represent the ideas and interests of their constituencies. On the other hand, massive corruption scandals discredit the majority of the political class in the eyes of voters.

In other words, these two factors together undermine the responsiveness of the party system to an extreme point in which the system collapses. The collapse represents a critical juncture which, in turn, determines a change in the political opportunity structure that may allow the entrance of new actors. These actors may employ a populist discourse to attract considerable portions of the

electorate, since the collapse produced a total disconnection between voters and mainstream parties.

In the second part of the chapter I examine the validity of my theoretical frame for post-war Italy. In order to do that, I first show the level of programmatic convergence of the mainstream parties in Italian party system from the first post-war election in 1953[7] until the 1992 election, relying on the RILE index elaborated by the Party Manifesto Project —which estimates the position of parties alongside the left-right axis — weighted by each party vote share. The results demonstrate that programmatic polarization has stayed at low levels during the whole period analyzed. Since, as pointed out in chapter one, convergence represents the opposite conceptual pole from polarization, it can be said that the levels of programmatic convergence during the Italian First Republic were high.

This result is quite interesting because of the presence of extreme parties, the Italian communist Party (PCI) and the MSI, in the system. Indeed, Italy during the First Republic was one of Sartori's (1976; 2005) cases of pluralist polarized party systems. However, focusing just on the programmatic positions, the PCI and the MSI, the two parties that, ideologically, are considered at the extremes, scored as the most leftist and rightist parties in the system only in the 1987 election (MARPROR).

Secondly, especially from the 1980s onward, the high programmatic convergence shown by analysis of the party manifestos was reinforced by large interparty governing agreements, such as such as the Pentapartito, formed by the DC, PSI (Partito Socialista Italiano), PSDI, PRI and PLI and lasting for ten years (1981-1991).

These five governing parties "proved themselves no longer capable of providing enough policy responsiveness" damaging the programmatic linkage capacity of the party system (see Pasquino 1997, p. 46). At the same time, the only party that escaped the programmatic discrediting was the PCI, which, however, was not a viable option. Its exclusion from governance created a blockage in the system, prohibiting meaningful ideological alternation in government (Gilbert, 1995; Morgan, 2011). It is also worth noting that during the Historic Compromise the PCI provide external support to the government.

[7] Although the first post-war in Italy was held in 1948, the first available complete data are for 1953.

Furthermore, to show the effect of the massive corruption scandals on the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage, I analyze the characteristics of Tangentopoli, the corruption scandal of the early 1990s, and its consequences at the party system level.

In the last section, I draw on literature on Latin America to define and apply the concept of party system collapse to the 1991-1994 period in Italian politics as well as describe the concepts typically applied to the period, like change of the party system (Morlino, 1996; Katz, 1996).

Although most of the literature agrees that the period's events produced a change in the Italian party system, the idea of a collapse of the entire party system is not systematically employed.

The last part of the chapter is dedicated to the collapse of the party system. As I pointed out earlier, programmatic convergence of mainstream parties and massive corruption scandals create the extreme, systemic unresponsiveness and set the stage for party system collapse (Morgan, 2011; see also Seawright, 2012). In turn, party system collapse represents a critical juncture, a *tabula rasa*, that may enable first the entrance of the new actors in the party system and the subsequent emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

At this point a clarification needs to be made. Collapse occurred in some party systems prior to the emergence of electorally relevant populist forces, such as Venezuela in 1998, Peru in 1990[8] and Bolivia in 2006. In those cases, the populism/anti-populism cleavage also emerged. However, the collapse of the party system does not seem to be a necessary cause of the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

In other cases, such as Greece after the Great Recession, the party system did not collapse prior to the emergence of the emergence of relevant populist options (Andreadis and Stavrakakis, 2017).[9] Without a doubt, party system

[8] Peru is an outlier. While in Seawright's (2012) conceptualization and operationalization, Peru is a case of party system collapse, Morgan (2011) claims that since within the Peruvian party system the patterns of partisan competition were not stable, it cannot be considered as a positive case of party system collapse.

[9] Even if some authors maintain that the populism-anti/populism cleavage structures the Greek party system, my conceptualization of the cleavage assumes that populist parties need to gain 40 percent of the vote in two consecutive national elections. Since the last two national elections in Greece were only 9 months apart, the Greek case does not fulfill this requirement. However, some scholars pointed out that the populism/anti-populism discursive antagonism has been partially structuring the Greek party system since the post-authoritarian period (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2018).

collapse constitutes a critical juncture (Thelen, 1999; Mahoney, 2000; Pierson and Skocpol, 2002; Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007) that relaxes institutional barriers and permits new actors to enter the system, actors which may later enable the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

In sum, it is important to keep in mind that after collapse, or any critical juncture, there is no pre-determined path. Contingency plays a role. During the critical juncture, agency is crucial in determining the path that the party system will follow (Mahoney, 2000).

2.2 The Emergence of the Populism/Anti-populism Cleavage

As I recalled in the introduction of this dissertation, the populism/anti-populism cleavage only emerges in some countries.

In this section, I examine the factors that may facilitate the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage and, at the same time, rule out other mooted explanations. The aim of this section is to spell out the external determinants of the emergence (and success) of relevant populist options. This kind of determinant is often studied using the political opportunity structure framework, which constitutes the overarching concept of this chapter (Zaslove, 2008; Mudde, 2007).

Despite the attention paid populism both in academia and in public opinion in the last few years, the literature has delved little into the causes and the electoral successes of populism.

Before beginning, it bears mention that the success or failure of populist parties is not measured exclusively in electoral terms — the percentage of votes parties obtain — but is also captured by their ability to put topics on the public agenda (agenda setting power) or their policy impact power, i.e. the power to shape public policies (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 98). A good example is the UK Independence Party (UKIP), a Eurosceptic right-wing populist party which, regardless of having won only one seat in the House of Commons in the 2015 election, saw implemented the only policy that it campaigned for, the UK's exit from the European Union. Even though UKIP is electorally irrelevant, it had power to set the agenda, managing to give Brexit priority in the public debate. Further, it saw Brexit implemented following the June 2016 referendum (Bale, 2018). The

UKIP filled the gap left by the Tories when they abandoned both the populist discourse and Eurosceptic tones in 2006 on the cusp of the economic and migration crises, and the Conservatives cannot regain the initiative (Bale, 2018, p. 263). The Conservative government failed to keep their promises on immigration and the UKIP gained electoral relevance. Even though the UKIP's best electoral performance was taking 12.6 percent in 2015 (obtaining only 1 seat in the House of Commons), slipping in the next cycle to electoral irrelevance (1.8 percent) with no seats in Parliament, this was sufficient to pressure the Conservatives into promising an in/out referendum on staying in the European Union (Bale, 2018, p. 263). When Brexiteers prevailed, the UKIP obtained its only policy goal despite its electoral irrelevance.

Even if the impact and success of populist parties cannot be measured only by looking at their electoral strength, given that the aim of this study is finding the determinants of the emergence of a cleavage, populist parties' electoral strength over time matters. Therefore, I refer to the success or failure of populist parties in electoral terms. I maintain that the populism/anti-populism cleavage structures the party system if populist parties obtain a vote share of 40 percent or more of the total in two consecutive national elections.

To explain the success of populist parties, we need to take account of both the demand and the supply side of the populist politics. As Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) observe, one of the advantages of interpreting populism as a set of ideas is seeing its workings at both the elite and mass levels. In other words, for populists to become electorally relevant, there needs to be a to demand for populism, but at the same time, there must be a supply of credible populist options. The demand side is a consequence of structural changes, which activate populist attitudes in the masses, while the supply side refers to those conditions that favor the success of populist actors in the political and electoral arena (Mudde and Rovira Kalwasser, 2017, p. 99; see also Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017).

By contrast, those explanations that link the emergence of populism only with the appearance of a charismatic leader, who interprets the feelings of part of the electorate (see Weyland, 2001), seems problematic. This type of explanation is problematic because not all populist forces are led by charismatic leaders and because it overlooks the fact that in the electorate there may be demand for

populism independent of the presence of a populist leader (see Mudde, 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

2.2.1 Causes of Populism: A Literature Review

Populism has received growing attention in recent years. However, most scholarly literature has focused more on the conceptualization of populism than on its causes (Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017). Within the literature on the causes of populism, categorizing the different explanations is difficult. To give an account of the different explanations for the emergence of populism, I follow the systemization of Hawkins and his collaborators (2017). They cluster the different arguments into two groups, though most explanations combine aspects of the two categories. The first group employ a “mass society thesis” while the others the so-called “economic thesis” (see also Rydgren, 2007). To Hawkins and his collaborators, studies using the “mass society thesis” examine “threats to culture and feelings of identity loss,” whereas those employing the “economic thesis” look to a Downsian spatial and materialist conception of political representation (Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017, p. 268-69).

Let us look closely at the mass society theories. At base, the majority of these theories maintain that populism is a consequence of weak civil societies and/or weak or absent mass-based organizations, such as trade unions or traditional religions (Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017, p. 269). Especially in those contexts where party organization is weak, such as in some Latin American countries, with fragmented and volatile party systems, individuals tends to build personalistic linkages with voters (Weyland, 2001). In these cases, citizens turn to populist actors, whose politics cut across the traditional cleavages, to fill the gap. Here, a charismatic leader plays an important role by articulating the collective identity, positioning himself in contraposition of mainstream politicians and defending the general will of the people (Weyland, 2001, p. 269). Therefore, to emerge, this popular identity needs some contextual circumstances. One variation of this argument is proposed by Laclau (2005), who maintains from a neo-Marxist perspective that post-industrialization created multiple new identities that compete with the traditional class identity. By creating a popular identity through their political action, populists construct an equivalent to the working class that unifies people against a capitalist elite. Finally, another variation

explores the proliferation of the new global mass media. By amplifying the cognitive weaknesses and the emotional vulnerabilities of the masses, these new media make people prey to populist messages. A notorious case is the entrance in the political arena (*discesa in campo*) of media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, whose broadcasts tend to focus on entertainment, spectacle and scandal, giving a strongly personalized image of politics (Mazzoleni 2008). In other words, promoting a certain type of content, new media may enhance the success of populist options (see also Mudde, 2007). As Hawkins, Pauwels and Read (2017) pointed out, an older version of this theory can be found in Latin American studies on populism, which stressed the capacity of radio and television to create a sense of personal connection with the leader (see Skidmore, 1993).

The second strand of literature on populism and its causes employ the "economic thesis," which follows a Downsian approach, based on the application of neoclassical economics to the study of politics. Even though Downs was not primarily interested in the study of populism, this approach considers both voters and politicians self-interested decision makers (Downs, 1957; Riker, 1962). To maximize their self-interest in a world characterized by uncertainty and costly information, politicians create "packages of positions, i.e. ideologies, which are marketed by parties" (Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017, p. 271). Since both voters and politicians are strategic, their interactions can be modeled spatially (see Downs, 1957).

Hawkins and his collaborators (2017) divided this in three sub-categories. The first, which focuses on the medium-term failure of established parties to respond to the demands of the electorate, is also known as the globalization losers thesis (Betz, 1994; Kriesi and Pappas, 2014). The losers of globalization are those that, in a globalized post-industrial environment, are at the margins of society because unemployed or unskilled or those whose jobs are threatened by advancing technology (Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017, p. 271). These voters drift away from mainstream parties since they feel unrepresented by those who implemented the neoliberal policies that marginalized them and, as a consequence, they turn to populist alternatives. This argument is often used to explain the emergence of populism in Western European countries.

The second category looks to long-term reactions to problems of corruption and weak governance more generally, often in relation to the so-called failures of

democratic government. In contexts such as Latin America or Eastern Europe, corruption has been an endemic dysfunctionality of the political system arising from the state building process (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013). Dissatisfied with the political class, voters are attracted to political options that present themselves as antiestablishment (see Kriesi, 2014).

The third sub-category, which often is an interaction between the first and the second, addresses the role of party organization and electoral rules in allowing populist parties to enter the system (Hawkins, Read ana Pauwels, 2017, p. 271). This sub-category links the emergence of populism to a change in the electoral opportunity structure, i.e. the interactions between mainstream and populist parties in the system (Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017, p. 273). If mainstream parties leave space in the system by overlooking issues that are important to voters, populist parties may exploit the niche (Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, 2017, p. 273). This argument is often used to explain the emergence of populist radical right parties which outflanked mainstream parties on the immigration issue (see Ignazi, 1992; 1996). Considering the openness of the electoral system, for example, some scholars found that systems based on proportional representation with low thresholds would benefit new parties more than majoritarian systems (Carter, 2005; Norris, 2005; Van Kessel, 2015). However, it is worth noting that the electoral opportunity structure is not related only to the features of the electoral system, but also to the organizational capacity of party leaders. Following this argument, traditional parties will be less prone to adapting their message, especially if it means admitting new leadership to make the message credible, and this lack of flexibility can lead to the decline of the party system (Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012). Meanwhile, many populist parties can be categorized, from an organizational point of view, as movement-parties which are, by definition more ideologically fluid and susceptible to the guidance of a charismatic leader. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that populist parties more likely to survive when the leader succeeds in recruiting competent personnel and creating a sort of organization (de Lange and Art, 2011).

In sum, one way of categorizing the literature on the causes of populism is to divide by thesis: mass society theories and economic theories. While mass theories focus on the failures of the of democratic governance, the economic

theories focus on the opportunities for populist parties to enter the system. (Hawkins, Read, and Pauwels, 2017).

These determinants can surely, in some cases, account for the emergence of populist forces. However, since this study aims to explain the emergence of a particular political divide, namely the populist/anti-populist cleavage, I develop a different theoretical frame, which nevertheless stays in relationship with some of the arguments presented.

2.2.2 The Determinants of the Emergence of the Populism/Anti-Populism Cleavage

As mentioned in Chapter one, I maintain that populism/anti-populism has emerged if the populist parties obtain 40 percent or more of the vote share in two consecutive national elections, a definition that relies on the antagonism of two "factions". Indeed, one can think that if a relevant populist discourse develops within the system, mainstream parties or new options in the system will respond by articulating an anti-populist discourse.

To account for the emergence of electorally relevant populist parties, I maintain that we should look at the combination two concomitant factors: the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties and the breaking of major corruption scandals that affect the responsiveness of party system. The presence of these two factors and the system's inability to adapt may cause an extreme level of unresponsiveness. When a party system is highly unresponsive, and it lacks the means to reinforce or replace the principal linkage that connects parties to voters, it collapses (Morgan, 2011).

The situation in which the party system collapses represent a critical juncture may favor the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

If mainstream parties are perceived as all the same, this serves the populist discourse by lending credibility to the characterization of the entire political elite of the country as morally corrupt and disinterested in the people's will (Roberts, 2017). Any newly-formed party needs political space to become relevant in the party system, but populist parties benefit especially from the convergence of mainstream parties because it reinforces their discourse. The fact the elite all share a position lends plausibility to the populist message that *they are all the same.*

Moreover, populist actors are more likely to become relevant if they can present themselves as outsiders, i.e. uninvolved with the country's mainstream parties. Moreover, corruption scandals play a decisive role in weakening the basis of the representation between voters and politicians. Parties that rely on a single type of linkage are particularly vulnerable: corruption scandals weaken the primary voter-party linkage while making it difficult for the party to use a clientelist linkage to replace the primary tie.

Given they depict the elite as morally corrupt, populist leaders need to present themselves as outsiders, i.e. individuals without any connections to the country's elites.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that populist leaders or parties are not necessarily true outsiders (see Carreras, 2013), but, at a discursive level, they tend to depict themselves as completely disconnected from the country's elites, helping them elude the blame and punishment of the voters. A classic example is Silvio Berlusconi in Italy. Even if he was part of the Italian economic elite and very close to some of the political leaders heavily involved in the Tangentopoli scandal, he preserved an image as someone new, other than the old political class, a self-made man who did not need politics to live and entered the electoral race only out of patriotism.

In the next section I analyze the political opportunity structure framework. For the purpose of this study, the high levels of unresponsiveness in the system that culminate with party system collapse primes the political opportunity structure for the emergence of relevant populist actors and the establishment of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. Once the party system collapsed, the cleavages that structured the system during the first republic unfroze while populism/anti-populism started to shape the political discourse among the political actors during the Second Republic.

2.3 The Political Opportunity Structure

Having assessed the theories that have been employed to explain the emergence of populism, in this section I examine the characteristics of the political opportunity structure framework. This framework helps identify the conditions that may enable the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

The concept of political opportunity structure first appeared in social movement literature and only later in party politics literature. The classic works that employ this framework within the social movement literature insight into topics such as the institutionalization of the environmental movement, the anti-nuclear movements (Kitschelt, 1986) and the new social movements in France, Germany, the Netherland and Switzerland (Kriesi et al., 1992). First, Van Der Heijden maintained that “ecological modernisation and sustainable development are both ways of dealing with environmental problems without fundamentally challenging the existing social order. Their applicability for environmental movements, however, is largely determined by political opportunity structures in individual countries” (1999, p. 199).

In a similar vein Kriesi et al. show the importance of the political context for the mobilization of new social movements (NSMs) in Western Europe (Kriesi et al. 1992, p. 220).

Changes in the political opportunity structure are linked with factors external to the social movement but that facilitate its emergence or consolidation. Such factors, such as economic or political crises, which are *independent* from the actions of the social movement, help the movement to generate a sort of propitious moment for it to emerge or consolidate. In Tarrow’s words, political opportunity structures (POS) are defined as “consistent, but not necessarily formal or permanent, dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure” (1994, p. 85). Moreover, political opportunity structures are defined as “comprised of specific configuration of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilization, which facilitate the development of protest movements in some instances and constrain them in others” (Kitschelt, 1986, p. 58). Political opportunity structures function like a filter between the mobilization of the movement, its choice of strategies and its capacity to change the social environment (Kitschelt, 1986). For instance, in order to develop an comparative analysis of anti-nuclear movements in different settings, Kitschelt (1986), focusing on France, Sweden, the U.S. and West Germany, observed that anti-nuclear movements have pursued different strategies which, in turn, led to a different impacts on energy policy despite intense conflicts over nuclear technology in all four. Kitschelt argues then that “a

particular set of variables is most useful for explaining these variations, namely, a nation's political opportunity structure" (1986, p. 57–58). In Sweden and to a lesser extent in the U.S. political input structures were open and responsive to the mobilization of protest, a search for new policies was triggered. On the other hand, where the political inputs structures were closed, as in France and West Germany, government insisted on a predetermined policy course (Kitschelt, 1986, p. 84).

The literature on party politics has also used the political opportunity structures frame to explain the entrance of new parties in the system. Following Mudde (2007), for example, "political and electoral systems do not so much determine whether political parties have electoral success; they provide them with electoral and political opportunities. As such, they are important building blocks of the larger political opportunity structures within which populist parties function, but "whether or not these parties successfully exploit the potential of the institutional framework in which they operate depends to a large extent upon what other political actors do". (Mudde, 2007, p. 237). For instance, in explaining the success of extreme right parties in Western Europe, Arzheimer and Carter (2006) incorporate a wider range of structural factors which together make up the political opportunity structure and that may potentially affect the extreme right's performance at the polls (2006, p. 419). In detail they found that "voter's socio-demographic attributes go a long way towards explaining his or her propensity to vote for a party of the extreme right" (Arzheimer and Carter, 2006, p. 438).

Being a white, male manual laborer increases significantly the probability of voting for the extreme right. However, since their results do not fully explain why the parties of the extreme right have encountered greater levels of electoral success in some instances while suffering relative failure in others, they introduced a political opportunity structure framework and elaborated a system-level explanation which accounted for the variation of the success of extreme right parties. The system-level variables that determine the political opportunity structure and explain the uneven success of the right-wing extreme parties in Western Europe are the level of unemployment, the position of the major party of the mainstream right, the disproportionality of the party system and the presence of a grand coalition government (Arzheimer and Carter, 2006, p. 438).

In searching for the conditions that facilitate or hinder the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage, the political opportunity structure is relevant because, for populist parties (or new parties in general) to be electorally successful, there has to be space for them in the system (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 105). If voters are fully loyal, the appeal of the new party would be limited to the small portion of new voters, i.e. the ones who never voted before. In other words, for populist parties to be electorally successful, a change in the political opportunity structure is needed. In my theoretical frame, the external factors that contribute to the change of the political opportunity structure are three: the programmatic convergence of the mainstream parties and the breaking of massive corruption scandals that involve the whole, or a significant portion of, the country's political elite. More specifically, these two factors lead the system to collapse when the system has reached an extreme level of unresponsiveness, the third factor that may lead to the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. The collapse represents a change in the political opportunity structure, a sort of "critical juncture"[10] which may favor the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

Giving that the ideational definition of populism conceives of society as divided into homogeneous groups, "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite," it can be said that these three factors somehow may facilitate the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage since they so well embody the populist worldview. Programmatic convergence or electoral collusion (see below) between mainstream parties over a significant amount of time not only undermines parties' responsiveness toward the electorate (see Morgan, 2011), but also can be used to depict those same parties as undifferentiated options. Moreover, if corruption scandals that involves a consistent part of the political elite burst, the populist discourse that focuses on the distinction between two homogeneous camps, the "pure" and "the corrupt", can heighten and reinforce the opposition dynamic brought up by the programmatic convergence.

In other words, even though these two factors are exogenous to the emergence of the cleavage, they may be functional to the populist *we vs. them*

[10] In historic institutionalism, critical junctures are defined as "brief phases of institutional flux during which more dramatic change is possible" (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, 341; see also Pierson 2000).

way of thinking, since both ideological convergence and massive corruption scandals conceive of the parties and the members of the political elite as all the same. Moreover, if the party system cannot adapt to and reinforce the linkages between voters and parties, the system may collapse. Party system collapse represents a wider opening of the political opportunity structure. If the system experiences a collapse, the probability of new actors, perceived as outsiders, and using a populist discourse, emerging grows since the whole old system is delegitimized. In this situation, constructing a new kind of linkage on the basis of a thin ideology may provide a more immediate approach than re-constructing a linkage on the basis of a full ideology.

In the following sections I analyze these two factors in detail explaining their role in triggering the collapse of the party system and the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

2.4 Programmatic Convergence, Unresponsiveness of the Party System and the Emergence of The Populism/Anti-Populism Cleavage

In my theoretical framework, one of the factors that may change the political opportunity structure and enable the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage is the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties.

Many scholars assert that parties are determinant for the functioning of democracy (Lipset 2000). Just to quote some of them, Max Weber stated that political parties are "the children of democracy, of mass franchise, of the necessity to woo and organize the masses" (1946, p. 102). For LaPalombara and Weiner, parties are "the creature of modern and modernizing political systems" (1966). Finally, Schattschneider (1942) claimed that "democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties." Parties are necessary for the survival of the democratic regime because they perform a critical role: they are the link between the government and the voters, representing the interests and ideology of the latter in the former. As Dalton et al. observe, party government is synonymous with representative democracy (2011a, p. 3). The literature on representation that considers parties and voters draws upon responsible party government theories on political representation (Katz, 1987; 1997). This model presumes that "parties exercise control over the government and the policymaking process through party control of the national legislature" (Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister 2011; 2011a, p.

23). As Sartori (1968, p. 471) maintains, “citizens in Western democracies are represented through and by parties. This is inevitable.”

That said, representation can be achieved in different ways. In other words, parties can establish different types of linkages with different constituencies (Kitschelt, 2000).

In general terms, programmatic linkage has been the most studied of voter-party ties; since one of the main functions of parties in modern democracies is represent voters’ ideology and the policy preferences, this type of linkage has always been conceived of as a superior type (Morgan, 2011, p. 49; see also Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). The sharing of programmatic positions between parties and voters and the consequent presence of a programmatic linkage is one of the ways by which representation works.

Even if they are not the only type of linkage between voters and elites (Kitschelt, 2000), programmatic linkages based on alternative policy platforms and preferences are integral to any conception of democratic representation and competition (Roberts, 2017). In other words, programmatic linkages are at the core of many forms of stable partisanship since the representation and the articulation of voters’ preferences have historically been one of the primary characteristics of modern political parties (Roberts, 2017; Lupu, 2016; Aldrich, 2011).

However, for the programmatic linkages to function properly, parties in the system need to offer voters different programmatic proposals which may be translated in different policy options. When, on the contrary, parties converge toward similar programmatic position, this kind of linkage is difficult to sustain since it does not allow voters to differentiate among rival policies proposals. I call the result of this phenomenon *overconvergence*, i.e. the excessive programmatic convergence of mainstream parties in the party system.

It looks like programmatic convergence may enable the emergence of extreme parties which are not necessarily populist (Mudde, 2007, p. 240). However, as previously discussed, programmatic convergence can serve to buttress the populist discourse which describes society as divided into two homogeneous groups, the morally corrupt elite and the pure people (Mudde, 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). The elite is depicted as “corrupt” because it does not respond to the interests of the people and offers only one

ideological option. Therefore, if mainstream parties are perceived as *all the same*, this creates space for the emergence of populist actors who can depict themselves as the real representatives of the people.

In general terms, increasing levels of programmatic convergence have been one of the factors that led to a higher level to unresponsiveness of the mainstream parties in some countries (see Katz and Mair, 1995; Mair, 2009). The convergence of those parties on similar ideological positions orphaned voters because the parties did not represent their interests and values.

According to Mair (2009), in contemporary democracies, parties have growing difficulties when it comes to fulfilling their traditional double role of representing the interest of the voters on the one hand, while coordinating and giving coherence to the governing institutions on the other. As Katz and Mair (1995; 2009) point out, as a part of the process through which the parties have transferred their gravitational center from society to the state, parties have also begun to move from a combination of representative roles to an exclusive strengthening of their governing role. In other words, parties cannot fulfill the double role of representing the voters and governing and so choose to focus only on the latter. Mair points out that representation had become more difficult as a consequence of "the decline of the traditional large collective constituencies, the fragmentation of electorates, the particularization of voter preferences, and the volatility of issue preferences and alignment made it more and more difficult for parties to read interests, let alone aggregate them within coherent electoral programs" (Mair, 2009, p. 6).

As Roberts (2017, p.12) pointed out, the convergence of mainstream parties can make it harder for the same parties to articulate and represent policy preferences that are salient to a significant portion of the electorate is, therefore, a widely recognized source of new party formation. This failure of representation leaves a political space, normally, but not necessarily, on the left and/or right. Radical right parties in Europe furnish one example. Ignazi (1992, p. 6) links the emergence of radical right parties to the fact that, together with the spread of post-materialism (see Inglehart 1995), in Western Europe during the 1980s, "a different cultural and political mood, partially stimulated by the same 'new politics' has also been taking root". While this change in attitudes has been partially absorbed and expressed by conservative parties, it remained largely latent. Such

latent attitudes included “the emergence of new priorities and issues not treated by the established parties, a disillusionment towards parties in general, a growing lack of confidence in the political system and its institutions, and a general pessimism about the future” (Ignazi, 1992, p. 6). In Ignazi’s words, just as the Greens emerged from a revolution led by the so-called New Politics, so too did radical right parties. In fact, it can be said that they represented a sort of “silent counter-revolution.” Convergence arguments, with some variations, have also been used by scholars to explain the emergence of populist radical right parties (Mudde, 2007, p. 239; Ignazi,1992). For example, some argue that the centrist position of the largest mainstream right-wing competitor is crucial (Van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie, 2005; Norris, 2005). If mainstream parties programmatically converge on some issues, leaving aside policies that are important to voters, such as immigration and security, the latter may feel unrepresented and come to support other, more radical political options that run on those issues. Various factors have contributed to high levels of programmatic convergence.

The process of economic globalization, which translates in a widespread agreement on European integration, for instance, made the ideological positions of mainstream parties less easily differentiable for the voters. One example is the so-called Third Way in Europe (Giddens, 2013), a position akin to centrism that tries to reconcile right-wing and left-wing politics by advocating a varying synthesis of right-wing economic and left-wing social policies. This stance has been represented, for instance, by the presidencies of Blair in the UK and Schröder in Germany.

The UK’s former Prime Minister, in his introduction to the 1997 manifesto, stated that “[i]n each area of policy a new and distinctive approach has been mapped out, one that differs both from the solutions of the old left and those of the Conservative right” (Labour Party, 1997).

Another crucial example was the deepening of the process of European integration. The role of parties in government has been stressed by the growing compromise that countries assumed participating in a deeper European integration that in turn limited the leaders’ discretion in decision making. Many studies have underlined that, as a consequence of processes such as globalization and Europeanization, a striking degree of policy convergence emerged; the development of similar or even identical policies across countries

over time can be observed (Knill, 2005). In a similar vein, Mair underlined that European parties in government experienced multiple constraints represented by a “host of different and sometimes contradictory principals constituted by the many veto and semi-veto players who now surround government in its dispersed multi-level institutional setting, the central banks, the courts, the European Commission, the Council of Europe” (2009, p. 12).

Also, it bears mention that in in Western Europe and elsewhere, like Latin America, the process of economic adjustment that followed global economic crises made mainstream left and right parties more programmatically convergent on the adoption of neoliberal adjustment packages. More in detail, in Latin America the breakdown of state-development models, plus debt crises and hyperinflation around the region, led to the implementation of economic austerity measures. Following Roberts (2016; 2017), where the austerity measures were implemented by center-left or labor-based-populist parties that traditionally supported state-led economic models and redistributive policies, programmatic convergence left party systems without an institutionalized channel for societal opposition to market liberalism. This same process of implementation of neoliberal economic adjustments in Western Europe as a consequence of the Great Recession, led, for example, to the programmatic overlapping of Pasok and ND in Greece in 2012 general election.

Also, the emergence of the so called “moderate Left” in Latin America (Madrid, Hunter and Weyland, 2010; Roberts, 2017) follows on from (excessive) political learning from left-wing parties which led to their professionalization, more technocratic approaches to governance and drift away from grassroots mobilization and social networks. This overlearning can cause a political cost for these parties which may end up being perceived as part of an increasingly out of touch establishment (Roberts, 2011, p. 246). This was the case for the Chilean Socialist Party learned painful lessons in the 1973 coup about the risks of promoting rapid changes in property and state-market relations, especially in contexts of incomplete political authority (Roberts, 2011, p. 343). Consequently, given the patently anti-democratic origins and content of the constitutional order, the Chilean Socialists learned to refrain from making plebiscitary appeals for change. It learned the new lessons too well. Despite widespread public approval of Concertación, the coalition to which the Socialists now belong, during the

Lagos (2000-2006) and first Bachelet government (2006-2010), political apathy in Chile surged, especially among young people (Roberts, 2011, p. 346).

In sum, programmatic convergence as an aspect of a broader phenomenon, such as the lack of responsiveness of the party system, may have an effect on the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. In fact, if the party system is extremely convergent, voters may have difficulties differentiating among political options and prefer populist forces that stress their differences to a morally corrupt elite.

2.5 Unresponsiveness, Massive Corruption Scandals and the Emergence of the Populism/Anti-populism Cleavage

Along with programmatic convergence between mainstream parties, massive corruption scandals, i.e., those involving a significant portion of the country's political elite, lead to extreme levels of unresponsiveness in the party system and, ultimately, to its collapse.

The collapse of the party system represents a sort of Big Bang, a critical juncture, which, in turn, may facilitate the emergence what I called the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

In the academic literature, corruption is defined as the "misuse of public power for private gain" (Rose-Ackerman, 1999, p. 21). More specifically, corruption scandals are defined as "actions or events involving certain kind of transgressions which became known to others and are sufficiently serious to elicit a public response" (Thompson, 2000, p. 13). Corruption scandals erode vertical accountability and further delegitimized the traditional political class for the voters. In fact, corruption scandals play a decisive role in weakening the basis of the representation between voters and politicians. It is worth noting that corruption is a universal phenomenon, i.e. it is present in all societies. What varies, though, is the degree of corruption.

Nevertheless, corruption per se is not what affects the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage since in a society that is used to experiencing high levels of corruption, it may have a weaker effect on government legitimacy. However, if corruption scandals are massive, i.e. involve all or most of the political class, they can create the conditions for the emergence of relevant populist actors in the system.

Populist actors rely on blame attribution, depicting elites as responsible for bad circumstances in their countries. It is worth noting that populism has often been depicted as loaded with emotions, negative ones in particular (Fieschi, 2004; Muller, 2016). One example is the fertile soil "globalization losers" give for the emergence of populist alternatives such as Donald Trump in the U.S. and populist radical right parties in Europe. These losers of globalization are people such as "entrepreneurs and qualified employees in traditionally protected sectors, all unqualified employees and citizens who strongly identifies themselves with their national community" (Kriesi et al., 2006, p. 922). Globalization losers are "expected to constitute potential for political mobilization within national political context" (Kriesi et al., 2006, p. 921). Those losers of globalization blame national and international elites who, in their opinion, are more interested in the fate of immigrants than in that of members of the nation.

Populist radical right leaders or parties, then, position themselves strategically with respect to these political potentials and have been able to articulate the demands of this growing portion of the electorate. Blame attribution works similarly in the face of massive corruption scandals.

The people's anger following a massive corruption scandal can create the conditions for the emergence of actors that develop a populist discourse, blaming the mainstream elite for the country's woes. The perception that a frustrating event is certain, externally caused, and unfair makes populism more appealing to voters as its defining attributes, strongly resonate with their anger's underlying appraisals, making populism particularly well-suited to express this emotion (Rico, Guinjoan and Anduiza, 2017, p. 445).

The more blame for the country's state falls on corrupt politicians and the greater the portion of the political elite seem corrupt, the greater the chances for the populist discourse to persuade voters that the establishment is responsible for the country's situation. At the same time, laying blame on the mainstream politicians, stressing that *they did that*, helps populist actors to depict themselves as different from the corrupt, compromised and self-interested elite.

Managing to depict themselves as innocent of responsibility for the country's tribulations, populists in general attempt to persuade angry common citizens with easy solutions to their problems (Mudde, 2004; Rooduijn, 2014).

In other words, massive corruptions scandals tend to activate populist attitudes. A scandal that involves the majority of the country's political elite is a clear signal that the political class is not advancing the interests of the people. As a consequence, an significant part of the population will perceive political elites drifting away from the policy concerns of their constituents (Hawkins, Rovira Kaltwasser, and Andreadis, 2018, p. 4). Citizens then started to feel alienated and cease considering their leaders true representative of "the people". Indeed, the real corruption is not (only) monetary but mainly moral. The betrayal cuts deeper than the illegal monetary exchange: the elite placed its own wellbeing above the people's.

This, at the same time, creates new incentives for populist actors to potentially exploit. These actors may succeed in making the corruption scandal a central issue of the political debate, as a mean of attacking the political establishment. In this way, they can play the role of the "pure leaders" that deserve to rule, in contrast to the "corrupt elite" represented by the traditional parties who betrayed the people.

At this point, it bears keeping in mind that not all populists draw the pure people vs. corrupt elite dichotomy the same. Since "the people" and "the elite" are constructed categories, different sub-types of populism define them in different ways.

For example, for populist radical right parties in general, the rulers are corrupted because allied to the sector of the political and economic elites that ignore the interests of the native people. By contrast, leftist populists like Syriza in Greece or Podemos in Spain, conceive of corruption mainly as an economic issue related to the increasing importance that the financial sector has in national politics. In Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser's words, "these parties use populist rhetoric to blame the elite for help bringing the aliens into the country and for ignoring the problems that natives are suffering" (2018, p. 1678).

The categories of the "people" and the "elite" are filled accordingly to the host ideology to which the populist set of ideas has attached. Obviously, it may happen a corruption scandal with the features mentioned above does not become politicized and the party system may adapt.

Without a political actor, either a leader, a party or a social movement, that that can drive the issue into the center of the political debate, there is little chance

for the divide to start structuring the party system. Therefore, agency remains central. Massive corruption scandals and mainstream parties' programmatic convergence lead to the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage only if political actors can exploit not only the country's ills but also to depict the situation as a crisis (Stavrakakis et al., 2017).

In sum, massive corruption scandals breaking improve populist actors' odds of transforming corruption in a relevant issue in the political debate. This, in turn, increases voter perception of the system as unresponsive, as they come to believe that the established political forces are purely self-interested. In fact, if corruption exists but is considered a nonissue, that does not necessarily mean that the system is unresponsive. As pointed out above, neither programmatic convergence nor massive corruption scandals are the only symptoms of unresponsiveness. However, these are the two factors that combined may change the political opportunity structure in a way that facilitates the emergence of electorally relevant populist options.

In the previous two sub-chapters I discussed the impact of the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties and the breaking of massive corruption scandals on the polarization of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. In the following two sections, I apply my theoretical framework to Italy between 1953 and 1992, during the period known as the First Republic.

2.5.1 The Programmatic Convergence of the Mainstream Parties in Italy (1948-1992).

Scholars seem to agree on the fact that post-war Italy constituted a clear example of a pluralist polarized party system, i.e. a party system which is characterized by high levels of fragmentation and ideological polarization (Sartori, 1976; 2005; Sani and Sartori, 1980; Morgan, 2011).

This may *a priori* seem to be at odds with one of the hypotheses of this study, which maintains that a high level of programmatic convergence in Italy enabled the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage after 1994. However, there are two aspects to consider. First, I agree with Sartori on the fact that until the 1970s, the Italian party system experience high levels of ideological polarization. However, from the 1970s until the collapse of the party system, choice was limited by different pacts between the parties, aimed at limiting

Communists access to government. This restricted the number the parties that had a real opportunity to join a governing coalition.

Moreover, it is important to recall that programmatic convergence can be conditioned by factors other than ideology, e.g., the deepening of the process of European integration. The importance of the EU has increased in the past 60 years, and it can be said that "European integration [is] a process by which bargaining power is shifting from national political institutions to the European supranational institutions" (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006, p. 236).

During this process the major forces within European party systems converged on a series of rules such as the Maastricht convergence criteria, reducing the space for policy-making by national governments. Given that the decision-making power for almost all policy issues falls between the national and the EU level, this has particularly affected the legislative and executive branches of European governments, which feel weakened relative to the European Commission and, to a lesser extent, to the European Parliament (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006, p. 236).

The Italian party system throughout the First Republic is one of the cases (along with the Fourth French Republic, Chile before 1973 and the Weimar Republic) of pluralist polarized party systems listed in Satori's seminal book, *Parties and Party Systems* (1976). In general, Sartori constructed a party-system typology based on two variables: fragmentation of the system, (the number of relevant parties in the system) and polarization (the ideological distance between the parties).

To Sartori, the Italian party system was characterized by high polarization (ideological distance between Left and Right), high fragmentation (high number of relevant parties) and, finally, by a centrifugal competition dynamic (Sartori, 1976; Ieraci, 2007). For Sartori, when a party system is characterized by a centrifugal competition dynamic, the parties committed to the struggle for political power do not converge toward the center of the space of competition and the distribution of the electorate is bi-modal, with only a small percentage of them positioned in the center. The main consequence of this bi-modal distribution of parties in the system is that the competing parties will try to implement radically opposed policies as government incumbents (Ieraci, 2007; Downs, 1957). There is then a difference between those "moderate" democracies where the dominant

drives of the party competition are centripetal, i.e. the competing parties are few (usually two, four at the most) and the political space is continuous, lacking in any ideological cleavage, and the “difficult” democracies, where the dominant drives of the party competition are centrifugal (Ieraci, 2007, p. 4).

To be more specific, the three characteristics that define a pluralist polarized system are: a) existence of bilateral and anti-system opposition, which is implied by the multi-polar and polarized party system; b) prevalence of centrifugal drives over the centripetal ones; c) ideological or immoderate attitudes of both the political class and the electorate (Sartori, 1982, p. 89).

The Italian coalition politics between 1948 and 1992 saw the Christian Democratic (DC) as a dominant party and pivotal actor in alliance with other minor parties situated on the center-left and/or on the center-right of the political spectrum (Daalder, 1984; Morlino, 1996).

However, while there is no doubt Italy’s party system experienced high levels of fragmentation during the First Republic, I partially disagree with Sartori’s interpretation on one fundamental point regarding the level of polarization during the post-war period through 1992, at least at the programmatic level. While he predicted that “the parties at the extremes of the political system would grow by the attempt to split the system apart by diverging ... through an extremist appeal" (Sartori, 1965, p. 27), I agree with Tarrow (1977) that Sartori’s interpretation does not describe exactly the paths of the Communist left and the former fascist right since the 1960s. Even if the former fascist MSI, through a strategy of tension, attempted precisely the polarization that Sartori predicted, it obtained poor results in the elections of June 1975 and June 1976 (Spreafico, 1975). On the other hand, the Communist left increased its vote share over time not through a radicalization of its message but, on the contrary, through a *moderation* of it and an attempt “to minimize issues that would have implications of a revolutionary character" (Sani, 1973, p. 558). Both these processes resulted in a development toward bipolarity, tempered programmatically by a shift towards the center by all the major parties (Tarrow 1977, p. 199).

In other words, as Ieraci (1997, p. 10) pointed, out the enfeeblement of the center predicted by Sartori did not happen. The DC did lose votes, but its electoral decline was balanced by the gradual inclusion in the coalition government of some “quasi pro-system” parties such as the Socialist Party and the Liberals. In

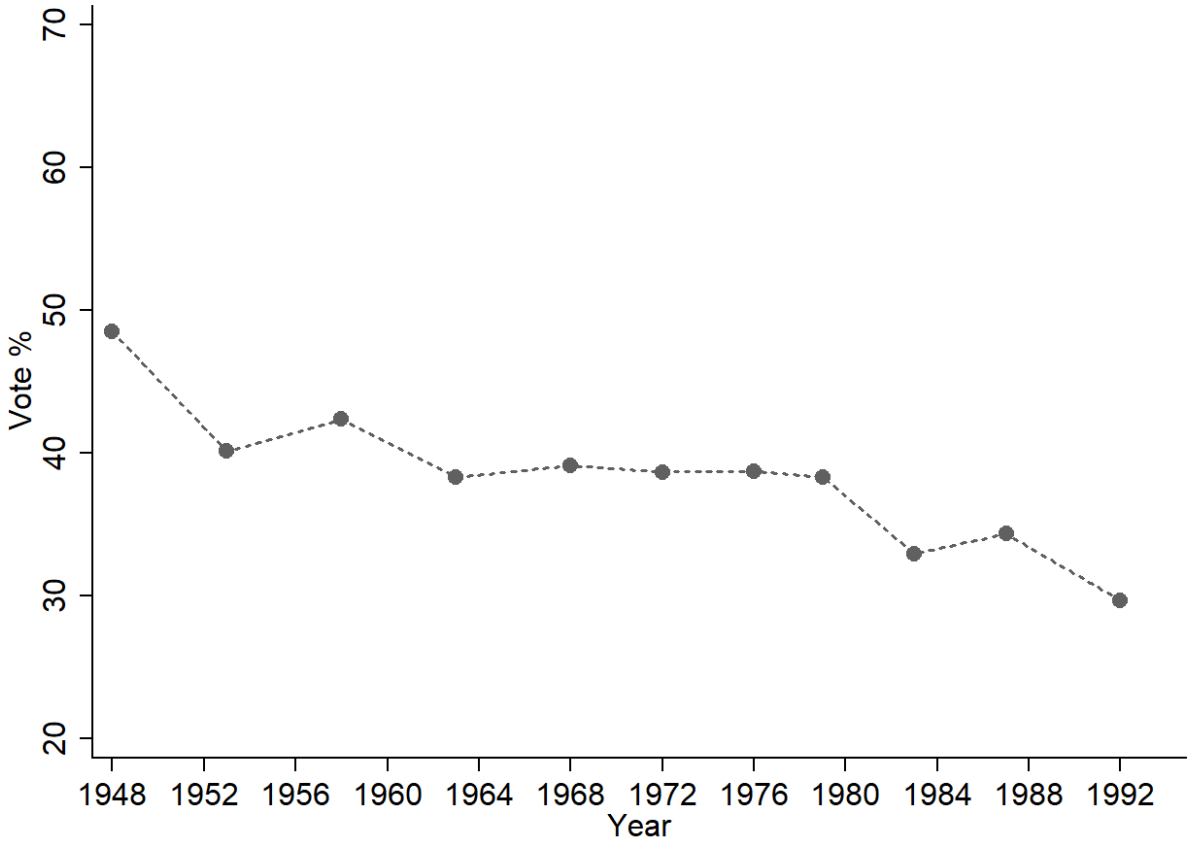
other words, the center was not enfeebled by the party system dynamic, as Sartori predicted, but instead incorporated new parties into governing coalitions through a process of extension (Ieraci, 1999). The strategy of the “extension of the center” proved to be successful for a long time but revealed some inconsistencies of the theory of polarized pluralism (Ieraci 1997, p. 61-63).

Moreover, the permanence of one party, the Christian Democrats (DC) in power for the whole period, by itself or in coalition with other parties, boosted the effect of programmatic convergence over time and, in turn, created the conditions for the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

In fact, programmatic convergence is more likely to occur when interparty agreement such like grand coalition governments or pacts include all or the majority of political options in the system. These agreements, in other words, contributed to further diluting the programmatic differences between parties which, in turn, debilitated the programmatic linkage between parties and voters. As Morgan pointed out “system-level discrediting is most likely to occur when interparty agreements like grand coalition governments or pacts include all the pro-system parties and thereby incriminate every viable governing options” (2011, p. 54) .

To understand the magnitude of the presence of the DC in government, it is worth noting that the party, founded by Alcide de Gasperi in 1943, furnished twenty-six of Italy’s twenty-eight prime ministers between 1947 to 1992. The following chart illustrates the trend of the DC’s vote share from the first post-war elections in 1947 until the last election before the collapse of the party system and the concomitant dissolution of the party in 1992.

Graph 2.1: DC vote share trend during Italy's First Republic (1948-1992)



Source: Manifesto Project Database (WZB)

As it can be seen in graph 2.1, the DC always managed to win a vote share above the thirty percent in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Only in the 1992 national election, in the wake of the massive corruption scandal known as Tangentopoli, did the party vote share fall below the thirty percent threshold. Whenever the party failed to win enough seats to govern alone, it formed an alliance, normally with the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and other minority partners. During the 1970s the DC secured the support of the Communist Party (PCI) through the so-called Compormesso Storico (Historical Compromise). After the abduction and homicide of one of the more prominent exponents of the DC and promotor of the Compromise, Aldo Moro, by the Marxist-Leninist Red Brigades (Brigate Rosse), the party hardened its stance, declaring that the state "must not bend" on terrorism.

In 1979 began a new era in the Italian party system, the so-called Pentapartito which consisted of a government coalition of five parties ranging from the

Socialist party on the left to the Liberal Party to the right. This further undermined Sartori's enfeeblement of the center thesis, since it revealed that the two "no-coalition" points could be pushed backward and forward (Ieraci, 1999).

Following the loss of support for the DC, in 1981 Spadolini of the Republican Party (PRI) was the first non-DC prime minister since 1944. He was at the head of a coalition which included the DC, the PSI, the PSDI, the PRI and the PLI. In the 1983 elections the DC suffered one of its largest electoral declines, and PSI leader Bettino Craxi was elected prime minister. In 1987, the DC regained the presidency after a mild electoral recovery and kept it until the end of the Pentapartito in 1992. The parties that had been in the coalition government in each election since the beginning of the 1980s withered over time as they entrenched in state institutions. Party organizations may become increasingly professionalized and dependent on state resources, eroding their grass-roots membership branches and linkages to social actors (see Katz and Mair, 1995; Ignazi, 1996). It can be said these parties, especially since the 1980s started to privilege their functions in government over their role of representing and articulating voters' preferences, preferring to be responsible rather than responsive (Mair, 2009). Established parties may even come to resemble a closed and powerful political cartel that shares in the spoils of public office and excludes alternative voices from effective representation. As Roberts points out, even if these forms of "organizational cartelization" are meant to exclude outsiders, they can become highly susceptible to outsiders' challenges in the electoral arena (2017, p. 10).

The second aspect of my divergence from Sartori's interpretation is in the classification of the PCI as an anti-system party from the Historic Compromise through the end of the First Republic. Palmiro Togliatti, one of the founders of the party and general secretary until 1964, stood by the USSR even after the Hungarian invasion in 1956. This decision created a major rift in the party, the Socialist scission. Later, the relationship between the PCI and the USSR fell apart and the party eventually moved away from the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy toward positions closer to Eurocommunism and the Socialist International. At that point, the party sought to partner with the Socialists and with the Christian Democrats,

inaugurating the Historic Compromise.[11] Responsible for this change in the party orientation was Enrico Berlinguer, secretary of the Communist party from 1972 to his death in 1984. During this time, his main objective was pursuing a moderate line, repositioning the party within Italian politics and advocating accommodation and national unity with a strategy termed Eurocommunism. Those years were very complicated, marked by the so-called Anni di Piombo (Years of Lead), a period of social and political turmoil that lasted from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, and other social conflicts, such as the Hot Autumn of 1969-70. The Historical Compromise ended when Christian Democrat party leader Aldo Moro was kidnapped and murdered by the Red Brigades in May 1978 and the PCI officially abandoned the Compromise as a policy in 1981.

In sum, the Communists substantially increased their share of the vote through a different strategy than predicted. They adopted a moderate appeal and attempted to "minimize issues that would have implications of a revolutionary character" (Sani, 1973, p. 558).

To support this interpretation, I measured the level of ideological convergence in the Italian party system from 1953 (the first post-war election with available data) to 1992.

To measure the level of programmatic convergence I used CMP/MARPOR's RILE index, which maps political parties on a left-right spectrum by analyzing their manifestos for positions taken in thirteen categories. A party's position on the left-right axis translates into a numerical value that ranges from minus one hundred (-100) for extreme left to one hundred (100) for extreme right. The categories in question are part of the core of the dispute between right and left, such as categories such as economic redistribution versus free market and expansion of the welfare state versus reduction of the welfare state (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). Furthermore, I weighted these values by the vote share of each party for each national election, using the following formula developed by Dalton (2008):

PI = SQRT{∑(party vote share(i))([party L/R score(i) – party system average L/R score]/5)2 },*

[11] The Historic Compromise strategy was developed by PCI secretary Enrico Berlinguer in 1973, after the military coup, in an article called "*Riflessioni sull'Italia dopo i fatti del Cile*" ("Reflections on Italy after the Chilean facts").

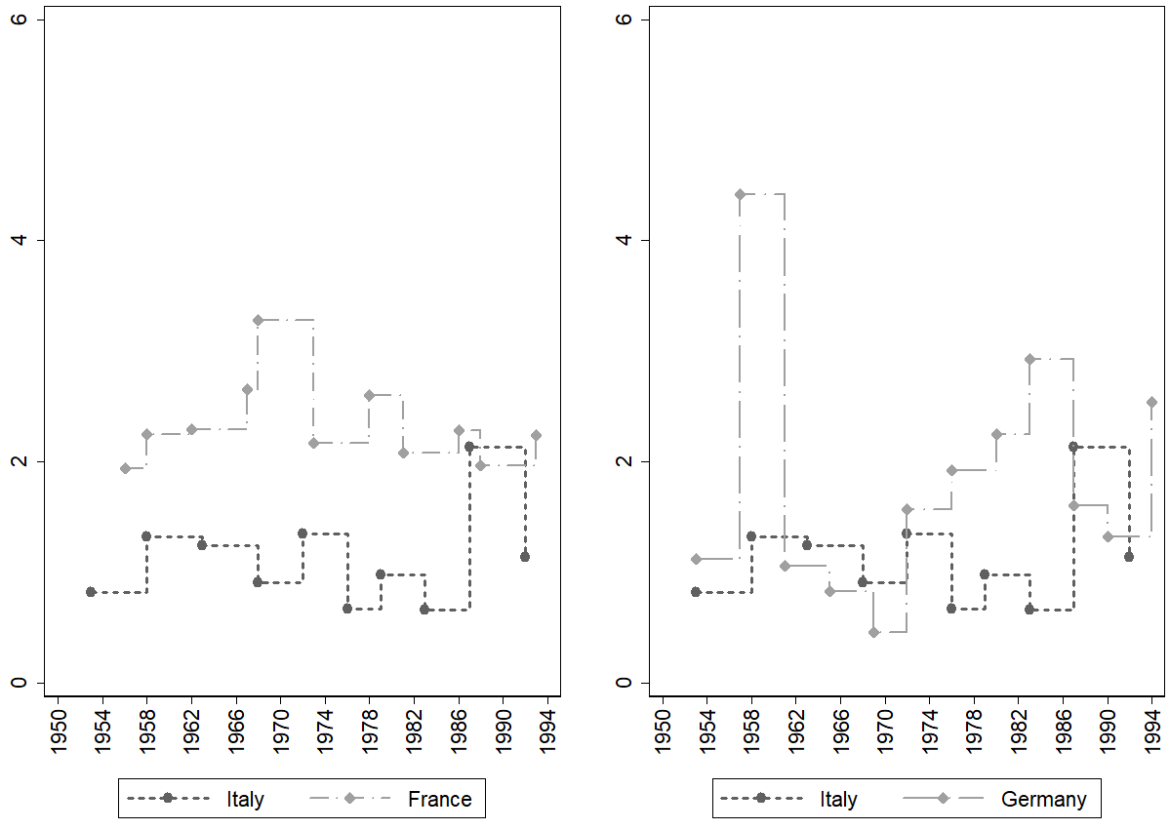
Here, *i* represent individual parties. Following Dalton, "this index is comparable to a measure of the standard deviation of a distribution and is similar to the statistic used by other scholars" (2008, p. 906). Since Dalton uses CSES survey data for the L/R score, to employ this formula, I standardize the RILE values on a 0 to 10 scale. Doing this, the polarization index ranges from 0 to 10, where 0 is total convergence and 10 is extreme polarization.

There are a variety of methods for measuring partisan polarization, but there are two reasons for choosing this one. First, since the variable I am measuring refers to convergence at the programmatic level, MARPROR'S RILE seems particularly suited because it provides an index which is based only on the codification of party manifestos. Furthermore, since I am measuring programmatic convergence during the First Republic (1953[12]-1992), MARPROR is the only available dataset that allows me to cover this time span.

Graphs 2.1 and 2.2 represent the level of programmatic convergence of the mainstream Italian parties between 1953 and 1992 compared to other European countries in the same period.

[12] Although the first post-war in Italy was held in 1948, the first complete available data are for 1953.

Graph 2.2: Levels of programmatic polarization of the Italian party system compared to France and Germany between 1953 and 1994

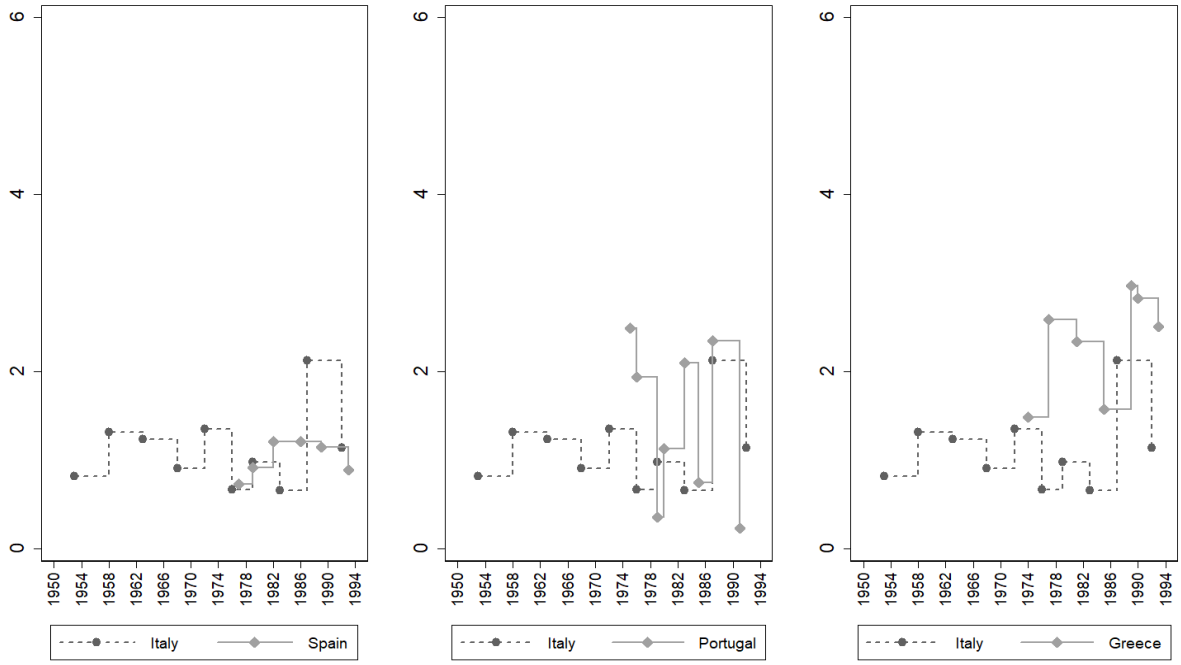


Source: Manifesto Project Database (WZB)

As we can see in graph 2.2, in Italy the levels of programmatic polarization were quite low for all the post-war period. This is evident looking at the comparison with other two big European countries in the same period such as France and Germany[13].

[13] For the polarization/convergence values countries for other European countries see Annex 1.

Graph 2.3: Levels of programmatic polarization of the Italian party system compared to Spain and Portugal and Greece between 1975 and 1994



Source: Manifesto Project Database (WZB)

In Graph 2.3 the levels of polarization in Italy are compared to the other Southern European countries such as Spain, Portugal and Greece.[14] While the levels of polarization in Portugal and Greece are higher, Spain shows programmatic convergence similar to Italy's.

This high level of convergence was reinforced by the pact among the parties in the system during the 1970s and the 1980s first, the 1970s' Historic Compromise, later, the 1980s' Pentapartito.

2.5.2 Corruption Scandals in Italy: Tangentopoli and its consequences

In February 1992, a major political crisis began in Italy. February 17th saw the first of many arrests of prominent politicians, representing most national political parties, who were charged with extortion, criminal conspiracy, corruption and ties to organized crime and receipt of stolen goods (Della Porta and Vanucci, 2007).

[14] Polarization values for Spain, Portugal and Greece are calculated from the first post-authoritarian election.

The first arrested was Mario Chiesa, a partisan of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and local administrator in Milan. The investigation expanded to unveil the nature of Italy's public administration, not only in Milan, but also in the center and south of the country (Della Porta and Vanucci, 2007). In a few months the investigation revealed a picture of corruption and political illegality unprecedented breadth in the history of Western European democracies, with deep collusion between the quasi-totality of the political class and high-profile businessmen. The corruption scandal was so broad that in 1993 alone, 250 of the 630 members of the Chambers of Deputies and 81 of 320 senators were under investigation (Della Porta and Vanucci 2007). At the end of 1994, the numbers were even more shocking. The numbers of the people under investigation reached more than 7,000, including 338 ex-deputies, 100 ex-senators and 331 regional, 122 provincial and 1525 communal administrators with 4,000 preventive custody warrants orders issued by the judiciary (Samarcanda, 15th November 1994).

A corruption scandal of this magnitude was a critical ingredient in the mounting unresponsiveness of the Italian party system. While programmatic linkage was already weakened by the interparty agreements, especially during the 1970s and 1980s (Morgan, 2011), Tangentopoli and the following trials further discredited the political class in the eyes of the voters.

Again, voters felt vindicated in blaming the whole political elite for the conditions of the country, since the whole elite was proved to be involved in the biggest corruption scandal in Italy's history. In other words, this scenario "pave[d] the way for the alienation of citizens from established political actors, who are increasingly viewed as anything but the genuine representatives of 'the people'" (Hawkins, Rovira Kalwasser and Andreadis, 2018, p. 4).

In the case of massive corruption scandals or unresponsiveness more generally, citizens are not necessarily *more* populist than they would be otherwise, but their populist predispositions are activated *more* frequently by a context characterized by political unresponsiveness (Hawkins, Rovira Kaltwasser, and Andreadis 2018, p. 4).

In the first part of the chapter I analyzed the two factors, programmatic convergence of mainstream parties and the breaking of massive corruption scandals, which are symptoms unresponsiveness of the whole party system. When the levels of unresponsiveness reach an extreme point, the party system

collapses. In the last part of this chapter, I introduce the concept of party system collapse and its role in triggering the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. As mentioned above, Italy at the beginning of the 1990s constitutes a case of party system collapse (Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012).

The literature, mainly Latin-American, conceptualizes party system collapses as an extreme change in a party system, where party systems change in type, and the major components become electorally irrelevant. It Italy, at least, such a collapse preceded the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. The collapse of the Italian party system in 1994 is the only case of collapse in the post-war Western Europe. Following the literature, a party system collapses when "(established) parties' breakdown and the structure of the system changes." For Morgan, this results in the change of the patterns of representation, accountability and governance (Morgan 2011, p. 6). The collapse of a party system leads to the complete reorganization of the democratic order because significant changes in the structure of the party system can threaten the fulfillment of the tasks that political parties perform in a democratic regime.

2.6 The role of the party system collapse in the emergence of the populism/anti-populism collapse

In the academic literature there is broad agreement on the fact that political parties are an essential element of democracy. They are said to be "basic institutions for the translation of mass preferences into public policies" (Key, 1964, p. 22). On the same note, Schattschneider (1960, p. 2), maintains that political parties are "the only kind of organizations that can translate into the fact the idea of majority rule is the political party" and that "political parties created democracy [and] modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties" (see also Aldrich, 1995; Stokes, 1999).

According to Sartori, the most important functions parties perform in modern democracies are participation, electioneering, integration, aggregation, conflict resolution, recruitment, policy-making and expression (2005a, p. 23).

With respect to expression Sartori points out that it "concerns the party as the agency which typically communicates the demands of the society to the state, as the basic link or connector between a society and its government" (2005a, p. 24). In other words, we can state that an essential function of parties is to perform an

expressive or representative linkage between voters and governments. Parties are the only representation channel that can transmit demands backed by pressure. It means that when parties field demands, they can compel a response (Sartori, 2005a). In perform this function, parties need to be responsive to voters, i.e. able to interpret and transmit voters' policy preferences to government (see Stokes, 1999, p. 243).

What happens when parties fail voters in this basic function? Voters shift towards an alternate party or logic of voting (Rose and McAllister, 1990; Kitschelt et al., 2010). In fact, situations in which a party breaks down, i.e., it suffers a "massive electoral defeat…in a single election cycle [that results] in a fragmentation of the party system" (Lupu, 2011, p. 5), are quite common in modern party systems. But what happens when whole party systems collapse?

In general, a system is conceived of as a set of interacting units where the action of each participant entity is affected by the actions of all others (Waltz, 1979, p. 40). More in detail, a party system is defined as the totality of the parties and their interactions (Sartori, 1976). For Sartori, the system is important because "it displays characteristics and properties that are separated from its components and because it results, and consists of, the patterned interactions of its components parts", (…) implies that "such interactions that occur do so not within, but across the boundaries indicated by the term party" (2005, p. 39). Once mainstream parties lose the capacity or willingness to be representative, voters will find themselves searching for other parties claiming to act as representatives. When this happens, the whole party system collapses.

The concept of party system collapse developed during the early 2010s to explain the deep changes that some Latin American party systems such as Venezuela in 1999, Colombia in 2002 or Bolivia in 2005 (Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012).

From a conceptual point of view, a party system is not working properly when it fails to fulfill its primary role in democracy: linking society to state (Morgan 2011, p. 6). Such a failure is caused when an established party system faces challenges to its core linkage strategies and when specific institutional and environmental constraints limit the ability of the system and its component parties to respond appropriately to these challenges. The party system's resulting inability to perform the critical task of linkage causes its collapse (2011, p. 7). This means

that, according to Morgan, collapses occur when an established party system changes in type (transforms) concurrently with a decay in the system's major parties (p.18). For Morgan, a party system can collapse only when "the structure of interparty interactions and the major parties are in place for enough time so that transformation—the collapse—constitutes a significant break with existing patterns" (2011, p. 19).

On the other hand, in his study about party system collapse in Peru and Venezuela, Seawright (2012) made clear that party system collapse is distinct from and more disruptive than other forms of party system change. In his study, the author aims at analyzing voter attitudes that lead to electoral support for an outsider without political experience but who enjoys prestige from other sources, mainly from a charismatic personality communicated to the people via mass media.

Seawright defines a party system collapse as a situation in which all the parties that constitute the traditional party system simultaneously become electorally irrelevant (2012, p. 48). To constitute a collapse, the party system change must satisfy two necessary and sufficient conditions, which need to occur simultaneously. First, there must be a significant decline of the major components of the system along with a transformation in the established system structure. Moreover, timing is relevant since these two transformations must occur over a short period of time (2012, p. 19). With respect to the operationalization of the concept, the two scholars differ.

On the one hand, following Morgan (2011) the collapse occurs when two events occur in a brief span of time. First, an established party system needs to transform from one major type into another, for example from a two-party system to a multiparty system. At the same time, the party system experiences a collapse when the main parties of the old system together lose control of the legislature, specifically if the joint seat share of these parties drops below a simple majority. In this case, mainstream parties have clearly lost influence.

One of the most patent examples is Venezuela. During the 1960s and 1970s, the country enjoyed both political stability and economic prosperity. Furthermore, the Venezuelan party system was one of the most institutionalized in the region, with stable patterns of competition (Mainwaring, 1998). After 1973 national election, the system has been described as a 2.5 party system with two major

actors, Acción Democrática (AD) and the Christian Democratic COPEI, plus Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) as the most relevant third party (Morgan, 2011, p. 74). The system started to show signs of decay in the mid-1980s. After Rafael Caldera, formerly of COPEI, won the 1993 presidential election, support for major parties dropped and the 2.5-party system changed into a multiparty system with more than five competitive parties. While in elections during the 1970s and 1980s AD and COPEI won about 80 percent of the seats, by 1998 the party system had collapsed and the two major parties lost control of the legislature, holding only 48 percent of the seats in the Senate and 43 percent in the lower chamber (Morgan, 2011, p. 77-78).

On the other hand, for Seawright, the requirement that the decline of all parties be simultaneous is taken to mean that the collapse must occur over a period of not more than two electoral cycles. In addition, the criterion of electoral irrelevance, central to the idea of party system collapse, is regarded as met whenever a party fails to achieve either the first or second place in a presidential election. Seawright analyzes two cases: Venezuela and Peru. Seawright (2012) tries to understand the cause of the party system collapse from both the demand and the supply side. The perception of ideological underrepresentation and concerns about corruption reflected in the changes of party identities are central motives at the individual level to produce the collapse of the party system. Indeed, both these sentiment cause anger, which in turn reduced the voters' risk aversion and facilitated their decision to vote for an outsider candidate. At the same time, the rigidity of mainstream parties made it difficult for them to change and adapt to the preferences of the electorate.

2.6.1 The collapse of the Italian party system and its relevance

For both Morgan's and Seawright's conceptualizations and operationalizations of the phenomenon, Italy experienced party system collapse in 1994.

As described above, the political revolution that took place in Italy in 1994 shook the entire party system. In 1994, two of the three traditional Italian parties fell into electoral irrelevance; the Socialists fell from a national vote share of 13.6 percent in 1992 to 2.2 percent in 1994, while the more powerful Christian

Democrats (DC) fell from 29.7 percent in 1992 to 11.1 percent in 1994[15] (Seawright, 2012). The third traditional party, the Communists, underwent meaningful electoral decline during roughly the same years, although the party did not reach the same depth as the other two. In the 1987 general election, the Communists won 25.6 percent of the vote, but at that point the party brand had changed in response to the fall of the Berlin Wall. The main heir of the PCI, the PDS, achieved 20.36 percent of the vote in 1992 (Bardi, 1996; Seawright, 2012).

All these events can be analyzed separately or through the concept of party system collapse as a single event (Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012).

However, most scholars analyzing the Italian case do not employ the concept of party system collapse, preferring other concepts such as "crisis of the party system" (see Morlino, 1996; Gundle and Parker, 2002), change of the party system (Katz, 1996) or party system realignment (Bardi, 1996; Morlino and Tarchi, 1996). When the term collapse appears, it refers not to the entire party system but only to a specific party or parties, such as the collapse of the centrist alliance (Hopkin and Mastropaolo, 2001, p. 170).

With respect to the causes of the events of 1994, scholars have mentioned three major explanations: the electoral reform of 1993, the massive corruption scandal known as Tangentopoli and subsequent trials, known as Mani Pulite (Clean Hands), which implicated the leading parties in the system, and the idiosyncratic dissatisfaction with politics in Italy. It is fair to say that in most cases, these explanations are not employed separately; rather, most accounts use some combination of the three.

First, some scholars attribute the change to the effects of the electoral reform of 1993 (Morlino, 1996). The two major novelties were the allocation of seats, three-quarters to single-member districts and one-quarter to proportional representation, and the use of the English first-past-the-post electoral formula in the uninomial districts were retained from the referendum result and applied to both chambers of parliament (Katz, 1996, p. 33).

With respect to the 1993 electoral law, Morlino (1996) underlines "anticipation reactions" to the law. As the author points out, even before the March 1994

[15] The 1992 election is the last with the DC Brand. In 1994 the party name changed to PPI (Popular Italian Party).

elections the DC splintered in anticipation of the anti-center impact of those quasi-majoritarian mechanisms. The electoral reform of 1993 was depicted as part of the electoral catalysis of the end of the First Republic and the old *partitocrazia* (Donovan, 1995, p. 47). This reform was made possible by the outsider elites employing the referendum strategy in a situation in which the traditional governing elites were weakened by massive corruption scandals and the subsequent trials.

However, Katz (1996), maintains that even if the reform was intended to alter the structure of the party system and the relations between parties, interests and voters, the results of the (1994, 32) election raises doubts that the changes should attributed to the reform. The changes in the Italian party system following the 1994 election were depicted as consequences of more long-term processes such as the collapse of the left, which "was already evident in 1992 parliamentary election, in which the PDS and Rifondazione between them obtained only 21.7 percent of the vote," while the collapse of the Christian Democracy "was at least foreshadowed by the communal elections of June 1993, in which the DC won only 18.8 percent and the PSI 3.6 percent of the vote in the larger communes, and even less in the smaller ones, and again in the communal elections of November/December 1993, in which their support was reduced still further" (Katz, 1996, p. 32).

The second factor that scholars mention to explain the change in Italian party system is related to the consequences of the major corruption scandal known as Tangentopoli and the subsequent trial which delegitized the whole political system (Morlino, 1996; De Santa Olalla, 2016; Newell and Bull, 1997). Tangentopoli critically undermined the traditional governing parties "not only though its effect on public opinion, but also more directly by subverting the parties' financial and organizational resources" (Newell and Bull, 1997, p. 87).

The 1994 collapse of the party system in Italy followed the massive corruption scandal (Tangetopoli) and resultant nationwide judicial investigation and trial into political corruption, Mani Pulite, which ensnared leaders from every party in the system, especially the Christian Democracy and the Socialist Party. The involvement of the political class was so broad that at some point more than half of the members of parliament were under indictment (Vannucci, 2009). More than 400 city and town councils were dissolved because of corruption charges and the

estimated value of bribes paid annually in the 1980s by Italian and foreign companies bidding for large governments contracts reached four billion dollars (Koff, 2002). The change in the Italian party system following the collapse is commonly known as the beginning of the Second Republic (Landi and Pelizzo, 2013). The first phase of the Italian republic was characterized by a strong *partitocrazia*, going well beyond the practice of party government (Pasquino, 2015, p. 155). For some scholars however, the so-called Second Republic never begun or at least never consolidated (Pasquino, 2000; Katz, 1996).

The third factor identified in the literature is chronic and widespread dissatisfaction and anti-party sentiment. This is an idiosyncratic factor of the Italian politics extant since the end of the 1940s (Morlino and Tarchi, 1996; Martini and Quaranta, 2011; Morlino, 2013). Some of the phenomena mentioned above, such as the corruption scandal, the April 1993 referendum and the new electoral laws, are important aspects of a complex funnel of causality but the chronic political dissatisfaction was able to manifest itself only in the early 1990s, when the constrains on its expression disappeared and incentives for its manifestation simultaneously appeared (Morlino and Tarchi, 1996, p. 43-44).

The dissatisfaction within Italian civil society was present since the end of World War II. Morlino and Tarchi observed that “whatever criteria we adopt to measure this [dissatisfaction], Italian democracy has had a low level of legitimacy since its beginning in the late 1940s.” They the changes that the Italian party system faced in the early 1990s as an “announced earthquake” (Morlino and Tarchi, 1996, p. 41).

Refusing to consider corruption as a determinant variable, they focused on widespread dissatisfaction. Manifestations of this dissatisfaction in 1968-69 were the student movement, the protest of feminist groups and trade unions through non-conventional forms of conflictual participation (Morlino and Tarchi, 1996, p. 45).

In a more recent study, Martini and Quaranta (2014) found evidence that the widespread dissatisfaction has its roots in the fragmentation of the party system during the First Republic and in the inability to reduce the number of the parties in the system during the Second.

Though these analyses merit consideration, I believe that by themselves they do not entirely account for the changes within the Italian party system at the

beginning of the 1990s. As Morlino (1996) pointed out “the interest of the Italian case lies in the fact that it compels us to analyze more profound transformations involving the disappearance of one or more parties and the change of the very party system itself.”

As a consequence, only by analyzing the simultaneous occurrence of two factors such as the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties, especially the pacts among the governing parties during the 1970s and the 1980s, and the Tangentopoli corruption scandal, which involved most of the Italian political class, as symptoms the extremely high level of unresponsiveness of the Italian party system during the First Republic, can we account for the 1992-1994 events. Moreover, analyzing the Italian case in light of the concept of party system collapse (Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012) may offer valuable insights. This concept can be useful since it allows analysis not only of the breakdown of a singular party, but the failure of the whole system, which was perceived to be highly unresponsive by voters. Only recognizing that it was the whole party system which was perceived as unresponsive allows us to understand the entrance of new relevant actors in a system that was completely closed and “frozen” during the years of the First Republic. When the collapse occurred, it made the institutional constraints more flexible. Considering the collapse as a moment in which the party system was a sort of *tabula rasa* allows us to understand that there was space for a re-structuration of the pattern of competitions within it.

Although the academic literature that explains the causes of party system collapse is certainly useful, this body of work sheds little light on what comes after the collapse. The collapse of the party system represents a crucial event in the politics of a country and entails a total reconstruction of the system. As a consequence, it represents a change in the electoral opportunity structure and of the entrance barriers to the party system. In other words, the collapse represents a critical juncture that involves the rupture of the linkages between voters and mainstream parties, since the latter are perceived as illegitimate and corrupt. After critical junctures there is no determined path. These triggering events do set development along a particular path, but the agency has a crucial role in determining which path (Mahoney, 2000). In some cases, political actors took advantage of the changes in the political opportunity structure to develop a

discourse that depicts the old parties as “the same” in the eyes of the electorate. However, it is not the aim of this work to speculate on the causation between the collapse of the party system and the emergence of relevant populist alternatives. Instead, this work focuses on the collapse of the Italian party system as a sort of “fertile soil” for the emergence of populist actors.

From a theoretical point of view, there may be other kinds of output for party systems after such a big change in the political opportunity structure.

First, since the concept has been developed mainly for research on Latin America, which is, according to Seawright, “a turbulent region for political parties” characterized by high instability, it could seem that party system collapse is an intrinsic characteristic of highly volatile party system, which is not necessarily the case. In fact, even those systems which have been characterized as stable and highly institutionalized, such as Venezuela and Colombia during the 1990s (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995; 1995a; Coppedge and Reinicke, 1990; Levine, 2015), experienced a collapses (Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012; Roberts, 2016).

Moreover, the region has been characterized by phenomena such as debt crises, economic restructuring and neoliberal reforms during the 1980s and 1990s but the case of collapse of the party system are limited in number (Seawright 2012, p. 3). At this point a consideration is in order. While party system change has been common in the region, party system collapse has been rare, even in a high volatile region such as Latin America. As a consequence, party system collapses in Western European democracy, such as Italy, should be analyzed more thoroughly to understand the reasons behind the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I illustrate a theoretical argument that accounts for the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. I maintain that three factors, the convergence of mainstream parties, massive corruption scandals and the collapse of the party system, play a role polarizing the cleavage and permitting it to structure the party system along a populism/anti-populism divide. The high levels of unresponsiveness of the system play a major role. The simultaneous

occurrence of programmatic convergence of the mainstream parties within the system and massive corruption scandals got to a point in which the level of unresponsiveness reached an extreme. If the levels of unresponsiveness of the whole party system reach a point of no return, it results in a collapse of the system. A party system collapses when the parties that compose it decay and the structure of the system changes (Morgan, 2011, p. 6). The collapse represents a critical juncture in a party system because it means that the tasks typically performed by parties such as promoting accountability went unfulfilled, which could make the regime unstable (Morgan, 2011, p. 6). While such events represent a critical juncture, their consequences are not pre-determined. During these brief windows of time, the role of political actors in determining the future of the party system is crucial. One relevant aspect is that during these brief phases, institutions became more permeable and either new actors can enter the system or actors that were electorally irrelevant may grow in profile. Other than this general statement, the consequences of a collapse for a party system depend largely on the decisions that old and new actors make.

The collapse of the party system has the effect of changing the political opportunity structure and lowering the institutional barriers for the entrance of new actors in the system. These new actors are likely to frame their discourse in a populist manner as they can cultivate a perception of distance from the country's political elite. In this sense, the role of agency is determinant in the appearance of the populism/anti-populism cleavage, because even with the presence of structural factors that may favor its emergence, a political actor — a leader, a party or a social movement — still needs to politicize them in a populist frame. Moreover, at the demand side, populist attitudes needs to be activated for the populist actors to gain electoral support (Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018; Hawkins, Rovira Kaltwasser, and Andreadis, 2018; Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove, 2014).

In the case of Italy, unresponsiveness reached a peak during the 1992-1994 period, when the party system experienced a collapse (Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012). The collapse was a consequence of both the high programmatic convergence of mainstream parties during the First Republic (1948-1992), reinforced by the inter-party agreements during the 1970s and the 1980s, which limited options for government formation. The situation was worsened by the

breaking of a series of corruption scandals known as Tangentopoli (Bribe City), and the subsequent trials, which found the majority of the political class complicit in those scandals.

The simultaneous occurrence of programmatic convergence and a massive corruption scandal resulted in the decay of both the programmatic and clientelistic linkage. In the 1994 general elections, the configuration of forces was totally different from the 1992 and even more from the 1987 election. One new actor, Silvio Berlusconi's populist party Forza Italia, was able to gain almost 25 percent of the vote and occupy the center-right space of the political spectrum. Also, to the right of the political center, the populist Lega Nord (LN), a federation of regional leagues in the north of Italy, started to become more electorally relevant by promoting a program centered on greater autonomy for the northern regions. With the appearance of these two actors and the populist discourse they employed, the party system started to be structured along a new political divide, namely populism/anti-populism.

In chapters 3 and 4, focusing in detail on the Italian case in the 1994-2016 period, I show that it took a while for anti-populism to emerge in response to this populist pole. However, as populism/anti-populism represents a political cleavage, once relevant populist options started to introduce a populist discourse in the system, a reaction by other actors in terms of the development of some sort of anti-populist discourse was sure to follow.

Chapter 3

The First Wave of Populism: Italy from 1994-2011 and the Emergence of the Populist Pole

Even before the results of the 1994 Italian election were revealed, it was clear that the country's political history had changed. Completely new party brands competed for the first time since the formation of the Republic. Moreover, many parliamentary candidates were also new, since many experienced politicians of the First Republic had been convicted or were under investigation following the Mani Pulite trials.

This chapter covers the period after the collapse of the party system in Italy until the breakdown of the fourth Berlusconi government in 2011 and the inauguration of Mario Monti's technocratic government. After the collapse, a different party system structure began to emerge, one with different incentives for coalition formation, even if instability and fragmentation, especially on the left, characterized the whole period.

The main argument of this chapter relates to the structure of the party system and the patterns of coalition formation that emerged after the party system collapse. While instability and fragmentation are the main subject of academic research (D'Alimonte and Bartolini, 1997; Morlino, 1996), one cannot forget that a pattern of electoral coalitions, though sometimes very fragile, emerged after the collapse. Moreover, an important peculiarity of the Italian case is that one of the two coalitions, the relatively more successful center-right coalition, can be conceived as populist.

This means that even though one could expect a "stabilization period" after an event so devastating as the collapse of the party system, the consequences of Italy's collapse were not only political instability and fragmentation, but also a restructuration of the party system around two axes of competition: left-right and populism/anti-populism.

The chapter is organized as follows.

After a brief account of major events during the 1994-2011 period, I examine the characteristics of the new parties and alliances in terms of ideology, policies and mobilization strategies. The first party I analyze in this section is the Lega Nord

(LN), a populist regionalist party (McDonnell 2006), and its shift to a populist radical right party type (Zaslove, 2007; 2009). Then I will examine Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia (FI) and People of Freedom (PdL), characterized by what I define as neoliberal populism (Pauwels, 2010; Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove, 2014). With respect to the organization and mobilization strategies used by these parties, I observe that while the LN adopted a mixed mobilization strategy with both a well-organized party and strong leaders, FI is clear-cut example of pure personal party where the leader has full discretion.

Moreover, I also analyze the position of the National Alliance (AN), which, since 1995, can be labelled as a national conservative right party. Its position is peculiar because it cannot be classified as populist but has been an important component of populist governments (1994-1996; 2001-2006; 2008-2011).

With respect to the other parties in the system, I also address the discourses and organizational strategies of the parties on the left. The main objective is to determine their political configurations and clarify whether an anti-populist pole emerged during this first period.

As a reminder, one of the aims of this dissertation is to analyze how the populism/anti-populism cleavage structures the party system. To that end, it is important to study the parties in the system from the ideological *and* organizational point of view. With respect to the former, I differentiate the parties in the system on the basis of their thin ideology, whether they are populist, anti-populist or non-populist, and of their thick ideology, i.e. the main host ideology to which they adhere. With respect to the organizational features of the parties, as I pointed out in chapter one, even though I provide a characterization of the main parties in the system, my main concern is examining the degree organizational density of both the populist and non-populist parties. This is relevant because it allows me to make inferences on the stability and the duration of the political cleavage.

The second part of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the populists the Lega Nord and Forza Italia (and The PdL) in government and in the opposition. For this analysis, it is necessary to observe the interactions between the actors within the populist pole and explain how this pole became more relevant. In the same section, to fully understand the characteristics of the party system in this period, I focus on the discourse of the actors that did not adopt a

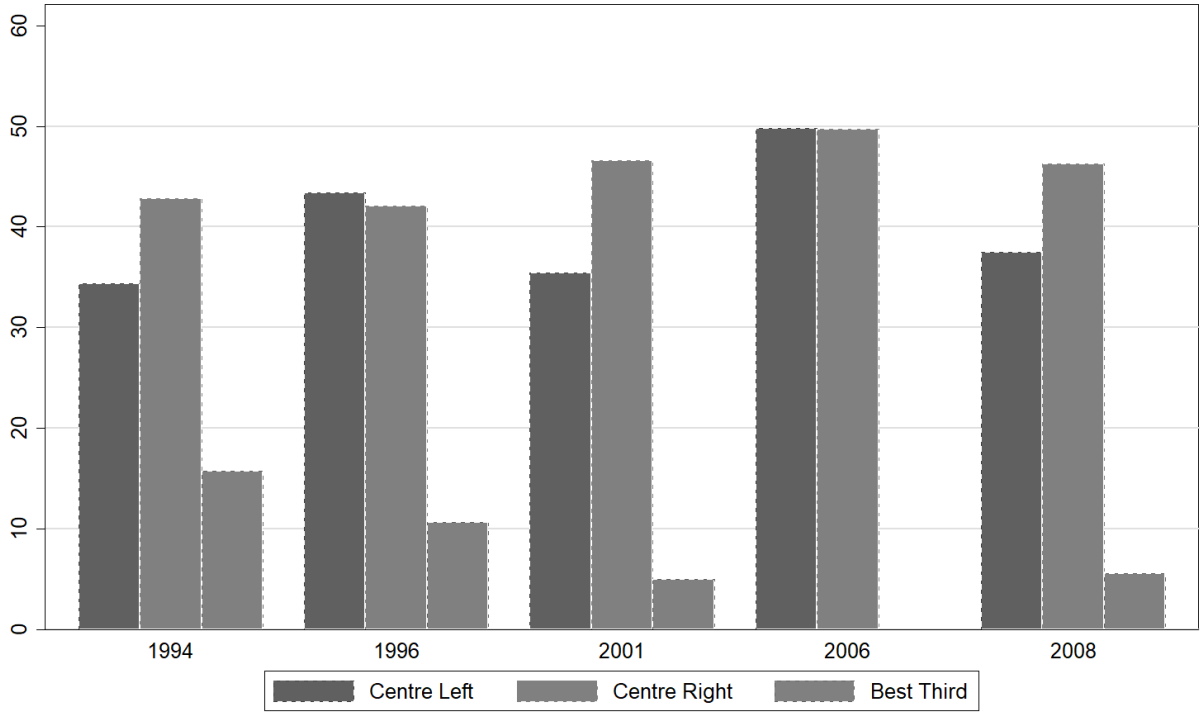
populist ideology, namely the non-populist parties (Partito Democratico, Scelta Civica and Alleanza Nazionale).

The main findings of this chapter are essentially two. First, as noted above, after the "chaos" produced by the collapse, a pattern of coalition formation emerged. Although the governing coalitions was unstable, a clear pattern is identifiable: a populist right-wing coalition lead by Berlusconi's Forza Italia, and later by the PdL, opposing a non-populist center-left coalition, characterized by high fragmentation until the emerged of the Democratic Party in 2007, as the collation strove to keep the progressive and Catholic wings together. The second relevant finding is that, at least during the 1994-2011 period, the anti-populist pole fails to emerge. In fact, while the emergence of the populist pole is patent, with the populist parties that became electorally relevant, non-populist parties did not develop an anti-populist discourse. On the contrary, those parties' discourse mainly attacks the Berlusconi government's policies, perceiving them to be *ad hoc*. It could be said that instead of an anti-populist discourse, non-populist parties responded with an anti-Berlusconi discourse. In sum, the Italian case seems to suggest that the cleavage may need time to fully develop. During the period analyzed in this chapter, the anti-populist pole did not fully emerge.

3.1. Italian elections outlook: 1994-2011

Right after the collapse, Italian politics experienced a profound change. Between 1994 and 2011, there were five general elections and only two legislatures finished their terms without major government reshuffling and without prime minister turnover. The following chart represents the party coalitions that alternate during this period and their vote share.

Graph 3.1: Percentage of the electoral coalition between 1994 and 2008[16]



Source: Elaboration of the author (Governo Italiano, Ministero dell'Interno, Archivio Elettorale).

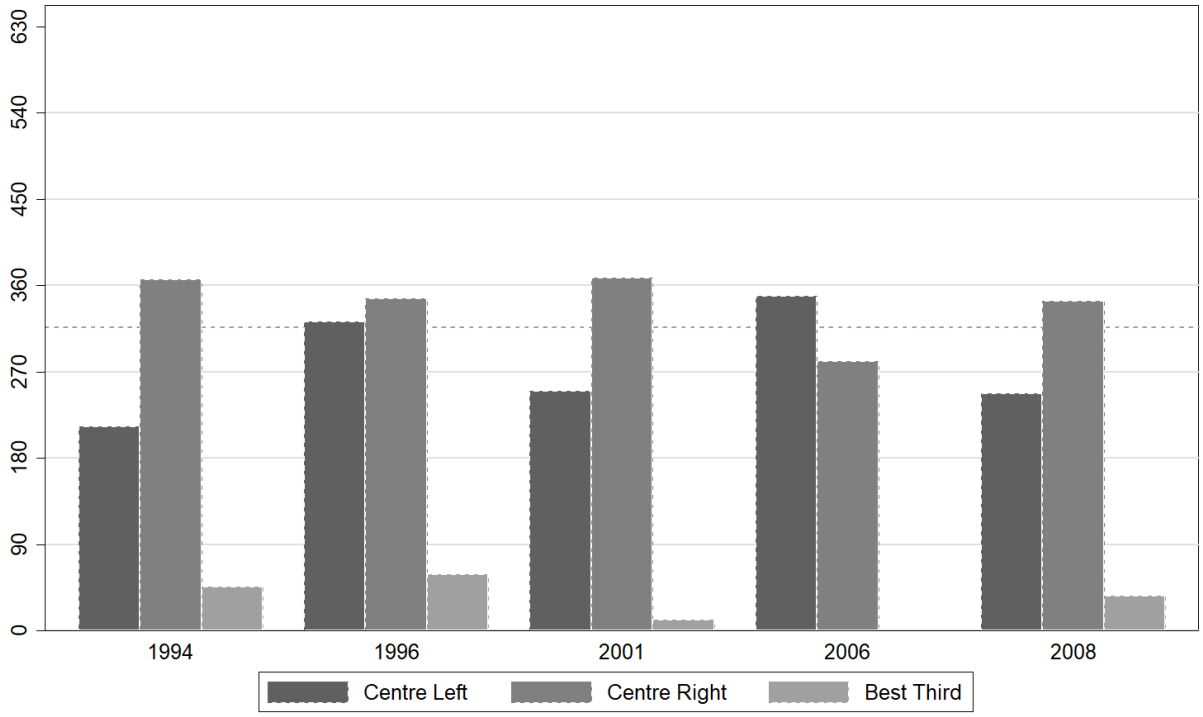
Despite the period's political instability, a regular pattern of coalition emerged, albeit with some significant deviations. First, to fully grasp the main features of this period, it is important to understand what the rules of the game were. The 1994 general election was the first to be held under the mixed electoral law adopted in 1993.

This new electoral law was approved with the aim of replacing Italy's extremely proportional (hyper representative) system with a relatively majoritarian variant of a mixed member electoral system. Despite numerous proposals for electoral reforms to cure factionalism and instability though moderate bipolarity and regular alternation in office (Pasquino, 1992), the idea of the electoral reform did not become relevant on the political agenda until 1991 (Katz, in Wattemberg and Shugart, 2001). In 1991, Italians voted for the first time in a referendum on the electoral system. The aim of the referendum's initiator,

[16] In 1994, 1996,2001 and 2008 elections the LN enjoyed a pre-electoral alliance with the centre-right coalition. In 1994 election the third opponent was Mario Segni Patto per l'Italia (15,75 %); in 2001 Rifondazione Comunista (5,03%); in 2006 the totality of the parties joined one of the two major alliances (Casa delle Libertà and Unione). Lastly in 2008, the third major force was represented by the Unione di Centro (UdC) that obtained the 5,62 percent of the total vote.

Mario Segni, was to reduce the massive corruption that was associated with preference voting. The success of the “yes” vote was overwhelming and mostly motivated by dissatisfaction with the performance of the previous political system (McCarthy 1992, p. 11). The most mentioned objective was to have governments with secure parliamentary majorities that would lead to greater stability and capacity to govern. Besides this, there were some side objectives such as a more transparent connection between the votes cast and the cabinets formed, simplification of the party system and the replacement of what Sartori (1976; 2005) called “polarized pluralism” with a sort of bipolar pluralism (Katz 2001, p. 103). As described in chapter one, Sartori gave Italy in the mid-1970s as an example of a pluralist polarized party system, i.e. there was high ideological distance between the party associated with a high number of relevant parties. Given that this kind of party system was believed to have dangerous effects on the stability of the system and on the regime, mostly due to high fragmentation, one of the aims of the new electoral law was to limit the number of the relevant parties or, at least, contain them in two competing coalition.

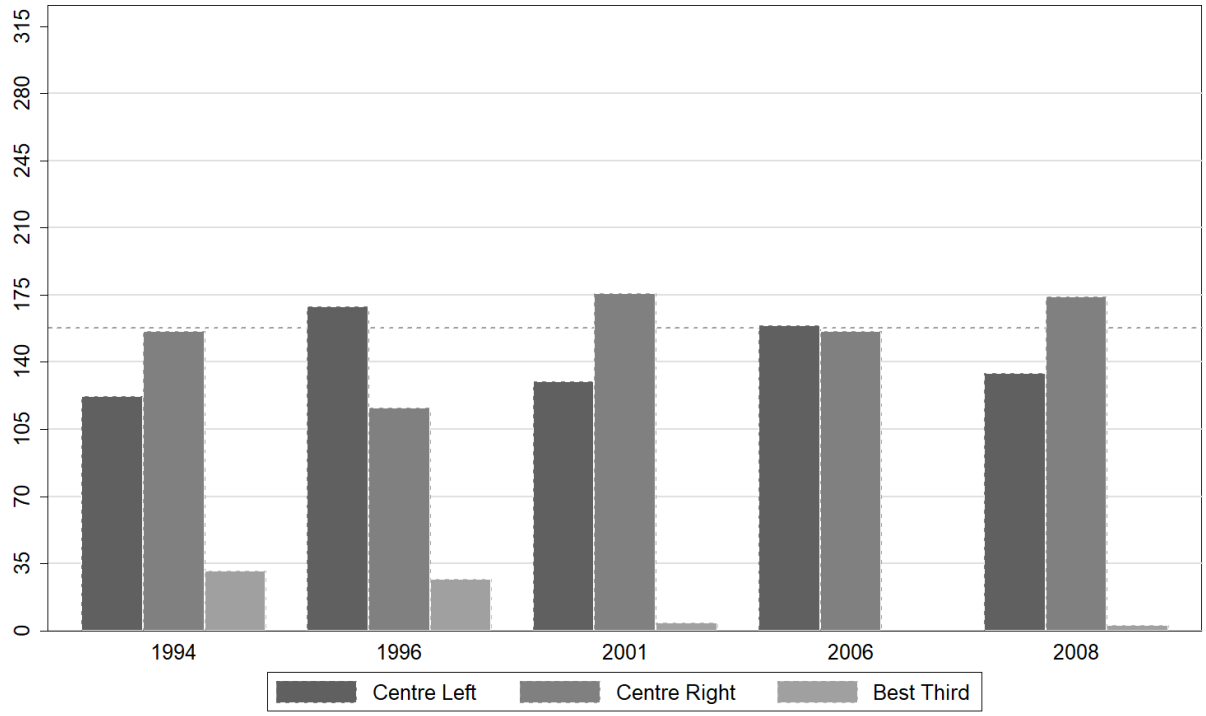
Graph 3.2: Seats in the Chamber of Deputies in the five national elections between 1994 and 2008



Source: Elaboration of the author (Governo Italiano, Ministero dell'Interno, Archivio Elettorale).

Graph 3.2 and 3.3 help to understand that the instability of Italian politics in those years stems not only from the small vote spread between the center-left and center-right coalitions but also has institutional origins. The charts represent the allocation of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

Graph 3.3: Seats in the Senate in the five national elections between 1994 and 2008



Source: Elaboration of the author (Governo Italiano, Ministero dell'Interno, Archivio Elettorale).

The first patent observation is that the electoral systems implemented during this period, especially the majoritarian system with proportional corrections of 1993, neither granted the numbers the winning coalition needed to implement its own agenda nor to implement those structural reforms the country needed. In the Senate, where the abstention equals a vote against, the parliamentary majorities have been very thin. In the 2006 election, for instance, the center-left coalition had only three more seats than the center-right in the Senate. Additionally, the picture was complicated by another classical feature of the Italian party system: party-switching. By party-switching, I mean any change in political party affiliation of a partisan public figure, usually one currently holding elected office. This practice is particularly problematic when majorities are thin, and a few seats may mean the survival of the executive as in the 1994-2011 period.

A second objective of the electoral reform arose from a desire to increase the vertical accountability of elected parliament members. In other words, "there was a desire to free the electorate from the confines of party labels and ideologies, and to allow the electors to take into account the character, qualifications, and

performance in office of individual candidates when casting their votes" (Katz, 2001, p. 103).

In the 1994 elections, the first under the new mixed electoral law, Berlusconi's brand-new Forza Italia managed to obtain the highest vote share and formed a government coalition with the populist regionalist Lega Nord (LN) (McDonnell, 2006), the formerly fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI), the Unione di Centro (UdC) and the Centro Cristiano Democratico (CCD). As Diamanti (2007) observed, Forza Italia was the result of applying marketing to politics by identifying orphan voters of the governing parties of the First Republic, aggregating their values and opinions and creating a political message that could capture them, then using the media to communicate and "sell" his political project as a "product". When Berlusconi entered the competition, he occupied and expanded the right, a political space that had previously been politically narrow and fragmented and drew together two completely different political forces: the post-fascist right-wing National Alliance and the Northern League (LN), which supported the independence of the north and radical political change (Diamanti, 2007, p.736).

In the 1994 election, the alliance seemed pretty pragmatic in terms of electoral evaluations. In fact, since Forza Italia was a new party, Berlusconi counted on the alliance with the Lega Nord (LN) to win northern regions and on the alliance with MSI/AN to compete in the south. Only the presence of Forza Italia could bind together such a heterogeneous coalition of political actors which also included the Centro Cristiano Democratico (CCD), led by Pierferdinando Casini and with quite different goals and interests from AN and the LN (Diamanti, 2007, p. 736). Eventually, the government broke down in 1995, after only eight months, demonstrating that these pragmatic electoral considerations, without consensus on policies, were not enough to carry a legislature to its end. Despite the victory, the rightist coalition had difficulties its actions and, in January 1995, the Lega Nord left the government, costing it a parliamentary majority.

Given the 1993 mixed electoral system's preponderantly majoritarian features, parties needed to form pre-electoral coalitions. Paradoxically enough, the less politically uniform rightist coalition beat the leftist one, whose parties were almost direct heirs of the leftwing parties of the First Republic (Lo Verso and McLean 1994). They included descendants of the dissolved Communist Party,

the Partito dei Democratici di Sinistra (PDS) and the more radical Rifondazione Comunista (PRC), the Greens, the Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) and other minor parties. The result was surprising also for its proportions: the rightist coalition won an absolute majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies while in the Senate it only fell nine seats short (Lo Verso and McLean, 1994).

In the second election held under the mixed electoral system, the two competing coalitions were the same as in 1994 election, with some changes. On the right, under the brand of Casa delle Libertà (House of Freedoms), were Forza Italia, Alleanza Nazionale (formerly MSI, which rejected fascist ideology at its Fiuggi convention in 1995) and the Catholic center. On the left, l'Ulivo (the Olive Tree) emerged, which represented a coalition in which the PDS was the major force. Nevertheless, there were two relevant differences from the 1994 elections. The Lega Nord, which had exited the center-right coalition few months earlier, decided to run alone. Likewise, l'Ulivo did not enjoy the support of Rifondazione Comunista, though the latter agreed not to field candidates against the coalition in certain constituencies. In the 1996 election, the left coalition successfully formed a government with the Greens and other minor parties and received external support from the PRC. The coalition achieved an absolute majority in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. This was mainly due to the wider geographical appeal of the coalition compared with the center-right PdL, which was significantly undermined in the north without the Lega, which ran alone. L'Ulivo, however, depended heavily upon the support of the *progressisti* and the PRC's Deputies and Senators (Warner and Varese, 1996). Also, Prime Minister Prodi lacked a power base in any party of the coalition. Therefore, just like the rightist coalition in 1996, the leftist one failed keep a majority in Parliament when the PRC's leader Fausto Bertinotti decided to withdraw support from the government. Prodi was ousted. Unlike 1996, in this case the leftwing parties managed to carry the legislature through to the end of term, with administrations led by D'Alema (leader of the PDS) then a technocratic one led by Giuliano Amato. These two government breakdowns in a row proved that the electoral system had its downsides. In particular, this system encouraged Italian parties to form all-encompassing coalitions to win single-member constituency seats at the expense of the homogeneity within the coalition and thus at the expense not only of governmental stability, but also of policy-making (Pasquino, 2007, p. 86).

The 2001 election was the only one in this period in which the legislature which lasted its entire term without any executive breakdown. This election saw another victory of the center-right Casa delle Libertà formed by Forza Italia, the Lega Nord, Alleanza Nazionale and the Centro Cristiano Democratico (CCD). This time the coalition was based not merely on electoral pragmatism, which had proved insufficient to keep the 1994 governing coalition together, but also by greater ideological convergence around issues such as immigration, law and order, devolution, tax cuts and social security (Parker and Natale, 2001). At the same time, on the center-left, the parties failed to build a coalition large enough to match the opposition considering that RC and di Pietro's Italy of Values (IdV) decided not to participate.

The April 2006 general election was the first with a new electoral system introduced by the 2005 Calderoli Law and approved in 2006 by the center-right. Just months before the 2006 general election, the ruling coalition decided to reform the electoral law. The most important reason for the reform was, "the attempt to unearth a law capable of limiting and possibly reducing the dimension of what at the time seemed the very likely centre-left victory and, at the same time, of containing the size of the equally likely centre-right defeat" (Pasquino, 2007, p. 81). Naturally, the new law had to be justified "by pointing to the alleged superior fairness of a proportional system in the allocation of seats and in the representation of the 'true' will and preferences of the electorate" (Pasquino, 2007, p. 81).

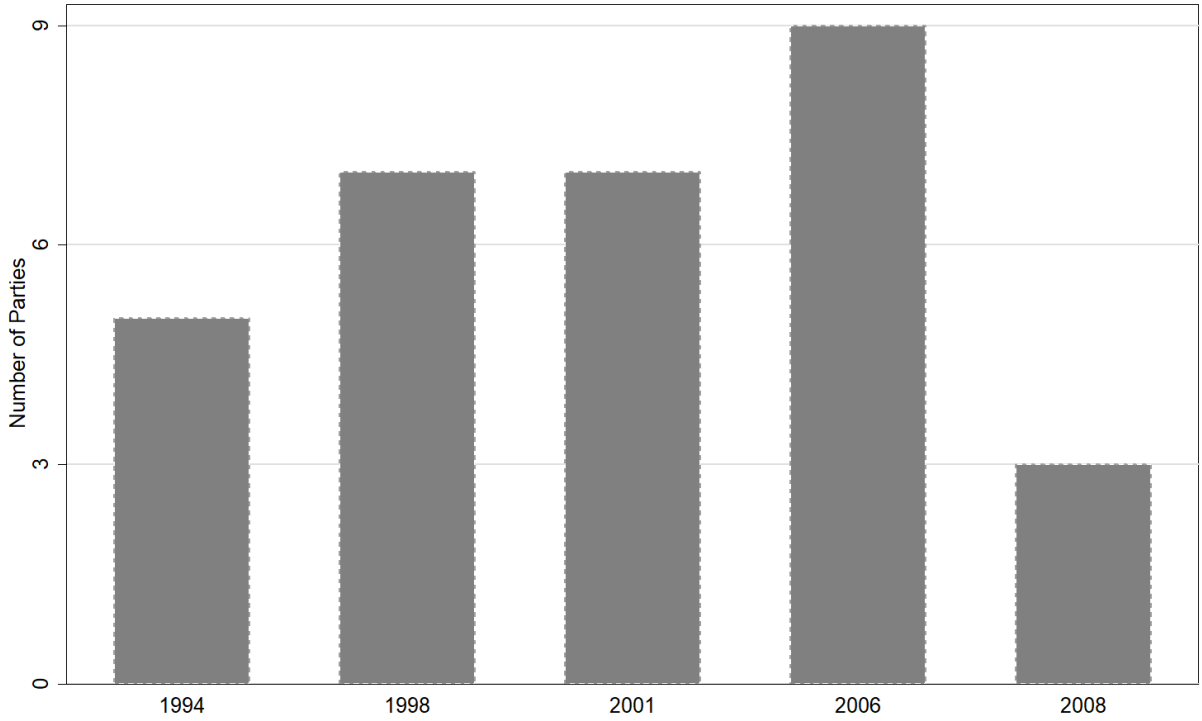
In fact, the new law transformed the mixed system in a proportional system with closed lists where seats were distributed between parties receiving at least four percent of the vote on a national base if independent or ten percent if part of a coalition. Moreover, the electoral law prescribed a majority premium (*premio di maggioranza*) when the initial proportional distribution of seats results in the largest party or coalition receiving less than 340 seats, in order to secure an overall majority. For the Senate, the mechanism was the same, but the majority premium was regionally assigned with a higher threshold than that in the Chamber of Deputies (Bull and Newell, 2009, p. 337).

As Pasquino points out, the majority bonus has served well its major purpose, providing the winning coalition with a sizable parliamentary majority in the Chamber of Deputies. Moreover, it contributed to the preservation of bipolar

competition and to the possibility of alternation in government (2009, p. 83). The price was the extreme heterogeneity of the two coalitions. In fact, this reform drew the two main coalitions to incorporate as many parties as they could, incentivizing a further fragmentation of the system (Renwick, Hanrett and Hine, 2009; Pasquino, 2015).

As a consequence, the center-left coalition, formed by 9 parties, named l'Unione (the Union) and led by l'Ulivo, with Romano Prodi as candidate for prime minister, was characterized by high political heterogeneity. The performances of the parties in the coalition were unimpressive. L'Ulivo obtained 31.1 percent of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies, but it underperformed in the Senate, where the parties stood in separate lists (Bellucci, 2008, p. 190). Electoral turnout was 83.6 percent, more than two points higher than in the 2001 election, probably influenced by the factor that this was the first time that Italians living abroad had the right to vote. On the right, within the Casa delle Libertà, Forza Italia was confirmed as the first-ranked party notwithstanding heavy losses (Bellucci, 2008, p. 190) but AN, the other major coalition partner, performed below expectations (12.3%). The campaign opened with the center-left managing to keep the focus on Berlusconi's trials but towards the end the subject moved to taxation issues and the economy and, to a lesser extent, bio-ethical and foreign policy issues, with the center-left on the defensive (Bellucci 2008). In the end, the Union obtained a slim victory, with 49.81 percent versus the 49.74 of the Casa delle Libertà, with dim prospects of surviving the entire legislative term. The instability of the governing coalition can be seen first in the increase in the number of appointed ministries and junior ministries (*sottosegretari*), due to the necessity to try to accommodate the many parties of the coalition. Also, the marked heterogeneity of the coalition and the slim majority in the Senate affected policy making, forcing the Prime Minister to take great pains to form agreements about every important policy decision (Bellucci 2008, p. 190). Graph 3.4 shows the number of parties and movements within or externally supporting the two governing coalitions.

Graph 3.4: Number of the parties forming and externally supporting the governing coalitions[17]



Source: Elaboration of the author (Governo Italiano, Ministero dell'Interno, Archivio Elettorale).

Even though both coalitions are highly fragmented, we can observe that the center-right coalitions on average are composed of and externally supported by a greater number of parties or movements.

In February 2007, there were mutual vetoes within the coalition on the proposal of the legal recognition of unmarried people (opposed by Catholics) and on the country's participation in NATO's Afghanistan mission (opposed by the radical left), which failed in the Senate and caused Prodi to submit his resignation. The President asked him to remain and the cabinet voted a confidence vote on a 12-points program presented as "take it or leave it" by Prodi (Bellucci, 2008, p. 190). Just like the 1996 coalition, this one failed to finish out the legislature, as the leader of the tiny Union of Democrats for Europe (UDEUR), Justice Minister

[17] In 1994 five parties were part of the parliamentary coalition that supported the govenrment (FI,LN,AN,Lista Pannella, CCD), in 1996 seven parties (PDS, Popolari per Prodi, RI, FdV, RL, UAL,Psd'AZ), in 2001 seven (FI, AN, LN, Biancofiore, NPSI, RS, NS), in 2006 nine parties (Uniti nell'Ulivo, RC, Rosa nel Pugno, IdV, Comunisti Italiani, FdV, Udeur, Südtiroler Volkspartei,Autonomié Liberté Democratie), and in 2008 3 parties (PdL, LN, Movimento per L'Autonomia).

Clemente Mastella, left the cabinet and eventually, withdrew his party's support, causing the government to break down.

This led to the 2008 election, the last one analyzed in this chapter. This election was the first to be held under the 2005 electoral law. The new electoral law was introduced and approved by the center-right coalition. As Pasquino observes, the most contingent reason was containing the size of the likely center-left victory in 2006 elections (2007, p. 81). Moreover, Berlusconi had repeatedly declared that the 1993 electoral Mattarellum law "put his party and his now single unified coalition at a disadvantage because they were doing better in terms of votes for their individual parties, but still losing in single-member constituencies" (2007, 81). Second, Berlusconi's leadership had been challenged by his junior coalition partners, which advocated holding primaries in the center-right coalition (Pasquino, 2007).

The Calderoli Law, adopted by the right-wing coalition, was a proportional law with a bonus to be attributed to the winning coalition and closed lists (Pasquino, 2007). This electoral law was used for the election of deputies and senators in three elections in 2006, 2008 and 2013. In January 2014, the Constitutional Court declared the law partially unconstitutional because the bonus was not linked to a certain vote threshold. Moreover, the law did not allow voters to express a preference vote.

The contenders were the Democratic Party (Partito Democratico), a center-left party founded in 2007 and heir of the Union. The Democratic Party at the time of its foundation had announced that it would stand independently at the election regardless of the electoral system but in the end, it allied with di Pietro's populist Italy of Values (IdV). To this new formation, Berlusconi responded with the so-called People of Freedoms (Popolo delle Libertà, PdL) a new version of the precedent Casa delle Libertà, with the merge of Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale, that allied with the Lega Nord and the Movimento per l'Autonomia, a smaller southern autonomist party. The centrist Union of Christian Democrats (UDC) chose to run alone, as did the New Socialist Party confirming its split from the former center-right coalition.

To the left of the PD was Sinistra Arcobaleno (SA), a single list comprising Communist Refoundation (RC), the Party of Italian Communists (PdCI) and the Greens (Verdi) (Bull and Newell 2009, 338). In 2006, Berlusconi's government

could claim the considerable achievement (in Italian terms) of managing to remain in office for a full parliamentary term, setting a record for longevity in office for a post-war Italian government. Although the center-right was defeated by the narrowest of margins in the 2006 general election, the breakdown of the center-left government in early 2008 paved the way for Berlusconi's third general election victory and return as prime minister in April (Fella and Ruzza, 2009). The PdL won 37.4 percent and the Lega Nord 8.3 percent, permitting the center-right coalition to surpass the center-left by more than 9 percent of the vote and secure a solid parliamentary majority (Tarchi, 2018). The poor performance of both the extreme left and the extreme right significantly reduced parliamentary fragmentation (Tarchi, 2018, p. 148). Despite the electoral success, this government followed its predecessors in collapsing before the end of the legislative term, but for different reasons. First, the relationship between Berlusconi and the AN leader Gianfranco Fini became increasingly problematic, with the latter trying to abandon the coalition, denouncing its inability to face the most pressing issues of the period (Tarchi, 2018, p. 148).

However, the sudden end of the Prodi government and the tight timing of the electoral campaign forced Fini to join Silvio Berlusconi in forming the PdL. The relationship between the two leaders, however, was not fully restored. The procedure chosen to form the lists in both chambers — 70 percent by FI and 30 percent by AN — provoked discontent in the minority element. The context was surely different, with the eruption of the international financial crisis and its fallout as well as allegations about Berlusconi's private life contributing to alienating previously supportive social actors, such as the northern entrepreneurial bourgeoisie and the Catholic Church (Fella and Ruzza, 2013). At the same time, the creation of the PdL out of previously separate political parties made it more difficult for Berlusconi to manage tensions within the coalition and led to greater questioning of his leadership, especially by Fini. The former leader of the post-fascist AN withdrew support from the coalition and, together with a number of his loyalists, joined the ranks of opposition, seeking (unsuccessfully) to bring Berlusconi down in a parliamentary vote of confidence in December (Fella and Ruzza 2011, p. 158). The secession of some PdL Deputies and Senators resulted in a new party called FLI (Futuro e Libertà per l'Italia) with the former AN secretary, Fini, as a leader. The party unsuccessfully tried to construct a third

pole of competition in the system, positioning itself toward the political center. This was the result of the contradiction within the PdL. Forza Italia and AN were built upon very different organizational models. On the one hand, AN had diffuse territorial structures which, following Tarchi (1997), “maintained the footprint of the old party of mass integration”. On the other hand, FI resembled a personal party, whose organizational structure never achieved a full institutionalization and was based primarily upon the leader (Calise, 2000; McDonnell, 2013).

What can we learn from this short analysis of the five national elections and numerous administrations that were formed in Italy between 1994 and 2011? First, during the entire period, Italy was undergoing important institutional reforms, namely the two electoral reforms of 1993 and 2005. Even if both electoral reforms aimed to enhance government stability, neither fully reached their objective. Second, there was “life after the collapse”, i.e. a pattern of coalition making emerged even if was not stable. While the collapse surely represents a devastating occurrence for a party system, its aftermath does not necessarily entail instability. In Italy after the collapse and partially due to the electoral law of 1993, a new pattern of electoral competition emerged with a bipolar dynamic. Third, the rightist populist coalition was the most successful, at least during those years. As mentioned above, the populist coalition — formed by Forza Italia and PdL and the Lega Nord — won three national elections in 1994-996, 200-2006 and 2008-2011.

The last aspect to consider is that the Italian party system achieved alternation in government, which was absent during the First Republic, when the DC was always in power.

In the next section, I analyze the ideology of Italian parties from 1994 to 2011. The aim is first to determine whether they employed a populist ideology. This, in turn is relevant to answering questions around the emergence of the anti-populist pole. With respect to the parties forming the populist pole, analyzing both their thin and thick ideology over this period of time is important to determine whether they changed in their sub-type of populism. In sum, through this analysis, it is possible to map the political space and define the axes of competition in the system, the configuration of the poles and the way they interact.

3.2 The new actors in the political system: analysis of the ideology and organization

As I argued in the precedent subchapter, after the collapse of the party system in 1994 in Italy, new parties entered the system. Those parties contributed to changing the party system configuration in place during the years of the First Republic (1948-1994). In this subchapter, I analyze those parties with a special attention to their discourse. Because I employ the ideational definition of populism, only by analyzing the discourse of political actors is it possible to classify them as populists. To be classified as populist, a party or a movement needs to develop simultaneously an anti-elitist and a pro-people discourse (Mudde, 2007; Hawkins, 2009). If, for instance, the party representatives only speak in favor of the people without developing an anti-elite discourse, or vice versa, the party cannot be classified as populist.

The parties studied in this chapter are the Lega Nord, Forza Italia, Alleanza Nazionale and the Italian left, with a special focus on the role of the PDS/DS (Left Democrats Party), l'Ulivo (later the Union and Democratic Party) and the Italia dei Valori (IdV).

3.2.1 The Lega Nord: from regionalist populism to populist radical right

The Lega Nord made its first appearance in the Italian political system before the collapse of the party system. The party emerged in 1991 from the union of six regionalist leagues from Italy's north and center, most of which had arisen in the 1980s. As Ignazi observes, the choice of the name "leagues" rather than "parties" signaled the existence of local specific characteristics in radical conflict with the mainstream parties (2005, p. 344).

In the 1987 election, one of these leagues gained prominence when its leader, Umberto Bossi, was elected to the Senate; previously, in 1983, the Liga Veneta elected a deputy and a senator. The two parties and other regionalist lists ran as Alleanza Nord in the European parliamentary elections in 1989, gaining 1.8 percent of the vote. In the 1992 national election, held during the Tangentopoli scandal, the LN won 8.6 percent of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies and 8.2 percent in the Senate, obtaining 55 and 25 seats respectively.

The further radicalization of the LN was favored by the collapse of the party system following the corruption scandals known as Tangentopoli. In this circumstance the LN had the chance to present itself as the representative of the "honest and laborious" northern people (Ignazi, 2005). Agitating for secession required employing a rhetorical "Padanian identity" to build a community of people belonging to the same motherland. The construction of an imagined identity shared by inhabitants of the Po Valley meant building ethnic commonality while simultaneously providing the basis for the exclusion of the others: first, Italian southerners and later, immigrants. In the 1994 election the party participated in an electoral coalition with Silvio Berlusconi's brand-new party, Forza Italia and with the MSI, the formerly fascist party. On this occasion, the party gained over 8 percent of the vote, nearly the same vote share it obtained in the 1992 election (Ignazi, 1995). The number of deputies this time was considerably higher thanks to the presence of Lega Nord candidates in single-member constituencies as representatives of the entire center-right coalition. This way the LN became the largest parliamentary group. The LN also obtained five ministries and the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies.

However, there were tensions from the beginning between the allies and, eventually, the alliance shattered, mainly as a consequence of disagreements on policies between the Lega and Forza Italia and on a personal level between the two leaders, Bossi and Berlusconi (Bartlett, Birdwell and McDonnell 2012). As Tarchi points out, "just only in the federal reform of the state, the Lega's key issue, did it manage to obtain full agreement from its allies, but the party's blackmail potential…has remained on the whole very limited" (2008, p. 90).

On the ideological plane, the LN has been unanimously defined as a populist party (Zaslove, 2012; Bartlett, Birdwell and McDonnell, 2012; Fella and Ruzza, 2013; Rooduijn and Pauwels, 2011).

First, let us see whether the defining elements of populism can be found in the Lega's ideology. As I claimed in chapter one, I adopt the definition of populism as a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous, antagonistic groups, "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite," and argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people (Mudde, 2004). Therefore, in order to categorize the discourse of the Lega as populist, we need to analyze if the two main features of this

definition apply to the party's discourse. With reference to the first feature, the Lega constructed a framework of interpretation in which the virtuous and homogeneous "us" referred to the honest, hard-working and simple-living northern Italians, strongly linked to their traditions, creating what Tambini called "a new source of self-respect for northerners" (2001, p. 105). On the other side of the coin, corrupt politicians who misused the revenues of the north in an unproductive south and center were identified as the "corrupt" elite. With respect to the "others" category, it has been depicted differently during the history of the party. At the beginning and during the party's first years in parliament, the "others" were the southerners, but starting in the 2000 and more decisively in the late 2000, the "others" became the immigrants, especially Muslims, and the party depicted itself as a savior of the Western values. Indeed, the xenophobia of the LN, while rather folkloric when aimed at Italian southerners, acquired a different, much harder meaning in its new phase (Ignazi 2005, p. 346).

The second characteristic of this definition of populism is the emphasis on a certain type of democracy, which is linked to the assumption that politics should be the expression of the general will of the people. This is translated to a preference for direct, unmediated types of democracy. The emphasis on democracy reflects the party's regionalist position. The hardworking citizens of the north, in fact, have lost their sovereignty and wealth to the "bad" elites of the center (Bobba and McDonnell, 2016). A clear example is a statement by the party's leader, Bossi, in a press release in August 2007: "rather than talking so much, those gentlemen in Rome should listen to the honest people who cannot take any more taxes. I know we cannot have a tax revolt using weapons, but the people are pissed off." (see Bobba and McDonnell, 2016 p. 290).

With respect to the "thick" or full ideology associated with the populism of the Lega Nord, the consensus view of at least its first 10 years of activity is that it is a "clear-cut case of regionalist populism" (McDonnell, 2006, p. 23). From its foundation until the 2000s, when describing the Lega's discourse, it is impossible to overlook its regionalist character. Since the emergence of the regionally based leagues that eventually merged, the party aimed to achieve greater autonomy for the northern regions of Italy; after the breakdown of the first Berlusconi government, they even advocated for secession and the creation of a Padania state. Since its emergence, "the Lega reopened a centre-periphery cleavage

which the formation of the unitary state had never completely sealed" (Tarchi, in McDonnell and Albertazzi, 2015, p. 87). This was possible in the context of the erosion of some of the traditional cleavages in Europe which provided the political space for the mobilization of new conflicts (Gomez-Reino Cachafeiro, 2000). The Lega, then, was able to reshape the economic, political and historical points of references of the north and create a community of values and interests in opposition to those of the south, constructing a common identity for all northerners (Bartlett, Birdwell and McDonnell, 2012). Through its discourse, the party told northerners that they were not responsible for the country's problems and therefore should not be held accountable for the corruption and the misuse of the public funds. The solution to this problem led to the defense of fiscal federalism in the form of devolution, which allowed a significant share of the taxes collected in the northern regions to remain in the north instead of being invested in the center and the south by corrupt politicians.

After a six-year period, during which the party refused alliances in the 2000 election, the relationship between the two parties rekindled and the LN entered the center-right coalition that succeeded in the 2001 elections. However, the party underperformed and got only the 3.9 percent of the vote share, while in the 1996 general election, running alone, it had reached the 10.1 percent. The alliance continued in the 2008 election, where the party obtained an 8.3 percent vote share. As claimed above, after greater northern autonomy, the main issue for the LN (particularly since 2000) has been immigration. Ideologically, the party has therefore been defined as "ethnoregionalist populist" (Spektorowski, 2003). Given its nativist and authoritarian positions, I believe that the most appropriate definition of the LN after 2010 is "populist radical right party" (Mudde, 2007; Norris 2005; Albertazzi, Giovannini and Seddone, 2018).

We can safely say that scholars see the LN as a significantly more radical type of "classic" right-wing populist party than FI/PdL and it is patent that "the LN embraced its niche as a regionalist but also populist radical right party" (Bobba and McDonnell, 2016, p. 284). I maintain that even though regionalism prevailed in the LN discourse until the mid-2000s, since then, the LN can be without a doubt classified as a populist radical right party. Following Mudde (2007), populist radical right parties combine populism, authoritarianism and nativism. It is important to stress that the combination of *all three* these elements is necessary

for a party to be categorized in populist radical right family. More specifically, Zaslove maintained that “the radical right mobilizes voters who fear that immigration, especially within the context of high unemployment, globalization and mistrust of political elites, threatens the security, identity and employment opportunities of locals” (2004, p. 100).

To sum up the argument, the important aspect to underline is that even though the party can be classified as populist from the 1990s until present, the Lega’s thick ideology transitioned from regionalism nativism and authoritarianism in the late 2000s. Consequently, even if the party have stuck to its populist ideology throughout its entire history, the host ideology has changed over time. In other words, the policies at the heart of the party’s interests are different than when it formed. Under Bossi’s leadership, the main issue was regionalism, while since the late 2000s, and more markedly after Matteo Salvini became secretary, immigration and security became the main issues.

With respect to the organizational structure of the party and its mobilization techniques, the figure of the leader is surely important and in some cases the leader, Umberto Bossi during the period analyzed, has been the means through which the voters identified with the party. However, the party itself has a consistent organization, with councils on the territory distributed in capillary form mainly in the northern and central regions.

When first Maroni in 2012 and then Matteo Salvini in December of 2013 became leader of the Lega Nord, the party was put under stress by the resignation of the charismatic founder-leader (McDonnell, 2013, p. 223). On the ideological plane, I have already mentioned the shift of the party toward the populist radical right type. Organizationally, this change and the survival of the party through the departure of the founder-leader demonstrate that the party cannot be classified as a “personal party,” like Forza Italia and the PdL, since the party’s expected lifespan has proven less dependent on the political lifespan of its founder-leader. Moreover, the Lega Nord also managed to construct a constant type of organization at the local level (McDonnell, 2013, p. 222).

Instead, the Lega Nord has been defined as a “personalist party” (McDonnell, 2013). A personalist party features a strong concentration of formal or informal power in the hands of the founder-leader, but its fate is not completely tied to the founder-leader, i.e. the party has good chance of survival even when the leader

leaves the party or dies. Moreover, in personalist parties, the party's image and campaign strategy are centered on the founder-leader. In the case of the LN, in fact, Umberto Bossi even after his departure remained the Federal President and still is a strong presence in the party supporters' imaginary. Therefore, in terms of organizational density, the LN has proven not fully dependent on the charismatic founder-leader and that there are internal checks and balances that put boundaries to the actions of the leader. The party was therefore the first of Italy's "organic populist parties," having adopted the populist ideology and a structured organization.

3.2.2 Forza Italia/PdL: a case of neoliberal populism

Forza Italia was created by the businessman Silvio Berlusconi just a few months before the general election of 1994. Berlusconi used the resources at this disposal and his abilities in communication to deliver his political message directly to the Italian people. Unlike the Lega Nord, which has a stronger organization and ideology, Forza Italia and, since 2009, the Popolo delle Libertá (PdL) seemed decisively linked to their founder Silvio Berlusconi on two levels. On an ideological plane, Forza Italia/PdL are almost unanimously defined as a populist party (Mudde, 2004; Edwards, 2005; McDonnell, 2013; Fella and Ruzza, 2013; Rooduijn and Pawels, 2011). Lying on the center-right of the spectrum, the party is a rare case of successful populist party that cannot truly be defined as radical (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Bobba and McDonnell, 2016). First, the party's ideology is not radical: it advocates neoliberal polices like lower taxes and freer trade combined with strong populist critiques of the political system and elites[18] (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 35). However, the party lacks the two essential components of populist radical right parties, nativism and authoritarianism (Mudde, 2007). Forza Italia also differs from populist radical right parties because it was founded with the explicit aim of entering government quickly, i.e. with a strong catch-all component (Bobba and McDonnell, 2016). Since Berlusconi's debut in Italian politics 1994, or as he calls it, "entered the soccer pitch", he has used confrontational rhetoric of "us" versus "them": the Italy

[18] Berlusconi's Forza Italia differs from the European populist radical right and has more similarities with examples of neoliberal populism in Latin America, such as Menem in Argentina or Fujimori in Peru (Weyland, 1999; Conniff *et al.,* 1999).

that produces versus the Italy that wastes, the Italy that saves versus the Italy that steals and the Italy of the people versus the old parties. In the populist logic, the category of the "others" then is represented by the constructed category of "the Communists" that is used to define all parties and voters that do not share FI's political views.

Even though FI is almost unanimously classified as populist, the LN can be defined as the only populist *party* in Italy. FI's anti-political populism is entirely expressed through its leader, who has made it a trademark of his political style, but not a source of ideological inspiration (Tarchi 2008, p. 86). However, as the leader is such an important element in the formation and success of Forza Italia, his populist ideology can be extended to the whole party (Tarchi, 2008).

Emerging right after the collapse of the Italian party system, the newly formed party needed to attract as many voters as possible, so adopted a catch-all strategy (Ruzza and Fella, 2011). Ideologically, the party was characterized first by a strong opposition to the "Communists" and their allies. An important point to make is that the party rhetoric against the Communist "danger" was not only directed toward militants or voters that had a communist past but also against those who disagreed with the leader's ideals. The anti-communist sentiment was used as a cognitive shortcut for dislike by relatively uninformed voters (Brusattin, 2007). The political setting of 1994, with its absence of an incumbent and long shadows over the national economy, favored the adoption of a cognitive shortcut by most moderate centrist voters ready to support anybody but the Communists. FI gave the orphan voters an anti-communist discourse and organizational credibility. Most of its voters converged on FI because the other rightist parties like the LN and the Italian Popular Party (Partito Popolare Italiano) did not take advantage of the anti-communist discourse (Brusattin, 2007). Also, Forza Italia differentiated itself from each of the major parties of the Italian right such as the AN and its corporate nationalism and the LN and its racist liberalism (Edwards 2005). While decidedly different from these rightist parties, FI offered itself as a bridge between them. Even if, at some points, FI and the LN were ideologically close, Berlusconi represented a sort of "government populism" as opposed to Bossi's protest populism (Edwards, 2005, p. 238). Despite differences in the populisms of FI and the Lega, it can be also noted how Berlusconi built on the rise and success of the Lega Nord (Verbreek and Zaslove, 2015).

The political language used by Berlusconi also reflects a core populist trait – speaking the language of the ordinary man on the street, rather than the *politichese* of the traditional parties (Ruzza and Fella, 2011). This has been easier with the help of the appeal of the television that reached public of all classes across Italy. While FI's populism has a catch-all component, it also attached to a laissez faire, neo-liberal "thick ideology", given the leader's entrepreneurial interests. This ideology, consequently, has more appeal for certain sectors of Italian society, such as the self-employed, large and small business, and those sections of the middle class employed in those sectors (Ruzza and Fella, 2011, p. 166). This analysis sheds light on a paradox of Berlusconi's: despite his image as an entrepreneur and the long-running court cases arising out of his links with the old establishment and his consequent campaign against "judicial persecution", he has from the outset sought to differentiate himself from the very same establishment. The link with the "establishment" can be also seen in Berlusconi's political debut that "was not only the result of a straightforward business decision…but [also of] the mounting debt of his Finninvest group, [which] led the entrepreneur to conclude that he would not be able to survive the extinction of the political class" (Edwards, 2005, p. 237). Despite the strong connection with the country's political and economic elites, the discourse of the FI/PdL focuses on a strong critique of the elites. Regarding the subtype of populism, the scholars' classification of FI varies from patrimonial populism (Edwards 2005) to neoliberal populism (Verbeek and Zaslove, 2016, p. 309; see also Ignazi, 2005). Following Verbeek and Zaslove (2016), I classify Forza Italia as a type of neoliberal populism. In fact, while Berlusconi's ideology is clearly populist, FI can be defined as a traditional center-right European party. In other words, the "thick ideology" of FI is not that different from neoliberal rightist European parties such as the The Rebublican French party or Nea Demokratia in Greece. The policies and ideology that played a role in constructing the electoral appeal included lowering taxes, investment in public works and reform of the public administration suffused with visceral anti-communism.

With respect to the organizational strategies and mobilization techniques, as stated before, FI and the PdL were characterized by hyper-personalization. As I previously maintained, both parties were strongly connected to their leader,

businessman Silvio Berlusconi. Forza Italia appears to be a textbook example of one type of populist mobilization: personalist leadership.

As Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser point out, this type of mobilization is that of an individual (Berlusconi) who campaigns and gathers support on the basis of his personal appeal (2017, p. 42). As in most such cases, the leader built a political party to successfully contest elections. Crucial to Berlusconi's success was the use of television. His own networks allow the businessman to "tell his truth" to Italians without the need of institutional intermediation.

Organizationally, this direct and immediate contact with the people and the sudden electoral success of the party in the 1994 elections, only three months after its formation, has not allowed the formation of a party organization, given that the elements who occupied the high ranks of the party were the ones close to the leader. Following McDonnell (2013), Forza Italia and the PdL are both "personal parties". Indeed, both parties were ideologically and organizationally "whatever type of party Berlusconi wanted [them] to be" (McDonnell, 2013, p. 221).

McDonnell identifies four essential characteristics of a personal party (2013, p. 222). First, the party's expected lifespan is dependent on the political lifespan of its founder-leader. Second, the organization at the local level is neither constantly manifest nor permanent. Third, there is a strong concentration of formal and informal power in the hands of the founder-leader. With respect to this, as Maraffi (2008) pointed out, the fact that Berlusconi "owned" the electoral machine allowed him to dedicate little time to its supervision. Fourth, the party's image and campaign strategy in both first and second order elections are centered on the founder-leader.

With respect to the typology explained in chapter one, the strong dependence of both FI and the PdL on the founder-leader and the lack of formal organization and internal checks and balances enable the founder-leader to exercise his absolute and unrestricted will on the party. Both parties then fit in the personalist populist party typology (see figure 3.1).

3.2.3 Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance)

Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance), was officially created in 1995 as an electoral façade for the fascist movement Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI). The

evolution of the party can be divided into two phases. The first was centered on MSI's need to respond to the political opportunities of the Tangentopoli scandal and the collapse of the party system in 1994. During the second phase, the party distanced itself from its former fascist ideology after its 1995 Fiuggi convention and dissolved in favor of the new National Alliance. Gianfranco Fini was the leader of the party from its foundation till 2008, when he stepped down to become the President of the Chamber of Deputies. After Fiuggi, the party became a key player in the Italian party system that joined the center-right coalition in 1994, 1994, 2001 and 2006. Until its dissolution into the PdL in 2009, the AN remained troubled by an identity torn between a desire to exploit the opportunities provided by the ongoing transition of the Italian party system and an attachment to traditional certainties. In fact, the party was divided into factions, one headed by Fini and advocating a liberal stance and another more sympathetic to Berlusconi's neoliberal populism (Ruzza and Fella, 2011).

From the ideological point of view, the National Alliance program emphasized traditional Catholic values, law and order – especially toward the limitation of the immigration – support for Israel, European integration and the United States, and the prohibition of all drugs, including soft drugs. The emphasis on family as the pillar of the society, on traditional sexual mores, on Catholicism and on animosity towards the "libertarian pseudo culture of 1968 signal[ed] the party's anchorage to the conservative tradition" (Ignazi 2005, p. 338). Although the party approved of the market economy and held favorable views on liberalizations and the privatization of state industries, AN was to the left of Forza Italia on economic issues and sometimes supported statist policies. Moreover, as Ignazi pointed out, the call for social provisions for the underprivileged distanced the party from the New Right agenda and pushed the party towards a compassionate national-conservatism vein of statecraft (2005, p. 338-39).

Moreover, AN presented itself as a party promoting national cohesion, national identity and patriotism. In general, the examination of the party documents reveals a set of positions close to the European center-right mainstream. The preponderance of traditional themes such as the emphasis on family, the need for strong executive leadership, and strong law and order and immigrant control policies is notable (Ruzza and Fella 2011, p. 168).

Unlike the Lega Nord and Forza Italia, there is agreement that Alleanza

Nazionale cannot be categorized as populist. Analyzing the party discourse, Tarchi points out that among the triad of concepts most dear to neo-fascist culture in the domain of collective life – state, *popolo,* nation – it is the nation which has best survived the turning point which gave life to the Alleanza Nazionale (2010, p. 145). The "people" are mentioned rarely, first out of fear of being accused of populism and to avoid confusion with the LN (Tarchi, 2010, p. 145). In general, it can be said that the AN cannot be categorized as populist because its discourse privilege the concepts of nation and state over the concept of people. After the 1995 Fiuggi convention, the party adopted the position and the discourse of the classic conservative Western political right, characterized by a conservative stance on moral issues and a liberal stance on economic issues. While it can be said that the ideology of AN changed during the period, the organizational structure, and membership, of the old MSI remained intact. Moreover, the majority of AN candidates previously stood as MSI candidates (Ignazi, 2005).

From the organizational point of view, the party enjoyed a capillary presence across the territory with an organ in every region and various youth associations, since it inherited precedent MSI structures. With the new party statute of 1995, the traditional "mass party" structure was altered by introducing a new basic unit parallel to the local branch: the "environmental" circle which functioned to gather members in the social, cultural and economic spheres who shared a common interest beyond territorial divisions (Ignazi, 2005, p. 337). In other words, the party transitioned from a territorial to a functional logic. At the leadership level, the party president continued to be elected directly by the congress even if he was no longer responsible to the national collective bodies, acquiring a Caesarean profile (Ignazi 2005, p. 338). Despite increasing party centralization, the partial persistence of the old MSI structure counterbalanced the power of the new leadership, maintaining different factions within the party. In fact, as Tarchi pointed out, the party maintained the footprint of the old party of mass integration (1997; 2008). These organizational structure differences to the light organization of FI, as underlined below, caused problems within the PdL and were partially responsible for the abrupt end of this political experiment in 2013 (Tarchi, 2018). In sum, even if there is a tendency towards an accumulation of power in the hands of the leader, AN can be classified as a non-populist organic party.

3.2.4 The Italian Left: between Catholicism and Reformism

The history of the left in Italy after the collapse of the party system and the reshuffling of Italian politics is mainly a history of fragmentation, instability and absence of leadership. The leftwing parties inherited very deep political, cultural and organizational divisions. Moreover, two other factors contribute to maintaining these inheritances. First is the electoral law, which has been either proportional or, such as the law of 1993, majoritarian with proportional corrections. As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the main objective of the electoral reform of 1993 was reducing the fragmentation and factionalism that were the main characteristics of the Italian party system during the First Republic (Katz, 2001). Not only did party fragmentation actually increase as a consequence of the electoral reform, but the Italian electoral system used in 1994, 1996 and 2001 "does not give a decisive incentive for politically coherent party aggregation of a national character" (D'Alimonte and Chiaramonte, 1993, p. 545). In other words, one of the consequences of this electoral law was the formation of "spurious coalitions" (D'Alimonte, 1994). The center-right coalition was less affected by the consequences of the new electoral law since FI, the main coalition partner, was characterized by a personal organization (see below), which helped, at least partially, keep coalition discipline. On the contrary, the left was more affected by the ideological differences and a more collegial internal organization. While these features helped dialogue and dissent both within parties, the "spurious coalitions" did more harm to the left, since it lacked a strong leader to incentivize the party and maintain coalition discipline.

The second, related factor that influenced the fragmentation of the left after the party system collapse is the absence of a strong enough leader to keep the different factions together. The center-left coalition has been depicted as the "loser coalition" in this period mainly because the main actor, the antecedents of the current Democratic Party, failed to keep the coalition united and to deal with political blackmail by electorally small parties. As a consequence, leftwing actors during the 1994-2011 period had a hard time keeping parliamentary coalitions together.

Since 2007, the center-left part of the axis has been occupied by the Democratic Party (PD), which emerged from the merger of various center-left parties formerly

of l'Ulivo's list and the Union coalition in the 2006 general election. They notably included: the social-democratic Democrats of the Left (DS),successors of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which in 1998 became the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) after merging with several social-democratic parties (Labour Federation, Social Christians, etc.); the largely Catholic-inspired Margherita (Daisy), merger of the Italian People's Party (heir of the defunct Christian Democracy party's left wing), the Democrats and Italian Renewal in 2002 (Slomp, 2011, p. 406).

As I claimed in the first chapter, the electoral system introduced by the electoral laws of 1993 and 2005 had the effect of facilitating the creation two coalitions but, in order to do that, the main parties on the left and right needed small parties to remain competitive, giving the latter the power to blackmail the whole coalition with threat of government breakdown. This and the absence of a charismatic leader like the center-right's Berlusconi, who could have been the "glue" that kept the different parties together, made the center-left coalition much more fragmented that the center-right. As Diamanti (2007) observes, Romano Prodi, the key figure on the center-left, was not a "new" politician, had no party of his own and lacked the resources to create a party or create a broad political coalition *à la* Berlusconi. His political and personal background is the complete opposite of Berlusconi's. Moreover, Prodi did not belong to the traditional political class, but was perceived as a "technocrat" (Diamanti, 2007, p. 738)

In this sense, Prodi's candidacy reflected the weakness of the center-left coalition: they were too divided, could not impose their own leaders on the entire coalition and lacked the necessary legitimacy to govern due to their communist past (Diamanti, 2007, p. 738).

With the formation of the PD as a new party that tried to cohere the majority of the parties on the left side of the political spectrum, the problem of fragmentation was partially tackled, but not totally resolved because, as Bordignon (2014) points out, the PD's DNA contains the colors and the bodies of the great parties of the twentieth century which were so often at odds with each other. The colors are white and red, which symbolize the two more relevant "ideologies" of Italian politics during the last century: Communism and Catholicism (p. 2). So, it can be said that factionalism remained a problem even after the creation of the Democratic Party.

The center-left's other main problem before the emergence of the PD, the lack of strong leadership, was not taken care of since "this party model was designed to represent a society rigidly divided into classes, in which the individual dimension was always subordinated to the collective one" (Bordignon, 2014, p. 2).

On the ideological level, given to the different factions within the Italian left and the two souls (the Catholics and the former Communists) within the PD, it is difficult to say which was the main discourse of the coalition, if one existed. It can be said that the opposition to the center-right has strengthened the left's support for state intervention and suspicion of federalism (Diamanti, 2007, p. 743). The ideological differences, first between the left parties and later within the PD, are mainly about religion, with the Daisy faction close to the Catholic Church, and about international affairs, with the radical left opposed to U.S. foreign policy. As Bordanini, Virgilio and Raniolo expected, religious issues and ethical themes hindered the building of a shared party identity and political culture (2008, p. 303). With respect to the populist ideology, the left's discourse, with the exception of di Pietro's Italia dei Valori, during this period presented no features of the populist discourse. In this period, neither references to the "pure" people nor to the "corrupt elites" were present in the center-left discourse.

Organizationally, what kind of party is the PD? Looking at the organizational choices during the constitutional process of the party in 2007, the party model is still open for at least two reasons. First, it would be pointless to look for an anachronistic cohesion typical of the mass parties and, even now after 10 years since its formation, the process of institutionalization of the PD is an uncertain and open process (Bordanini, Virglio and Raniolo, 2008, p. 316). For these reasons the party, on the, organizational grounds, has been defined as "franchise party" or "stratarchic party" (Katz and Mair 1995; Carty, 2004). As such, it has to face the stratarchic imperative (Carty, 2004), i.e. to balance thrusts towards autonomy coming from the different faces of the party and the need for integration and coordination. This balance is crucial, above all, in three areas: institutions, (central) organization and territory (Bordanini, Virglio and Raniolo, 2008, p. 317). It has relatively more capillary diffusion on the territory and less dependence on a leader compared with other parties. Instead, the PD seems to have the opposite problem: the absence of a recognized leader has on many occasions affected

the effectiveness of the party. Since the PD does not adhere to the populist ideology and does not rely on a charismatic leader but can count on many internal checks and balances both at a national and subnational level, it fits in the non-populist organic party type.

3.2.5 Italia dei Valori (IdV)

The IdV (Italy of Values) is an Italian center-left political party founded on March 21, 1998 by Antonio di Pietro, former magistrate during the Mani Pulite (Clean Hands) trial, which brought to light a system of national political power founded on corruption.

Following solitary participation in the 2001 general election, it joined the center-left alliance, participating in the elections in the Union of Romano Prodi's coalition in 2005 and 2006 and in the 2008 election in coalition with the Democratic Party.

In 2006, disagreements arose between the Union (the antecedents of the PD) and the IdV. In July 2006, a controversy emerged within the ruling coalition: IdV and its leader, di Pietro, opposed the adoption of an indictment law supported, conversely, by legislators from both coalitions. Di Pietro's rejected proposal was to exclude financial, corporate and corruption offenses from the indictment. The law would affect approximately 12,000 prisoners. Regarding the ideology and discourse, the IdV is labelled as populist by some scholars (Caiani and Graziano, 2016; Braghiroli and Verzichelli, 2011). There is no doubt, analyzing some of its leader's public discourse, that the main elements of the populist discourse are present. Di Pietro appeared in front the Senate before the vote, alongside the Lega Nord, which was also opposed. Following the protest, di Pietro claimed:

> It is disconcerting, really disconcerting, to see the Union abandon the platform it presented citizens and for which it was elected. The citizen counts for less than nothing; he can neither choose his representative [due to lack of preferential voting] nor see the government's platform respected. What use is the parliament today? How estranged is it from the voters? This is a question we politicians must ask ourselves and which must soon be answered (Giangrande, 2016 p. 471).

Here emerges the idea that politics that should be an expression of the will of the people yet is not. In fact, the parliamentary institution mediates the will of the people and distorts it. Consequently, the people have their voice taken away from

them. Moreover, the manifesto for the 2001 election stated, “we address all those who, regarding the moral issue have seen the differences between right and left disappear because both sides intended politics as pure management of power” (Italia del Valori, Si Riparte dai Cittadini, 2001, p. 2). The differences between left and right are blurred because both options are morally corrupt. In other words, the element that in the first place differentiates the IdV from other political forces is not the policies they propose but the fact that they are morally pure while the others are not.

From the organization point of view, IdV has been defined a personal party on the model of Berlusconi’s FI and PdL (Musella, 2014; 2015). The party depended almost entirely on the charismatic appeal of its founder-leader: until 2010, it was the only party, apart from Forza Italia, to reserve for the founder-leader the unchecked power to decide candidacies for national and European elections (Di Virgilio and Giannetti, 2011; McDonnell, 2013). As a consequence, the party fits in the personalist populist type.

In the last section, I examine the populist in government and the opposition and, the reaction of the non-populist parties. The section is divided into sub-sections which analyze the four populist governments, Berlusconi I-II-III-IV. The objective is twofold. The first is to analyze the characteristics of the populist pole. Second, analyzing the reactions of the non-populist parties may reveal whether an anti-populist discourse emerged in the system. In this way, it is possible to infer whether the populism/anti-populism cleavage fully emerged and structured the party system throughout the period under analysis.

3.3 The populist pole

As shown in the precedent sections, in the 1994-2011 period, the populist pole emerged with a certain configuration. On the populist side, essentially on the right side of the political spectrum, there were the regionalist – then populist radical right – Lega Nord and, later, the center-right neoliberal populism of Berlusconi’s Forza Italia. The parties that did not adopt a populist discourse were the center-left coalition and some extreme left forces. A peculiar case is Alleanza Nazionale, which is not a populist party but has been an ally in all five populist administrations.

In the following sub-chapter, I describe populists in government. As I mentioned above, between 1994 and 2011, the populist parties presented themselves in a coalition together four times (1994, 2001, 2006, 2008), winning in three (1994, 2001 and 2008), but they were only able to finish an entire legislative term once, in 2001. In order to analyze the populist pole, I study the populist parties in government. Moreover, analyzing the discourse of the non-populist parties, I assess the emergence of an anti-populist pole.

3.3.1 The populists in government

The aim of this sub-chapter is to study the features of the populist pole in power. This is important for at least two reasons. First, analyzing the changes in the discourse of the populists in power and in opposition clarifies the relation between the elements within the populist pole and its changes during the period. Moreover, the changing of the discourse within the populist pole may help understand the emergence, or absence, of the anti-populist pole.

The first populist government in Italy began in 1994 with the alliance between Berlusconi's Forza Italia and the Lega Nord. During this legislature, three other parties were part of the electoral coalition: the MSI (later AN), the Unione di Centro (UdC) and the Centro Cristiano Democratico (CCD). In general terms, the 1994 populist alliance was quite distinct from the others because it was only based on electoral (numerical) evaluations. The core of the coalition, Berlusconi's brand-new Forza Italia, needed to form a coalition with parties with more solid organizations and greater presence in the territory, such as the Lega in the north and MSI/AN in the south. Rounding out the coalition were the Cristian Democratic Centre (CCD) and the UdC, both formed by former Christian Democrats. The governing coalition broke down just eight months after the election, in January 1995, for two primary reasons. First, there were no agreements on policy, regarding federalism in particular. Federalism was a main issue at that time for the LN, which advocated the formation of a federal state and even for the secession of the northern regions, so-called Padania. According to the Lega's leader, Umberto Bossi, Forza Italia and other coalition partners failed to keep commitments made before the 1994 election.

Moreover, Bossi did not agree on the reforms of the pension system and

broadcast systems, mainly of television, and on the Biondi justice reform. One of the most controversial points of this reform concerned the judicial resolution of Tangentopoli, the massive 1990s political corruption scandal. According to Bossi, the plea bargains and the sentence reductions for those who cooperated with the Mafia contributed to "mak[ing] the society unsafe" (Repubblica).[19]

Given that the LN at first espoused an anti-corruption discourse (Hopkin, 2004; McDonnell, 2006), it is not surprising that its leaders were not prone to condone these "privileges" to representatives of the "old" and "corrupt" political class. With the last pillar of the governing collation, Alleanza Nazionale, joining in protest, the decree was withdrawn.

After the government breakdown, the confrontation between the two leaders assumed strong tones. During his resignation statement in the parliament, FI's leader described his former ally as a "disillusioned man", a "political corpse" and someone with whom with whom he "will never sit down at the table [with] again" (Il Fatto Quotidiano).[20]

The LN's leader used no softer tones and in a September 1995 interview with the Corriere della Sera, a popular Italian newspaper, warned Berlusconi "you will have to escape from the North at night with your wife and your children and suitcases. They understand you're a Mafioso." Bossi's statement compares Berlusconi to the LN's enemies, southerners who in the LN's ideology are linked with the Mafia (15 September 1995, p.9).

In general, Bossi's and the LN's discourse between 1995 and 2001 compared Berlusconi's party to the old traditional parties. During the 2005 annual Lega meeting in Pontida, Bossi asserted that "the media are supporting the idea that only two poles exist: the left and the right…like in the old times Communists and Fascists. And they do that to avoid the contraposition centralism vs. federalism which pushes toward the overcoming of the old system" (Bossi, Raduno Annuale Lega Nord di Pontida, 1995). Even after the success of the populist coalition in 1994, Bossi claimed in an interview that the FI lacked an *idem sentire*, a common ideal that rises after years of fighting. The falling-out between the two parties reflects the difficulty regional populists have participating in national government

[19] https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1994/07/08/maroni-boccia-la-riforma-biondi.html
[20] https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2012/01/26/bozza-insulti-bossi-berlusconi/186654/

coalitions. As Albertazzi and McDonnell note, the key was to choose the “right” friends and enemies within a government (2005, p. 952). This peculiarity differentiated the 1994 government from the successive populist alliance during Berlusconi’s second government (2001-2006). During this legislature, the LN was Berlusconi’s most faithful ally while often at odds with the other elements of the coalition, the AN and the Catholics of the UdC. Despite having lasted less than a year in the first Berlusconi-led coalition in 1994, the Lega managed to stay in government for the entire legislative period (through the second and third Berlusconi governments).

Moreover, it succeeded in presenting itself simultaneously as both “the opposition within government” and as a driving force behind high-profile areas of government policy (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005, p. 953). How did it manage that? While in 1994, Bossi focused on Berlusconi as his main enemy within the coalition, from 2001 on, Bossi sensibly allied himself with his fellow Lombard politician in a “northern axis” against the pro-southern “old professional politicians” of the Lega’s junior coalition partners, the post-Fascist Alleanza Nazionale (AN) and the former Christian Democrats of the Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e Democratici di Centro (UdC). These forces had moved closer together over the last years, clearly with an eye towards a post-Berlusconi future center-right (Albertazzi and McDonnnell, 2005, p. 954). Berlusconi then in the LN’s imaginary and discourse changed his image from a representative of the old politics and the traditional left-right cleavage to a new politician of the northern axis opposed to the “old professional politicians” such as the AN and UDC parliamentarians. Following the electoral victory in 2001, it was evident that the coalition was different in aspects to the one of 1994. First, the LN was electorally weaker in 2001 and losing representatives in the parliament from 1994. The second difference was the special relationship that Bossi enjoyed with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and with Finance Minister Tremonti.

As Diamanti and Lello (2005) note, the government seemed to be divided into two groups: the inner circle of the “new northern pro-business politicians” from Lombardy – Bossi, Berlusconi and Tremonti and the other faction of pro-south, public-sector sympathizing old politicians. On the policy level, in return his

support for devolution,[21] Berlusconi received backing from the LN on personal issues such as the reform of the justice system and media regulation. Still, the LN played "opposition within government" along with the other parties of the coalition, "guilty" of plotting a post-Berlusconi era organized on First Republic lines.

The first and second Berlusconi administrations differed also on the plan of the policies implemented. Analysis of the policies implemented during the populist government is relevant because some authors maintain that holding office often produces a taming effect. In other words, the radicalism that wins populists votes is counterbalanced by the concessions that need to be made to moderate forces in order to stay in government (Minkenberg, 2001, p. 2; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005; Akkermann and Rooduijn, 2015). Furthermore, it is worth noting that even when populists are the majority force in a governmental coalition but still lack the capacity to initiate far-reaching institutional reforms, such in Italy, "courts often play [] an important role in taming populist actors and striking down some of their policy changes" (Taggart and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2016, p. 358). In a similar vein, Albertazzi and McDonnell (2005) indeed observe that "the impact of the populist in government tends to be felt more in terms of a changing political culture than actual public policies" (p. 960).

While there was little agreement on policy during the short-lived first Berlusconi administration, during the second "in order to reassure voters that the [Casa delle Libertà] and the Lega were serious about governing Bossi and Berlusconi signed an agreement which supposedly guaranteed rapidly approval of devolution in return for solid and enduring Lega support for Berlusconi and his policies" (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005, p. 956). Consequently, in March 2005 the Senate approved legislation on the so-called devolution after LN minsters threatened to resign and Bossi partially returned to political life after a serious illness. The Lega considered the devolution of some powers to the regions as a first necessary step toward the creation of a federal state. The taming effect partially occurred with respect to the other issue close to the party's interests:

[21] Devolution is one of the terms (e.g. federalism, regionalism, secession) used by the Lega Nord to frame the issue of Northern authority that underpinned their narrative of territorial distinctiveness (see Albertazzi Giovannini and Seddone 2018, p. 663).

immigration. The 2002 Bossi-Fini law on immigration was one of the toughest in Europe, at least on paper (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005). The law was seen as an answer to the “soft” policies previously adopted by the center-left, like the 1998 Turco-Napolitano Law. The new law introduced criminal sanctions for persons caught illegally entering the country or returning after being expelled. Under the new law, an immigrant stopped without a residence permit would be accompanied to the border and expelled immediately. Immigrants were also subject to arrest and detention of six to twelve months, to be followed by immediate deportation, if caught attempting to re-enter Italy before the expiration of a re-entry ban. A second offence is punishable by up to four years’ imprisonment. The permit for residence of immigrants has been strictly linked to a work contract. Furthermore, under the new law, the time limit for confinement in detention centers whilst waiting for extradition was extended from thirty to sixty days and asylum seekers were placed in detention while awaiting asylum review. Also, the new law required fingerprint registration of all foreigners applying for residence. Although the law was seen internally and abroad as very strict, the actual results were mixed. A crucial point was *sanatoria* (amnesty), that despite the Lega’s position, was granted to about 700,000 irregular immigrants, far surpassing the number of amnesties granted by the Dini government in 1995 and Prodi government in 1998 combined (Colombo and Sciortino, 2003). In return of his support for devolution and the immigration law, Berlusconi received the backing of the LN on issues of personal interest to him, such as the reform of the justice system and media regulation (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2005, p. 956). This arrangement produced, for example, the 2002 Cirami Law which permitted legitimate suspicion (*legittimo sospetto*) of the impartiality of the judges to serve as a basis for recusal and removal of suits. As for media regulation, in 2003, Parliament passed a decree creating an exception for Rete 4, one of Berlusconi’s networks, to permit it to continue analog broadcasting.

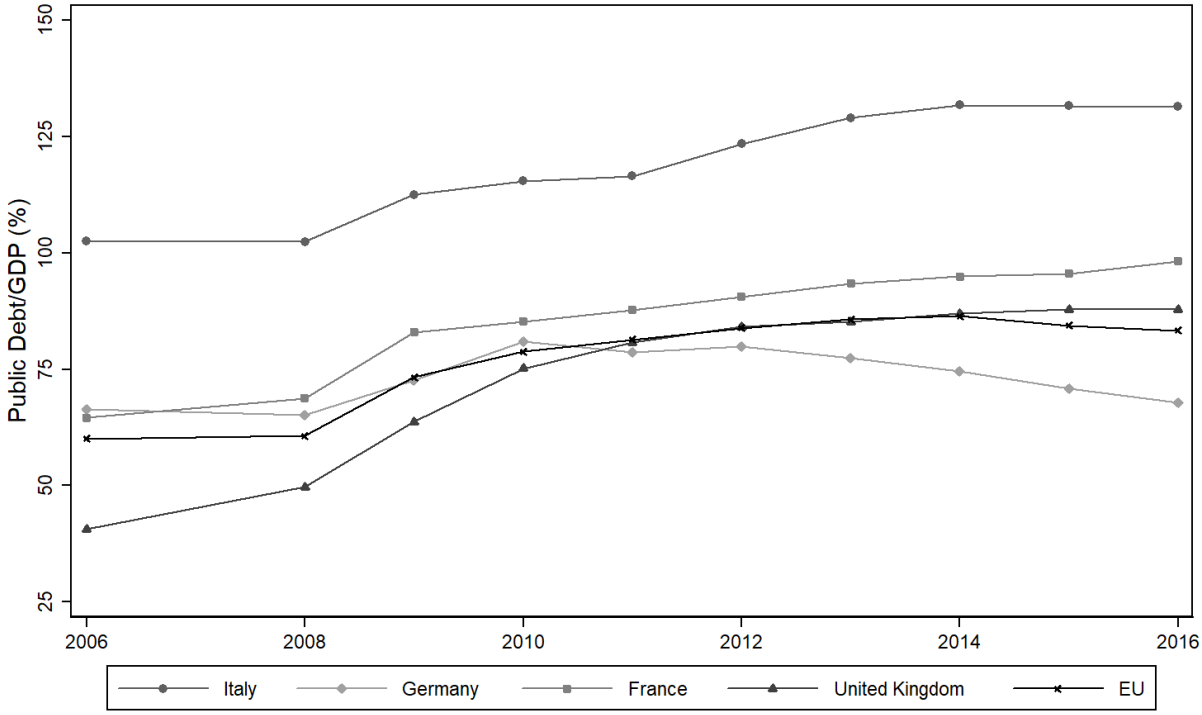
The populist parties remained in the opposition after the victory of the center-left coalition in 2006 election and during the second Prodi government, which broke down in May of 2008. However, only two days later, populist parties in Italy had another chance to be in government in 2008 when the center-right coalition formed by the PdL and Lega Nord succeeded in the general election. Nonetheless, after almost 20 years of electoral success, the center-right populist

coalition seemed to have unraveled by the end of 2011, when the debt crisis precipitated by the Great Recession hit Italy.

Indeed, the financial crisis played a major role in the breakdown of the fourth Berlusconi government, which enjoyed strong numbers upon its inauguration and achieved several election promises, like the abolition of taxes on one's first house, the "save banks decree" (*decreto salva banche*) in December 2008 and fiscal federalism, sponsored by the Lega, in May 2009. In return Parliament approved in August 2009 a tax amnesty (*scudo fiscale*) for undeclared offshore assets with the Lega's support. This law allows taxpayers to disclose financial activities and properties illegally held abroad and unknown to the tax administration, subject to payment of a forfeit tax but without being subject to certain tax assessments or criminal charges (Mastellone, 2010). However, the international situation started to affect Italy in early 2010. The relationship between the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister, Tremonti, started to crumble because of the massive cuts needed to respond to the crisis. The Italian situation was even more delicate because of the country's high public debt: always quite high, by 2015 it had reached 130 percent of GDP (OECD data).[22] In chart 3.2 it is possible to observe the public debt/ GDP ratio for Italy, Germany, France UK and the mean for EU countries.

[22] https://data.oecd.org/gga/general-government-debt.htm

Graph 3.5. Percentage of public debt/GDP in Italy, Germany, France, UK and the mean of EU countries



Source: Elaboration of the author (OECD).

On several occasions the Prime Minister tried to reassure the country and the financial markets that the economic and political situation was solid. In November 2011 at the G-20 in Cannes, Berlusconi claimed “it seems to me that there is no strong crisis in Italy. Consumption has not diminished, it is hard to book a seat on planes, and restaurants are full of people.” However, the economic and financial reality of the country was degrading, with the spread between the Italian and the German bonds reaching very high levels, gross domestic product falling and rising unemployment, mostly among the young people, reaching 29 percent in 2011(Istat, 2011). Small companies, industrialized regions and production were the worst affected. The combined effect of the international crisis and domestic problems, such as the numerous trials involving the Prime Minister, weakened further his position, leading him to resign in November 2011.

To summarize the first part of this chapter, as described above, it can be said that the so-called populist pole between 1994 and 2011 was composed mainly of right and center-wing parties, namely the populist regionalist Lega Nord and

Berlusconi's neoliberal populist Forza Italia. The only exception is Italy of Values, the political party founded by former Mani Pulite judge Antonio di Pietro in 1998.

As we can see below (table 3.1.), from the point of view of the parties' organizational features we can observe that both FI (and the Casa delle Libertà) and di Pietro's IdV can be described as personal political parties (McDonnell, 2013). As described in chapter one, personal parties are those in which the party's expected lifespan is dependent on the political lifespan of its founder-leader (Kefford and McDonnell, 2018). On the contrary, though its secretary, Umberto Bossi, is a strong leader, the Lega Nord managed to build a denser organizational network containing checks and balances that limit the strength of the leader. As mentioned in chapter one, following Sartori (2005a) a party's organizational density can be described as "the power of penetration of a given party, both in terms of intensity and reach" (p. 8). The main parties of the right-wing populist government then, having developed poor organizational density, seems to cast doubts on the consistency not only of the political right in Italy but also on possibility of crystallization of the populism/anti-populism political cleavage (see figure 3.2).

Table 3.2. *Main parties in the Italian party system (1994-2008) on the bases of the presence/absence of populist ideology and organizational density*

Organizational Density / Populist Ideology	High	Low
Yes	Forza Italia – M5S - IdV	Lega (Nord)
No	PD – AN	

After having observed the emergence a populist pole in the Italian party system and its characteristics on both the ideological and organizational point of view during the period between the collapse of the system and the breakdown of the fourth Berlusconi government in 2011, there is another issue we need to address

before the end of this chapter. This issue is related to the emergence of the other pole of the cleavage: the anti-populist pole. To demonstrate whether the cleavage fully emerged, we need to answer the following question: has the anti-populist pole emerged in the 1994-2011 period? This is a relevant question because for a cleavage to structure a party system, both poles need to have emerged. In the following section I address this question by analyzing the responses of non-populist parties to the emergence of the populist pole.

3.4 The anti-populist pole: elitism, pluralism or neither of them?

To determine whether an anti-populist pole emerged, "anti-populist pole" needs definition. How we know that an anti-populist discourse has developed? First, to recognize the development of an anti-populist discourse, we need to remember that the conceptual opposites of populism are elitism and pluralism. Elitists believe that "the people" are dangerous, dishonest and vulgar and that "the elites" are superior not only in moral, but also in cultural and intellectual terms. As Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser put it, "elitists want politics to be exclusively or predominantly an elite affair in which the people do not have a say; they either reject democracy altogether or support a limited model of democracy" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 7). Following Stravakakis, elitist anti-populism "reduces politics to an administrative enterprise, stripped from the elements of participation and open democratic deliberation, offering no real choice between different alternatives, leaving it prey to the supposedly objective instructions of experts and technocrats — such as independent central bankers — who *always know better" (2014, p. 506).*

But elitism is not the only opposite pole of populism. Pluralism is the opposite of the dualistic perspective (pure people vs. corrupt elite) of populism *and* elitism. From a pluralist point of view, society is divided into a broad variety of partly overlapping social groups with different ideas and interests and, in this sense, diversity is seen a strength rather that a weakness (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 7). Taking those descriptions of the anti-populist pole, I try to answer two further questions in this section. First, how do we know whether an anti-populist ideology or discourse has emerged? As in the case of the populism, we need to analyze the discourse of non-populist parties. I believe that anti-populism can manifest itself in two ways. First anti-populism may imply a

further moralization of the public discourse. In fact, it can be the case that non-populist political actors develop a discourse similar to the populist ones, presenting a different definition of the "people." As Mudde (2018) points out, since the people are a constructed entity defining them "is a big part of the political struggle for populists and vice versa."[23] Often the response to populism is reclaiming "the people," which in some cases turns into anti-populism. In this scenario, anti-populism is based on the same moral distinction of populism. The only difference lies in the construction of the category of "the people." This is the more basic manifestation of anti-populism. An example of this kind of anti-populism is represented by Hillary Clinton speaking about the "deplorables" who would vote for Trump (Mudde, 2018). This kind of anti-populism is elitist in the sense that conceives of society as divided into groups: populists, who are bad by definition, and anti-populists, who are good since they oppose populists.

On the other hand, anti-populists can develop a pluralistic discourse. This more sophisticated type of discourse avoids describing the people singularly. Anti-populists in this case do not need to reclaim the people, at least not as a unified category. Pluralist anti-populists, indeed, deny that society is divided into two homogeneous groups. Instead, society needs to be conceived of as formed by different groups. The difference between groups is moral. People are not "bad" or "good" depending on political alignment.

I will address the last question: did an anti-populist pole, with pluralist or elitist features, emerge in Italy in the 1994-2011 period? While there was major backlash against the *ad personam* law Berlusconi introduced, an anti-populist discourse and ideology did not develop, at least during that period. It seems more like an anti-Berlusconi, not anti-populist, discourse developed in Italy during this period. This anti-Berlusconism opposes essentially two aspects of Berlusconi government. First, it opposes certain policies that the populist right-wing coalition implemented, chiefly those that benefitted Berlusconi and the people close to him.

Opponents rallied against the populist pole on the basis on their aversion toward certain policies which were perceived to be mainly designed to solve

[23] https://icds.ee/mudde-populism-is-based-on-morals/

some of the leader's private issues, such as the so called Tremonti bis, the abolition of tax on inheritance and donations for large assets in 2001 or Law 61/2001, by which false accounting was decriminalized. This law allowed the Prime Minister to be fully acquitted in two trials, the "All-Iberian 2" and "Sme-Ariosto 2." The second reason for anti-Berlusconism relates to Berlusconi's career-long leadership style. Throughout his political career, Berlusconi wielded an enormous concentration of formal and informal power. His influence was such that he wrought changes in Italian politics not only in its inter-party competition but also in its discourse. The Italian left, first the PDS and from 2007 onwards the PD, was heavily "influenced by an anti-Berlusconi rhetoric" (Anselmi and De Nardi, 2018). On the same note, Bosco and McDonnell maintain that the Italian party system has been dominated since 1994 by a "pro-anti Berlusconi cleavage" that seemed to experience some changes only in 2011 as the effects of the financial crisis hit Italy (2012, p. 37).

Although certain policies promoted by FI, the PdL and the Lega Nord were opposed by the non-populist parties, a clear anti-populist discourse did not emerge in this period. The non-populist oppositions did not develop an anti-populist discourse, either pluralist or elitist, on a large scale. Occasionally opposition parties, mainly the mainstream left, accuse Berlusconi of being a populist and the leader of FI/PDL responds by calling these forces elitist, but a clearly anti-populist discourse does not seem to have emerged, at least before the breakdown of the fourth Berlusconi government.

3.5 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to analyze the emergence of populism/anti-populism cleavage in the Italian party system from after the party system collapse to the breakdown of the fourth Berlusconi government. Through the analysis of secondary literature, party manifestos, public speeches and television programs, I maintained that a populist pole emerged, formed by the Lega Nord, a regionalist populist party that changed into a populist RRP, Forza Italia/ Popolo delle Libertà led by Silvio Berlusconi, defined as neoliberal populist party, and the ant-corruption Italia dei Valori (IdV) led by former Mani Pulite judge Antonio di Pietro. However, for a cleavage to emerge, both poles must form.

It does not look like in the period analyzed an anti-populist pole emerged, even if the populist forces were in power for almost nine years. Rather, the populists have been opposed mainly on the basis of their policy choices rather than on their populist ideology. Even if on some occasion there have been “accusations” of populism, a clear anti-populist discourse, whether elitist or pluralist, did not fully develop. Instead, an anti-Berlusconi discourse emerged, especially from within the Democratic Party and previously the Left Democrats (Anselmi and de Nardis, 2018).Moreover, I have analyzed the organizational features of the parties in the system since that can shed light on the possibility of crystallization and duration of the populism/anti-populism political cleavage. I categorized parties according to both the presence/absence of a populist set of ideas in their discourse and by high/low level of organizational density (see table 3.1). With respect to the so-called populist pole, Forza Italia and IdV, a dominant and junior partner in the right-wing coalition, respectively, showed strong dependence on their respective founder-leaders without organisms that can effectively counterbalance their power. For this reason, both FI (and the PdL) and the IdV are cases of personal populist parties. Conversely, the LN, despite the relevance of the founder-leader, developed a more capillary organization and does not seem to depend only on the founder-leader.

Chapter 4

New Populism Vs. Old Populism and the Emergence of the Anti-Populist Pole

As seen above, the period between 1994 and 2011 was characterized by the emergence of a populist pole. This populist pole was formed mainly of right-wing parties, namely Silvio Berlusconi's FI and the Lega Nord. Conversely, the discourse of non-populist parties does not show anti-populist traits. Nevertheless, until 2011, the discourse of left-wing parties has been characterized by an anti-Berlusconi stance (De Giorgi, 2016).

This chapter covers the period between the fall of the fourth Berlusconi government in November 2011 and the Constitutional Referendum of December 2016. In the political arena, this period was characterized by the permanence of the so-called populist pole on the right side of the political spectrum, with Lega Nord's electoral performance improving and subtype of populism shifting, from regionalist populism to radical right populism, and the weakening of Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia. On the left, with the disappearance of di Pietro's Italia dei Valori, the Democratic Party consolidated as a centre-left government alternative despite a rise in internal disputes, and the extreme left declined. The analysis of Italian politics, more specifically, of the cleavages that came to structure the party system during the period under consideration, can provide insight into possible coalition formation patterns beyond those accounted for by the classical coalition theory literature (Golder, 2006). In fact, if the parties compete along two (or more) the axes, the feasible coalitions are different from the ones possible when the only axis structuring the party is the traditional left-right spectrum. Three essential arguments are developed in this chapter.

The first argument relates to the appearance of a second wave of populism in Italy during the Great Recession, represented by Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement. The emergence of this movement was mainly a consequence of the implementation of neoliberal adjustment measures, but also, more generally, it was the result of the politicization of the widespread anti-political sentiment that has affected Italy since the collapse of the party system. Moreover, the discourse

of the M5S effectively politicized corruption, exploiting the scandals that involved representatives of the main parties in the early 2010's.

The Movement's populist discourse is peculiar because it altered the dynamics of competition in the system, framed against the country's entire political class, even against the still-present populists of the first wave (i.e. the Lega Nord and Forza Italia).

Second, after the emergence of the so-called populist pole in the previous period analyzed (1994-2011) the populism/anti-populism cleavage came to completely structure the party system, since non-populist parties adopt a consistent anti-populist discourse. Essentially two types of anti-populist discourse were articulated in this period. On the one hand, Monti's technical government articulated an anti-populist discourse with elitist features. Being elitist, the technocratic government inverted the logic of the populist discourse, maintaining that the elites should rule because "they know better." On the other hand, an anti-populist discourse, still elitist but with different features, was articulated by the centre-left Democratic Party in the electoral campaign for the general election in 2013 until at least the constitutional referendum of 2016.

Third, the emergence of the M5S had a double impact on interparty competition. After the emergence of an anti-populist discourse concomitant with the neoliberal adjustment measures implemented by Mario Monti's technocratic administration, the appearance of the Movement led a further polarization of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. Furthermore, the difficulty of positioning M5S on the left-right axis of competition, the socioeconomic cleavage parties have partially lost relevance in structuring the Italian party system.

In sum, during the 2011-2016 period, the populist pole changed its configuration, partially enabling the reaction of the non-populist parties that developed an anti-populist discourse.

The chapter is divided as follows.

The first section offers a short overview of Italian politics between 2011 and December 2016. During this period, one national election took place and three administrations were formed, including the Monti government. Their average duration was 617 days (less than two years). In is worth noting that the most important feature of this period was the so-called Great Recession, the financial

and economic crisis that hit hard Southern European countries mainly in the form of a sovereign debt crisis.

In the second section I analyze the ideology and organizational features of the new actors in the system: Mario Monti's technocratic government and the Five Star Movement (M5S). As I recalled in the previous chapter, the analysis of the discourse is relevant, first, for understanding whether the configuration of the populist pole has changed with respect to the previous period and whether or not an anti-populist ideology has surfaced.

The analysis at the organizational level, on the other hand, as covered in chapter three, is necessary to make inferences about the duration of the parties in the system. This could seem obvious for the classic literature on parties but the literature on populism, focusing on party ideology or on charismatic leadership, has often neglected the analysis of the organizational features of parties, with a few exceptions (Heinish and Mazzoleni, 2016; McDonnell 2013; Kefford and McDonnell, 2018). As a consequence, both the Monti administration and the M5S are relevant in the analysis of the populism/anti-populism cleavage, since each of them took opposite positions on the moral dispute between "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite." First, Monti presented himself and his technocratic government as a solution to the fecklessness of the parties in the system and thus may be interpreted as a response to the populist coalition in power, Berlusconi's FI and the LN, for most of the Second Republic. The second new political actor, the Five Star Movement, founded by comedian Beppe Grillo and web strategist Gianlaberto Casaleggio in 2009, which participated for the first time in the general elections in 2013 and won more than the 25 percent of the vote, may be interpreted as a response to the economic stabilization measures adopted by Monti's technocratic government (Mosca, 2014).The M5S was able to politicize the anti-political sentiment in the Italian society using the convergence of most parties on the neoliberal measures of economic stabilization implemented during Monti administration. This allowed Grillo and the Movement to create the rhetoric of "they are all the same", in particular regarding the two main parties in the system, the Democratic Party (PD) and the Popolo delle Libertà (PdL). To underline that the interests and the values of the two major electoral forces in the country were the same, Grillo renamed them together "PD-

L" (PD minus L). This rhetoric worked also during the Letta government which enjoyed the parliamentary support of most parties in the system.

Finally, in the third part of the chapter, I analyze the non-populist parties in power which have developed an anti-populist discourse. From the technocratic government until the campaign for the constitutional referendum of 2016, two kinds of anti-populist discourses were articulated. This implies a study first of the technocratic government and then the analysis of the other type of anti-populist discourse, neither entirely elitist nor entirely pluralist, developed by the Democratic Party. This second type of anti-populist discourse, which still can be described as elitist, consists in targeting specific populist actors and causing a full moralization of the political debate in the country, since this kind of anti-populist discourse reinforces in some way the populist contraposition between the "good" and the "evil." This type of anti-populism, analyzed in chapter three, has been characterized as a sort of basic anti-populism.

The analysis of the ideology and organization of the actors in the system is relevant to determining which cleavages structure the party system and to shedding light on the possible duration of those cleavages. Moreover, being able to map the position of the parties in the political space give us insight into the possible future dynamics of coalition formation. In fact, if the left-right axis is not the only one that structures the system, we could better explain some the alliances of parties that are not programmatically close one another. In other words, populism, i.e. the thin ideology that two parties share, may function as the "glue" between them even if they are not close on the ideological plane.

4.1 Overview 2011-2016: The Great Recession and its consequences for the Italian party system

The effects of the global economic crisis hit Italy in 2011. That year represented a turning point for many reasons. First, the effects of the so-called Great Recession put an end to the fourth Berlusconi government in November. Furthermore, as explored below, two new actors entered the system: the Movimento Cinque Stelle (Five Star Movement) and Mario Monti's technocratic government. Both these political actors are relevant for the structure of the party system, representing changes both in the populist and non-populist side.

The period analyzed in this chapter begins with the breakdown of the fourth Berlusconi government in November 2011 and ends with the constitutional referendum in December 2016.

To fully understand the characteristics of the period in question, it is important to analyze the characteristics and the consequences of the Great Recession and its major economic and political consequences for Southern European countries.

The term Great Recession has been used in recent years to refer to the generalized period of economic decline in world markets during the late 2000s and the early 2010s. The crisis had its origins in the sub-prime mortgage crisis of 2007-2009 in the U.S. and spread around the world, though not homogenously. In general, Southern European countries and Ireland experienced severe macroeconomic consequences. These European peripheral countries experienced the Great Recession mainly as a sovereign debt crisis, which exploded in 2010 when international financial markets' doubts about the ability of the Greek government to repay its bonds led to the country losing access to the private bond market (Armingeon and Baccaro, 2012, p. 163). The most obvious economic response during crises such as the Great Recession was currency devaluation. However, Southern European countries' policy responses were limited because, as members of the Eurozone, devaluation was not a viable option.

Permitting domestic inflation to fight the debt problem was not an option either, given the inflation aversion of the European Central Bank (ECB). As Armingeon and Baccaro (2012) pointed out, these countries were forced into pro-cyclical austerity measures in a time of recession. In Southern European countries, the only remaining option was "internal devaluation", namely to "engineer a recession strong enough to lower wages below productivity and make up for the lost competitiveness" (2012, p. 168). In fact, independent of the political orientation of the government, the policy responses were quite similar: fiscal consolidation and structural measures were implemented with the aim of increasing the degree of competitiveness of the labor and product markets (Armingeon and Baccaro 2012). Empirical evidence demonstrated that in almost all countries severely hit by the crisis, there was an important degree of support for cutting public spending instead of increasing taxes (Bermeo and Bartels, 2104, p. 19). In general, it can be maintained that almost all European countries, eschewing the quantitative

easing strategy adopted in the United States, have preferred austerity measures not resulting in major changes in the realm of public policies (Rovira Kaltwasser and Zanotti 2018, p. 537).

As far as the effects of the Great Recession on the Italian economy, it is important to underline that Italy is the third largest economy of the Eurozone (after Germany and France) and that the country held the largest public debt (over €2 trillion) which had been growing at an astonishing pace, even in more recent times and particularly as a ratio of GDP (130%) since the latter has been contracting fast. Italy's economic problems were similar to the other GIIPS:[24] the loss of competitiveness vis-à-vis Germany due to stagnant productivity increases (Lane, 2012). Since 2011, the interest rate on the Italian treasury's ten-year bonds exceeded the interest rate of the German bonds by more than five percentage points. Moreover, the country has suffered since the early 1990s from a very high public debt, which consecutive governments have not been able to reduce despite the frequent fiscal consolidation adjustments implemented since the 1990s.

Since mid-2011, the European Union started to demand tough economic reforms from Italy. More specifically, European leaders Angela Merkel and Nicholas Sarkozy, during various meeting of the EU organisms in Brussels, demanded that Berlusconi present a plan for growth and for reducing Italy's public debt (Bosco and McDonnell, 2012). However, disagreement within the government coalition with the Lega Nord over the economic measures to adopt, especially pensions reform, made it impossible for the government to fulfill the requests of the European Union. Beyond the strain that the adoption of some of the demanded economic measures put on the governing coalition, EU institutions, international financial institutions (IFIs) and European leaders strongly supported the appointment of Mario Monti over a new coalition government led by Berlusconi. This may seem quite contradictory, given the neoliberal features of Berlusconi's populist discourse. One could expect that the austerity economic measures demanded signaled that the European leaders and the markets in general believed that Silvio Berlusconi was the right man for the

[24] Acronym used to identify the country more affected by the Great Recession (Greece, Italy, Ireland, Portugal and Spain)

job. However, his five administrations have not been characterized by the implementation of neoliberal economic policies. As Gualmini and Schmidt argue, “Italy’s trajectory since the postwar years has gone back and forth between normal periods of non-liberal political leadership – in which what opportunistic political leaders said had little to do with what they did – and crisis periods of neo-liberal technocratic leadership, in which pragmatic leaders neo-liberal words matched the actions” (2013, p. 347).

Therefore, his past record did not give Berlusconi credibility in the eyes of the European institutions. The typical inertia of the Italian political system, following Gaudalini and Schmidt’s (2013) interpretation, was perpetuated by opportunistic and self-interested political elites, embodied in Berlusconi, which limited or precluded any reformist policies in favor of the so-called *partitocrazia,* i.e., an economic system in which clientelism and patronage strongly connected to political parties prevailed.

On the other hand, the appointment of former European commissioner, Mario Monti, at the end of the year was seen as a step forward in addressing the structural problems that had affected Italian economy since the First Republic. Days before Monti’s appointment as prime minister, the President of the EU, Herman Van Rompuy, claimed that Italy “needs reforms, not elections.” Historically, Italy’s neo-liberal reforms capability came from outside the country and was mainly an effect of the power of the EU, seen as a normative ideational construct and an institutional constraint and opportunity (Gualmini and Schmidt 2013, p. 348). Thus, these technocratic executives, who are not unusual in Italy’s political post-war history,[25] represent a transformational period during which technicians implement neo-liberal policies that apparently can be carried out only outside party politics.

On a general level, it has been said that the Great Recession included different intertwined dimensions: first, there was a competitiveness crisis which resulted a slowing down of economic growth in most of Europe; second, a banking crisis, due to undercapitalization of banks and their consequent lack of liquidity; and third, a sovereign debt crisis, especially in those countries that could

[25] The two examples of fully non-party technocratic government in post-war established European democracies are both in Italy: Lamberto Dini’s administration (January 1995-May 1996) and Mario Monti government (November 2011-April 2013).

no longer fund public debt on their own because of rising bond yields (Kriesi and Pappas 2015, p.1). Like the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Great Recession started in the U.S., ended up affecting most of the world's countries and opened a long period of hardship. Even though the economic crisis was not uniform in terms of outcomes, it seems that so far, the political consequences for the party systems have been very limited. Following the literature about the consequences of the Great Recession, we can say that three factors help explain this finding (Rovira Kaltwasser and Zanotti, 2018). First, the presence of welfare states which "are designed to insure against social risks, such as unemployment, poverty and income loss and thus should serve to cushion the harshest impact of the recession" (Anderson and Hetch, 2014, p. 53). Second, as Bartels (2013; 2014) and Kriesi (2014) convincingly demonstrate, the limited reactions to the economic crisis lay in the extensive use of the retrospective voting. The Great Recession, in fact, seems to confirm that voters tend to punish incumbents during times of economic hardship while rewarding them during periods of economic expansion. The Berlusconi government breakdown, for instance, can be analyzed in light of the effect of the Great Recession, since in the 2013 elections, when the Italian economy was already seriously affected by the crisis, voters punished him and the centre-left succeeded despite the closeness of the election (Bellucci, 2014). Third, at the political system level, in most cases, the Great Recession has amplified preexisting electoral trends rather than provoking major changes. However, in several countries, new political actors emerged or established parties gained force both on the radical right, such as True Finns in Finland (Kriesi and Pappas, 2015), and the radical left, such as Podemos in Spain (Ramiro and Gomez, 2017). Some of the parties or movements that emerged with the crisis are populist, with a critical stance towards the political order, such as Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement (M5S) and Jon Gnarr's Best Party in Iceland (Kriesi and Pappas, 2015, p. 2). We cannot forget that even in those cases in which the crisis contributed to the erosion of the existing party system, populism has been a long-term process that had already started at the time of the Great Recession (Kriesi and Pappas, 2015).

Then, even if the literature on the Great Recession demonstrates that the political consequences of the economic crisis were in most cases limited, it is also true that, at least in the GIIPS countries (Greece, Italy, Ireland, Portugal and

Spain) there were major changes at party system level. These Southern European countries experienced a harsher economic crisis, mainly because of the structural shortcomings of their economies.

On the party system level, in Spain, Greece and Italy, new parties emerged or became electorally relevant. In 2009 and 2014, in Italy and Spain respectively, two new populist parties and movements, the Five Star Movement and Podemos, made their political debuts. In 2012, two new parties debuted in the Greece party system. On the left, SYRIZA,[26] which was initially a coalition of parties which shared a thick ideology close to ecological socialism, Marxism and euro-communism, achieved 36.34 percent of the vote in the January 2015 election, the most of any party. In 2012, this time on the right, ANEL was founded by Panos Kammenos, a former MP for mainstream Nea Demokratia. Even though ANEL did not match SYRIZA's electoral success, the two parties joined their forces and formed a government together.

The coalition of these two parties is particularly interesting from an analytical point of view, since it represents the first governing alliance of left-wing and right-wing populist parties in Europe (Aslanidis and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2016).

This empirical observation led to a reflection on the theoretical link between the economic crisis and the emergence of populism. The literature that focused on the consequences of the Great Recession does not find a necessary causal connection between the economic crisis and the emergence of populist alternatives. However, one could think the economic crisis "fertile soil" for the emergence of populist actors. The effects of the economic crisis, above all the neo-liberal economic measures implemented by most EU governments, produce discontent and angst among voters. Since the austerity measures have been implemented in every country severely affected by the Great Recession, we could assume that the demand for populist alternatives was the same in all those countries. However, to understand the emergence of populist political actors, we need to also consider the supply side of the equation. On the empirical level, this is demonstrated by the absence of populist alternatives in Portugal, a country that experienced severe macroeconomic fall, comparable with GIIPS peers. In other

[26] SYRIZA was formed as a coalition of small left parties in 2004. Later, in 2012, they unite and formed a party.

words, the Portuguese party system was more responsive to voters' concerns and no relevant populist actor could take advantage of the "fertile soil" produced by the Great Recession.

As Mair (2009; 2013) points out, the erosion of the mainstream parties' representation is due to the increasing tension between responsibility and responsiveness, the two main functions of the parties. The lack of responsiveness of mainstream parties to specific demands from voters make the latter feel unrepresented and more likely to prefer a political alternative that distances itself from the "corrupt" party system. In sum, the economic crisis, on the one hand, cannot be considered either a sufficient or a necessary cause for the emergence of populism but, on the other hand, it can be interpreted as a critical juncture (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007) which amplified the tension between responsiveness and responsibility as governments seemed to have little power to and interest in confronting technocratic international institutions such as the Troika, i.e., the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which sought fiscal consolidation at any cost (Rovira Kaltwasser and Zanotti 2018, p. 540).

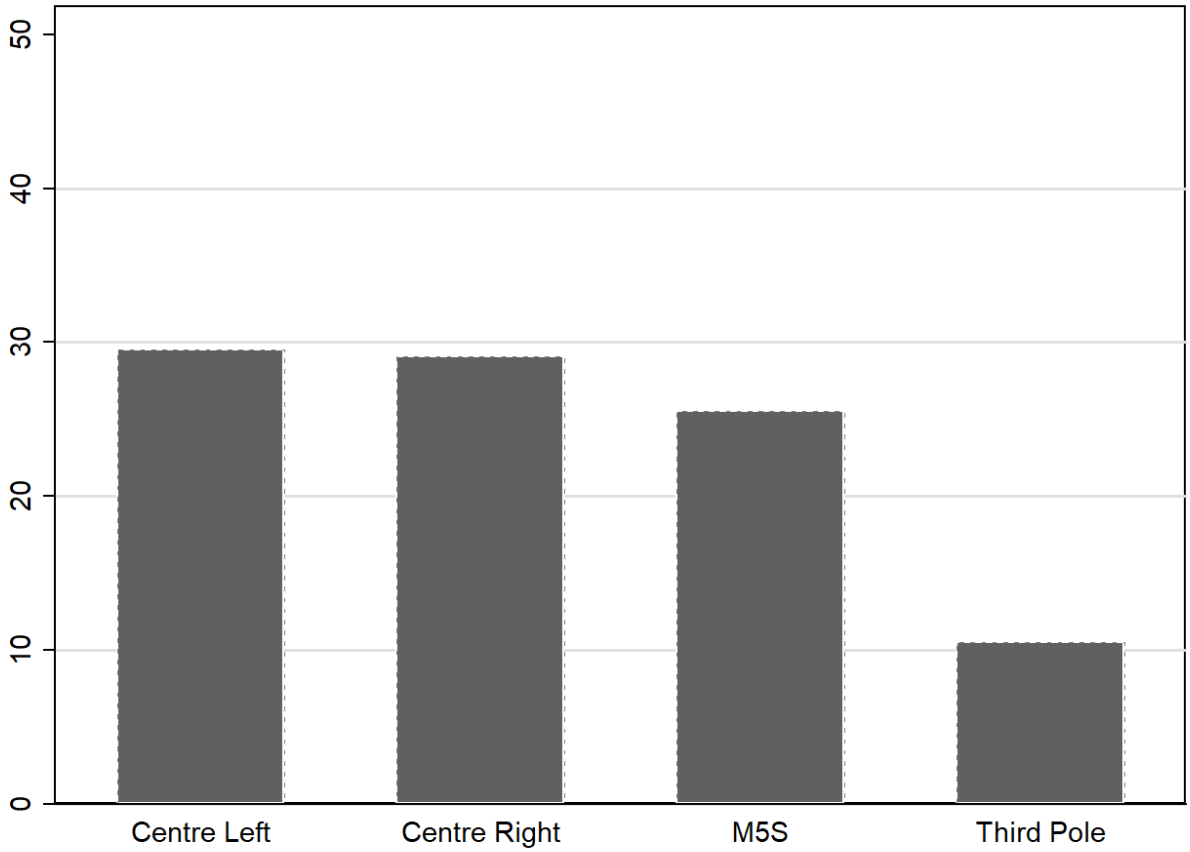
The emergence of populist political options like the M5S in Italy can be seen as both the malfunctioning of the representative democracy, with reference to the parties, i.e., the tension between responsiveness and responsibility, and the aftereffect of the Great Recession and the neo-liberal adjustment measures implemented by Monti's technocratic regime.

Another feature of 2011-2016 Italy was the partial estrangement of Silvio Berlusconi from the political life of the country. After the breakdown of the fourth Berlusconi government, the leader of the centre-right coalition started to distance himself from the political life of the country albeit without formally retiring. Judiciary scandals, responsibility in Italian and European public opinion for the disastrous situation of the country's economy and internal disagreements drove Berlusconi away from political life, and without their leader the party began to weaken, especially after the 2013 election. The decline of Forza Italia, which had been the "glue" of the Italian right for more than twenty years, started a process of fragmentation on the right.

On the right, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the LN completed the transition from a populist regionalist party to a radical right party (Zaslove, 2011;

Albertazzi, Giovannini, and Seddone, 2018). Decisive in this transition was the change of leadership, with the election of Matteo Salvini as secretary in 2013. From the beginning of his leadership, he demonstrated that the regionalist ideology was part of the history of the party. In 2014, he founded “Noi con Salvini” (Us with Salvini), a sister electoral list of the LN for the central and southern regions. In 2017. the leader changed the name of the party to Lega (without Nord) as well as the party’s symbol for the 2018 national election.

Graph 4.1: Vote percentage in 2013 national election[27]



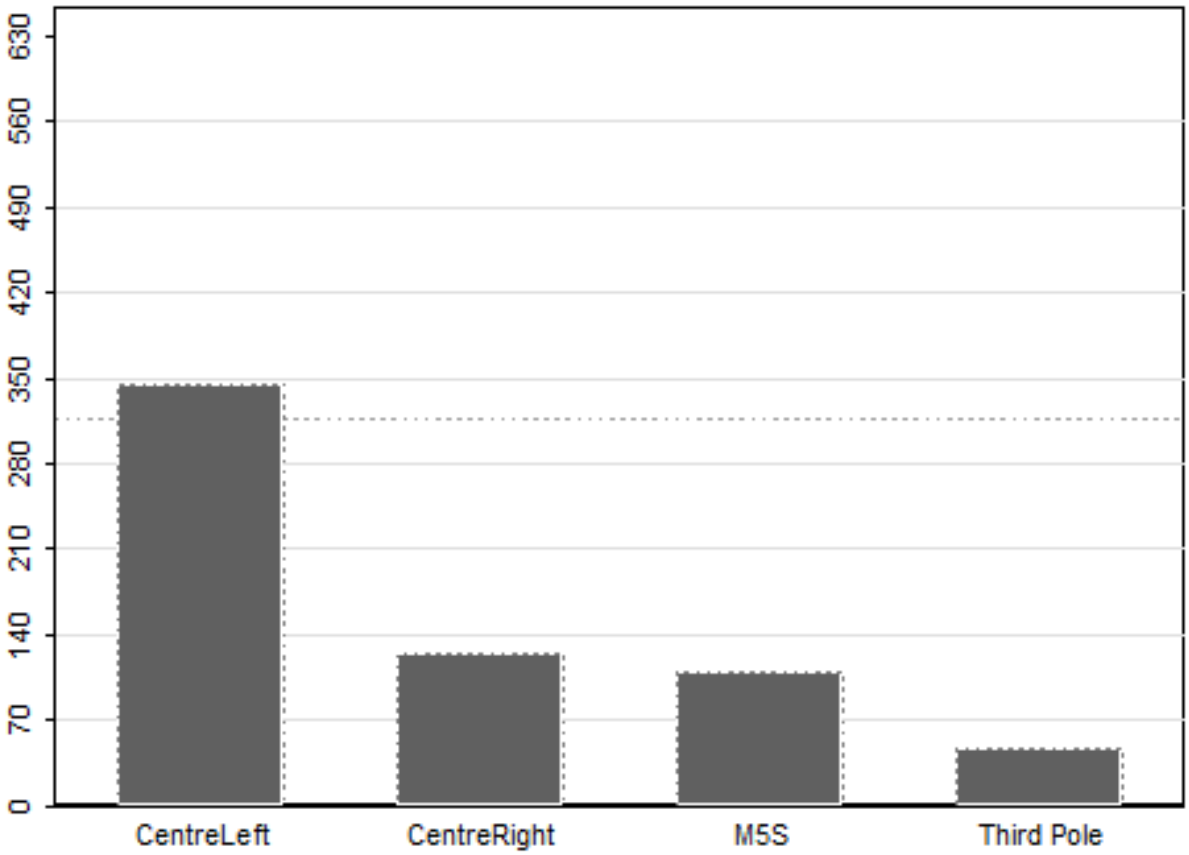
Source: Elaboration of teh author (Governo Italiano, Ministero dell’Interno, Archivio Elettorale).

Graph 4.1 shows the vote percentage in the 2013 national election. As shown in the graph (above) the differences between the shares obtained by the top three

[27] Centre-left coalition was composed of the PD, SEL, Centro Democratico and other minor parties. The centre-right coalition included FI, LN, Fratelli d’Italia-Centro Destra Nazionale and other minor parties both in the Chamber of Deputies and Senate.

are slim, with the center-left and the center-right divided by less than one percentage point and M5S gaining more than 25 percent.

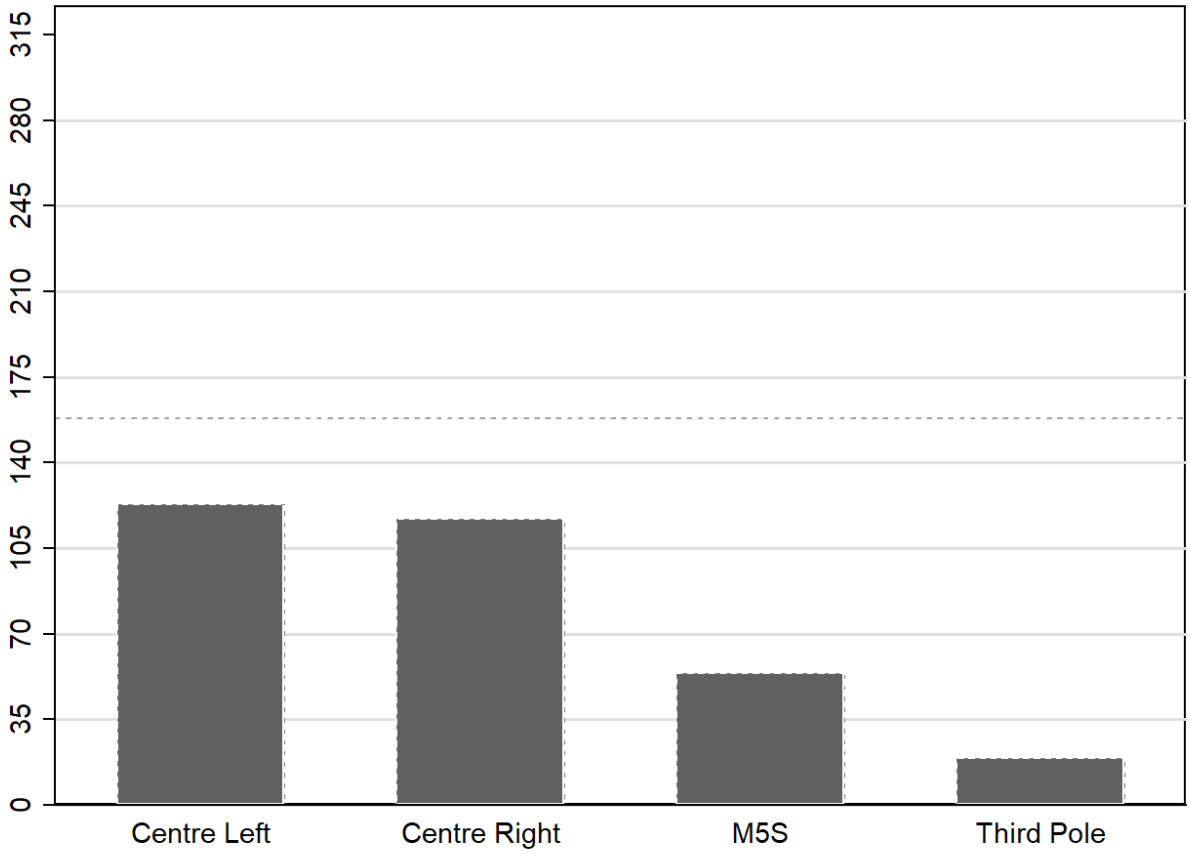
Graph 4.2: Number of seats in 2013 national election (Chambers of Deputies)



Source: Elaoration of the author (Governo Italiano, Ministero dell'Interno, Archivio Elettorale).

To take a closer look at the 2013 national election, graphs 4.2 (above) and 4.3 (below) show, respectively, the vote percentage obtained by the three main parties (or coalitions) in the 2013 national elections and the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and Senate.

Graph 4.3: Number of seats in 2013 national election (Senate)



Source: Elaboration of the author (Governo Italiano, Ministero dell'Interno, Archivio Elettorale).

As the graphs show, the difference between the vote shares obtained by the biggest parties was minimal. Also, at least in the Senate, the PD had only a slim majority, which made it difficult to build a solid parliamentary bloc to support the executive. The uncertainty of the electoral results was aggravated by internal problems within both the centre-left and centre-right coalitions, which led to fragmentation and the inability to form a viable parliamentary majority for several weeks after the 2013 election.

The leader of the centre-left coalition and Secretary of the PD, Pierluigi Bersani, tried to build a majority for two months without success, mainly because of the slim difference of seats in the Senate. In April 2013, he resigned as secretary of the PD after the PD's candidate for president, Romano Prodi, failed to secure a parliamentary majority in the presidential election. The turbulent situation, both at a political and economic level, persuaded President Napolitano, 87, to run for a second term in "the high interest of the country." At that point, the president pushed for a period of grand coalition government with the major

parties involved. The task of arranging this majority was given to Enrico Letta, a PD leader. The aim of this broad coalition was to implement reforms that would lead the country out of the political stalemate. Letta managed to organize PD, PDL, UdC, Radicals, and Scelta Civica (Civic Choice) into the new party formed by Monti after the end of his tenure as prime minister in 2012. The LN and others opposed to the Letta government alleged the new prime minister to be an imposition by President Napolitano and not the outcome of a popular vote (Tarchi 2018, p. 154). The most important measures tried to bolster the country's productivity and to reach the approval of the budget law for 2014 through a confidence vote. Letta's resignation in February 2014 followed the National Direction of the PD that manifested "the will and the urgency to begin with another phase, with a new executive." Because of the disagreements caused by the budget vote in the Senate, Berlusconi's PdL withdrew support from Letta's government. However, at this point Berlusconi, worried by an imminent vote in the Senate on the proposal to dismiss him due to his conviction for tax fraud, restored the brand Forza Italia to achieve stricter control (Tarchi, 2018, p. 154).

However, this decision caused a scission within the party, with three ministers, one deputy minister, seven junior ministers, 29 deputies and 30 senators, led by Angelino Alfano, adopting the name Nuovo Centro Destra (NCD). Berlusconi denounced the "betrayal," accusing the president of being behind it and moved FI to the opposition benches (Tarchi, 2018).

In February2014, the National Direction of the PD supported a motion presented by the new secretary, Matteo Renzi, asking Letta to resign and for the formation of a new administration.

The Prime Minister left his mandate in the hands of the President and the party supported a new government led by Matteo Renzi. Only thirty-nine years old, Matteo Renzi became the youngest prime minster of Italy. Before that, he served as president of the province of Tuscany from 2004 to 2009 and as mayor of Florence from 2009 to 2014.

A feature of the period under consideration was the attempt of the centre-left coalition, after the 2013 national election, to form a stable government alternative. However, the appointment of Matteo Renzi as the PD's new secretary and later as prime and, more specifically, his personalist rhetoric fomented internal disagreements which led to several scissions in the party.

With most the party supporting his candidature, it seemed the inauguration of a period of relative stability at least within the party. Although Renzi's new political style of and personalistic leadership has been very powerful in attracting electoral support and media attention, it clashed with the cultural and organizational roots of the centre-left. This dissonance between the new type of leadership and the organization's heritage led to a further weakening of the internal cohesion of the party, which resulted in factions forming within the party and even some scission. Indeed, the PD had since its formation been characterized by a higher degree of internal democracy or, at least, by a directive organism that was not subordinate to a single personality.

Renzi's administration lasted almost three years but after the unfavorable outcome of the constitutional referendum at the end of 2016, the Prime Minister was forced to resign and left his mandate in the hands of the president of the Republic.

4.2 The new actors in the system: Discursive and organizational features

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the Great Recession contributed to ending the fourth Berlusconi government in late 2011. Moreover, the timing of the economic crisis overlapped with a difficult phase of political transition, characterized by an increasing lack of legitimacy and by the decline of several of those political actors who had consolidated their positions over the last two decades (Marangoni and Verzichelli, 2015).

As the economic crisis hit Italy and after the breakdown of Berlusconi government, Italian politics experienced a partial reconfiguration, with new actors entering the system. In this sub chapter, I analyze these new actors with respect to their discourse and organization. The actors studied are the technocratic government and Civic Choice (*Scelta Civica*), the party created by the former leader of the technocratic government, Mario Monti, to compete in the 2013 national election, and the Five Star Movement (*MoVimento Cinque Stelle*).

4.2.1 The technocratic government and the formation of the Civic Choice

As mentioned in the previous chapter, after the breakdown of the fourth Berlusconi government in November 2011, President Napolitano appointed

Mario Monti as a senator for life, then gave him the task of building a technocratic government. The administration started operating after the vote of confidence in the Senate on November 18th, 2011. Monti, a former European Commissioner for competition policies and president of the Bocconi University in Milan, one of the most prestigious university in Italy, was first perceived as a sort of savior not only in Italy but also in the European capitals and Brussels. His predecessor, former PM Silvio Berlusconi, was widely judged incapable of solving Italy's economic problems, which European leaders feared may have led the Eurozone to breakup (Culpepper, 2014; Schmidt and Thatcher, 2013).

The program of Monti's government was approved with the parliamentary support of most of the parties, opposed only by the Lega Nord. Monti government was the second example of fully technocratic government, i.e., composed without any party representatives, in the history of Italian politics (Pasquino and Valbruzzi, 2012; Bosco and McDonnell, 2013; Di Virgilio and Radaelli, 2013).[28] A government formed with no party representatives is extremely rare in post-war Europe. Also, the duration of the administration, 528 days, exceeded the average for Italian governments after the Second World War. In the literature about technocracy, different conceptualizations have been proposed. Generally, from a conceptual point of view, a technocracy is defined as a political situation in which effective power belongs to technocrats (Meynaud, 1968). Following Silva, a technocrat is an individual with a clear technical-scientific orientation and that manages to acquire political influence in high circles of government due to his possession of specialized skills and expertise in the fields of economic policies, finance and state administration (2006, p.178). An operational definition of technocrat is provided by McDonnell and Valbruzzi who maintain that a prime minister or minister is a technocrat if, at the time of her appointment to government, she: (a) has never held public office under the banner of a political party; (b) is not a formal member of any party; (c) is said to possess recognized non-party political expertise which is directly relevant to her role in government (2014, p. 657).

Contrasting the experience of technocrat-led government in postwar Europe with technocracy in a classic sense, we can observe that the latter is formally

[28] The first fully technocratic administration in Italy was the Dini government (1995-1996).

respectful of democratic values and institutions (Radaelli, 1999, p. 24). It is important to underline that technocratic governments are not a-political. In fact, as Meynaud points out “when he becomes a technocrat, the expert becomes political” (1968, p. 259) since there is a conceptual difference between the term “a-political” or “non-political” and “not party political”. In this sense, technocratic government represents a challenge to representative democracy and, in some cases, can put a strain on the political system as a whole. Technocrats are, or at least are perceived, as political outsiders who are not “legitimate,” first, because they are not elected by voters, i.e., they do not respect the procedural bases of democracy. Moreover, and as a consequence, they do not need to be responsive to their constituency (Mair, 2009).

From a discursive point of view, then, the technocratic government’s ideology can be defined anti-populist. Because of its elitist discourse, it reverses the classical populist dichotomy between the people and the elite maintaining that the later should be in charge because technician know better (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). As this research seeks to explore the causes of the emergence of the populist/anti-populist cleavage, analyzing the ideological characteristics of the technocratic government is relevant because populism and technocracy have been treated, by some, as correlative and related to each other. For instance, Muller argues that “technocracy holds that there is only one correct policy solution; populism hold that there is only one authentic will of the people. In a sense, therefore, they are curiously apolitical. For neither technocrats nor populists is there any need for democratic debate” (Muller, 2016).

This could sound counterintuitive since as I recalled above, the technicians’ discourse is clearly elitist. However, even if technocracy in its elitism is often conceptualized as opposed with populism, they surely share common ground. They both claim they are non-political and they criticize two features of the modern democratic politics: political mediation and procedural legitimacy (Bickerton and Invernizzi, 2017). In this sense, both the technocratic government and the emergence of the Five Star Movement can be interpreted as the response to the same anti-politics sentiment that has been a feature of the Italian political system since the end of the First Republic. In Italian politics, this anti-sentiment feeling has mostly been directed against the parties and this feeling was reinforced as a consequence of the Tangentopoli corruption scandal and the

ensuing the judicial trial that found that the majority if the political class was involved. Political parties are the main political body that mediates the political process between voters and the state. One central feature of political parties and the conception of democracy they are tied to its procedural understanding of political legitimacy (Bickerton and Invernizzi, 2017, p. 331). In fact, party democratic legitimacy "is based on the principles of freedom and equality that are realized through parliamentary deliberation and decision-making rules that are either majoritarian or more consociational depending on the country in question" (2017, p. 331). This is evident in Monti's discourse when he compares political parties with problematic features of democracy such as "short-termism", "demagoguery", "rent-seeking", and the systematic pursuit of "private interests" at the expenses of the common good (Monti and Goulard, 2012).

With respect to the policies implemented by the technical government, they were all animated by a neoliberal spirit and provoked strong criticism from the trade unions and from the parliamentary opposition formed of the Lega Nord and small far left parties. In other words, Monti's government can be positioned on the right of the classical socioeconomic axis of competition (left-right). The most resounding example was the pension reform promoted by the Minister of Labor and the Social Politics, Elsa Fornero, who weathered harsh criticism not only from the trade unions but also from civil society. This was unsurprising given that the executive was made up of highly educated, wealthy individuals coming from the establishment and who enjoyed powerful political connections. On example was the Minister of the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Transport, Corrado Passera, former CEO of Banca Intesa and former director of Silvio Berlusconi's publishing house, Mondadori. Another example is Interior Minister Anna Maria Cancellieri, who was prefect in Genoa and commissioner in Bologna during from February 2010 to May 2011 during a mayoral crisis. In general, most of the ministers appointed by Monti, such as the Minister of Labor, Social Policies and Gender Equality, Elsa Fornero, and the Minister of Justice, Paola Severino, were scholars from top ranked Italian universities, such as the Bocconi in Milan and the University of Turin.

As noted earlier, the technocratic government was initially supported by the two main parties. However, at the end of April of 2013, Silvio Berlusconi's PdL withdrew its support, forcing the President to dissolve the Parliament and call for

elections. After the dissolution of the technocratic government, Monti formed Scelta Civica (Civic Choice). The aim of Scelta Civica was "to appeal to moderate voters dissatisfied both with the left and the right, but it became largely an umbrella organization in which former Christian Democrats and former neo-fascists found an opportunity to survive" (Pasquino and Valbruzzi, 2013).

The party competed for the first time in the 2013 national election, joining a coalition with Pierferdinando Casini's UDC and part of the former AN, Futuro e Libertà per l'Italia (FLI). This coalition has been named the "third pole" by pundits and scholars (Bosco and McDonnell, 2012). On the left-right axis, Monti's party sits at the center of the spectrum, while on the populism/anti-populism axis, it adopted a clear anti-populist stance (see below). The electoral results of the 2013 national election, however, showed that Italians rejected Monti's newly formed party. The "third pole" won just over the ten percent of the total vote share, not obtaining the numbers to be a viable coalition partner (Culpepper 2014, p. 1265). From an organizational point of view, two considerations are in order. First, Scelta Civica was founded a few months before the 2013 elections. In that limited span, the creation of a solid organizational structure was simply not feasible. Second, the foundation of Scelta Civica depended on Mario Monti, who recruited the candidates, investing primarily on his personal resources. In sum, according to the typology elaborated in chapter one, Scelta Civica can be categorized as an electoral party, since it did not feature a populist discourse and has low organizational density.

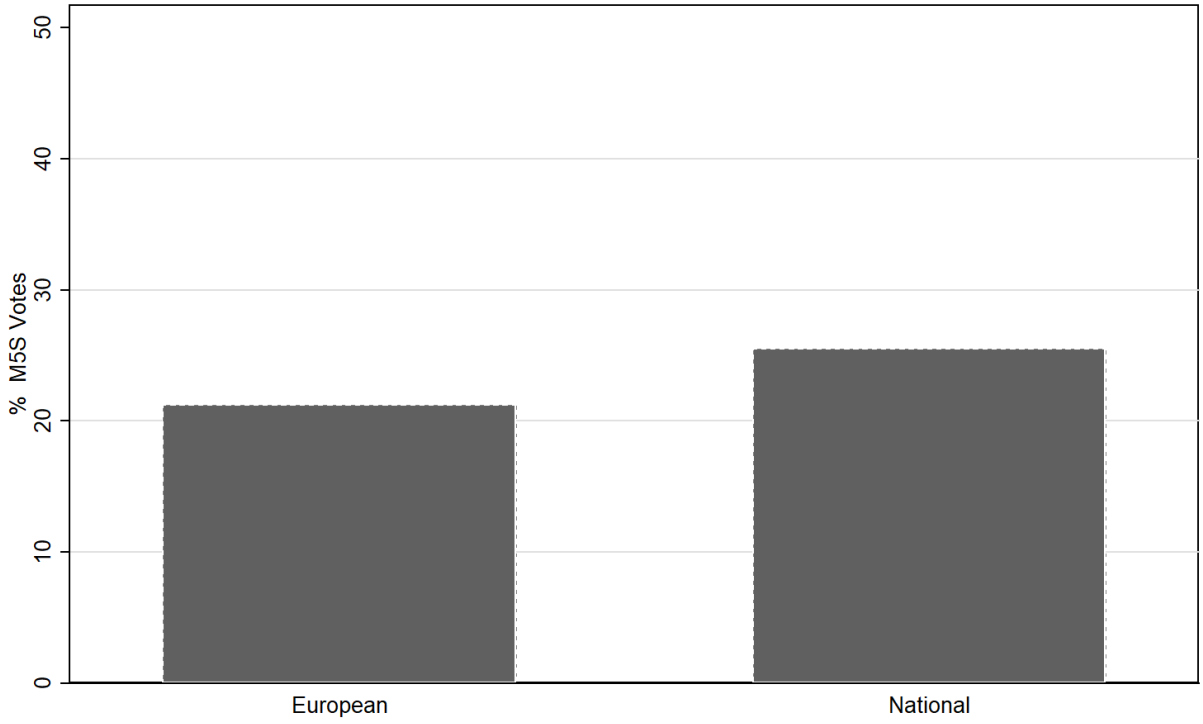
4.2.2 The Five Star Movement: a case of pure populism?

The Five Star Movement (M5S) is a political movement founded by comedian Beppe Grillo and web strategist Gianalberto Casaleggio in 2009. However, Grillo's involvement in politics can be dated back in the 1970s and 1980s when, as a comedian and television presenter, started to develop an anti-establishment stance which saw him banned from the national public television broadcaster, RAI. In the 2000s, Grillo became an enthusiast of the web and created his blog, *beppegrillo.it*, which is the foundation of his political project. While the blog proved to be successful, Grillo did not stop touring Italy, reaching the peak of his notoriety with the so-called Vaffanculo Days (or V-Days), which can be translates as "Fuck Off Days" (Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013, p. 4). On the blog, he maintained that

he would not be running in the 2008 because the closed lists did not allowed voters to choose candidates through a preference vote. In the 2009 European elections, Grillo backed two independent candidates in the lists of the former Italia dei Valori (IdV), the centre-left populist party formed by the former anti-mafia judge, Antonio di Pietro (Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013). Although the logo of the party was used in the 2008 local elections, the M5S was not officially formed until October of 2009. The only requirement to become a member was not be a member of a political party. Also, those interested in running for office needed clean criminal records.

The 2011 local election was the first in which the M5S participated, with candidates in 75 municipalities, achieving a 9.5 per cent vote share in Bologna. However, it was the 2012 local elections that represented the turning point in M5S's political trajectory. As stated earlier, the M5S managed to capitalize the social discontent that followed the economic crisis and the adjustment measures adopted by Monti's technical government and supported by the European Union and the financial markets. The following graph shows the vote share of the Movement in 2013 national election and in the election for the European Parliament in 2014.

Graph 4.4: Five Star Movement vote share in 2013 national election and 2014 European election



Source: Elaboration of the author (Governo Italiano, Ministero dell'Interno, Archivio Elettorale).

As can be seen in graph 4.4, the Movement participated in its first national election in 2013 and was the first party to gain more than the 25.5 percent of the vote share in its first election cycle (Bouillaud, 2016). Moreover, in 2013 it gained 108 of 630 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 54 of 315 seats in the Senate, while in the European election, the M5S won 17 of Italy's 73 seats Parliament. To understand the phenomenon of M5S and its electoral success, we need to analyze two features: the ideology and the organization.

From the ideological point of view, the Movement is almost unanimously defined as populist (Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013; Corbetta and Gualmini, 2013; Biorcio and Natale, 2013). First, the dualist worldwide which sees a division between the "pure" people and the "corrupt" elite is present both in the party manifesto (2013) and in the public speeches of Grillo and the main relevant actors in the party. The "pure" people in M5S's worldview are represented by those Italians who have paid the consequences for the economic stabilization measures implemented by the technocratic government but also, more generally, the average Italian who feels that the traditional parties and the classic left-right

axis lost respectively their capacity to represent the voters and their significance. After the surprising performance in the 2013 general election, Grillo claimed that the result was “a non-violent, democratic revolution which eradicated the powers [and allowed] the citizen to become state and enter the Parliament in only three years” (Grillo, Lettera agli Italiani, 2013). While the “us” category, the “pure” people, is populated by those disappointed Italians, in M5S’s discourse the “corrupt” elite is formed of two categories, referred by the leader as *castes:* the whole political system and the media. As mentioned earlier, the M5S interpreted the widespread anti-politics sentiment in Italian society (Chiapponi, Cremonese and Legnante, 2014). The anti-politics sentiment addresses politicians in general but also state institutions. First, the attack is directed at professional politicians, interested only in defending their privileges and their connections to the economic elite of the country (Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013, p. 7). However, professional politicians are not the only category in the party’s critique of the system. Political institutions, without exception, are strongly blamed for the situation of the country. Through the discourse, Parliament is delegitimized because of the presence of closed electoral lists and the impossibility for the voters to choose the candidate they prefer (V-Day 2007). Another critique of Parliament relates to the fact that many representatives have criminal convictions. During his speech at a rally, Grillo exclaimed: “when we talk about unlawful people, we naturally think of unauthorized windscreen cleaners or car park attendants, and whores, while the real unlawful people are in our Parliament’ (V-Day 2007). Grill and the party have also levelled criticism at the former President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, condemning him for charging Enrico Letta with forming a “unity government after that the leader of the PD, Bersani, was not able to find a parliamentary majority.” During a December 2013 speech in Genoa, Grillo claimed: “Napolitano made a government in one night, the three of them [Napolitano, Letta and Berlusconi] made it…and I am here to officially tell you that [M5S] already filed for the *impeachment* for Napolitano, he needs to go” (V-Day 2013). Journalists, newspapers and television companies form the other group of “others,” i.e., the “corrupt elite,” in M5S’s discourse. M5S’s critique of the media mirrors that it levels at the parties. As Bordignon and Ceccarini (2013) observe, the media “are accused of being in cahoots with big political and economic interests, of hiding the truth and of dulling the consciousness of citizens.” During the second V-Day,

Grillo proposed cutting public funding for newspapers and eliminating the order of journalists and the Gasparri law, which regulated radio and TV broadcasting. Another category of “others” in Grillo’s sights is the economic and political elite of the EU, guilty of demanding painful reforms of Italians. During a 2014 speech in Turin, in the middle of the campaign for the European election. he claimed “the first thing that Schultz [former president of the European Parliament] said about me when he came to Italy is that I am like Stalin. He, as a German, should thank Stalin because if it was not for Stalin who defeated the Nazis, [Schultz] would be in the European Parliament with a swastika drawn in front (#VinciamoNoi Tour, 17 May 2014).

With respect to the subtype of populism the Movement is quite peculiar. Given that, as mentioned above, the M5S cannot be placed on the left-right axis, it is difficult to identify to which “host ideology” it is associated. Grillo himself in various occasions stressed the fact that the M5S is a movement not a party, since it cannot be placed in the traditional left-right axis. Different themes form the backbone of M5S’s political program: environmental issues, criticisms of consumerism and money and, in recent years, issues such as public security or immigration, with Grill staking his opposition to the granting of the Italian citizenship to the children of immigrants born in Italy. With respect to the European Union, the accession of Romania was strongly criticized (Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013, p. 7).

The five stars in the movement’s logo are a reference to the five key issues of the party: public water, sustainable transport, sustainable development, right to the internet access and environmentalism.

Given the variety of issues supported by the M5S, some of them shared with the radical right and some close to the positions of the radical left, it is difficult place the Movement on the left-right axis. For sure, the “glue” that keeps the Movement together is not a specific “thick” ideology associated with its populism.

The ideological diversity within the party constitutes one of the major strengths of the Movement. Not identifying with a particular thick ideology allows the M5S to attract voters from the whole political spectrum (Maggini, 2014), constructing a party with a catch-all message (Katz and Mair, 1995). The heterogeneity within the party and its lack of association with any specific ideology is surely an advantage while the party is in the opposition, since it can attract a broad

spectrum of voters. However, once the party is in government, it will need to implement policies and take a stand on critical issues for the country, turning its catch-all appeal into a major weakness. First, the movement will probably see the linkage with part of its voter base weakened, at least at a programmatic level. The Movement will need to commit itself to certain policies losing, at least in part, its catch-all stance. Moreover, while in the opposition, the party does not need to be responsible; once in power, Italy's political and economic commitments, mostly due to its participation of the EU and the Eurozone, and the need for structural reforms will require the implementation of policies opposed to their campaign platform. This last challenge, which obviously exists for all the parties once they get in power, is particular tricky for a movement like the M5S, given its "pure" populist character and the fact that, until now, it has not relied on a stable core constituency of voters. In other words, its "purity" allows the M5S to adopt a more catch-all stance while in the opposition; however, once in power, it will have to commit to the implementation of policies that will made it less "pure" and, consequently, less catch-all.

As mentioned earlier, the strong anti-politics sentiment seems to be the only sentiment that voters and candidates of the Movement have in common. Consequently, none of the subtypes of populism used to classify populist parties is useful to define the M5S. For this reason, I define the Movement as "pure" populism (Tarchi, 2015; Manucci and Amsler, 2017). Given the presence of multiple "thick" ideologies within the party and the impossibility of or unwillingness to take a position on the left-right axis, the populist ideology is the only one that the movement's members and voters share.

Also, from the organizational point of view, the Movement seems not to fit to any of the "classic" types used for describing the other parties. Before Grillo created the blog, no organization existed and the militants of the M5S all joined the movement by attending a "Meet-Up," a local public meeting organized for blog's audience. The web not only allowed the citizens to participate but also represents a direct link between voters and governments, making all intermediate institutions, such as parties, unnecessary. This double specificity of the M5S – no sponsoring organization(s) or previous organization(s), and intensive use of Internet to mobilize grassroots – makes the M5S rather unique among all the parties which tried to emerge in Italy since the return to democracy (Bouillaud,

2016). However, in some respects, a comparison can be made to the early version of Forza Italia, when it was a direct emanation of Silvio Berlusconi's economic conglomerate. In the same way, Beppe Grillo owns the M5S trademark and can authorize its use for electoral competition in Italy. Also, the M5S so far seems to fit the "personal" party mold elaborated by McDonnell (2013). As stated above, a party can be defined as personal if its "expected lifespan *is* seen (not only by commentators, but also by party representatives and members) as dependent on the political lifespan of its founder-leader. In other words, significant internal doubts regarding party continuity in the absence of its founder-leader are present" (p. 222).

The M5S satisfies these requirements. Not only does the party's expected lifespan seem dependent on the political lifespan of Beppe Grillo, but the organization has only occasional local presence and power, formal and informal, is concentrated in the hands of Grillo, since he has the power to oust members from the party. Further, the party's image and campaign strategies are centered on the figure of the founder-leader (McDonnell, 2013, p. 222). Even though the M5S exhibits these four characteristics, there are substantial different between its organization and FI's. Unlike either the FI and the PdL, the Movement seems to have a "conception of membership activism" (McDonnell and Vampa, 2016).

This member activism, however, at least for now, does not translate into a dense party organization that goes beyond the leader. The web mobilization looks like a sort of strategic way to give voters and sympathizers a feeling of, rather than an actual avenue to, participation.

In the words of the two leaders of the movement, Grillo and Casaleggio, parties are institutions that are destined to disappear thanks to the power of the web. In their words "parties live on money, on lobbies, on territorial structures: headquarters, press, offices, employees, newspaper. On the Internet, all this is worthless; it's not needed" (Casaleggio and Grillo, 2011, p. 8). However, while the Movement often use the rhetoric of the web as an equalizer of hierarchies, "in the management of dissent among elected members, one observes strong intervention by Grillo, who acts either as an executive controller or as the initiator of top-down processes (Tronconi, 2015, p. 132). These acts are for M5S's "sake", for its "reputation" or to "battle against an enemy that in some circumstances

assumes the guise of the mainstream media and in others of the entire established political system (Tronconi, 2015, p. 132).

Even if in their non-statutes, as they called the M5S program to differentiate it from the traditional parties' manifestoes, they define the movement as a "non-association" and cite headquarters at the URL beppegrillo.it (Five Star Movement, 2009). The name and the symbol of the Movement are registered "in the name of Beppe Grillo, the only title-holder of the rights to their use." This is maybe the most controversial article since "it depicts the party as a sort of commercial enterprise headed by a boss who is its owner" (Tronconi 2015, p. 30).

To properly define M5S's organizational features, we also need to analyze features of its leadership. Beppe Grillo is without doubt the leader of the party. However, he is not a traditional Italian professional political figure. He comes from the show business where, as a comedian, he previously attacked the political and economic establishment of the First and Second Republic. During his shows, he gave voice to the anti-politics sentiments so common among Italian voters (Bardi 1996). Even if the comedian was a well-known person in Italian society, he is perhaps one of the truly outsider populist leaders. Even if populist leaders tend to present themselves as outsiders, most are very much part of the elite. One example is television businessman Silvio Berlusconi who before founding FI was linked both to the economic and political elite of the country, building his empire through connections with Bettino Craxi, the founder of the Socialist Party and former prime minister (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 75). On the other hand, true outsiders have no significant links to the elite and construct their careers far from the political mainstream. Outsiders are rare in institutionalized party-dominated Western countries while enjoying more success in personalized and fluid political system, a phenomenon embodied in Venezuela's Hugo Chávez (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

In sum, as a "full outsider" kind of leader, Grillo seems to be an exception among the populist leader, at least in Western Europe democracies. Indeed, he fulfills both the requirement to be classified as a "full outsider" i.e. (a) he has not had a previous career in politics and public administration when the campaign started and (b) he participated in the election through the formation of a new political vehicle (Carreras, 2013, p. 45).

However, the anti-politics sentiment that has pervaded the Italian society since the post-war period and increased after the collapse of the First Republic made it easier for him, as an outsider with no connections with the elites, to build a movement that rapidly gained electoral ground.

In sum, the M5S has two peculiar characteristics that differentiate it from the other parties in the system. First, the party is not linked to any full ideology and the only “glue” that keeps it together seems to be populism. Second, the M5S as an organization surely shares some features with personal parties, even though it seems to keep a constant call to an active membership. However, this call seems to be more instrumental than a relevant feature of the party’s decision-making process. For these reasons, the M5S fits in the first quadrant of the typology shown in chapter one.

These two peculiarities of the Movement permit some inferences about its duration. As I claimed in chapter one, populist parties with a low level of organizational density are expected to be less able to maintain linkage with voters in the long run.

This consideration also shed light on the future of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. Two of the three parties that constitute the populist pole of the cleavage have not developed a strong organization and feature charismatic leadership. As a consequence, it looks like the cleavage seems poorly grounded. In fact, unless parties like Forza Italia and the Five Star Movement undergo organizational reshuffling, it seems difficult to imagine them surviving their leaders. In the following table, I placed the relevant Italian political party into the typology presented in chapter one. The typology accounts for the presence or absence of the populist ideology and for organizational density. More in detail Figure 4.1 organizes the major parties in the Italian party system between 2011 and 2016, according to the presence of absence of populist ideology and the high/low organizational density.

Table 4.1: Main parties in the Italian party system (2011-2016)

Organizational Density / Populist Ideology	High	Low
Yes	Forza Italia – M5S - IdV	Lega (Nord)
No	PD - AN	Scelta Cívica

The Five Star Movement and Forza Italia share a low level of organization density since they rely heavily on their leaders. Meanwhile, the Lega was able to make a transition from being a populist regionalist to a populist radical right party in the late 2010s. This demonstrated that the party has been successful at changing and surviving change of leadership. This was possible due to the high level of organizational density it was able to build, manifested in strong local presence and powerful intermediate bodies.

In the next sub-chapter, I analyze the main features of the so-called anti-populist pole. During this period, some non-populist options within the system developed an anti-populist discourse. First, the technocratic government developed an anti-populist ideology with elitist characteristics, while from 2013 on the centre-left administrations adopted an anti-populist discourse with pluralist features.

4.3 The non-populist in power and the development of the anti-populist discourse

Between the formation of the technocratic government and the constitutional referendum of December 2016 anti-populist forces held power, aside from the ten months of the Letta government (April 2013-February 2014). After the electoral campaign of 2013 an anti-populist discourse began to emerge on the centre-left. While before 2011 the centre-left directed its criticism mainly against

Silvio Berlusconi, his *ad personam* policies and the personal features of his parties, the main characteristic of the 2011-2016 period seems to be the formation of an anti-populist bloc. The anti-populist pole first developed elitist features during Mario Monti's technocratic government, while Matteo Renzi's government assumed pluralist traits.

After the national election of 2013, the close victory of the centre-left coalition and the inability of PD's leader, Pierluigi Bersani, to form a government, Enrico Letta accepted the challenge to form a large coalition government, with a bi-partisan support of the parties in Parliament, with the objective to pass reforms the country needed. This, from a theoretical and empirical point of view, has two consequences. First, even if the prime minister belonged to the Democratic Party, the government was a large coalition government and not a centre-left government. The second consequence is related to the position of the executive along the populism/anti-populism axis. Even though in the Manifesto of 2013, the PD clearly adopted an anti-populist discourse, the Letta government, because of its *raison d'être*, could not share that anti-populist stance.

Conversely, anti-populist discourse was one of the main features of the Renzi government (February 2014-December 2016), especially during the "electoral campaign" before the Constitutional Referendum of December 2016.

Monti's government manifested a clearly elitist and anti-populist stance and fell on the right of the political spectrum, pursuing neoliberal policies For a few weeks after its inauguration, the Monti administration was one of the most popular in Italy's recent political history (Bosco and McDonnell, 2012). On the day of his inauguration, outside Parliament a crowd hailed the Prime Minister. Even the leaders of the European Union announced their trust in the ability of the new Italian PM to solve Italy's structural problems.

The Monti government was not the only technocratic government in Italian history. However, there were some differences between this government and the technocratic executive in the 1990s. The technocratic government in the 1990s worked closely with civil society, especially with the labor unions, to adopt reforms with broad social support (Culpepper, 2002; Baccaro and Lim, 2007). Monti's strategy of reform was different. The policies implemented during the seventeen months of his government were mostly related to the structural reforms the country needed to improve its macroeconomic indicators, watched so closely by

the Troika institutions (EU, BCE and IMF) and the markets. More specifically, the executive's program involved four elements: revenue increase, spending cuts, rationalization of the state apparatus and liberalization of protected sectors (Culpepper, 2014, p. 1271).

The first measure approved by the technocratic government in December 2011 was the so-called Salva-Italia (Save-Italy) decree, which aimed to shore up state accounts and to ensure a balanced budget in 2011, focusing on the first three elements, especially on taxation increase. One example was the 25 percent increase in gasoline tax, making it the second highest in the Eurozone (Randall, 2013).

On the side of spending cuts, the Save-Italy decree started the reform of the pension system, one of the most criticized reforms by both civil society and the trade unions associations. The executive estimated that the total savings from the reform would be €5.4 billion by 2014 and more than €20 billion by 2020. The other measure was the removal of the indexation to inflation for all pensions above €1,400 per month (Culpepper, 2014).

One of the more contested aspects was the gradual raising of the retirement age of the private female workers from 60 to 62 years of age. Moreover, the retirement age was set to rise incrementally to 67 until in 2018 (Culpepper, 2014). In fact, as Culpepper (2014) notes, one of the characteristics of the Monti government, unlike the fully technocratic executive during the mid-1990s, was the attempt to impose an austerity plan without relying on any links to Italian society to generate buy-in for its difficult reform program (p. 1265). The Monti administration was described as an example of "unmediated democracy," since its initiatives were not planned and implemented with the collaboration with social partners such as political parties, trade unions and other corporate interests. In particular, the trade unions were united against the deindexing of pensions and the increase in women's retirement age. However, their discontent did not produce any government concessions even after the general public-sector strike, involving Italy's three most important trade union umbrella organizations.

After Monti stepped down, the anti-populist discourse was articulated by another political party, this time from the centre-left of the political spectrum. More specifically, the PD's discourse, both in its manifesto and in public speeches of its leaders, manifested a clear anti-populist stance. The first paragraph of the

manifesto ends with “our objective is to defeat every form of populism” (PD, Programma di Governo, p.1). Moreover, the attack seems to be directed at a specific form of populism, the populism inhabiting the right end of the spectrum: “the populist right promised an illusionary protection from the effect of the financier liberalism building cultural, territorial and, in some cases, xenophobic barriers” (PD, Programma di Governo, p.4). The PD’s manifesto beyond criticizing rightist populism provides a sort solution saying that “the only response to populism is democratic participation. Today’s crisis of democracy needs to be fought with more democracy not less. More respect for the rules, a clear separation among powers” (PD, Programma di Governo, p.4).

As stated above, after the result of the 2013 national election it was impossible for PD’s leader, Bersani, to obtain a parliamentary majority in the Senate. Consequently, Letta had formed a government only with the support of a large bi-partisan parliamentary coalition. After the grand coalition broke down, a new administration was formed under Matteo Renzi, the new secretary of the Democratic Party, who gave new strength to and re-articulated the anti-populist discourse, especially during the months before the Constitutional Referendum in December 2016. In 2010, Renzi launched a radical change within the Democratic Party with the objective set of setting aside the old ruling class (Bordignon, 2014, p. 1). His rapid rise led to comparisons, even from within his party, to Silvio Berlusconi’s entrance into the political arena and accusations of exacerbating the personalization of Italian politics. Renzi’s political project at a national level started in 2012 in the coalition primaries to choose the centre-left candidate for prime minister. His main opponent, Bersani, conceived of the party in a different way, as a collective and structured entity. On the other hand, Renzi wanted a “light” and “leader-centred” party (Bordignon, 2014). In the primary election, Bersani won with over the sixty percent of the vote but the debacle of the cenre-left coalition in the 2013 general election showed Renzi the path to power within the party: election as secretary. In February of 2014, the President of the Republic gave him the opportunity to find a parliamentary majority and form a government.

The Renzi government was the fourth longest in Italy’s postwar history. The party composition of Renzi’s government was almost the same of Letta’s: the PD, Scelta Civica and Nuovo Centro Destra – the parliamentary group formed when Berlusconi decided to take Forza Italia out of the parliamentary coalition that

supported the Letta executive (Marangoni and Verzichelli, 2014). The first reform bills that Renzi launched concerned election law, the transformation of bicameralism and the education system (Pasquino, 2016). In 2015 the new electoral law for the Chamber of Deputies, the *Italicum,* which was developed with the initial support of Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, provided a two-round system based on party-list with proportional representation corrected by a majority bonus and a 3 percent threshold.

With respect to the categorization of the discourse of the PD during the Renzi government and in particular during the electoral campaign for the 2016 constitutional referendum, part of the literature defines it as populist (Bordignon, 2014). In fact, Renzi's political stances and proposed reforms have sometimes been defined by pundits as expressions of a "light" or "constructive" populism. However, it seems that even though Renzi's discourse attacked the PD elites, a characteristic of a populist discourse, it lacks reference to the "pure" people and the belief that politics should be the expression of the general will of the people. Without a doubt, Renzi's political style is certainly different from Bersani's and, in general, from the style of the PD leaders before him. Personalities from the public opinion but also from the academia have compared Renzi to Silvio Berlusconi, categorizing the PD's leader as populist. Despite some similarities between Renzi and Berlusconi's political style, which can be defined personalist, this is not a feature of populism. Moreover, Renzi needed to work within the boundaries of an organized party and did not enjoy the same discretion as Berlusconi within FI and the PdL.

On the contrary, as stated earlier, the discourse of the PD under Renzi seems to be characterized by stronger anti-populist features. However, this type of anti-populist discourse presents peculiar characteristics. In his discourse, there are multiple attacks on the populist actors in the system, but it does not seem that a sophisticated anti-populist discourse developed. The kind of anti-populism that Renzi's discourse incarnated, especially in the campaign before the constitutional referendum of December 2016, contributed to a moralization of the political debate in the country. As mentioned before, the PD type of anti-populism, at least until 2016, was characterized by elitist features. In fact, the categorization of the populist actors as "evil" and "dangerous for the society" and, at the same time the depiction of those who were in favor of the "yes" in the constitutional referendum

as some sort of nation-saviors, does not reflect a sophisticated anti-populism; rather, it has the features of a basic kind of anti-populist discourse.

Two days before the referendum, during a speech in Florence, the Prime Minister maintained that those in favor of the referendum “are the ones that love Italy and the institutions” (speech in Firenze 2 December 2016). During a pro-referendum demonstration in Piazza del Popolo (Square of the People) Rome, Renzi started his speech with a direct attack on populist forces: “this square belongs to the people, not to populists.” Then, during the speech Renzi attacked all the parties opposing the referendum, including Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, the Lega Nord and the M5S, implying that the referendum was a “fight” between the populists and responsible actors.

The tones of the political confrontation between the “yes” and “no” were particularly high during the months before the referendum. The representatives of the political institutions of the EU and the leaders of the EU’s leading countries campaigned for the “yes” faction, worried about the political instability in the country and by the fact that populist parties campaigned for “no.” In those months, the moralization of the political debate deepened even more, with the two factions (yes vs. no) presenting themselves to the ones actually interested in Italy’s well-being and accusing the other faction self-interested myopia. This kind of anti-populist discourse is essentially different from that of Monti’s technocratic government, which was elitist, but also from pluralist anti-populism. As recalled in chapter one, the pluralist discourse is characterized by the rejection of the dichotomist conceptualization of the society as divided in the people which are “pure” and the elite, which is “corrupt” (Mudde 2004). In fact, the pluralism sees societies as more complex and composed of various groups that represent different interests. The type of anti-populist discourse which emerged in Italy in the period analyzed is different. It consists of a direct attack on populist actors, mainly by depicting them as irresponsible.

For a few months, Renzi was able to tame the Italian populist wave, converting it into fuel for his government and his reformist plan. Thereafter, return to a proportional logic has seemed to suggest a move in the opposite direction: the possible formation of a moderate centrist pact among the major parties of the Second Republic, in order to keep the “populist threat” beyond the city walls (Ceccarini and Bordignon 2017, p. 299).

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I analyzed the characteristics of partisan competition in Italy between 2011 and 2016. First, Italy between 2011 and 2016 was heavily affected by the economic and political consequences of the Great Recession. Indeed, various facts such as the breakdown of the fifth Berlusconi government, the appointment of the fully technocratic administration led by the former EU commissioner Mario Monti and the electoral exploits of Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement can be interpreted — at least partially — as effects of the global economic crisis of 2008. These events need to be interpreted at the light of the economic crisis which, in a country with such deep political and economic structural problems such as Italy, had disastrous consequences.

During the period analyzed two major actors entered the Italian party system: Monti's technocratic government, and subsequently Scelta Civica, and the populist Five Star Movement. These two actors are at first sight diametrically opposed, since the former developed an anti-populist discourse with elitist features while the latter has been defined as "pure" populism. However, technocracy and populism share at least two important features: the rejection of both the representative democracy and the procedural aspects of politics (Bickerton and Invernizzi, 2014). As a result of these new forces in the system in this period, the populist pole was formed by three political forces: the Lega Nord, Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia (and the PdL) and the Five Star Movement. These populist actors differ in host ideology. First, the Lega Nord, especially with the election of Matto Salvini as secretary and the defeat of the moderate wing, can be defined as a radical right party. Silvio's Berlusconi's Forza Italia and PdL are both centre-right populist parties, but they are not ideologically radical. Instead, the full ideology they adopt is neoliberalism.

Finally, the populism of the M5S has been defined as "pure" since it does not seem to be attached to any full ideology in particular, given the heterogeneity of its affiliates. The 2011-2016 period is also characterized by the consolidation of an anti-populist pole. Two moments can be underlined in this process. The first type of anti-populist discourse was adopted by Mario Monti's technocratic government (2011-2013) and had elitist features. The second moment in the

consolidation of the anti-populist pole came via the discourse of the Democratic Party (PD) during the period between the electoral campaign of 2013 and the 2016 constitutional referendum. Clearly different from the elitist discourse of the technocrats, the PD's discourse is characterized by attacks on specific populist actors, stressing their irresponsibility which, at the same time, make them (the anti-populists) the only ones who can save the country. Lastly, looking at the typology proposed in chapter one, some inferences can be made about the probability of survival of the M5S, one of the actors that entered the system during the period analyzed in this chapter. It looks difficult for the Movement to survive for at least two reasons, one related to its ideology and the other one linked to the party's type of ideology. First, the party representatives and voters do not seem to share a common full ideology. While this peculiarity is without a doubt an advantage while the party is in the opposition, since it can attract voters from the whole left-right spectrum, exploiting its catch-all appeal, once in power, the party will need to commit to certain policies, displeasing part of its electorate. Moreover, because of its low-density organization and its heavy reliance on its leader, it does not seem to constitute a durable alternative. Unless it can change in type and build a more solid party organization with actual internal debate, territorial presence and intermediate organisms, it will stay fully reliant on its leader with unpleasant consequences for its survival.

CONCLUSION

Populism has been the object of numerous studies in recent years. Great scholarly and press attention has been given to this phenomenon, especially following the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president in 2016 and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2018. However, populism is nothing new. In some European countries, populist parties began to enter national parliaments since the 1980s. The Front National in France is a good example. Jean Marie LePen founded the party in the 1970s, and it adopted a populist ideology during the 1980s. Another remarkable example is the Belgian Vlaams Blok, which began as a radical nationalist party in the 1970s before adding a populist element in the 1980s (Golder, 2016). In general terms, populist parties began to enter parliaments of numerous European countries in the 1980s. A part of the academic production of populism has focused on the causes of the emergence of populist parties or leaders (Weyland, 1999; Skolkay, 2000; Hawkins, 2010; Cannon, 2013; Hawkins, Pauwels and Read, 2017). The objective of this dissertation is different.

Indeed, it seeks to study the determinants of the configuration of the populism/anti-populism as a political cleavage. I tried to give an answer to the following question: under what conditions does the populism/anti-populism crystallize as a political cleavage that, at least partially, contributes to structuring the party system? To answer this question, I constructed a theoretical framework which relies on the simultaneous occurrence of two elements: the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties and the breaking of massive corruptions scandals. Those two factors together undermine the responsiveness of the party system, leading to its collapse. The collapse of the party system represents a critical juncture for the emergence the populism/anti-populism cleavage. Not only do these two elements weaken party-voter linkages but they also buttress the populist discourse, since both paint the whole political elite of the country as morally corrupt and uninterested in the people's will (Roberts, 2017).

Italy is a good case in point. In Italy, populist parties started to emerge in 1994, after the collapse of the party system. However, the Italian case is not just about the emergence of populist parties. In Italy, in 1994 a populist/anti-populist cleavage started to emerge and to partially structure the party system. For the

whole period known as the “First Republic” (1948-1994) the Italian party system showed a high degree of programmatic convergence. The high level of programmatic convergence was reinforced by two factors. First, for more than forty years the same party, alone or in coalition, was been in government. Only three prime ministers were not Christian Democrats during the First Republic. The lack of unpredictability and the permanence of the same party in power lowered the level of vertical accountability of the whole system.

The second element has to do with government pacts, especially during the 1980s. Those pacts between the parties in the system limited the relevance of the voters’ choice, mainly due to the parties’ goal of limiting the Communists’ access to government. Thus, those pacts restricted the number the parties that effectively had a chance to join government coalitions. Beyond programmatic convergence, from 1991 to 1994 most of the Italian political and economic elite was involved in a series of corruption scandals known with the term Tangentopoli. The following judiciary investigation and trial known as Mani Pulite (Clean Hands) fully discredited the whole political class at the eyes of the voters. Both programmatic convergence and massive corruption scandals, even more when they occur simultaneously, pave the way for the alienation of citizens from established political actors, who are increasingly viewed as anything but the genuine representatives of “the people” (Hawkins et al., 2018, 4). Both elements can increase the level of unresponsiveness to the point the party system collapses, which represents a critical juncture in my theoretical framework. Following the comparative institutionalism literature, critical junctures are defined as “brief phases of institutional flux during which more dramatic change is possible” (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007, p. 341; Pierson, 2000) which opens the political opportunity structure in favor of the dramatic change of the inter-party patterns of competition. Critical junctures in fact, relax the institutional barriers and permit new actors to permeate the system. One of the possible consequences is the emergence of the so-called populism/anti-populism cleavage. In fact, the populist discourse may re-build the broken linkages on the basis of a discourse that pits “the pure people” against “the corrupt elite.”

Contributions

This dissertation contributes to the literature on both the theoretical and empirical level. First, even if populism is a hot topic in academia, the phenomenon analyzed in this dissertation, i.e., the polarization of the populism/anti-populism cleavage, is less studied.

In other words, this study goes beyond the analysis of the causes of the emergence of populist actors in the party system, focusing instead on those cases in which populism and its counterpart anti-populism translate into an ideological and discursive divide that contributes to structuring a party system. Studying the emergence of a political cleavage has different implications than studying the emergence of a single populist party. For instance, when populism/anti-populism emerges as a political cleavage, the factors behind parties' political choices in general and electoral coalitions preferences are affected. For this new cleavage to start polarizing, a change in the political opportunity structure is needed. In fact, when the political opportunity structure opens due to events external to the party system, new actors may enter the system and produce a change in the dynamic of competition. The second theoretical contribution is related to the factors that explain the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. In fact, even though some of the factors employed in the analysis have been used to explain the emergence of populist parties, the framework is different since the object of the study is the polarization of a cleavage. Among the factors I employed to construct my argument, the collapse of the party system has been mainly employed to analyze Latin American cases. This study seeks to apply to a non-Latin American case a theoretical argument whose factors have been mostly employed to explain a different reality. In short, I maintain that three factors enable the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage. First, the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties and in many cases in the presence of inter-party agreements result in a perception that the parties are not fulfilling their role of representation. When programmatic convergence and the breaking of massive corruptions scandals occur simultaneously, the linkages between voters and parties are further undermined, causing the former to perceive that the country's political elite is no longer responsive. In other words, when these two factors occur

simultaneously, the unresponsiveness of the part system reaches its most extreme level. This level of unresponsiveness means that in the eyes of the voters the whole system is no longer able to represent their ideology and their interests and the party system collapses. A party system collapses when the principal type of linkage that links voters to parties break down and the other types are not able to replace it (Morgan, 2011). The collapse of the party system represents a sort of critical juncture that lowers the institutional barriers for new actors to enter the system. In this sense, the political opportunity structure changes for those new actors who start to employ a populist discourse.

From an empirical point of view, this dissertation also makes two contributions. First, it goes beyond the analysis of single populist parties in the Italian party system. Those analyses, which are surely very insightful, do not provide an overview of the effects on populist parties for the party system. As the object of this study is political cleavage, it entails the analysis of a longer period of time. The consideration of more than twenty-two years allows analyzing the interactions within the system along the reactions of non-populist parties over time. Moreover, the study of the factors that cause the populism/anti-populism cleavage to polarize are different from those that have been used to explain the emergence of single populist parties. In fact, even though the theoretical framework I use builds on some of the factors used to explain the emergence of populist parties, it also allows for the introduction of new factors which give an account of the dynamics of the whole Italian party system in the long run. The second empirical contribution of this study has to do with the presence in the analysis of the organizational characteristics of the parties in the system. Examining the organizational characteristics of the parties, in fact, can shed light on the possible duration of both the same parties and the populism/anti-populism political cleavage. In the typology I constructed and applied in both Chapters Three and Four, I categorized parties based on the presence of populism in their discourse and the level of organizational density they display. Putting the Italian parties in this typology, it emerged that both the Silvio's Berlusconi parties FI and the PdL as well as M5S are populist parties and they display a low level of organizational density for their heavily reliance on the founder-leader and the lack of checks and balances, bodies or mechanisms that may limit the will of the leader. On the contrary, the Lega (formerly Lega Nord) shares the populist

ideology but at the same time has a high level of organizational density. It can be observed in the late 2010s when, after a corruption scandal that involved the leaders of the party, and especially the founder-leader Umberto Bossi and his family, the party managed to survive and even become electorally stronger. On the non-populist side, I found that Mario Monti's Scelta Civica, the party the former EU bureaucrat founded after his experience leading the technocratic government, does not share the populist ideology and has low organizational density. Lastly, Alleanza Nazionale does not display a populist ideology, while showing high organizational density.

Insights on the consequences of the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage

The emerge of the populism/anti-populism cleavage is not a widespread phenomenon. However, it can have important consequences both for the party system and for the democratic regime.

At a theoretical level, if the populism/anti-populism cleavage starts to polarize and structure the party system, it can be the case that populism/anti-populism becomes a determinant in the evaluation of parties' coalition formation. In other words, parties would consider both axes of competition when evaluating the possibility of engaging in electoral coalitions. How is this analysis relevant to explaining the patterns of coalition formation in Italy after the collapse of the party system in 1994 and 2016?

First, the left-right axis does not completely account for the dynamics of competition in the Italian party system. To fully understand them, we need to consider that the political space in Italy, but not exclusively there, is structured alongside two axes, or cleavages, the left-right and the populism-anti-populism. Under this new configuration, the possible coalition patterns may considerably change. In fact, following the classical coalition theory literature, we expect that two (or more) parties will more probably form a coalition if they are relatively close on the ideological plane. However, if we consider the political space as structured by two lines of conflict the possible coalition incentives may change.

One example of this occurred during Italy's last general election in March 2018. This election is not the object of this study, but it represents a good opportunity

to see one of the possible effects of the presence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage on the parties' incentives for coalition formation. After the results of the election did not give to the center-right coalition a clear majority, especially in the Senate. At that point, the Lega broke the pre-electoral alliance with the other rightist parties to join the Five Star Movement, with an agreement to form the so-called "government of change". As claimed in Chapter Four, the Lega and M5S are not close on the left-right continuum. However, both adopt the populist ideology. This can be considered a determinant of the formation of the coalition. Only few months have passed since the formation of this coalition and surely it is premature make predictions about its future.

However, two considerations are in order. The first relates to the strength of the coalition. In general terms, it is important for answering the following question: is a governmental coalition primarily constructed on the populist ideology, which by definition is thin, essentially more volatile than one based on the sharing of a more complex ideology? This obviously is not the place give an exhaustive answer. One could think that without at least a partial agreement on policies, which in turn may be enhanced by proximity on the left-right axis, a governmental coalition may have worse chances of survival. However, the history of Italian governmental coalitions shows that similar positions on the left-right axis do not necessarily enhance stability.

The second consideration has to do with the organizational features of the two parties. As shown in Chapter Four, while the Lega can be classified as a party with a high level of organizational density, M5S cannot. This difference in terms of organization in the long run can affect the viability of the coalition, as happened in 2013 with the breakdown of the PdL (see Chapter Four). This leads to another point. The durability of the populism/anti-populism does not depend solely on the reproduction of the confrontational discourse between populism and anti-populism but also on the type of organization of the parties on both sides. In fact, if the destiny of the parties in the system is somehow intertwined with the fate of their leaders, the durability of the parties, and of the cleavage, may be affected. The populism/anti-populism cleavage also acted as a determinant for the formation of electoral coalition in contexts other than Italy, such as Greece. As mentioned before, in both Greece's January and September 2015 general

elections, populist radical left SYRIZA formed a coalition with populist radical right Anel.

Future research agenda

This work be the starting point for a future research agenda that can develop in different directions. The first way to complement this study is through an analysis of the demand side, i.e., the voters' side. Indeed, all three factors employed in this study to explain the emergence of the populism/anti-populism are related to the supply side, i.e., they are just considering the actors in the party system to explain the result. The voters' side, i.e., the demand, is less developed, even if there is the need of both the presence of a populist discourse at the elite level *and* the activation of populist attitudes in the society to account for the emergence of the populism/anti-populism political divide. Until recently, scholars explained electoral support for populist forces without considering the level of populist attitudes among voters. Even if I agree that any study of populist voting that ignores voter attitudes is incomplete, for the period I analyzed there is survey data available. For these main reasons, I maintain the whether the three factors that I mentioned also activate populist attitudes in the electorate is a question that needs to be answered in future research. Since the demand side of populism has been the object of recent research in different countries (Van Kessel, 2013; Spruyt, Keppens, and Van Droogenbroeck, 2016; Elchardus and Spruyt, 2016; Akkerman, Zaslove, and Spruyt, 2017; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018; Hawkins, Rovira Kaltwasser, and Andreadis, 2018), it would be possible to study whether the populism/anti-populism cleavage is dividing voters at the electorate level as well. The literature on the demand side of populism has until now been proceeded almost exclusively from an European point of view. Whether or not this theory can travel to other contexts remains an open question. Latin America would furnish good test cases, containing as it does countries with long populist traditions, such as Argentina and Venezuela, and others which seem immune to populism, like Chile.[29]

[29] The only study that to my knowledge has yet examined the demand side in a cross-regional fashion compares the activation of the populist attitudes in Greece and Chile (Hawkins, Rovira Kaltwasser and Andreadis, 2018).

Moreover, since the study has identified a cleavage, the stability and duration of the cleavage can be analyzed from the demand side starting now. The analysis of the demand side can in fact shed further light on the future of the cleavage. Indeed, on the one hand, if the level of populist attitudes in the electorate falls this can have a negative effect on the efficacy of the populist ideology and, consequently, on the duration of the cleavage. On the other hand, if the populist attitudes are widespread within the electorate and the cleavage has with sociological roots, the possibility of duration of the cleavage increase.

Another further step that can be made with this study as a starting point has to do with the comparative potential of the theoretical argument. In this sense, the future research agenda can be further explored in two directions. First, since this dissertation analyzes a single case, the question of whether this theoretical framework can travel to other countries is worth examination. At first sight, these arguments can surely be used to analyze other cases. As maintained above, there are some Latin American cases that make us think that this theoretical framework, with some adjustments, can be useful in explaining them. Venezuela, for example, was considered an example of democratic success in the region, with government alternating between two institutionalized parties, Acción Democrática and COPEI. However, since the 1980s, things started to change and by the late 1990s the programmatic position of the two parties was indistinguishable. Moreover, as in Italy, interparty agreements created the image that parties colluded. As stated in Chapter Two, this bolstered the populist discourse, since it gave populist actors the chance to depict mainstream parties and politicians as “all the same.”

The perception of low responsiveness as a product of the programmatic convergence between AD and COPEI was fueled by the high level of corruption in the country. Even if a corruption scandal à la Tangentopoli did not break in Venezuela, external constraints put a further strain on the responsiveness of the party system. For instance, the economic crisis constrained the ability of the parties to deliver. Thus, it can be said that the effect on the perceived unresponsiveness of the party system was the same, even in the absence of a full-blown corruption scandal. At this point, like in Italy, the party system collapsed. Venezuela’s party system collapse acted as a critical juncture for the emergence of the populism/anti-populism political divide, with the election of the

populist outsider Hugo Chavez in 1999. Other cases that may be suitable for evaluating the "travelling" potential of this theoretical framework are Peru with the fujimorismo/anti-fujimorismo and Argentina with the peronismo/anti-peronismo divide. Thinking of non-Latin American cases, Greece seems interesting. As a consequence of the Great Recession and Greece's very high public debt, since 2010 the European Union and international financial institutions have pressured the Greek government to implement neoliberal adjustment measures on which they conditioned financial aid. When the incumbent ND government lost the 2009 election to the social democratic alternative, the leader of PASOK and prime minister, Papandreu, had no alternative but ask for a bailout. This choice had the effect of sparking a wave of protest and demonstrations through the entire country. Indeed, this "bait and switch" marked a sort of betrayal for PASOK's base, evident in electoral results from 2009 on. Two trends are observable. First, PASOK's vote share has generally fell, probably as a result of the aforementioned policy shift. Secondly, SYRIZA, a left-wing populist party, began to increase its vote share, becoming the strongest political party. SYRIZA won the January 2015 election and formed a coalition government with right-wing populist Independent Greeks of ANEL (ANEL). This coalition represents the first European alliance between a radical-left and a radical-right populist party (Aslanidis and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2016). The Greek case merits two considerations. First, even if the alliance between two populist parties which do not lay close on the left-right continuum may suggest that a populism/anti-populism divide is at least partially structuring the party system, since fact that the last two elections are close in time suggests caution. Moreover, the latest polls for the 2019 parliamentary election show a declining support for SYRIZA, with ND between the 31 and 38 percent in most of the polls. The second consideration involves the collapse of the party system. Greece did not experience a collapse mainly because only PASOK's base felt unrepresented. On the contrary, ND still was the runner-up in both the January and September 2015 parliamentary elections. In the case that in the 2019 election populist parties lose vote share, there is no political cleavage, at least in the way I define it in this study. This might have to do with the fact that the Greek party system did not experience a critical juncture like the collapse of the party system. To conclude, the possibility of utilizing this theoretical framework to explain the Greek case is still under consideration. As seen above,

Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2018) maintain that for a period after democracy was restored in Greece, PASOK adopted a populist ideology that was dismissed in the late 1980s, following a massive corruption scandal that involved the party's leaders. Therefore, the populist/anti-populist cleavage in Greece would have emerged back in the 1970s and from the 1980s it would have been latent. As a consequence of the economic crisis and the PASOK bait and switch, the cleavage gained strength again with the electoral exploits of SYRIZA. This can shed light on another aspect of the comparative potential of this theoretical framework. The comparative value of this theoretical argument, it is not just related to cross-country comparisons. Like in the Greek case, to have a clear overview of the cases in which the populism/anti-populism cleavage has emerged, the historical perspective must not be neglected. In other words, even if few cases now exist in which the populism/anti-populist cleavage is structuring the party system, a historical perspective can reveal more cases.

To conclude, further research needs to engage more deeply with the anti-populist ideology. While, as mentioned before, populist actors are widely studied, anti-populism is a less-analyzed subject. This is particularly relevant in the studies of the effects of populism on both the party system and the political regime. Indeed, it can be the case that anti-populism, just like populism, could also have either a negative or positive effect on democracy depending on its characteristics. In this dissertation, I differentiate between a basic and a more sophisticated anti-populism. The subjacent idea is that the basic anti-populism strategy is to fight fire with fire, i.e., trying to reclaim the people on moral considerations, leads to a further moralization of the political debate. This in turn would entail further polarization in the populism/anti-populism cleavage, which may have pernicious effects on both the party system and the democratic regime. Conversely, anti-populist forces may construct a pluralist dialectic, refusing to conceive of society as divided into two, morally opposed groups. Depicting society as composed of different groups of people who are not intrinsically "good" or "bad" may help lower the level of the moralization in the system. This is turn may have a beneficial impact on democracy.

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GLOSARIO

AD: Acción Democrática (Venezuela 1941-present)

AN: Alleanza Nazionale, National Alliance (Italy 1995-2009)

AMLO: Andrés Manuel López Obrador (President of Mexico 2018-present)

ANEL: Independent Greeks (Greece 2012-present)

CCD: Centro Cristiano Democratico, Christian Democratic Centre (Italy 1994-2002)

COPEI: Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (Venezuela 1946-present)

CPBT: Coalición por el Bien de Todos, Coalition for the Good of All (Mexico, 2005-2006)

DC: Democrazia Cristiana, Christian Democrats (Italy 1943-1994)

FI: Forza Italia, Go Italy! (Italy 1994-2009; 2013-present)

FLI: Futuro e Libertà per l'Italia, Future and Freedom for Italy (Italy 2010-2014)

IdV: Italia dei Valori (Italy 1998-present)

LN: Lega Nord, Northern League (now the League) (Italy 1991-2017)

M-15/Indignados: Movimiento 15 de mayo (Spain 2011-present)

M5S: MoVimento Cinque Stelle, Five Star Movements (Italy 2009-present)

MAS: Moviemento al Socialismo, Movement toward Socialism (Bolivia 1987-present)

MSI: Movimento Sociale Italiano, Italian Social Movement (Italy 1948-1995)

ND: Néa Dimokratía, New Democracy (Greece 1974-present)

PASOK: Panellínio Sosialistikó Kínima, Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Greece 1974-present)

PCI: Partito Comunista Italiano, Italian Communist Party (Italy 1921/1943-1991)

PD: Partito Democratico, Democratic Party (2007-present)

PdCI: Comunisti Italiani; Party of the Italian Communists (Italy 1998-2016)

PdL: Popolo della Libertà (Italy 2009-2013)

PDS: Partito dei Democratici della Sinistra, Democratic Party of the Left (Italy1991- 1998)

PP: Partido Popular, Popular Party (Spain 1977/1989-present)

PRC: Rifondazione Comunista, Communist Refoundation (Italy 1991-present)

PRD: Partido de la Revolución Democrática, Party of the Democratic Revolution (Mexico 1989-present)

PSI: Partito Socialista Italiano, Italian Socialist Party (Italy 1892-1994)

PSOE: Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spain 1879-present)

PUP: Palmer United Party (Australia 2013-2017)

PVV: Partij voor de Vrijheid, Party of Freedom (The Netherlands 2006-present)

SA: Sinistra Arcobaleno, Rainbow Left (Italy 2007-2008)

SYRIZA: Synaspismós Rizospastikis Aristerás, Coalition of the Radical Left (Greece 2004-present)

UdC: Unione di Centro, Union of Christian and Centre Democrats (Italy, 2002-present)

UDEUR: Union of Democrats for Europe (Italy 1999-2013)

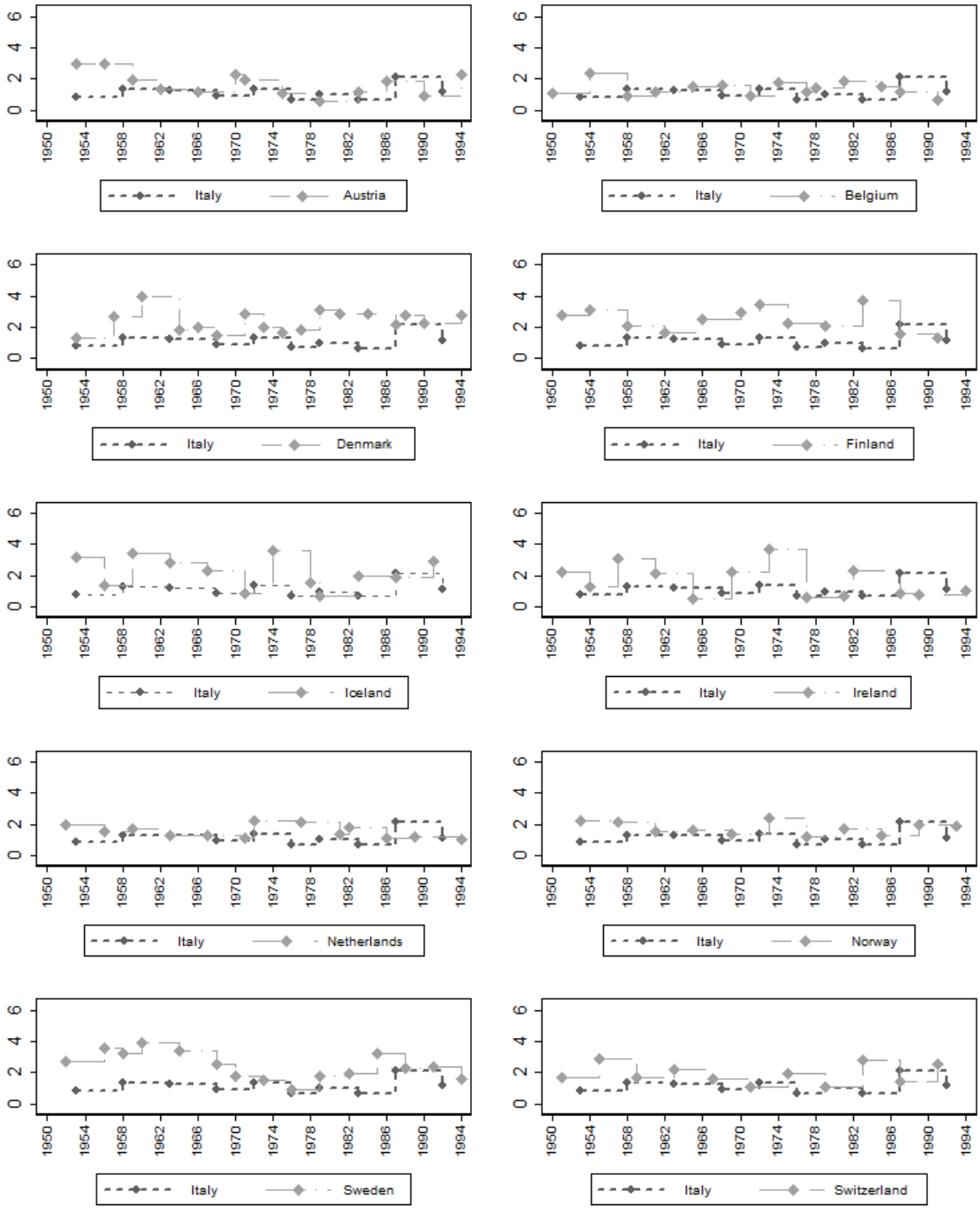
UKIP: United Kingdom Independence Party (UK 1993-present)

Annex 1: Party System Polarization Score

Year	Italy	France	Germany	Spain	Portugal	Greece	Austria	Denmark	Norway	Switzerland	Sweden	Belgium	Netherlands	Finland	Iceland	Year	Italy	France	Germany	Spain	Portugal	Greece	Austria	Denmark	Norway	Switzerland	Sweden	Belgium	Netherlands	Finland	Iceland
1950												1.09				**1972**	1.35		1.57									2.18	3.47	
1951		1.54								1.69				2.79		**1973**		2.17						1.97	2.36		1.54				
1952											2.69		1.98			**1974**						1.49						1.76			3.6
1953	0.82		1.12				2.99	1.33	2.26						3.22	**1975**					2.49		1.06	1.63		1.94				2.28	
1954												2.33		3.12		**1976**	0.67		1.92		1.94						0.92				
1955										2.93						**1977**				0.73		2.59		1.79	1.23			1.19	2.13		
1956		1.94					3.00				3.55		1.57		1.38	**1978**		2.60										1.41			1.57
1957			4.42					2.71	2.16							**1979**	0.98			0.92	0.36		0.57	3.15		1.11	1.77			2.08	0.71
1958	1.32	2.25									3.23	0.88		2.09		**1980**			2.25		1.13										
1959							1.94			1.67			1.73		3.41	**1981**		2.08				2.34		2.87	1.73			1.87	1.36		
1960								3.96			3.95					**1982**				1.21							1.95		1.76		
1961			1.06						1.54			1.15				**1983**	0.66		2.93		2.10		1.20			2.82				3.73	1.96
1962		2.29					1.31							1.66		**1984**								2.85							
1963	1.24									2.17			1.30		2.86	**1985**					0.75	1.58			1.32		3.24	1.52			
1964								1.80			3.42					**1986**		2.28		1.21			1.81						1.11		
1965			0.83						1.64			1.47				**1987**	2.13		1.60		2.35			2.14		1.40		1.20		1.55	1.86
1966							1.17	1.98						2.55		**1988**		1.97						2.80			2.31				
1967		2.65								1.61			1.28		2.3	**1989**				1.15		2.97			2.00				1.15		
1968	0.91	3.28						1.52			2.59	1.59				**1990**			1.32			2.83	0.87	2.23							
1969			0.46						1.38							**1991**					0.23					2.56	2.41	0.65		1.34	2.95
1970							2.29				1.74			2.90		**1992**	1.14														
1971							1.90	2.82		1.06		0.92	1.12		0.86	**1993**		2.24		0.89		2.51			1.92						
																1994			2.54				2.3	2.81			1.64		1.02		

Source: *Manifesto Project Database (WZB)*

Annex 2: Party System Polarization Score by country



Source: *Manifesto Project Database (WZB)*