Populism as a Political Strategy

- A Case Study of Hungary and Poland -

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헝가리와 폴란드 사례 연구

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Sang Jun Lee

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Kyung Hoon Leem

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Seoul National University
Political Science Major

Sang Jun Lee

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Sang Jun Lee

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Chair	T. K. Ahn	(Seal)
Vice Chair	Kyung Hoon Leem	(Seal)
Examiner	Hyeong-Ki Kwon	(Seal)

Abstract

This research attempts to assert the explanatory value of the political-strategic approach to populism through the cases of Hungary and Poland. Theoretically, due to considerations of agency, intentionality, and empirical observation, this research claims the political-strategic approach to be more inclusive and exhaustive than the ideational and socio-cultural approaches.

Moreover, considering patterns of government change, ratio of votes cast to populist parties (Fidesz and PiS), values survey results, and political affiliation by age group, it is difficult to validate that ideational and socio-cultural factors are responsible for the rise and persistence of authoritarian populist governments in Hungary and Poland.

Having disproved the validity of ideational and socio-cultural explanations, this research hypothesizes a causal relationship between the institutional (media control, economic policies, attack on the judiciary, election law amendment), non-institutional (position change, crisis rhetoric) populist strategies and election outcomes, and demonstrates its validity through the cases of Hungary and Poland. By discussing how changes in agentic variables could have resulted in different outcomes, this research claims that, regardless of the given ideational and socio-cultural backgrounds of a country, it is the (non-)populist actors' strategies and (re)actions that lead to populist electoral victory or failure.

Considering that Hungary and Poland are the only two cases in which populists have secured consecutive electoral victories in a consolidated democracy, correctly

diagnosing the possible cause and process of populist electoral victories would be essential to prevent future democracies from sharing the same fate.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Study Background and Research Questions

Populist authoritarian governments in Hungary and Poland are democratically elected. With a majority in parliament, Hungary's Fidesz (Civic Alliance) led by Viktor Orbán and Poland's Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) led by Jarosław Kaczyński [1] pursue legal/constitutional amendments, anti-EU, anti-immigration, anti-LGBT policies, and disrupt judicial and media independence. Such policies have caused concern both domestically and internationally (e.g. EU's Sargentini Report). This research is an attempt to understand the cause and process of how populist leaders in Hungary and Poland have seized and managed to stay in power for multiple terms.

This research selects the cases of Hungary and Poland because they are the only two cases in which a non-mainstream populist party has risen to seize a parliamentary majority and managed to stay in power for consecutive terms in a consolidated democracy. [2] Given that few populists ever gain the necessary power to fully implement the policies they want (Mudde, 2017, p. 31), Hungary and Poland appear to be the rare two exceptions and therefore provide much-needed cases for analysis. Even more so considering that the processes Orbán and Kaczyński

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[1] Although Jarosław Kaczyński hardly intends to take up formal positions for himself, everybody knows that it is he who makes the decisions concerning the policies of the party (Hartliński, 2019, pp. 103-104). He exercises a powerful behind-the-scenes influence in determining the government's programmatic and strategic priorities and is constantly being called upon to resolve personnel and policy disputes (Szczerbiak, 2016), thus being the de facto ruler of Poland (Wanat, 2020).

[2] Hungary and Poland are the only two countries among Freedom House's 'Nations in Transit' (2022) data to have receded from a decade of 'consolidated democracy' to a 'semi-consolidated democracy.'

underwent and the strategies they employed to gain power were strikingly similar,[3] while their actions as incumbents also show high resemblance. Discovering a common pattern between the two cases will be informative for preventing future plunges of consolidated democracies into populist rule.

Based on a political-strategic definition of populism, this research focuses on political leaders and the political strategies of Fidesz and PiS. It aims to address questions such as: how do populists come to power? What allows their successful election and re-election? While the literature on this question is divided into ideational, socio-cultural, and political-strategic approaches and explanations, which explanation has the most explanatory validity? Can ideational or socio-cultural explanations be quantitively confirmed?

This research attempts to claim that in the cases of Hungary and Poland, ideational and socio-cultural explanations are mostly ungrounded and that political-strategic factors explain the success of populists in Hungary and Poland. Then, the ensuing research question is: what political strategies do populist leaders employ to rise to power and stay in power?

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[3] First, both came to power again eight years after their failure to secure a second term. Second, during this eight-year opposition, they have shifted their political position to the right and became more religious. Third, both Ferenc Gyurcsány (Orbán's main political rival) and Donald Tusk (Kaczyński's main political rival) have disappeared from the political stage. Fourth, both Orbán and Kaczyński came to power in the elections after the exit of their rivals and have successfully stayed in office for multiple terms ever since.

1.2. Three Approaches to Populism

Populism is known to be one of the most "edgy" terms in the social sciences (Stockemer, 2019, p. 2). Its ambiguity has been characterized as "slippery" (Taggart, 2000, p. 2), "chameleonic" (p. 5), or a "shifty eel" (Weyland, 2010, p. xii). The *Oxford Handbook of Populism* (2017) categorizes the diverse approaches to populism into three—ideational, socio-cultural, and political-strategic. This section aims to review the three approaches to populism and offer Weyland and Barr's political-strategic approach as the most inclusive approach.

(1) The Ideational Approach

The main proponent of the ideational approach to populism is Mudde (2004, 2007, 2017). He defines populism as "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the pure people versus the corrupt elite and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (2004, p. 543; 2007, p. 23). This approach gives center stage to the role of ideas in defining and explaining populism (Hawkins, 2019, p. 57).

Essential to the discourse of the populist is the normative distinction between "the elite" and "the people" (Mudde, 2004, p. 544). Under a Manichean outlook, in which there are only friends and foes, "the elite" are not just those with different priorities and values but are considered fundamentally evil (p. 544). Consequently, compromise with "the evil elite" is impossible, as it corrupts the purity of "the people"

(p. 544). This Manichean understanding makes populism moralistic rather than programmatic (p. 544).

As an ideology, populism is distinct in a way that it does not possess the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency as socialism or liberalism (Mudde, 2004, p. 544). It is a "thin-centered" ideology usually attached and combined with another ideology, resulting in a diverse array of populisms in different regions and contexts (p. 544; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 7).

Moreover, because the ideational approach seeks a "minimal" definition of populism (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 8; Rooduijn, 2013, p. 572), the performative style of populist politicians and the organizational characteristics of populist parties do not define populism but are rather dependent on the attributes of populism (Mudde, 2004, p. 545; Rooduijn, 2013, p. 593). Thus, the ideational definition of populism indicates nothing about the specific type of mobilization by the populist actor (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 9).

A significant number of researchers subscribe to Mudde's minimal definition of populism as a thin and Manichean ideology (Abts & Rummens, 2007; Hawkins, 2009, 2019; Rooduijn, de Lange & van der Brug, 2014; Bakker, Rooduijn & Schumacher, 2016; Müller, 2016; Gagnon et al., 2018; Stockemer, 2019), making it one of the most "popular" (Hawkins, 2019, p. 57) and "broadly used" (Mudde, 2017, p. 28) approaches in the study of populism.

Based on the ideational definition of populism, Hawkins (2019) specifies the cause of populist electoral victory as the prevalence of "populist attitudes" that exist in the minds of voters and politicians (p. 61). Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, p. 6)

contend that such "mental map" (p. 6) and "lens" exist in society regardless of the presence of populist political actors (p. 97).

Other researchers of the ideational approach have used the "congruency principle"—that voters select politicians whose traits match their own—and the similar "elective affinity model"—that individuals support a party if their personality matches with the party's ideological message—to delineate how the populist attitude of voters relate to populists' rise to power (Bakker, Rooduijn & Schumacher, 2016, pp. 304-305).

(2) The Socio-Cultural Approach

The socio-cultural approach to populism can be divided into the performative theories of Ostiguy (2009, 2017) and Moffitt (2016), and the "cultural backlash theory" by Inglehart and Norris (2016; Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

Populism as a Low-Dimensional Political Appeal

Ostiguy's (2009, 2017) approach to populism asserts the presence of a "high" and "low" culture (2017, p. 80). Politicians on the "high" are well-behaved, more restrained, and proper, both in manners and institutional procedures, while politicians on the "low" are more down-to-earth, coarser, earthier, and personalistic (p. 1) (Figure 1.1). From this categorization, populism is a "transgressive" means of politics by deviating from what is known to be "proper" (p. 76). It is an antagonistic, mobilizational flaunt of the culturally popular and native, and of personalism as a mode of decision-making (p. 84).
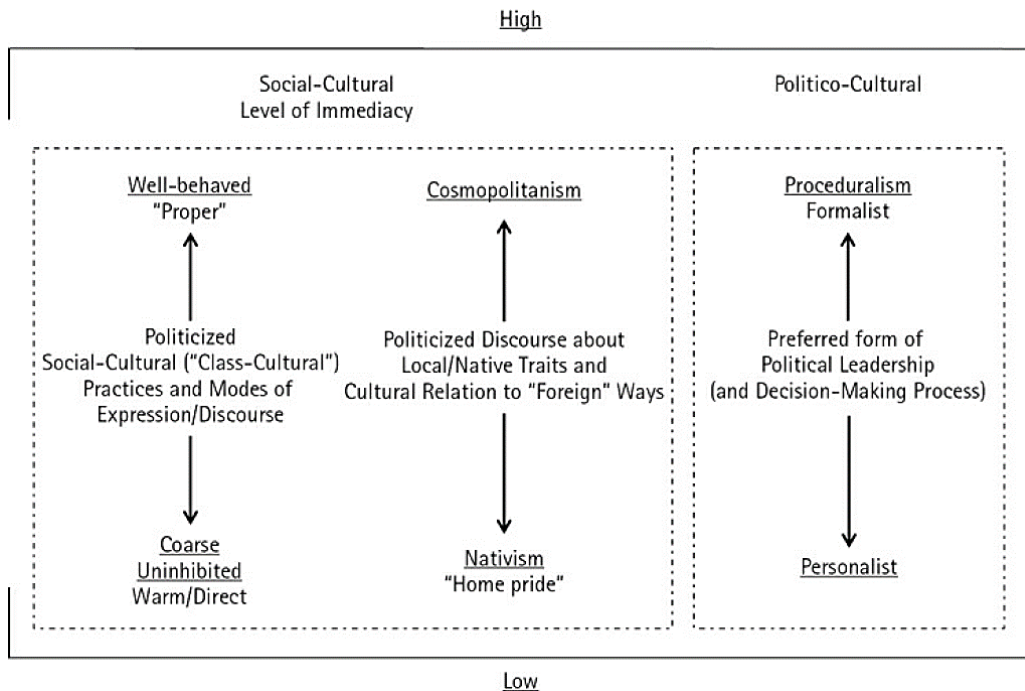
[Figure 1.1] Components of the High and the Low in Politics (Ostiguy, 2017, p. 80)

The high and low involve different criteria for judging what is likable and morally acceptable in a candidate (p. 5). These appeals and positions allow the voter to recognize a politician as credibly "one of ours" (p. 5). And because the high and low are linked deeply with a society's history, existing group differences, identities, and resentments (p. 5), this definition of populism indicates that support for populists is attributed to a society or an individual's cultural features stemming from history.

Moreover, the high and low are neutral regarding the political left-right axis, thereby explaining the diverse combinations of populism with other political ideologies (pp. 3-4) as indicated in Figure 1.2.

HIGH
(Anti-Populism)

High-Left	High-Right

LEFT · RIGHT

Low-Left	Low-Right

LOW
(Populism)
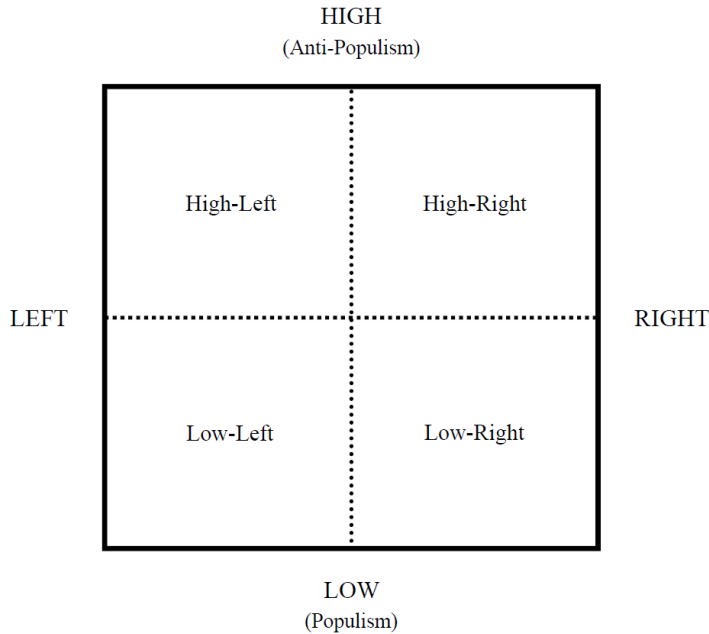
[Figure 1.2] A Two-Dimensional Political Space of Positions and Appeals (Ostiguy 2009, p. 17)

Populism as a Political Style

Moffitt's (2016) notion of populism as a political style stresses the "performative" aspects of populism. He defines political style as "the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life" (p. 38).

The decline of ideological cleavages, displacement of the class character of politics, and the alienation of ordinary citizens from traditional party politics have allowed "styles" and "repertoires" to take on much greater resonance as markers of political experience (p. 39). Combined with increased mediatization—which political actors must perform and project themselves through media channels—

politics have become more "stylized" and "spectacular" (p. 39). In such landscape, style and performance become central to political experience and analysis (p. 39).

Populist leaders "appeal" to the people as arbiters of "common sense" and the "way forward" (p. 44). They also "perform" crisis, breakdown, threat, and urgency (p. 45) in a manner disregarding what is considered "appropriate" behavior in the political realm (p. 44). From this outlook, Moffitt (2016) defines contemporary populism as "a political style that features an appeal to 'the people' versus 'the elite,' 'bad manners,' and the performance of crisis" (p. 45). Similar to Ostiguy's "high-low" axis, Moffitt presents a technocratic-populist political style spectrum (Figure 1.3).

Technocratic Political Style
Appeal to expertise
'Good manners'
Stability and progress

Populist Political Style
Appeal to 'the people' vs. 'the elite'
'Bad manners'
Crisis, breakdown, threat
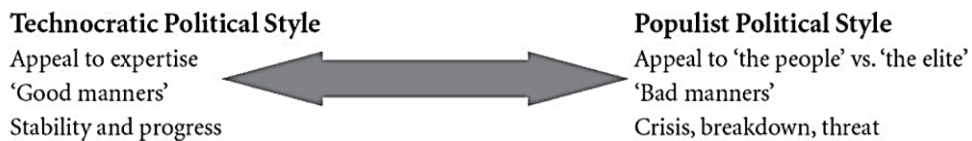
[Figure 1.3] Technocratic-Populist Political Style Spectrum (Moffitt, 2016, p. 46)

This perspective contends that leaders hold a central position in all contemporary theories of populism, and popular discussion and concern about populism often focus on the personalities and performances of populist leaders over the parties or movements they are a part of (p. 43). Therefore, the performance of the populist leader and their style are crucial to understanding populism.

Populism as a Result of Cultural Backlash

According to Inglehart and Norris (2016), the "cultural backlash" thesis suggests that the surge in votes for populist parties can be explained in large part as a reaction against progressive cultural change called the "silent revolution" (p. 2).

The "silent revolution" holds that the unprecedentedly high levels of existential security experienced by the people of developed Western societies during the postwar decades brought an intergenerational shift toward post-materialist values.[4] In addition, levels of education, urbanization, and ethnic diversification have risen concomitantly, further contributing to the gap (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, pp. 38-40).

However, these developments have triggered a "counter-revolutionary backlash," especially among the older generation, white men, and less educated, who actively reject the rising tide of progressive values (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, pp. 3, 5). Politicians thereby have opportunities to mobilize these social conservatives by blaming the erosion of traditional moral values on liberal elites, corrupt politicians, and the mainstream media, as well as denigrating rising out-groups who benefit from socially liberal attitudes and policies, such as women, racial minorities, and immigrants (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, p. 48).

In light of such observation, Norris and Inglehart (2019) define populism "minimally as a rhetorical style of communication which claims that the only legitimate democratic authority flows directly from the people, and that established powerholders are deeply corrupt and self-interested, betraying public trust" (p. 66).

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[4] Such as cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, generating rising support for progressive movements advocating environmental protection, human rights, gender equality, and self-expression (2016 p. 3; Norris & Inglehart, 2019, p. 32).

Populist narratives can be reduced to these—and only these—twin components (p. 66).

Overall, the socio-cultural approaches offered by Ostiguy, Moffitt, Inglehart, and Norris all appear to claim that populist leaders appeal to a certain cultural attribute of the electorate.

(3) The Political-Strategic Approach

In their approach to populism, Weyland and Barr focus on human agency, rational choice, intention, and behavior. Weyland identifies populism as "a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, and un-institutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers" (2001, p. 14; 2017, p. 50; 2022a, p. 478). This conceptual-ization focuses not on what populists say, but on what they actually do, especially how they pursue and sustain political power (2017, p. 50).

With the central rationale of populism being the quest for political power (2001, p. 18), the "strategy" refers to the "principal ways and means by which a political actor captures the government" (2017, p. 55). Therefore, a populist leader's political strategy focuses on the methods and instruments of winning and exercising power (2001, p. 12), and is characterized by the power capability that rulers use to sustain themselves politically (p. 18).

On a similar line, Barr (2017, 2019) claims that populism is a means of building, generating, and maintaining political power based on the mass mobilization of supporters through anti-establishment appeals and plebiscitarian linkages (2017, pp. 44, 182; 2019, p. 44). Because populism is a strategy of enhancing the power of an

individual, a populist is someone who uses this strategy as a primary, though not necessarily only, means of generating support (p. 44).
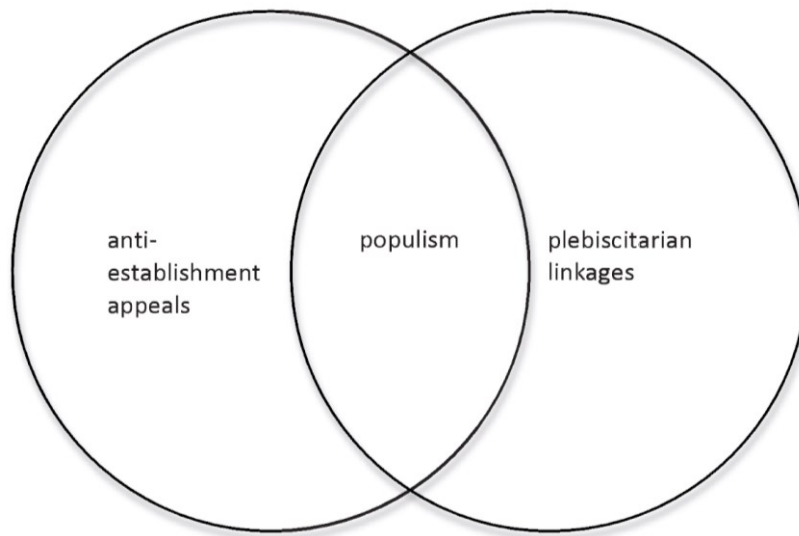
[Figure 1.4] Venn Diagram of Populism (Barr, 2017, p. 47)

From this approach, populism revolves around an individual politician (Weyland, 2017, p. 56), lacking firm commitment to ideologies and principles, instead concentrating on a quest for personal power (2013, p. 31). An opportunistic leader is at the heart of populism, not a worldview (Barr, 2019, p. 50). Therefore, a diverse array of policies—ranging from far-left to far-right—can be labeled "populist."

In light of such analysis, a focus on the actual behavior of populist leaders is necessary, especially how they react to opportunities offered by crisis situations

(Weyland, 2021, pp. 187-188). If the populist leader is a "skillful" "trendsetter" (2013, p. 23), his/her "populist agency" (2022b, p. 2) could amplify sufficiently to make an impact on the political system.

(4) Towards an Inclusive Approach

The notions proposed by all three approaches appear cogent. However, each approach seems incapable of single-handedly defining or explaining the populist phenomenon sufficiently. Each approach is inexhaustive to a certain extent and mutually interdependent, having to constantly borrow from or depend on others. However, due to problems of agency, intentionality, and empirical observation, the political-strategic approach appears to be the most inclusive compared to others.

Problem of Agency

An ideology cannot by itself account for any phenomenon but requires bearers/carriers of the idea to act (Barr, 2019, p. 45). Regardless of how prevalent a certain idea or socio-economic condition may be, it is indispensable for someone to stand up and "activate" populist attitudes among citizens and to "mobilize" them (Hawkins, 2019, p. 62). In other words, if populism is indeed a "thin-centered ideology" combined with a "host ideology," the combination itself requires a politician as a "host" to emerge, thrive, and survive.

On a similar note, no matter how pervasive the "populist idea" or "socio-cultural" condition may be, they can only be expressed when populist parties and candidates are on the ballot sheet providing a channel for political expression (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, p. 49). The ideational and socio-cultural approaches' emphasis

on political demand easily neglects the fact that political supply is an equal *sine qua non* of populism.

In addition, unless the ideational and socio-cultural approaches fully consider the role of agency, theories will end up in determinism and path-dependency (Barr, 2019, p. 55), thus precluding possibilities of avoiding or overcoming populism. The ideational and socio-cultural approaches to populism are incapable of explaining how some populists under similar socio-cultural conditions fail while others thrive. This can only be explained by the strategies and choices of the populist leader and non-populist opponents on the stage.

Problem of Intentionality

By neglecting agency, other approaches disregard any possibility of "intentionality" in populism (Barr, 2017, p. 46; 2019, p. 47). If populism is indeed a "thin-centered ideology" combined with a "host ideology" as Mudde suggests, why would any politician come up with a certain combination? Would a populist still employ a certain combination knowing it will play disadvantageously in elections? Pondering upon such questions, it would be difficult to deny the preponderance of intentionality.

In their pursuit of electoral victory, an ambitious politician might attempt to manipulate citizens using ideas and appeals while not fully agreeing with them (2017, p. 38; Mammone, 2009). One might also attempt to gain power by intentionally adopting a Manichean worldview and developing an antagonistic relationship between two groups (Barr, 2017, p. 38). If a populist deliberately makes and searches for enemies only to demonstrate heroism and rally supporters (Weyland, 2019, p. 325), the Manichean logic serves as a mere "top-down instrument" (2017, p. 59) or

"tool" (Ostiguy, 2009, p. 3) for personalistic leaders, not as the "core" (Mudde, 2004, p. 544; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 9) of populism. In other words, the anti-elite, anti-plural, and pro-people rhetoric are only *some* of the many strategic tools available and disposable to the wily populist to win elections. It is in their strategic use that such ideas find salience, not the ideas themselves (Barr, 2019, p. 53).

Moreover, populism's "disregard for ideological purity" (Weyland, 2017, p. 65) and notorious changes can only be explained by the opportunistic intentions of personalistic leaders to concentrate power and stay in office (p. 54). Populist leaders avoid embracing a specific, well-defined ideology (pp. 52, 67) precisely because they intend to secure leeway for future action. Thus, even the "host ideology" is subject to arbitrary switches, derived from the calculations, choices, and whims of the personalistic leader (p. 67).

Simply put, the ideational approach only explains several possible *contents* of the strategy (Barr, 2019, p. 47), while the socio-cultural approach discerns the *context* which might make a certain strategy (dis)advantageous. The *contents* are merely an "instrument" (Weyland, 2001, p. 12; 2017, pp. 59, 63) at the disposal /service of the populist. Therefore, no matter how profitable the socio-cultural *context* may present itself, and no matter how attractive the *contents*, nothing happens without the will, intention, and action of the populist agent to exploit it.

Problem of Empirical Observation and Study

The ideational approach focuses on the contents of populism, not its form or use (Barr, 2019, p. 47). But an empirical investigation of populism as a set of ideas is stymied without turning to actors for help (p. 52). Therefore, although the ideational

approach defines populism in ideational terms, it can only be studied in behavioral terms (2017, p. 39).

The political-strategic approach is a focus on the actual behavior of leaders (Weyland, 2021, p. 187). By grounding this understanding in terms of agency and action, researchers can make sense of its consequences on democratic institutions, political incorporation, and others. An ideology, however, cannot by itself account for such results (Barr, 2019, p. 45).

Political Strategy as an Inclusive Approach

As discussed above, due to problems of agency, intentionality, and observation, populism can only be explained within the boundaries of political strategy. However, the *contents* and *context* of populism proposed by the other approaches are still necessary components of the populist strategy and cannot be neglected. Therefore, Barr's (2017, p. 44) definition of populism as a "means of building and/or maintaining political power based on the mass mobilization of supporters through the use of anti-establishment appeals and plebiscitarian linkages" appears most explanatory and inclusive.

Barr's definition includes not only the organizational aspects of populism described by Weyland as a "personalistic leader" seeking "direct, unmediated, and un-institutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers" (2001, p. 14; 2017, p. 50; 2022a, p. 478), but also the Manichean aspect proposed by the ideational approach (Barr, 2017, p. 44).

Moreover, by including the populist agent's "low socio-cultural appeals" as part of the anti-establishment "appeals," Barr's political-strategic notion of populism

includes the socio-cultural approach as well (pp. 44-45). Hence, Barr's notion of populism reconciles all three approaches by including the gist of them all the while maintaining agency and intention at the core.

Based on such understanding and building upon Budge and Farlie's (1983) notion of issue salience (Section 3.1), this research posits populism as a political strategy to win elections by achieving ownership over certain passionate issues, even by abandoning democratic norms, principles, and "forbearance" (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2019). Then, the definition of a "populist strategy" would be an act to own issues and voters who would respond passionately to certain issues, even at the cost of democratic integrity.

1.3. The Literature on Populism in Hungary and Poland

(1) The Ideational and Socio-Cultural Approaches

Considerable research on the cause of populism in Hungary and Poland employs the ideational and socio-cultural approach, blaming the ideas and socio-cultures to be significantly different from those of consolidated democracies (Inglehart, 2006, p. 67).

Regarding Hungary, Ágh (2013) argues that the proper socialization process required for democratic behavior was missing in Hungary's modernization, therefore the socio-economic transformation could not create democratic patterns of behavior (p. 35).

Kornai (2015) claims that if the causes of populism in Hungary are to be explained, researchers must look further before 1990, and deeper into historical

traditions that reach back over centuries to the older layer of historical memory shaping today's way of thinking (p. 18).

Lendvai (2017) attributes Hungary's populism to a sense of exceptionalism and superiority stemming from the memory of its glorious past (p. 194). Lendvai also points out Hungarian nostalgia for the leadership of János Kádár, who reigned for thirty-two years during the communist era (p. 53).

Antal (2019) states that populism and nationalism were widely used by Hungarian politicians throughout the twentieth century, and thus are deeply "embedded" in the political culture (pp. 20, 97).

On Poland, Napieralski (2017) attributes populism to political Catholicism, which intends to influence the decision-making process to enshrine Catholic values into law (pp. 1-2), while Średnicka (2018) and Darasz (2018) attribute Poland's populism to its nationalist Romanticism originating in the nineteenth century (Średnicka, 2018, pp. 122, 127, 129; Darasz, 2018, pp. 133-134).

Drinóczi and Bień-Kacała (2021) locate emotional traits of collective victimhood, narcissism, resentment, and a yearning for a charismatic leader among Poles (p. 46). They argue that due to their historic and emotional character, Hungarians and Poles favor a charismatic leader over a specific political philosophy (p. 3). Such trajectories generated "receptiveness" to populism and strong leaders in Hungary and Poland (p. 11).

Krekó and Juhász (2019) point out "tribalism"—total loyalty towards the leader and group—as the driving force of populism in Hungary and Poland (pp. 71-72). They claim that tribalists are more likely to reject political pluralism and support political violence as a tool (p. 72). Moreover, Hungary and Poland share several

similarities in historical narratives that can be the breeding grounds for populism (p. 73; Krekó, 2021, p. 250).

Wigura and Kuisz (2021) mention that countries such as Hungary and Poland, having been deprived of statehood for centuries, possess a traumatic and nervous sense of self, resulting in long-term support for "nativist" political movements and governments.

(2) The Political-Strategic Approach

Conversely, the political-strategic approach asserts that, regardless of the ideas and socio-culture, the agency, intention, and choices matter, therefore emphasizing that events could have turned out differently had the agency, intention, or choices been different.

Körösényi (2020) believes that the literature on "hybrid regimes" overestimates structures and formal institutions by considering them superior to agency (pp. 31, 266). While in opposition, Orbán applied new, innovative political methods, campaign techniques, and divisive political strategies (p. 12). As prime minister, rather than considering the circumstances, structures, and institutionalized norms as obvious or natural constraints, Orbán reshaped and transformed them into resources to maintain and broaden his capacity to act (pp. 267-268). He turned out to be a master of shaping citizens' preferences and the political agenda (p. 95) through politics of "chaosmos" and creativity (p. 180).

Lendvai (2017) mentions that the "actual key" to Orbán's electoral success was his rivals (p. 63). The colossally controversial Őszöd Speech (2006)[5] led to the eventual demise of prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány and his Socialist Party (MSZP), providing Orbán with the much-needed opportunity to eliminate political adversaries (p. 69). The inability of Gyurcsány and the Socialist Party to handle the scandal and the lack of a competent new figure to replace Gyurcsány put the spotlight on Orbán's charisma and leadership (p. 79).

Sadurski (2018) claims outright that structuralist explanations do not apply to the Polish case (p. 56). He believes Poland offers a strong "vindication" of the explanatory power of the agentic theories which emphasize the significance of the human factor as a source of illiberal transformations (p. 56). To Sadurski, populism in Poland can be explained by the relentless will and obsession of Kaczyński and his closest allies (p. 56). Although structural determinants cannot be denied completely, they under-determine political phenomena (p. 58), because no matter how well-designed the system is, it will not forcefully protect itself against a dishonest leader (p. 64).

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[5] What Lendvai (2017) calls a "political nuclear bomb" was an event in which recordings of the new prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány's secret speech were disclosed. In an attempt to convince his party's newly elected parliament members that some painful reforms were unavoidable, Gyurcsány had used shockingly vulgar language, and admitted that he and his party was "lying morning, noon, and night" to the people throughout the election campaign. It was an incident which Orbán gleefully pounced upon to unleash a full-scale political offensive against Gyurcsány and his coalition government. The leak also led to unprecedented waves of public protests, ending up in cases of violence (pp. 65-67).

(3) Limitations of the Literature

Although the claims of various approaches appear reasonable, there are certain limitations this research aims to address.

First, while researchers employing the political-strategic approach such as Sadurski (2018) asserted the need to "vindicate" (p. 56) the agentic theories, insufficient attention was paid to disprove the ideational and socio-cultural claims to populism in Hungary and Poland. Therefore, this research looks into election results, values survey, and political polls to examine the ideational and socio-cultural explanations (Chapter 2).

Second, most works on populist leader agency did not use election theories to explain public support for populist parties in Hungary and Poland. Thus, this research borrows Budge and Farlie's (1983) concepts of "electoral volatility" and "salience theory" to hypothesize and examine how populist strategies translated into votes in Hungary and Poland (Chapter 3).

Third, while current literature includes various aspects of a populist's political strategies, this research intends to categorize them into *institutional* and *non-institutional* strategies and delineate their distinctive features. This categorization would distinguish what different strategies are available to populists when in opposition and in office. Clarifying a subtle supporting relationship between this pair of strategies would help further understand the "self-reinforcing dynamic" (Weyland, 2019, p. 325) of populism. Moreover, since incumbent populists have both types of strategies at their disposal, the distinction between institutional and non-institutional strategies could be useful in understanding why and how some populists have managed to stay in power for multiple terms while others could not (Chapter 4).

1.4. Hypothesis and Research Methods

This research seeks to substantiate the following hypotheses: [H1] in an environment of *high electoral volatility*, populists' *ownership of passionate issues* (via non-institutional strategies) and non-populists' *loss of passionate issues* and *failure to form a coalition* in (performed) *crisis situations* will result in populist electoral victory (Section 3.2), and [H2] the *scope of strategies* available to an incumbent populist—which is predicated on the *ratio of populist party seats* and *compliance of members* in parliament—will determine the likelihood of a populist's re-election (Section 4.1).

Validation of the hypotheses first requires disproval of the presence of ideational and socio-cultural populist sentiments and their political implications (Chapter 2). This is carried out in four ways: first, *patterns of government change* in Hungary and Poland since the post-transition free elections are observed to examine the existence of coherent public support for right-wing parties (Section 2.1). Second, to observe actual support for populist parties, *votes cast to Fidesz and PiS* are compared with the sum of votes cast to other parties (Section 2.2). Third, to identify possible ideas and socio-culture unmanifest in elections, *values survey results* of Hungary and Poland are compared to those of traditionally consolidated democracies such as the United Kingdom and the United States (Section 2.3). Fourth, poll results on *political affiliation by age group* are observed to discern differences between generations (Section 2.4).

Afterward, Budge and Farlie's (1983) theories of "electoral volatility" and "issue salience" are introduced to understand the political environment in Hungary and Poland which populist strategies could exploit to emerge victorious (Section 3.1).

Based on such understanding, non-institutional populist strategies (position change and crisis rhetoric) of Orbán and Kaczyński during their eight years in opposition (Sections 3.3 and 3.4), and the reaction of non-populists in Hungary and Poland (Section 3.5) are analyzed to examine the first hypothesis.

To validate the second hypothesis, parliament composition, compliance of party members, and re-election results of populist leaders (Orbán, Kaczyński, Trump, and Babiš) are observed. (Section 4.1). Then, institutional strategies employed by Orbán and Kaczyński (media control, economic policies, attack on the judiciary, amendment of election law) are presented for analysis (Sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5).

Specifically, both chapters demonstrate how the dependent variables (populist electoral victory and re-election) of the hypotheses could have been altered had there been changes in agentic variables (actions of populists and non-populists). The underlying logic is that, if differences in actions or events could have culminated in different dependent variables, the given ideas and socio-cultural background of a country would lose explanatory validity as the independent variable.

Overall, this research is a qualitative multiple-case (cross-case) study (Yin, 2010) and a hypothesis-generating case study (Lijphart, 1971, p. 692) applying and examining hypotheses to the cases of Hungary and Poland for validation. Moreover, this is an archival research using existing research material, news reports, election data, values survey, and opinion poll results for hypothesis validation.

Chapter 2. Debunking the Ideational and Socio-Cultural Myth

The previous literature appealing to the centuries-long sentiment of Hungarians and Poles might appear persuasive. However, are such attitudes actually dominant in Hungary and Poland? Can these sentiments be held accountable for a political phenomenon in a contemporary democracy? Do large numbers of Hungarians and Poles share a populist "mental map" or "lens"? Or find "low" and "populist" appeals attractive?

If such ideas and socio-culture had existed predominantly for such prolonged periods and had determined political events in Hungary and Poland, it would be natural to expect the following four phenomena after the implementation of free elections. First, right-wing conservative governments would have been continuously elected. Second, populist parties (Fidesz and PiS) would have achieved landslide victories in elections. Third, compared to consolidated democracies, a distinctive set of ideas and culture would be visible in values survey results. Fourth, the older generation would support right-wing conservative parties more fervently than the youth.

To examine these four expectations, this chapter observes patterns of government change (Section 2.1), election vote counts (Section 2.2), values survey results (Section 2.3), and political affiliation by age group (Section 2.4).

2.1. Patterns of Government Change

The long-term preservation of authoritarian, conservative ideas and socio-culture naturally leads one to expect a continuous electoral victory of conservative, right-wing, nationalist political parties in free elections. But is this actually the case in Hungary and Poland? This section looks into patterns of government change since the post-communist transition in Hungary and Poland.

Both Hungary and Poland elect a parliamentary-cabinet system. The prime ministers of both countries are selected by parliament. However, while the Hungarian president is also selected by parliament, the Polish president is elected via a popular election. Therefore, this study observes the prime minister positions of Hungary and Poland, and the president of Poland.

As Table 2.1 exhibits, patterns of government change in Hungary and Poland exhibit a frequent change between left and right parties. Only after Orbán and Kaczyński came to power—Hungary in 2010, Poland in 2015—and began tampering with institutions did one party dominate the scene. It is also worth noting that progressive-left parties were elected for prolonged periods right before the populists came to power in both Hungary and Poland.

On top of that, Eastern European countries including Hungary and Poland have exhibited high electoral volatility and issue salience since the transition (Shabad & Slomczynski, 2004, p. 151; Gherghina, 2014; Lipiński & Stępińska, 2018, p. 83; Epperly, 2022). Such lack of party system stabilization for over two decades and sensitivity to issues could also serve as evidence of the absence of a dominant political idea or culture in Hungary and Poland.

[Table 2.1] Patterns of Government Change in Hungary and Poland

Hungary	Year	Poland		Hungary	Year	Poland	
Prime Minister		Prime Minister	President	Prime Minister		Prime Minister	President
Németh	1990	Mazowiecki	Jaruzelski	Gyurcsány	2006	Jarosław Kaczyński	Lech Kaczyński
Antall	1991	Bielecki	Wałęsa		2007		
		Olszewski			2008	Tusk	
	1992	Pawlak			2009		
		Suchocka		Bajnai			
Boross	1993	Pawlak		Orbán	2010		Komorowski
Horn	1994						Schetyna
	1995	Oleksy	Kwaśniewski		2011		Komorowski
	1996	Cimoszewicz			2012		
	1997	Buzek			2013		
Orbán	1998				2014	Kopacz	
	1999				2015	Szydło	Duda
	2000				2016		
	2001	Miller			2017		
	2002				2018		
Medgyessy	2003				2019	Morawiecki	
	2004	Belka			2020		
Gyurcsány	2005	Marcinkiewicz	Lech Kaczyński		2021		
	2006				2022		

(Note: Red indicates progressive, left-wing parties, and blue indicates conservative, right-wing parties)

Therefore, it appears sound to conclude that upon observation of patterns of government change through free elections, a clear presence of a certain authoritarian, conservative idea or socio-culture cannot be discerned in the political landscapes of Hungary and Poland. Even if such ideas or socio-culture do exist, it does not appear to significantly affect the electoral outcome continuously.

2.2. Election Vote Counts

Because popular elections are the most explicit and direct means to endow power to populist leaders and permit them to claim legitimacy (Weyland, 2017; Körösényi, 2020), it is necessary to pay close attention to how much of the votes were actually cast to populist parties. This section covers Hungarian parliamentary elections, Polish Sejm (lower house), and presidential elections to compare the votes cast to populist parties with the sum of votes cast to other parties.

For the Hungarian parliamentary elections and Polish presidential elections, a second-ballot system is used, thus making it necessary to examine results only from the first round of votes that provide more "unimpaired" chances to all parties (Duverger, 1954, pp. 240, 376, 386).

Upon observation of vote counts, despite the majority victory of populist parties, the ratio of votes for other parties always exceeds 45% in Hungary and 55% in Poland. Considering the uneven playing field created by Fidesz and PiS governments—by institutional means such as media control and amendment of election laws in their favor—support for opposition parties is worth noting.

[Table 2.2] Parliamentary Election Results (Round One) in Hungary

Election	Turnout	Fidesz Votes (%)	Fidesz Seats	Fidesz Government	Non-Fidesz Votes (%)
1990 Parliamentary	65.0%	5.3%	21/386	No	94.7%
1994 Parliamentary	68.9%	7.8%	20/386	No	92.2%
1998 Parliamentary	56.3%	21.0%	148/386	**Yes**	**74.0%**
2002 Parliamentary	70.5%	39.4%	188/386	No	60.6%
2006 Parliamentary	67.8%	42.1%	164/386	No	57.9%
2010 Parliamentary	64.4%	53.4%	262/386	**Yes**	**46.6%**
2014 Parliamentary	61.7%	44.1%	133/199	**Yes**	**55.9%**
2018 Parliamentary	69.7%	47.9%	133/199	**Yes**	**52.1%**
2022 Parliamentary	69.6%	52.5%	135/199	**Yes**	**47.5%**

(Source: National Election Commission)

[Table 2.3] Sejm (Lower House) Election Results in Poland[6]

Election	Turnout	PiS Votes (%)	PiS Seats	PiS Government	Non-PiS Votes (%)
2001 Sejm	46.2%	9.5%	44/460	No	90.5%
2005 Sejm	40.5%	27.0%	155/460	**Yes**	**73.0%**
2007 Sejm	53.8%	32.1%	166/460	No	67.9%
2011 Sejm	48.9%	29.9%	157/460	No	70.1%
2015 Sejm	50.9%	37.6%	235/460	**Yes**	**62.4%**
2019 Sejm	61.7%	43.6%	235/460	**Yes**	**56.4%**

(Source: National Electoral Commission)

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[6] Only elections after PiS was founded in 2001.

[Table 2.4] Presidential Election Results (Round One) in Poland[7]

Election	Turnout	PiS Votes (%)	PiS Victory	Non-PiS Votes (%)
2005 Presidential	49.7%	33.1%	**Yes**	**66.9%**
2010 Presidential	54.9%	36.5%	No	63.5%
2015 Presidential	49.0%	34.8%	**Yes**	**65.2%**
2020 Presidential	64.5%	43.5%	**Yes**	**56.5%**

(Source: National Electoral Commission)

As the numbers in Table 3.2, Table 3.3, and Table 3.4 indicate, election vote counts in Hungary and Poland do not exhibit predominant support for Fidesz and PiS. Rather, attitudes and sentiments appear to be divided, while others perhaps expressed their weariness and disappointment in politics by abstaining (Kornai, 2015, p. 11). Thus, it might be difficult to conclude that populist party victories are the result of a certain "dominant" idea or socio-culture.

Moreover, considering the ratio of votes cast to populist parties, we can understand that these *populist* parties and governments actually stand on non-majoritarian or slim-majoritarian support. In other words, populist governments are sustained by only a parliamentary majority, not a popular majority.

Therefore, the main task of Fidesz and PiS would be to create and maintain an electoral and institutional system in which a slim- or non-majority in popular vote counts can be converted into a parliamentary majority, by continuously mobilizing the "majority of the minority" (Ágh, 2016, p. 282). For instance, the new electoral

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[7] Only elections after PiS was founded in 2001.

system forged by Fidesz after its parliamentary supermajority in 2010 allowed it to maintain a supermajority in 2014 (2,165,342 votes) with *fewer* popular votes than in elections which Fidesz failed to secure even a majority in 2002 (2,217,755 votes), and 2006 (2,269,241 votes).

In this light, it is possible to claim that support for populist governments is more dependent on various political strategies and institutions than on historically rooted ideas and socio-culture of the electorate. The election system itself, introduced after the change of regime, has offered the opportunity for a considerable difference between actual political support and the proportions among the representatives (Kornai, 2015, p. 11).

2.3. Values Survey Results

While election results appear to demonstrate the absence of a dominant authoritarian, conservative political idea or socio-culture, election results alone cannot represent the whole story. As Duverger (1954) asserts, the distribution of votes in elections is only *one* way of expressing public opinion, thus insufficient to understand its true nature (p. 372). Different methods such as public opinion survey reveal a more "raw" public opinion (p. 380). Therefore, this section analyses the values survey results of Hungary and Poland and compares them to consolidated democracies to discern the presence of distinctive political ideas and socio-culture possibly conductive to populism.

Influenced by its renowned founder Ronald Inglehart, the World Values Survey is an international research program devoted to the scientific and academic study of

the social, political, economic, religious, and cultural values of people in the world. World Values Survey Wave 7 (Haerpfer et al., 2022) was conducted between 2017 and 2021 in fifty-nine countries and territories.

This section compares survey results from four countries—Hungary, Poland, the United States, and the United Kingdom—on questionnaires related to democracy, authority, nationalism, and religion. The United States and the United Kingdom have been selected for comparison because they are considered to be long-established and resilient democracies (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, p. 23). If a distinctively conservative set of ideas or socio-culture does exist in Hungary and Poland, respondents' answers are expected to differ conspicuously on many counts from those of the US and the UK.

(1) Democracy

[Table 2.5] Q238: Having a democratic political system

	Hungary	Poland	UK	US
Very good	57.8%	40.9%	60.2%	45.8%
Fairly good	30.3%	41.4%	31.3%	35.7%
Fairly bad	4.4%	6.5%	5.0%	10.4%
Very bad	2.3%	2.7%	1.0%	4.0%
Don't know	3.6%	7.8%	2.5%	0.4%
No answer	1.7%	0.7%	0.1%	3.8%
(N)	(1,519)	(1,358)	(1,794)	(2,596)

The ratio of respondents who responded that democracy is "very good" was higher in Hungary (57.8%) than in the US (45.8%) and did not differ significantly from the

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UK (60.2%). The sum of responses for "very good" and "fairly good" exceeded 80% in both Hungary (88.1%) and Poland (82.3%), similar to the US (81.5%).

Responses for "fairly bad" was higher in the UK (5.0%) and the US (10.4%) than in Hungary (4.4%) and Poland (6.5%). Moreover, more respondents responded that democracy is "very bad" in the US (4.0%) than in any other country compared. Analyzing this question alone, respondents from Hungary and Poland seem to possess democratic values nor far behind traditionally democratic countries.

[Table 2.6] Q222: When elections take place (national level) do you vote?

	Hungary	Poland	UK	US
Always	65.8%	60.7%	61.4%	59.2%
Usually	23.1%	25.5%	19.1%	21.0%
Never	9.2%	11.0%	14.8%	14.9%
Not allowed to vote	1.0%	1.6%	4.6%	3.1%
Don't know	0.3%	0.3%	-	-
No answer	0.6%	0.9%	0.1%	1.7%
(N)	(1,519)	(1,358)	(1,794)	(2,596)

Respondents who responded that they always vote in national level elections were similar in Hungary (65.8%), Poland (60.7%), the US (59.2%), and the UK (61.4%), while the ratio of respondents that would never vote was slightly higher in the US (14.9%) and the UK (14.8%) than in Hungary (9.2%) and Poland (11.0%). Therefore, the perception of participation in democratic procedures is similar or better in Hungary and Poland. This tendency can also be interpreted as a positive understanding of democracy per se.

[Table 2.7] Q194: Political violence

	Hungary	Poland	UK	US
Never justifiable	84.3%	75.3%	60.1%	60.1%
2	6.5%	9.7%	14.5%	10.7%
3	2.2%	3.7%	8.2%	7.1%
4	1.0%	1.6%	4.5%	4.7%
5	2.4%	3.2%	6.6%	8.7%
6	1.0%	0.9%	2.3%	2.4%
7	0.2%	1.0%	1.6%	2.4%
8	0.5%	0.0%	0.8%	0.9%
9	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%
Always justifiable	0.4%	1.2%	0.4%	1.3%
Don't know	1.1%	2.8%	0.9%	-
No answer	0.5%	0.3%	0.0%	1.2%
(N)	(1,519)	(1,358)	(1,794)	(2,596)

The ratio of respondents who regarded political violence to be unjustifiable was higher in Hungary (84.3%) and Poland (75.3%) than in the US (60.1%) and the UK (60.1%). Meanwhile, the ratio for "always justifiable" was equal in Hungary (0.4%) and the UK (0.4%), and similar in Poland (1.2%) and the US (1.3%). Thus, the acceptability of political violence can be considered lower in Hungary and Poland than in the consolidated democracies compared.

Overall, it is possible to assert that regarding the democratic system, voter participation, and political violence, Hungary and Poland share similar—if not better—democratic values compared to those of consolidated democracies.

(2) Authoritarian Leader

[Table 2.8] Q235: Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections

	Hungary	Poland	UK	US
Very good	4.1%	2.4%	5.9%	11.5%
Fairly good	17.0%	13.6%	21.7%	25.6%
Fairly Bad	32.1%	34.6%	25.5%	25.7%
Very bad	41.6%	42.2%	44.7%	34.8%
Don't know	3.5%	6.3%	2.1%	0.2%
No answer	1.6%	0.9%	0.1%	2.3%
(N)	(1,519)	(1,358)	(1,794)	(2,596)

The ratio of respondents who believed it to be "very good" to have a strong leader was lower in Hungary (4.1%) and Poland (2.4%) than in the US (11.5%) and the UK (5.9%). On the other hand, the ratio of respondents who believed it to be "very bad" was lower in the US (34.8%) than in Hungary (41.6%) and Poland (42.2%), which were more similar to the UK (44.7%). Hence, compared to consolidated democracies, the inclination for a strong, charismatic leader in Hungary and Poland appears not much different.

[Table 2.9] Q248: People obey their rulers

	Hungary	Poland	UK	US
It is against democracy (spontaneous)	1.4%	1.3%	0.2%	-
Not an essential characteristic of democracy	17.9%	30.8%	13.9%	14.3%
2	6.2%	9.8%	6.5%	5.4%
3	6.9%	8.8%	9.0%	5.7%
4	5.5%	5.0%	8.3%	6.1%
5	18.4%	12.9%	16.4%	22.6%
6	9.2%	5.2%	9.6%	8.7%
7	8.5%	4.5%	11.8%	10.0%
8	6.7%	5.9%	10.2%	10.2%
9	4.7%	2.8%	4.9%	4.3%
An essential characteristic of democracy	11.8%	5.4%	5.9%	10.4%
Don't know	1.3%	7.4%	3.3%	0.0%
No answer	1.5%	0.3%	0.1%	2.3%
(N)	(1,519)	(1,358)	(1,794)	(2,596)

The ratio of respondents that answered that obedience to rulers is against democracy was higher in Hungary (1.4%) and Poland (1.3%) than in the UK (0.2%). A higher ratio of respondents in Hungary (17.9%) and Poland (30.8%) believed obedience was not an essential characteristic of democracy than in the UK (13.9%) and the US (14.3%).

Reversely, the ratio of responses stating that obedience is an essential characteristic of democracy was similar between Hungary (11.8%) and the US (10.4%), and between Poland (5.4%) and the UK (5.9%). Thus, it is safe to conclude

that Hungarians and Poles are not distinctively authoritarian-minded compared to the US and the UK.

(3) Nationalism

[Table 2.10] Q254: How proud are you to be [country's nationality]?

	Hungary	Poland	UK	US
Very proud	48.7%	62.8%	45.0%	45.6%
Quite proud	36.3%	32.1%	34.8%	32.4%
Not very proud	10.5%	2.4%	7.7%	14.7%
Not at all proud	1.8%	0.3%	2.2%	4.2%
I am not [nationality]	-	-	-	1.7%
Don't know	1.2%	1.6%	0.6%	-
No answer	0.6%	0.5%	0.1%	1.5%
Other	1.0%	0.3%	9.6%	-
(N)	(1,519)	(1,358)	(1,794)	(2,596)

Poland (62.8%) exhibited the highest national pride among the countries in comparison. Hungary (48.7%), the UK (45.0%), and the US (45.6%) showed similar tendencies. Therefore, while national pride in Hungary appears to be similar to countries of consolidated democracies, Poles clearly appear to have more national pride than in other countries.

[Table 2.11] Q63: Trust (people of another nationality)

	Hungary	Poland	UK	US
Trust completely	8.2%	1.0%	10.9%	8.1%
Trust somewhat	45.4%	42.0%	70.6%	65.1%
Do not trust very much	29.6%	31.8%	12.6%	21.0%
Do not trust at all	11.4%	9.8%	2.9%	4.6%
Don't know	4.2%	14.5%	2.7%	0.1%
No answer	1.2%	0.8%	0.2%	1.1%
(N)	(1,519)	(1,358)	(1,794)	(2,596)

Trust in foreigners is observed to be low in both Hungary and Poland. Those that responded "trust completely" were similar in Hungary (8.2%), the UK (10.9), and the US (8.1%). The sum of "trust completely" and "trust somewhat" is 53.6% in Hungary and 43.0% in Poland, while the sum of "do not trust very much" and "do not trust at all" is 41.0% in Hungary and 41.6% in Poland. Unlike the responses to other questions, the opinion in Hungary and Poland appears to be completely divided into half on this matter.

Moreover, responses for "don't know" was higher in Hungary (4.2%) and Poland (14.5%) than in other consolidated democracies. Therefore, although distrust towards foreigners is higher compared to consolidated democracies in comparison, neither trust nor distrust towards foreigners is sufficiently pervasive enough to be proclaimed as dominant in both Hungary and Poland.

(4) Religion

[Table 2.12] Q173: Religious person

	Hungary	Poland	UK	US
A religious person	53.2%	83.0%	36.9%	58.0%
Not a religious person	36.9%	10.3%	49.2%	33.3%
An atheist	6.8%	3.3%	12.6%	7.9%
Don't know	1.7%	2.8%	1.2%	-
No answer	1.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%
(N)	(1,519)	(1,358)	(1,794)	(2,596)

The ratio of respondents identifying themselves as a "religious person" was highest in Poland (83.0%). The ratio of respondents for every answer was similar in Hungary and the US. Thus, with the exception of Poland, religion does not appear to be a distinctive feature.

[Table 2.13] Q164: Important in life: Religion

	Hungary	Poland	UK	US
Very important	16.1%	37.3%	15.8%	37.1%
Rather important	29.0%	40.8%	21.2%	23.6%
Not very important	33.6%	13.8%	35.4%	21.9%
Not at all important	20.3%	7.0%	27.4%	16.5%
Don't know	0.6%	0.9%	0.1%	-
No answer	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.9%
(N)	(1,519)	(1,358)	(1,794)	(2,596)

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The ratio of respondents for "very important" was similar between Poland (37.3%) and the US (37.1%), and between Hungary (16.1%) and the UK (15.8%). Therefore, although more people identify themselves as religious in Poland (Table 4.12), religious vigor in Hungary and Poland is not conspicuously distinctive from that of consolidated democracies.

The sum of responses for "not very important" and "not at all important" is higher in Hungary (53.9%) than in the US (38.4%). With 53.9% of respondents responding that religion is not important in their lives, it would be difficult to conclude religiosity as a conspicuous feature of Hungarian culture. Moreover, although devotion to religion appears to be considerably high in Poland, recent research reveals that religiosity and the number of believers are gradually declining, especially among the younger generation (Marody & Mandes, 2017, pp. 237, 240; Harper, 2018, p. 31).

Overall, Polish respondents exhibit the most distinctive tendencies in national pride, trust of foreigners, and religion. However, considering that the extent and intensity of the "populist revolution" are stronger in Hungary than in Poland, and that it was in Hungary that populists first rose to power with a parliamentary *supermajority*, these values seem unlikely to have been a decisive factor (independent variable) for populist electoral victory.

Moreover, considering the election vote counts from Section 2.2, with over 55% of Poles voting against PiS in every election, it is difficult to conclude that such tendencies directly translate into support for populist parties in elections. Therefore, values survey data demonstrate that it is difficult to observe a dominant conservative

culture in both Hungary and Poland persuasively responsible for the rise and persistence of populist parties and governments.

2.4. Political Affiliation by Age Group

While Norris and Inglehart (2019) posit that, as a result of the silent revolution and cultural backlash, the older generation tends to vote for authoritarian populist parties and the young for progressive parties, the cases of Hungary and Poland appear to be the exception.[8] According to various surveys, in both Hungary and Poland, the younger generation appears to be as conservative—if not more—as the older generation.

Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 show a rough picture of the left-right landscape in Hungary.[9] What is clear from these survey results is that support from the older generation dwindles as the parties approach the right end, while support from the youth exhibits a reverse inclination. Another fact worth noting is that Fidesz receives balanced support from all generations. Hence, it is difficult to claim that the older generation retains a more conservative tendency compared to the younger generations in Hungary, and that Fidesz mostly feeds on their support.

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[8] Norris and Inglehart do partially acknowledge that parties endorsing authoritarian policies received more support from the younger cohorts in Hungary (2019, p. 282).

[9] The MSZP (Socialist Party) is the successor party of the former communist party, with a liberal agenda for social democracy. The DK (Democratic Coalition), founded by former MSZP prime minister Gyurcsány, espouses social liberalism, and the LMP (Green Party) is on the center-left. Párbeszéd (Dialogue) is regarded as a centrist party, and Momentum a center-right platform. Irrefutably placed on the far-right are Jobbik and Fidesz, while Jobbik is considered more radical than Fidesz on certain issues (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, p. 311). Ágh considers Jobbik to be a twin party of Fidesz, since its president, Gábor Vona, used to be a member in one of the Fidesz "civic circles" (Ágh, 2013, p. 45; 2015, pp. 206-207, 212).

[Figure 2.1] Distribution of "Absolutely Sure" Voters by Age (Hungary, 2018)[10]

	MSZP	DK	LMP	Jobbik	Fidesz
■ Above 60	50.0%	42.9%	20.0%	26.7%	27.8%
▨ 40-60	30.0%	28.6%	40.0%	33.3%	44.4%
■ Under 40	20.0%	28.6%	40.0%	40.0%	27.8%
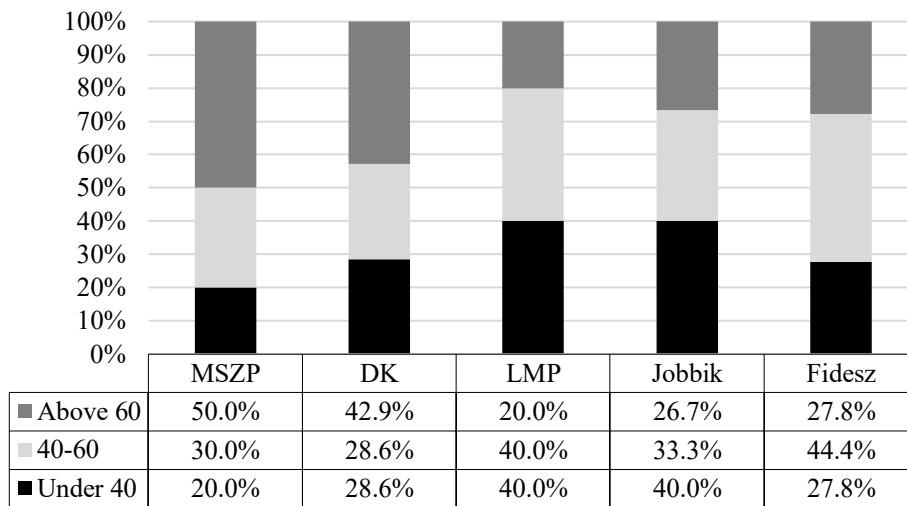
[Figure 2.2] Age Distribution of Voters of Political Parties (Hungary, 2021)[11]

	MSZP	DK	LMP	Párbeszéd	Momentum	Jobbik	Fidesz
■ Above 60	55%	42%	26%	22%	19%	13%	30%
▨ 40-59	33%	32%	35%	52%	31%	33%	36%
■ 18-39	12%	26%	39%	26%	51%	54%	33%

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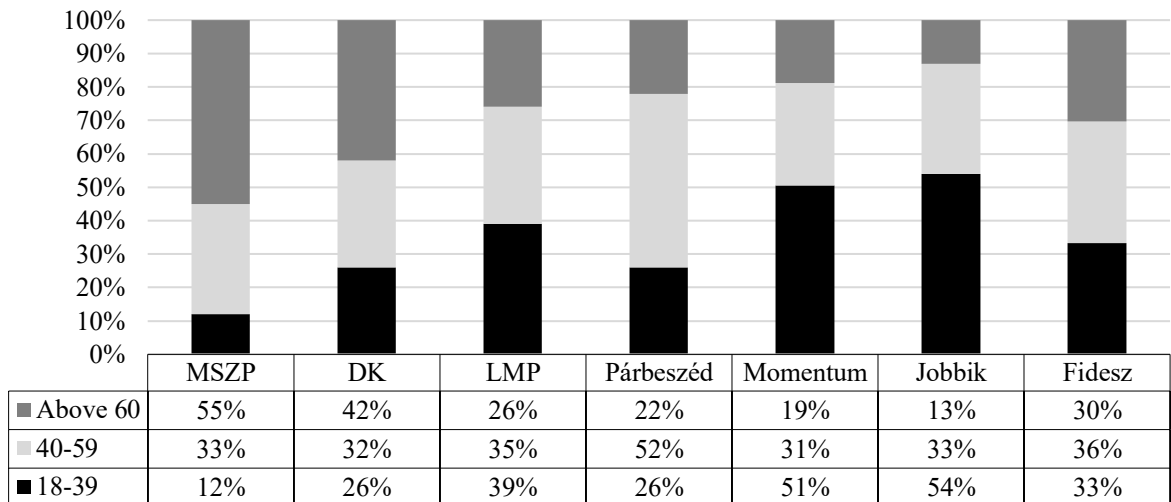
[10] Munk (2018)
[11] Republikon Intézet (2021)

[Figure 2.3] Support for Right-Wing Parties by Generation (Poland, 2015)[12]

	Age 18-29	Age 30-39	Age 40-49	Age 50-59	Age 60+
■ KORWIN	16.8%	4.8%	2.6%	6.0%	0.6%
■ K'15	20.6%	12.6%	7.7%	4.9%	2.0%
■ PiS	26.6%	30.6%	38.7%	47.1%	48.7%
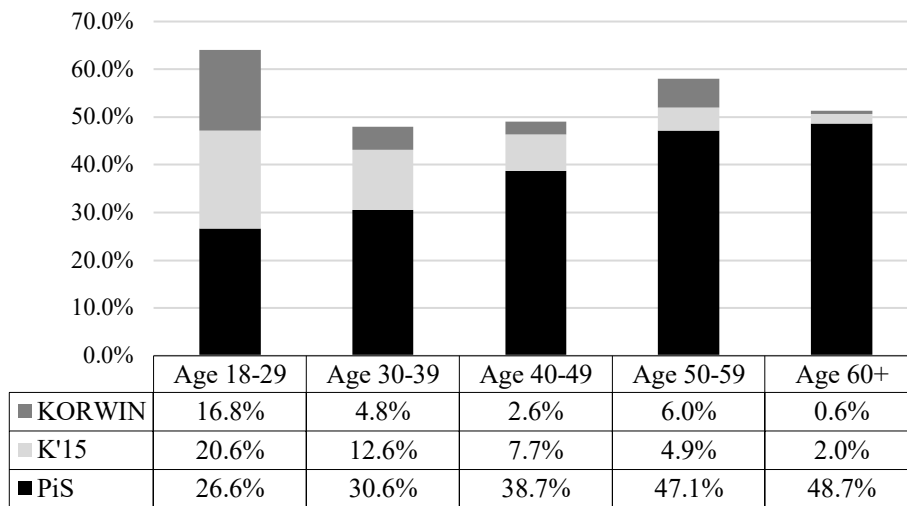
[Figure 2.4] Support for Left-Wing Parties by Generation (Poland, 2015)[13]

	Age 18-29	Age 30-39	Age 40-49	Age 50-59	Age 60+
■ RAZEM	5.2%	5.8%	4.1%	3.2%	1.8%
■ ZL	3.4%	5.6%	6.4%	7.3%	9.3%
■ PO	14.4%	23.8%	25.8%	23.0%	28.1%

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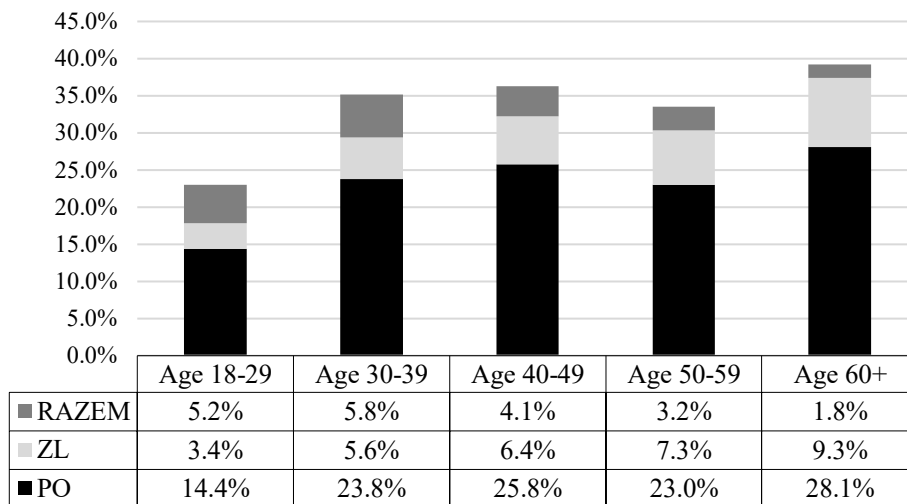
[12] WP Poll
[13] WP Poll

41

In Poland, at the time of PiS's return to power in 2015, the youth also showed more conservative tendencies than the older generation (Figure 2.3),[14] while a larger portion of the older generation supported left-wing parties than the young (Figure 2.4). As was the case in Hungary, it is difficult to conclude that the older generation retains a more conservative tendency compared to the younger generations in Poland as well.

While Norris and Inglehart (2019) state that authoritarian populist rhetoric of tough law and order, restricted border flows, and the restoration of national sovereignty appeal more strongly to older citizens (p. 286), in both Hungary and Poland, such issues appear to resonate equally or better with the young (Bayer, 2016). Thus, the popularity and consecutive electoral victories of populist parties in Hungary and Poland are unlikely to be the result of a generational gap or conflicts of ideas or socio-culture.

To summarize, this chapter argued that an analysis of election results, values survey data, and political poll results show that the presence of a pervasive authoritarian or conservative political ideas, socio-culture, or their political impact is difficult to substantiate. Although some might share the same values with the populist leader, the ratio is not sufficiently predominant to constitute the defining culture of Hungary and Poland, or of their youth or the old.

Hastily identifying the entire population through the behavior and rhetoric of the populist leader is precisely playing into the populist's logic and tactic. While

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[14] KORWIN and Kukiz' 2015 are considered to be more radical than PiS on certain issues.

there are over 45% of the electorate in Hungary and over 55% in Poland actively voting against the populists in every election, reducing people's ideas and socio-culture collectively as anachronistic simpletons is a rash and irresponsible over-generalization.

Although there must be some truth in observing the historic context (Tilly, 2008, p. 420), excessively extending the time scope for investigation might blur the point and end up in erroneous conclusions. Many researchers seem to have fallen into this pitfall because as Hague (2010) points out, it is dangerously easy to resort to cultural contrasts as explanations for political differences. Especially when researchers can think of nothing else, they can simply conclude that "it's just part of their culture" (p. 201).

This is exactly what Harper (2018) critiques to be a West-centered observation of Poland. Reporters and researchers with "stereotypes" (p. 6), "loaded eyes" (p. 18), "neo-/quasi- colonial" (p. 14), or "partisan" (p. 19) attitudes observe an imagined and fantasized "other" Poland (p. 18). And rhetorical devices used by Western media—such as "hard-right," "xenophobic," and "nationalistic" (p. 14)—treat Poland as a "child" of democracy and evaluate populism as a symptom of "collective pathology" (p. 16). Ágh (2013) also warns of exaggerations and lamentations about an "eternal East" in European political science (p. 30). Therefore, the ideational and socio-cultural explanations of populism discussed in the literature are likely to be an exaggerated *myth*—unfair and insulting to the millions of Hungarians and Poles who have voted against the populists.

Chapter 3. Non-Institutional Populist Strategies

Because the scope of strategies available to populist leaders differs between when in office and in opposition, strategies can be distinguished into *institutional* and *non-institutional*. Institutional strategies include legally binding orders from official government/parliament positions and institutions held by populists such as executive orders or legislation, whereas non-institutional strategies are merely non-binding rhetorical devices. Therefore, non-institutional strategies could explain how populists initially come to power from opposition, and institutional strategies could explain how populists use state apparatuses as part of their strategy for re-election.

The first hypothesis of this research requires an understanding of Budge and Farlie's (1983) theories of "electoral volatility" and "issue salience." The electoral volatility theory provides insight into the political environment that populists can exploit, and the issue salience theory explains how populist strategies sway a volatile electorate.

3.1. Electoral Volatility and Salience Theory

(1) Electoral Volatility

According to Budge and Farlie (1983), electoral volatility is the "transition of support from one party to another," usually produced by *issues* (p. 123). Electoral volatility is considered to be high where more voters respond to issues and where issues tend to be important, for example, in the United States (p. 124).

The literature on populism has claimed that high electoral volatility provides a fertile ground for populists (Ostiguy, 2009, p. 2; Barr, 2017, pp. 113-146; Norris & Inglehart, 2019, p. 53). Research has also shown that electoral volatility is high in post-communist transition states of Eastern Europe because the political and economic transition resulted in ideological confusion and weak programmatic identities of political parties (Shabad & Slomczynski, 2004, p. 151; Gherghina, 2014, p. 2; Lipiński & Stępińska, 2018, p. 83; Epperly, 2022). The weak societal roots of parties did not allow easy party identification or voter alignment, and unclear patterns of competition made policies detached from reality, leading to a lack of elite loyalty and reduced leadership continuity (Gherghina, 2014, p. 3). Such absence of social cleavages readily led to higher electoral volatility associated with personality politics and authoritarian populism (Evans & Whitefield, 1993, p. 526).

Setting aside the fact that high electoral volatility itself serves as evidence of an absence of a dominant conservative/authoritarian political culture in Hungary and Poland, the theory posits that it rendered the electorate prone to "issues" in elections. It is under this environment that the populist politician intentionally and strategically utilizes provocative, divisive Manichean language and regularly "performs" crises by exaggerating or forging issues.

(2) Issue Salience

Meanwhile, according to Budge and Farlie (1983), "salience" is giving selective emphasis on the strong points of one's case while giving less attention to issues that favor opponents (p. 24). Instead of diligently considering every topic, parties devote most attention to issues that favor themselves, trying to render and stress their areas

of concern to be most prominent (pp. 23-25). Therefore, saliency theory sees party competition in terms of emphasis on varying policy areas, not by arguing directly with each other (pp. 23-24). The result is that parties are widely perceived as "owning" certain issue types (p. 25).

This aspect of party competition is important because parties provide the main political guidance for most voters, by simplifying and focusing the complex world of politics in terms of their policies and stands (p. 22). The voter's only choice is between the alternatives offered by parties (p. 22), and voters select the party that "owns" the issues important to them.

Especially, regional, ethnic, religious, and moral issues "arouse strong passions among considerable numbers of electors" and "generally engage large groups fairly intensely" (p. 49). Therefore, a political party that holds ownership over certain *passionate* issues is likely to be advantageous in popular elections. And despite the fact that every society has certain passionate issues, they might differ according to region and context.

Then, when applied to the context of Hungary and Poland, the characteristics presented by the ideational and socio-cultural explanations—historical tradition, nationalism, religion, et cetera—point out the possible passionate issues of the two countries in question. However, because salient issues of a party are usually selected by the party leader based on strategic considerations (p. 46), the selection of issues to own can only be understood through political agents' intentions and will. In other words, the existence of certain possible passionate issues itself does not explain why and how a certain politician or party comes to own them.

3.2. Hypothesis 1

Based on Budge and Farlie's concepts, this study hypothesizes that [H1] in an environment of *high electoral volatility*, populists' *ownership of passionate issues* (via non-institutional strategies) and non-populists' *loss of passionate issues* and *failure to form a coalition* in (performed) *crisis situations* will result in populist electoral victory[15] (Figure 3.1).

Constant		Antecedent Variable		Independent Variable		Mediating Variable		Dependent Variable
High Electoral Volatility	$+$	(Performed) Crisis Situations	$+$	Populists' Ownership of Passionate Issues	$+$	Non-Populists' Loss of Passionate Issues and Failure to Form a Coalition	$\rightarrow$	Populist Electoral Victory
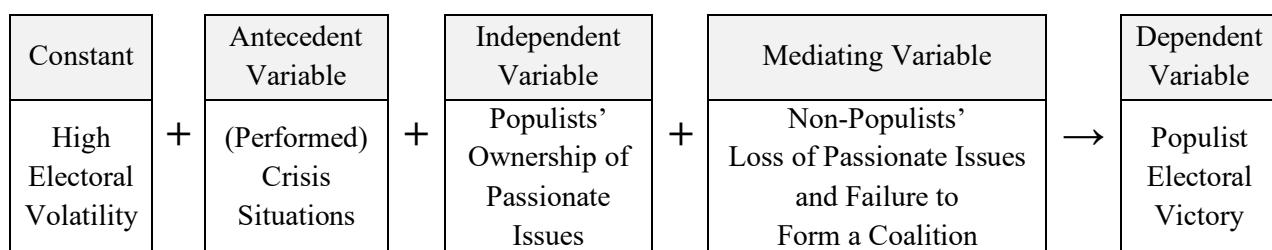
[Figure 3.1] Hypothesis (H1)

Weyland (2021) mentions the need to understand "how they [populists] reacted to opportunities offered by crisis situations" (pp. 187-188). Because the nature of populist strategies requires an existential crisis to thrive, populists will actively exaggerate an already existing crisis or "perform," "trigger" (Moffitt, 2016), "invent" (Körösényi, 2020) one to render an advantageous environment for themselves. Under these circumstances, if populist rhetoric succeeds in dominating passionate issues, populists are likely to emerge victorious in elections.

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[15] The dependent variable "populist electoral victory" indicates possibilities of both initial electoral victories and re-elections of populists.

However, populists' complete ownership of passionate issues also depends on how non-populists react. No matter how limited, non-populists' maintenance of a firm foothold on those passionate issues—by endeavoring to disclose and "fact-check" the performed crises—will lead to support from those who disagree with the populist rhetoric. But holding on to passionate issues alone is not enough to deny the populist party a majority in parliament. Such endeavors of *all* non-populist parties must be united in a coalition, thereby offering the electorate a democratic alternative on both the left and the right.

Likewise, a combined effort of all non-populist parties to countervail populist rhetoric can significantly decrease the possibility of populist electoral success. Therefore, not only the populists' strategies but also the reaction of non-populists is vital to understanding and explaining the process of a populist electoral victory or failure.

The remaining sections of this chapter present two major non-institutional populist strategies, *position change* (Section 3.3) and *crisis rhetoric* (Section 3.4), and examples of both unsuccessful (Section 3.5) and successful (Section 3.6) reactions by non-populists.

3.3. [Strategy 1] Position Change

Salient issues are usually selected by the party leader based on strategic considerations (Budge & Farlie, 1983, p. 46). Therefore, populists, with their purpose to gain as many votes as possible, are likely to select more passionate issue areas regarding morality, ethnicity, nation, and religion. Having targeted such

passionate issues, the populist leader will use any means necessary—however undemocratic they may be—to own these issues and to gather voters.

During Orbán and Kaczyński's years of opposition and consecutive electoral failures, they shifted their party position to the right, intentionally embracing nationalism and religion as official party policy. After failure in the 1994 and 2002 elections, the once "anti-clerical rebel" (Lendvai, 2017, p. 50) Orbán officially declared a rightward turn, embracing Catholic/Protestant churches and accepting Hungary's founding myths (p. 36; Stanley, 2017, p. 148; Körösényi, 2020, p. 68), even insinuating possible ambitions for territorial expansion.[16]

Similarly, Kaczyński's "radicalization" was designed to secure the right of the political spectrum (Lipiński & Stępińska, 2018, p. 91). His initially pro-EU views were altered to attract nationalistic and Eurosceptic voters (Płatek & Płucienniczak, 2017, p. 301; Napieralski, 2017, p. 155). In addition, after gradually revealing its religious shade, PiS openly included political Catholicism in its 2014 party manifesto (p. 76). Such moves can attract votes from religious conservatives who support "political Catholicism"—the desire to influence the political decision-making process to embed Catholic values in law (Napieralski, 2017, pp. 1-2).

Although rival parties on the center-left also do acknowledge the importance of national identity and religion (p. 65), populists take a step further and abandon democratic norms to enshrine them in official party doctrine—something a major party of a secular democratic country would not normally do. This codification allows the populist party to own these passionate issues officially and exclusively in

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[16] "European borders have become movable" (Michnik, 2023).

the eyes of the public, thereby paralyzing any counter-efforts of non-populists unless they proceed to abandon democratic norms to include nationalism and religion in official party policy as well.

If not for such shifts in policy positions, neither Fidesz nor PiS would have been able to secure the prominent issues necessary for their parliamentary majorities. Therefore, these shifts could be considered deliberate and strategic actions by Orbán and Kaczyński to gain more votes.

3.4. [Strategy 2] Crisis Rhetoric

After populists have positioned themselves toward passionate issues, they "perform"—make up or exaggerate—crises on those issues. Because populist strategies receive more attention and reap political benefits under extreme circumstances, populists will exaggerate already existing crises or fabricate one to make them appear more threatening.[17] Pretending the presence of an "apocalyptic" confrontation (Müller, 2016, p. 42) would be extremely effective in making the electorate believe that the issue is salient or imminent and that the populist owns the issue. It would also make voters believe the populist leader to be the most apt and confident person to take care of such urgent matters.

In other words, certain issues become salient precisely because the populist intentionally made them salient, by deliberately "performing," "triggering" (Moffitt,

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[17] This is likely to be why "fake news" and "fact-checking" received much attention during the 2016 US presidential election campaign.

2016), or "inventing" (Körösényi, 2020, p. 118) crisis. The most typical areas for such rhetoric are *anti-elite* and *anti-immigration*.

(1) Anti-Elite Rhetoric: Crisis of Morality

Populists regularly criticize and demonize those in power to be the "elite" or the "establishment" by accusing them of corruption and instigating that power is in the wrong hands. Considering that corruption issues become fatal only when employed as a political weapon (Weyland, 1994, p. 3), bringing them to the fore and dominating the message is an ingenious move by the populists to promote their issues and demote rivals and their issues (Rychard, 2018, p. 43).

During their years in opposition, Orbán and Kaczyński forced upon the center-left governments and parties an unfavorable image by continuously stigmatizing them as corrupt, conspiring, and evil. In Hungary, Orbán often targets and accuses the Socialist Party (MSZP) of "post-communism" (Körösényi, 2020, p. 146). Former Socialist Party prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány's scandalous Őszöd Speech (2006)[18] and the financial crisis (2008) were interpreted by Orbán as proof of the illegitimacy and corruption of the remnant "communist forces" (p. 147). Similarly, in Poland, Kaczyński also argues that the corrupt former communists were never

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[18] What Lendvai (2017) calls a "political nuclear bomb" was an event in which recordings of the new prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány's secret speech were disclosed. In an attempt to convince his party's newly elected parliament members that some painful reforms were unavoidable, Gyurcsány had used shockingly vulgar language, and admitted that he and his party was "lying morning, noon, and night" to the people throughout the election campaign. It was an incident which Orbán gleefully pounced upon to unleash a full-scale political offensive against Gyurcsány and his coalition government. The leak also led to unprecedented waves of public protests, ending up in cases of violence (pp. 65-67).

completely wiped away and that his rival party, the Civic Platform (PO), is part of it as well (Harper, 2018, p. 29).

Regardless of the validity of such accusations, the populists repeated such rhetoric, and if an unexpected political crisis such as the aforementioned Őszöd Speech incident, the financial crisis, or the refugee crisis actually does occur or exacerbates, the public would view populist accusations with significant credibility. Even after Orbán and Kaczyński seized power, they continuously demean their rivals as those who comprised the corrupt former government to further diminish their legitimacy.[19]

However, it is difficult to see that the public "shares" the Manichean dichotomy of the populists as the ideational approach asserts. The populist strategy is to simply force upon their rivals a negative image, not to make voters share their Manichean dichotomy per se. In other words, anyone can be persuaded that the elite are corrupt and evil without necessarily embracing a dichotomic worldview.

(2) Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric: Crisis of National and Religious Identity

The issue of immigration was previously of low salience in Eastern European politics (Stanley, 2017, p. 147). However, the refugee crisis in 2015 brought this issue to the fore, with Orbán and Kaczyński deliberately stimulating rage. In Hungary, the refugee crisis was turned into the main topic and managed to stay so for a significant

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[19] As prime minister, Orbán incessantly accuses all those against him as "socialist and liberal" (Lendvai, 2017, p. 123), and that they, together with NGOs and journalists, are traitors who have secretly joined forces with external enemies (Körösényi, 2020, p. 117). PiS rhetoric also frames PO and its members as corrupt and colluding with foreign powers, justifying the need for a "moral revolution" to solve this situation (Harper, 2018, p. 29).

time since 2015 (Körösényi, 2020, p. 113). Orbán framed the crisis as a security issue, an issue of national sovereignty, a threat to national and cultural identity (p. 112), and Western civilization in general (Lendvai, 2017, p. 192).[20] Through this strategy, Orbán projected himself and Fidesz as the only reliable shield for protecting national identity (p. 220), significantly improving support for himself (pp. 193, 201).

Similarly, in Poland, Kaczyński referred the refugees to a "disease" from the Middle East (Harper, 2018, p. 31). Racist attitudes were skillfully stimulated by PiS (Sadurski, 2018, p. 59), contributing to high perceptions of threat (Lipiński & Stępińska, 2018, p. 84). The consistent reiteration of "crisis" had the dual effect of maintaining advantageous issues salient and projecting the populist leader to be adamant, confident, and competent on the issue.

Moreover, owning the issue enabled Orbán and Kaczyński to bring it up whenever and however they deemed fit. Not only did populists use the refugee crisis to reinforce their own cause, but they also went further to relate opponents' support for refugees to "foreign interests" such as the EU (Körösényi, 2020, p. 113; Szczerbiak, 2022). Such rhetoric once again fundamentally damaged the morality and motivations of political adversaries, causing public doubt on the left's every other issue agenda.

With rival center-left parties already morally damaged by the anti-elite rhetoric, and unable to outmaneuver the populist crisis rhetoric, populists dominated the passionate issues of nationalism, religion, and morality. Populists rendered many

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[20] Orbán specifically used phrases such as "a civilizational threat from Islam" (Brubaker, 2017, pp. 4, 5) and "a Trojan horse of terrorism" (Lendvai, 2017, p. 205).

voters to view center-left politicians and parties as immoral, incompetent, and lenient on urgent existential matters.

If an opponent raises a different opinion on the issue, the populist can simply demonize or delegitimize them as "privileged," "corrupt," or "special/foreign interests" (Weyland, 2001, p. 14). This drastic attitude of populists could make rival parties abandon passionate issue areas completely to save themselves from further diminishing their reputation. Likewise, if the opposition is incapable of effectively acting against the populist rhetoric, populists will likely emerge victorious in elections.

Overall, non-institutional strategies of *position change* and *crisis rhetoric* can be seen as deliberate endeavors to own passionate issue areas while making opponents leave them to cling on to dispassionate and trivial policy issues. And because such strategies perform better in existential crisis contexts, the populists will exaggerate a pre-existing crisis or make one up.

Moreover, because the anti-elite, anti-immigrant crisis rhetoric is based on a "politically driven division of society" (Bozóki, 2008, p. 219) forced by populists after their political position change, such ideas or culture can be considered an observable *consequence* of deliberate populist strategies, rather than a pre-existing set of constants in Hungary and Poland.

3.5. Un-Strategic Response of Non-Populists

Researchers have discussed the important role of non-populists in a populist's rise to power (Müller, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2019; Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Before populists rose to power, there definitely would have been stages in which such "democratic gatekeepers" could have reacted. Then, amid the various populist strategies, what were non-populist parties and politicians doing?

The hypothesis of the research claims that populists achieve electoral victory if non-populists fail to reclaim passionate issues and fail to form a coalition. In both Hungary and Poland, the main adversaries of Orbán and Kaczyński spontaneously quit from politics without doing much to counter populists' strategic actions.

In Hungary, prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány of the Socialist Party (MSZP) was Orbán's main contender. However, the unexpected Őszöd Speech scandal (2006) by Gyurcsány led to unprecedented public demonstrations resulting in violence and unrest. The series of unskilled political blunders rendered Gyurcsány and the Socialist Party unfavorable in the public eye. Due to these events, Gyurcsány and the Socialist Party became politically irrelevant in the subsequent 2010 election, allowing Orbán an unprecedented parliamentary supermajority.

Similarly, in Poland, former prime minister Donald Tusk of the Civil Platform (PO) was virtually Kaczyński's lone rival.[21] But in 2014, less than one year before the 2015 parliament and presidential elections, Tusk voluntarily stepped down from prime minister, running for and being elected as president of the European Council. Not only did this exit provide additional grounds for Kaczyński to claim a malicious

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[21] Tusk was leader of PO from 2003 to 2014 (Tomczak, 2015, p. 10).

connection between Tusk, the PO, and the EU, by the time Tusk returned to Polish politics in 2019, Kaczyński and the PiS had already done fatal damage to democracy (Shotter, 2021).

Gyurcsány and Tusk's exit from the domestic political stage unwittingly provided populists with an unprecedented window of opportunity. The center-left parties of Hungary and Poland had no alternative political figures to fill the void of these exits (The Economist, 2014). With the most prominent leader of the center-left absent in both countries, a skillful scheme to retake passionate issues or to form a broad coalition did not take place. Therefore, such exits would have swayed the volatile electorate to vote for the only remaining major candidate/party or could have deterred center-left voters from voting at all due to the lack of a favorable (or competitive) candidate.

It can be no easy coincidence that both the MSZP and the PO were in power for multiple terms right until the exit of Gyurcsány and Tusk but lost in every election ever since their exit. It is always possible to conjecture a different outcome had these figures remained influential and skillful on the political stage or had the political, economic, and refugee crises not occurred. Hence, it is safe to claim that, instead of certain ideas or socio-culture, the opportunities, strategic choices, and interactions of politicians in response to events were critical in the outcome of political events in Hungary and Poland.

3.6. Strategy Trumps Strategy: Prospects for Redemption

"At the same time, favorable scenarios are not impossible. [...] What if the opposition, parties, and civil movements pull themselves together? What if new political groups and movements emerge and win over millions?" (Kornai, 2015, p. 20)

The Budapest mayoral election in 2019 and the Czech parliamentary election in 2021 provide examples of how a successful strategy by non-/anti-populists can out-maneuver populist strategies. Unlike the un-strategic blunders of the previous section, these cases demonstrate how non-populists countervailed populist strategies by reclaiming some passionate issues and forging a pan-non-populist alliance.

István Tarlós of Fidesz had been mayor of Budapest since 2010. However, in the 2019 mayoral election, Gergely Karácsony of the new left/green party *Dialogue* (Párbeszéd) defeated Tarlós, becoming the first non-Fidesz mayor in a decade. This victory was the result of an "unprecedented coordination" of all viable opposition parties. The previous mayoral election (2014) saw the emergence of a coalition but was limited to parties on the left. However, in the 2019 election, *all* opposition parties agreed on a primary to select a single candidate against the current Fidesz mayor (Kovarek & Littvay, 2022).

This non-populist alliance implemented new and effective public messaging methods to overcome the media restraint forced upon by the Fidesz government. The alliance also unearthed and exploited a Fidesz corruption scandal, thereby damaging its ownership and legitimacy on the passionate issue of morality. This success provided the anti-populist opposition with a hope of overturning the populist government in other future elections (Kovarek & Littvay, 2022).

Similarly, in the Czech Republic, populist prime minister Andrej Babiš and his ANO (Action of Dissatisfied Citizens) had been in office as a minority coalition government since 2017. However, in the 2021 election campaign, five opposition parties formed two opposition coalitions—the right-wing SPOLU and center-right PirStan. Although ANO had gained the most seats (72 seats), the two coalitions with a total of 108 seats coalesced to form a new government replacing Babiš.

It is notable that five diverse parties managed to build two coalitions and combined their efforts after the election to reach a parliamentary majority. This election demonstrated that democratic opponents of populism can defeat populism by putting aside their differences and coordinating (Rovny, 2021). Moreover, the Czech case illustrates that in a parliamentary-cabinet system, anti-populist coalitions need not always be formed *ex ante*, but also *ex post* an election. Therefore, anti-populists have more room to react against a populist party as long as the populist party does not achieve an exclusive majority.

As such, the cases of the Budapest mayoral election and the Czech parliament election exhibit how anti-populists' effective strategies of innovation and alliance can outmaneuver populist strategies of issue ownership. Considering the high ratio of votes other parties receive in Hungary and Poland (Section 2.2), an appropriate political strategy can be expected to have a significant possibility of defeating populists in future elections.

To summarize, the initial election of populist parties into power was the result of populists' ingenious political strategies in response to events and non-populists' failure to respond accordingly. Orbán and Kaczyński were extremely skillful in

responding to the political, economic, and refugee crises to gather support, while center-left parties were not.

Considering the events and strategies presented in this chapter, it is clear that alternate outcomes were possible had the populists not shifted their position, had such crises not taken place, had Orbán and Kaczyński lacked rhetorical/strategic ingenuity, or had non-populists kept a tougher stand by cooperating. Hence, it is safe to conclude that nothing was destined by certain ideas or socio-culture present in Hungary and Poland and that populist political strategy and actions were the determinant of election outcomes.

Furthermore, the results of the Brexit referendum (2016) and the electoral victory of Donald Trump (2016) were similar to the developments in Hungary and Poland in a way that conservative/right-wing politicians had exploited (exaggerated or made up) an immigration "crisis" to own certain passionate issue areas. These developments from even the most traditional, resilient, and consolidated democracies (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, p. 23) demonstrate that by meeting the necessary conditions, such results can take place in any consolidated democracy regardless of given socio-cultural or historic background. In other words, the issues of nationality, religion, and immigration can turn out to be "passionate" and be exploited by populists not only in Eastern Europe but in the US and the UK as well.

Chapter 4. Institutional Populist Strategies

This section argues that in addition to non-institutional strategies discussed previously, institutional strategies employed by incumbent populist politicians have also contributed significantly to the re-election of populists, by institutionally promoting populist actions while hindering opposition activities.

While non-institutional populist strategies are available to the populist at all times, institutional strategies are only available when in office. It can be expected that observing institutional strategies populists employed *after* their ascendency to power would be useful in understanding why and how some populists have managed to stay in power for multiple terms while others could not. Accordingly, this chapter starts with hypothesizing that the scope (availability) of institutional strategies determines re-election outcomes but is predicated on two factors: *populist party seats* in parliament and *compliance of party members*.

4.1. Hypotheses 2

To claim that institutional strategies turn out to be advantageous for populists, this research hypothesizes that [H2] the *scope of strategies* available to an incumbent populist (Table 4.1)—which is predicated on the *ratio of populist party seats* and *compliance of members* in parliament—will determine the likelihood of a populist's re-election (Figure 4.1).

Because enactment of laws favoring populists requires at least a majority consent in parliament, implementation of institutional strategies (discussed later in

this chapter) would require a populist party's *majority in all houses* and *compliance of party members*.

[Table 4.1] Scope of Institutional Strategies by Parliament Seats[22]

	Majority in All Houses	Majority in One House	Minority Government
[1] Media Control	Yes	Yes	No
[2] Economic Policies	Yes	Yes	Yes
[3] Attack on the Judiciary	Yes	No	No
[4] Election Law Amendment	Yes	No	No

Independent Variable		Mediating Variable		Dependent Variable	
Ratio of Populist Party Seats		Action of Populist Party Members		Scope of Available Institutional Strategies	Likelihood of Re-Election
Majority in All Houses	+	Compliance	→	Wide	High
	+	Non-Compliance	→	Medium	Medium
Majority in One House	+	Compliance	→		
	+	Non-Compliance	→		
Minority Government	+	Compliance	→	Narrow	Low
	+	Non-Compliance	→		

[Figure 4.1] Hypothesis (H2)

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[22] This will differ according to the political system and laws adopted by the respective country.

[Requisite 1] Parliamentary Majority in All Houses

Although the presidential or prime ministerial position grants the populist significant executive powers, proper usage of institutional strategies requires the enactment of populist *laws*. Since the enactment of such laws requires at least a simple-majority approval in parliament, a populist cannot unleash the full extent of his/her populist strategy without a parliamentary majority.

Moreover, a majority is needed to be secured in *all* houses in a bicameral parliament because in most cases, each house retains the power to veto or delay legislation ratified in the other. Considering such possibilities, it would be tremendously advantageous for a populist party to retain a majority in *both* houses. Simply put, securing a majority in all houses is necessary to prevent hindrances caused by non-populist adversaries *outside* the populist party.

[Requisite 2] Compliance of Party Members

Considering the possibility that some non-populists might exist among the party ranks, or a member might disagree with certain policies of the populist leader, securing a majority in both houses might not be enough. The populist leader must be confident in all party members' loyalty regarding any legislation—no matter how draconian it may be. Hence, observing strict compliance of members is necessary to prevent non-populists from entering the party or anyone hindering strategies from within. In other words, a populist leader of a *personalistic party* is more likely to be re-elected than that of a traditional party.

This hypothesis can be applied to distinguish single-term populists from multiple-term populists. Among the cases of Hungary, Poland, the US, and the Czech Republic—consolidated democracies where populists were elected and retain high levels of electoral volatility—only populist governments that have secured a *majority in all houses* and retained *compliance from members* have succeeded in re-election.

[Table 4.2] Comparison of Scope of Institutional Strategies and Results of Subsequent Elections

Country	Populist Government	Years	Party	Majority		Compliance of Party Members	Victory in Subsequent Election
				Lower House	Upper House		
Hungary	Orbán I	1998-2002	Fidesz	No (Unicameral)		Yes	No (2002)
	Orbán II	2010-2014		**Yes**		**Yes**	**Yes (2014)**
	Orbán III	2014-2018		**Yes**		**Yes**	**Yes (2018)**
	Orbán IV	2018-2022		**Yes**		**Yes**	**Yes (2022)**
Poland	Kaczyński I	2005-2007	PiS	No	No	Yes	No (2007)
	Kaczyński II	2015-2019		**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes (2019)**
USA	Trump	2017-2019	Republican	Yes	Yes	No	No (2020)
		2019-2021		No	Yes	No	
Czech Republic	Babiš	2017-2021	ANO	No	No	Yes	No (2021)

Before the midterm election, Donald Trump and the Republican party retained a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate (115th Congress: 2017-2019). While this served as a historic opportunity for Trump, internal fissures

within the Republican party hindered Trump's policies from being enacted into law (Edwards III, 2017; Pearson, 2017; Binder, 2018). Likewise, a party's majority in all houses alone is insufficient to codify populist institutional strategies.

Conversely, while Czech populist Anderj Babiš enjoyed full compliance of party members via his personalistic party, ANO (Action of Dissatisfied Citizens), it retained an exclusive majority in neither house. Even with the largest share of seats, he desperately sought a coalition partner, ending up in acquiring cooperation from none other than the Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the Communist Party (KSČM) (Hovet, 2018; Lopatka & Muller, 2018). Fearing a breakup with these "allies," Babiš was unlikely to unravel his institutional strategies required for re-election.

Similarly, the first Orbán government (1998-2002) and the first Kaczyński government (2005-2007) held the largest number of seats in their respective parliaments. But the lack of an exclusive majority prevented them from enacting laws in their favor.

However, in 2010, Fidesz became the first party in Hungary's history to achieve not only a majority but also a two-thirds supermajority in a unicameral parliament. Since then, Orbán's governments (almost) always maintained a supermajority in a unicameral parliament. And because Fidesz is a personalistic party founded and maintained by Orbán, compliance of all members is guaranteed.[23] Accordingly, Orbán had damaged judicial independence, amended election laws, and set up a new

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[23] For example, Orbán is personally involved in party affairs down to the district level, so nothing can happen within the party or government without his permission or approval (Körösényi, 2020, p. 184).

constitution. This case serves as the perfect example of a majority in all houses and compliance of party members.

Similarly, PiS, Kaczyński's personalistic party,[24] became the first party in Polish history to achieve an exclusive majority in both the Sejm (lower house) and the Senat (upper house) in 2015, thereby forming a government without a coalition partner (Richardson, 2018, p. 96). With a majority in both houses, PiS attacked the judiciary and amended election laws, without which PiS re-election would have been difficult in the 2019 election.

Holding exclusive control of both the legislative and the executive branches conferred massive authority to the populists, allowing them to legally weaponize state institutions to boost their power and revamp the institutional framework to their advantage in the next election (Weyland, 2019, p. 327). They could drastically tilt the electoral playing field by legally promoting their cronies and allies while punishing or intimidating critics and opponents (2013, p. 23).

Likewise, only a concurrence of a *majority in all houses* and full (or sufficient) *compliance of party members* in parliament enables a populist to fully utilize institutional strategies necessary for re-election.

Then, if the scope and availability of institutional strategies are so critical, what specific types are there? What is the relationship between institutional and non-

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[24] Kaczyński also dominates party leadership (Gwiazda, 2008, p. 815; Tomczak, 2015; Hartliński, 2019). He retains exclusive right on human resources including the right to appoint key positions (Hartliński, 2019, p. 98), select and dismiss party members (Tomczak, 2015, p. 12), form and dissolve regional party organizations, and appoint their heads (pp. 13-14). These decisions are subject to approval at meetings which only Kaczyński holds the right to convene (pp. 12, 13).

institutional strategies? The following sections identify four major institutional strategies of Orbán and Kaczyński, media control (Section 4.2), economic policies (Section 4.3), attack on the judiciary (Section 4.4), election law amendment (Section 4.5), and discuss their relationship with non-institutional strategies (Section 4.6).

4.2. [Strategy 1] Media Control

In addition to non-institutional strategies, controlling the media can further contribute to "owning" issues. Under a populist management, media outlets not only present populist propaganda more frequently, but also present them casually, so that they can portray Manichean rhetoric and conspiracy theories as something obvious or common-sensical, thereby normalizing their worldview. Considering that mere exposure on media can enhance the attitude and support for a certain candidate (Zajonc, 1968), increased exposure of populists and less of opposition are likely to affect a volatile electorate.

In Hungary, the Fidesz government significantly weakened independent newsgathering and reporting (Körösényi, 2020, p. 195), seriously limiting the opposition's chances to reach out to voters (p. 129). Fidesz-related think tanks obtained contracts to edit news (p. 195) and government entities managed news reports (p. 198). Media outlets were purchased by pro-Fidesz businessmen (pp. 81, 196) and outlets critical to Fidesz faced additional taxation or closures (Lendvai, 2017, pp. 139-140, 161-162; Ost, 2018, p. 58). Workers in the media industry were replaced with pro-Fidesz personnel, and many influential shows were canceled (Lendvai, 2017, p. 118).

As a result, all people could hear of center-left parties were stories of corruption and power struggles designed to induce public disappointment and political apathy (Lendvai, 2017, p. 132). Even when Fidesz amended the constitution in 2012, the media could not deliver news of opposition demonstrations or the concerns of international organizations such as the EU (p. 122).

In Poland, the PiS also increased media restraint after coming to power in 2015. PiS's "national broadcasting" scheme took over public broadcasting and purged incompliant personnel (Rychard, 2019, p. 49). All government offices and state firms were forbidden to advertise in news sources critical to PiS, damaging news companies financially (Ost, 2018, p. 58). PiS also attempted to undermine the credibility of certain news outlets by accusing them of "foreign intervention" (p. 58). Moreover, expressing critical opinions on social media also triggered law cases being sued by PiS and its cronies for civil defamation (Drinóczi & Bień-Kacała, 2021, p. 139). Consequently, the activities of independent and anti-PiS media channels were significantly withered, with public television exerting monopoly over many regions (Sadurski, 2018, p. 62).

While non-institutional strategies demonized opposition politicians, institutional strategies can simply banish them from the public eye to make them unfamiliar and irrelevant on the political stage. Therefore, the populist's institutional control of media must be considered an essential part of their strategy for legitimacy and re-election.

4.3. [Strategy 2] Economic Policies

Economic policies could be another institutional strategy at the disposal of incumbent populists. Populists across various regions have implemented a diverse array of concentrative or distributive economic initiatives to garner support. While Orbán and Kaczyński's economic policies both gear toward receiving more votes in the following election, they exhibit distinctive orientations and methods.

In Hungary, Orbán's economic policies are regarded to be "neoliberal" (Antal, 2019, p. 129), with clientelism and neo-feudalism leading to stable support from privileged social groups, while permitting exploitative labor laws (pp. 131, 133) and cutback on welfare benefits (p. xii; Müller, 2016, p. 59), resulting in what many observers have labeled "mafia state" (Sadurski, 2018, p. 8; Antal, 2019, p. 126; Drinóczi & Bień-Kacała, 2021, p. 147). However, Orbán's self-presentation as a strong leader ready to nationalize companies and use the state to protect the ordinary folk from multi-national corporations has been highly effective (Müller, 2016, p. 59).

On the other hand, Kaczyński employs a much more distributive economic policy accentuating strong welfare. PiS has moved away from orthodox neoliberalism (Ost, 2018, p. 61), deploying a language closer to social democracy, or perhaps a cruder "statism": that the state should remain an important allocator of resources to protect the old, pensioners, traditional industries, and a strong health care system (Harper, 2018, p. 29).[25]

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[25] Its flagship social program is the "500+" (five hundred złotys per month) allocation to parents of every child after the first (and for the poor, the first as well). With two-million families as its beneficiaries, it has led to a dramatic decline in child poverty rates. PiS has also introduced free medication for people over 75, restricted the endless use of short job contracts, and pushed forward a minimum wage even higher than what trade unions were demanding (Ost, 2018, p. 61; Sadurski, 2018, p. 61).

While such policies might appear to be motivated by genuine care, Sadurski (2018) points out the "shrewdness" and "ingenious simplicity" of these pork-barrel policies. Giving out cash is immediate and tangible with the satisfaction of receiving it, but at the same time instills a fear of losing it when PiS is out of power (p. 61). Such policies also highlight PiS from former governments which have only claimed to have empathized with the ordinary people without actually helping them directly (p. 61).

Therefore, it is possible to say that, despite their similar nationalist and paternalist rhetoric on "the people," the actual economic policies of Orbán and Kaczyński are differently calibrated to attract votes. This could be another aspect of how populists do not have coherent ideas or socio-culture at their core, but strategies for re-election.

4.4. [Strategy 3] Attack on the Judiciary

Because divisive and stigmatizing populist rhetoric and policies are likely to be illegal or unconstitutional, populists require ways to avoid legal cases and punishment that might limit their activities. Therefore, populists will use all their abilities to limit the activities of the judiciary, by legally reducing its power or countervailing its powers via court packing.

In Hungary, Orbán actively used Fidesz's parliamentary supermajority to eradicate the separation of powers, especially the power of the Constitutional Court

(Lendvai, 2017, p. 109).[26] The number of Constitutional Court judges was increased from eleven to fifteen for the new posts to be filled by parliament selection (p. 104; Antal, 2019, p. 99). The new judges appointed by a Fidesz-supermajority parliament were selected not based on legal expertise but on whether they were politically reliable (Lendvai, 2017, p. 104). Orbán also barred the court from referring to resolutions from before 2010 (Körösényi, 2020, p. 155), and outlined a stricter distinction between constitution-making and constitutional interpretation (p. 160).

Similarly, in Poland, the constitutional crisis (2015)[27] unraveled as soon as PiS took over the majority in both houses and the presidency, not allowing any "transition time" for the courts to react (Drinóczi & Bień-Kacała, 2021, p. 159).[28] Poland's Constitutional Tribunal is now comprised of a pro-PiS president and judges selected by Kaczyński (p. 172). The PiS government also introduced reform laws that lowered the court's ruling quorum from thirteen to seven (Richardson, 2018, p. 100).

Now, the courts of Hungary and Poland permit or even facilitate undemocratic measures (Drinóczi & Bień-Kacała, 2021, p. 159). By actively helping the government, the courts have become a restraint upon not the government and the ruling party, but the opposition (Sadurski, 2018, p. 7). Without any legal restraint,

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[26] The Hungarian Constitutional Court was downgraded by Orbán's centralized legislative machine after 2010 (Körösényi, 2020, pp. 150, 159). Fidesz legislation limited the ruling powers of the court (pp. 155, 160), and increased the numbers of judges to be filled with loyal personnel (Lendvai, 2017, p. 104; Antal, 2019, p. 99).

[27] The new PiS president, Andrzej Duda, whose term coincided with the outgoing parliament, ignored the judges nominated by the outgoing parliament and appointed new judges spontaneously (Richardson, 2018, pp. 97-98).

[28] Unlike the previous tenure of PiS (2005-2007), no time was wasted in 2015 (Sadurski, 2018, p. 3). The widely respected Constitutional Tribunal was also damaged by a PiS majority (Levitsky & Way, 2015, p. 56; Drinóczi & Bień-Kacała, 2021, pp.176-177).

Orbán and Kaczyński are now able to strike at whoever they deem as an obstacle to their re-election, with the opposition left with no means of legal appeal.

While Orbán could use a supermajority to amend the constitution, Kaczyński made the best out of PiS's simple-majority to formulate an effect akin to a constitutional amendment. The PiS law-making machine has managed to paralyze the constitution and render it a dead letter without any formal change of institutions and procedures (Sadurski, 2018, p. 5).

With the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government subsumed, the populists have nullified and paralyzed the law and constitution. Because every procedure was legal, there was nothing the minority opposition parties could do to stop or alter this development (Drinóczi & Bień-Kacała, 2021, p. 117), and no other institution or procedure could stop them (Ost, 2018, p. 55).

4.5. [Strategy 4] Election Law Amendment

Amending election law greatly increases a populist's chances of re-election. With appropriate parliamentary procedures, populists can alter the number of seats in parliament, gerrymander, or select election committee commissioners in their favor.

Election law in Hungary was altered in 2011 to fit Fidesz's needs in the 2014 election. First, the Fidesz-dominated parliament reduced the number of electoral districts from 176 to 109 (Antal, 2019, p. 110) and gerrymandered constituencies to their advantage (p. 110; Lendvai, 2017, p. 129; Körösényi, 2020, p. 163). Fidesz also eliminated second-round voting (Antal, 2019, pp. 109-110), making it difficult for the opposition forces to unite under a single candidate in the second round. Another

move from Orbán was to extend voting rights to ethnic Hungarians residing as minorities in neighboring countries (p. 110).[29]

As a result, Fidesz retained its two-third parliamentary supermajority despite a vote drop from 53% in 2010 to 45% in 2014 (Lendvai, 2017, p. 128). Elections in Hungary since 2014 are considered "free but not fair" (Győrffy & Martin, 2022, p. 10).

In Poland, the Sejm (lower house) and Senat (upper house) controlled by PiS amended election laws in 2017 and 2018 (Rakowska-Trela, 2018, p. 458). The amended laws dictate that National Election Commissioners will be appointed according to the share of seats in the Sejm (p. 461), and electoral disputes to be considered by a new council selected by a parliamentary majority. The new law also obliges local governments to redraw the boundaries of the constituencies, increasing the risk of gerrymandering by the governing majority party (pp. 462, 465).

These changes show that the electoral process will be fully controlled by the ruling party, thereby lacking impartiality and professionalism (pp. 463, 465; Drinóczi & Bień-Kacała, 2021, p. 112). PiS is likely to win continuously, although results will not correspond with actual public support (Rakowska-Trela, 2018, p. 465).

The populist's change of election law is a deliberate attempt to manipulate the electoral system in their favor. If previous attempts—both institutional and non-

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[29] This strategy is regarded to have simultaneously redeemed Hungarian nationalist grudge on the Treaty of Trianon and provided Fidesz with a new stable base of support. Some sources reported that 95% of these new voters voted for Fidesz in 2014 (Lendvai, 2017, pp. 89-90). In addition, among Hungarians living abroad, those in the United Kingdom and Germany—normally regarded to be younger voters critical of the Fidesz regime—were required to go through a much more burdensome voting procedure than those in other countries, discouraging their participation (pp. 130-131).

institutional—to achieve issue salience were endeavors to receive more votes, the amendment of election law seeks to forge an electoral system in which the maximum number of parliamentary seats can be secured with the minimum number of votes. Creating this system is of equal strategic importance as achieving and maintaining issue ownership, since it allows them to secure seats regardless of whether the popular majority actually votes for them. As the ratio of non-Fidesz and non-PiS votes demonstrate (Section 2.2), the consecutive electoral victories of Fidesz and PiS would have been unlikely without such changes in the electoral system.

In addition to changes in election law itself, in June 2023, regarding the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War, the PiS government launched a commission to investigate "Russian influence" on opposition politicians. The opposition claims that this so-called "Tusk Law" is designed to disqualify Tusk and members of the PO from running in the parliamentary elections (scheduled for November 2023) and holding public office (Michnik, 2023).

Considering the affinity and similarity between the two populist leaders, Orbán might one day introduce a similar "anti-EU-influence law" to limit his political opponents from running for and holding positions. Likewise, with all branches of government under control, Fidesz and PiS have been able to, and actually have altered the electoral field to their advantage in all stages of the election process.

The amendment of election law provides the most difficult case which cannot be understood through the ideational and socio-cultural approaches to populism. The prevalence of certain populist ideas and socio-cultural appeals cannot account for incumbent populists' motivations or actions to drastically alter election laws in their

favor. Only political-strategic calculations to do whatever it takes to stay in power can explain the motivations behind these institutional changes.

4.6. A Self-Reinforcing Dynamic

Weyland described populists' deliberate search for enemies to prove their heroism and rally supporters as a "self-reinforcing dynamic" of populism (Weyland, 2019, p. 325). However, Weyland's observation is limited to what this research identifies as *non-institutional* strategies. Therefore, this research asserts that the categorization of populist strategies into institutional and non-institutional strategies reveals another aspect of the "self-reinforcing dynamic" among various populist strategies.

First, when used by incumbents, non-institutional strategies *enable* and *justify* institutional strategies. Crisis rhetoric persuades the public about the necessity of enacting certain laws or executive orders that would be deemed draconian under "normal" circumstances. For example, the attack on the constitutional courts could be justified as rectifying the judicial process set up by corrupt elites of the past. Hence, without non-institutional strategies, institutional strategies would appear odd or unjustified even to supporters of populist parties.

Meanwhile, institutional strategies reciprocate by *normalizing* and *legalizing* non-institutional strategies. Populists' restriction of media allows more frequent, unquestioned, and casual exposure of populist rhetoric in everyday contexts, thus making them regarded as normal and common-sensical. Moreover, the populist seizure of the judiciary will protect populist figures and institutions from possible

legal cases of defamation or libel from the opposition resulting from harsh populist rhetoric.

Hence, there exists an intimate reciprocity between the *institutional* and *non-institutional* strategies. Once a populist party achieves electoral victory, the self-reinforcing dynamic among various populist strategies propels the populist to an advantageous position for re-election. Therefore, sufficient institutional power in the hands of a populist is likely to end up in a vicious cycle of populism.

To summarize, the consecutive electoral victories and re-election of Fidesz and PiS are mostly a result of strategic moves by Orbán and Kaczyński to exploit a parliamentary majority to their advantage. By means of media control, economic policies, attack on the judiciary, and election law amendment, Orbán and Kaczyński used state institutions for their own good and severely disadvantaged the opposition's chances in the following elections.

Even with their parliamentary majorities and personalistic parties, had Orbán and Kaczyński not been cunning or bold enough to tilt the electoral landscape, or had significant numbers of Fidesz/PiS members revolted against their leader's policies, their re-election would have been difficult. Therefore, the consecutive electoral victories of Fidesz and PiS are more the result of agency and political strategies than of preordained ideational or socio-cultural circumstances.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

The political-strategic approach to populism makes more sense both theoretically and empirically, especially in the cases of Hungary and Poland. Compared to the ideational and socio-cultural approaches to populism, Weyland and Barr's political-strategic approach was more inclusive and exhaustive, due to matters of agency, intentionality, and empirical observation.

Moreover, considering patterns of government change, ratio of votes cast to Fidesz and PiS, values survey results compared to other consolidated democracies, and political affiliation by age group, it was difficult to validate that certain distinctive ideational and socio-cultural factors exist in Hungary and Poland and are responsible for the rise and persistence of authoritarian populist parties and governments. It is possible that such perceptions were based on unjustified stereotypes and myths significantly detached from political reality.

Having disproved ideational and socio-cultural factors as the independent variable, this research hypothesized and demonstrated a causal relationship between the institutional (media control, economic policies, attack on the judiciary, election law amendment), non-institutional (position change, crisis rhetoric) strategies and election outcomes in Hungary and Poland.

First, in an environment of *high electoral volatility*, populists' *ownership of passionate issues* (via non-institutional strategies) and non-populists' *loss of passionate issues* and *failure to form a coalition* in (performed) *crisis situations* resulted in populist electoral victory. Second, the *scope of strategies* available to an incumbent populist—which is predicated on the *ratio of populist party seats* and

compliance of members in parliament—determined the likelihood of a populist's re-election.

From the cases of Hungary and Poland, it is clear that regardless of the ideational or socio-cultural backgrounds, a populist actor's intentions and choices in response to crisis situations can result in what is often referred to as a "populist wave." This also means that alternate outcomes were possible had certain crises not taken place, had Orbán and Kaczyński lacked strategic intentions, ingenuity, or courage, and had non-populists (especially Gyurcsány and Tusk) kept a tougher/skilled stand. If other outcomes were possible, it would be difficult to blame the ideas and socio-culture of Hungary and Poland as responsible for the continuous electoral victories of Fidesz and PiS.

Dispelling the cultural-historic *myth* is essential to undermining the "determinism and path-dependency" (Barr, 2019, p. 55) insinuated by the ideational and socio-cultural approaches, therefore opening up possibilities of avoiding or overcoming populism. In addition, dispelling the myth can also contribute to overcoming the complacency of Western democracies which might blindly believe their democracies are well consolidated and unendangered due to lack of certain ideational or socio-cultural features. As the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump have demonstrated, populists always retain the possibility of achieving electoral victories even in the most traditional democracies if proper conditions (variables) coincide.

Because Hungary and Poland are the only two cases in which populists have secured consecutive electoral victories in a consolidated democracy, they might serve as a valuable lesson. Correctly diagnosing the cause and process of populist

victories—without prejudice about Eastern European socio-culture—would be an essential first step to prevent future democracies from sharing the same fate. As Wigura and Kuisz (2019) put it, "Want to save Europe? Learn from Poland [and Hungary]!"

Institutional Implications: Government Systems (Un-)Susceptible to Populism

The second hypothesis of this research indicates that certain government and parliament structures allow fewer stages for defensive reactions from "democratic gatekeepers." In other words, some government systems are more susceptible and prone to populist strategies than others. It could be said that a more fragmented government system permits more leeway for non-populists.

First, instead of a system in which parliament selects *both* the prime minister and the president (such as in Hungary), a system in which the two are elected *separately* (such as in the US and Poland) increases the likelihood that the two are from different parties and thus allows them to check on each other instead of collaborating.

Second, instead of a unicameral parliament (such as in Hungary), a bicameral parliament (such as in the US) allows the two houses to check on each other's legislation. However, as the example of the Polish houses demonstrate, the term cycles of the two houses must *not* coincide to prevent public opinion of a single "crisis situation" from dominating the composition of both houses. The three-class division method of the US Senate may be an appropriate example permitting more reaction from democratic gatekeepers.

Third, a proportional-representative party-list election system reflects popular vote shares more precisely than a single-member district system, thereby preventing the popular-vote ratio distortion discussed in Section 2.2 (similar to the election of Donald Trump via the electoral college system). A national proportional-representative election system can combine the divided voters of non-populist parties. Considering the ratio of votes non-populist parties receive in Hungary and Poland, an increase in proportional seats will likely decrease the number of populist party seats.

Fourth, in the case of a single-member district system, a two-round voting system—in which non-populists can unite under a single candidate in the second round—would be more difficult for populists to penetrate than a single-round system. (As mentioned in Section 4.5, this is why Fidesz eliminated second-round voting.)

If the government system of a certain country were to select the methods suggested above, it could significantly lower the possibility of falling prey to populist strategies. The key would be to fragment the government system so that the winner of a single election can take all.

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Abstract in Korean (국문초록)

정치전략으로서의 포퓰리즘:
헝가리와 폴란드 사례 연구

이상준

정치외교학부 정치학전공

서울대학교 대학원

　본 연구는 포퓰리즘에 관한 정치전략적 접근의 설명적 가치를 헝가리와 폴란드의 사례를 통해 검증하고자 한다. 우선, 관념적 접근과 사회문화적 접근이 이론적 차원에서 내재하고 있는 행위자성, 의도성, 관찰의 한계 등으로 인해 정치전략적 접근의 포괄성과 타당성을 주장한다.

　또한, 헝가리와 폴란드 개혁개방 이후 정권 교체 양상, 피데스(Fidesz)와 법과 정의(PiS)의 득표율, 가치관 조사 결과, 세대별 정치성향 조사 결과 자료를 통해 관념적 접근과 사회문화적 접근이 헝가리와 폴란드의 포퓰리즘 현상을 적절하게 설명하지 못한다는 점을 지적한다.

　이후 본 연구는 포퓰리스트의 제도적 전략(언론 통제, 경제 정책, 사법부 독립성 훼손, 선거법 개정), 비제도적 전략(입장 변경, 위기 담론)과 선거 결과 간 인과 관계를 가설로 상정하고 헝가리와 폴란드의 사례를 통해 가설을 검증한다. 행위자 변수의 변화에 의해 선거 결과가 뒤바뀌었을 수 있음을 논의하며 본 연구는 한 국가의 관념적,

사회문화적 배경과 무관한, 포퓰리스트와 비포퓰리스트의 전략과 행위(대응)의 결과 포퓰리스트의 선거 승패가 결정된다고 주장한다.

공고화된 민주국가 중 헝가리와 폴란드에서 최초로 포퓰리스트가 자유선거를 통해 연임에 성공했다는 사실로 미루어 보았을 때, 그 원인과 과정을 정확하게 파악하여 진단하는 것이 향후 민주주의의 학술적 연구뿐만 아니라 현실 민주주의의 발전에도 도움이 될 수 있다는 것이 본 연구의 의의이다.