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THE RISE OF THE POLITICS OF EMOTIONS: ANTI-ELITISM AND ANTI-CORRUPTISM AS TRAITS OF CZECH AND SLOVAK POPULIST PARTIES¹

Pavol Frič - Oľga Gyárfášová*

ABSTRACT

Within last few years we are witnessing the rise of populist politics which applies anti-establishment and anti-corrupt appeals. This phenomenon is widespread not only in the newer but also in advanced democracies. The present study identifies a theoretical framework for studying the politics of emotions in the context of the electoral success of populist parties. It pays detailed attention to anti-elitism, the affective political style, and anti-corruption rhetoric, researching them as dimensions of emotion-based populist mobilisation. In the empirical section, it analyses the results of an expert survey of political parties with respect to the Czech and Slovak political parties. By comparing the results for the years 2014 and 2017 on the dimensions of anti-elitism and anti-corruption rhetoric, the study demonstrates the growing salience of the politics of emotions, especially in the case of new protest parties. The evidence presented clearly documents the reliance of these protest parties and movements on the politics of emotions, suggesting that they can be classified as populist. Analysis of the salience of anti-elitist and anti-corruption rhetoric shows that the rise of anti-establishment parties cannot be explained merely by growing voter discontent with the economic situation and the quality of governance. Any such explanation must also embrace evidence about the politics of emotions that characterizes those parties. In the concluding section, the paper documents a clear trend of increasing electoral popularity of parties found by the expert survey to exhibit above-average levels of anti-elitist and anti-corruption rhetoric.

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Key words: politics of emotions, populist parties, anti-elitism, anti-corruptionism

Introduction

It all started rather inconspicuously. At the beginning of the first decade of the 21st Century, the world of developed democracies saw a wave of social movements that expressed discontent with the deficient workings of democracy. Based on the principle of diffused leadership, i.e. without recognised and politically involved leaders, social movements such as *Indignados* or Occupy Wall Street gave rise to a wave of media attention, even in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, but were quickly forgotten as an unpromising form of political struggle. Their supporters were unable to transform their feelings of disgust with a corrupt democracy into a clear list of demands for change that they might collectively and effectively work on. They aroused emotions and then vanished.

Nothing has changed in the workings of democratic governments. Politicians have not taken the warnings of angry citizens seriously, even if political parties have long been the least trusted institutions. However, the rise of populist parties with strong and charismatic leaders, which came only a bit thereafter, has truly horrified the leadership of standard political parties in Western liberal democracies. The success of populist leaders is often explained with structural factors such as economic or political crises. However, populism literature increasingly reminds us that the success of populists largely depends on their ability to resonate with the feelings of ordinary people (Betz, 2002; Canovan, 1984; 1999; Hochschild, 2015) and appeal to, or even manipulate, voters *en masse* by means of a politics of emotions. For example, Hans-George Betz argues that “populist rhetoric is designed to tap feelings of *ressentiment* and exploit them politically” (Betz, 2002, p. 198), and Kenneth Minogue associates emotions that dominate the atmosphere within the population with the very essence of populism: “To understand the (populist) movement is to discover the feelings which moved people” (Minogue, 1969, as quoted by Demertzis, 2006, p. 114).

Yet academic authors have long focused exclusively on the negative effects of the populist politics of emotions. They have viewed populists as leaders who are devaluing the society’s civic intelligence (Schuler, 2001) and shaken their heads at the naivety and inability to learn of the voters who trust and repeatedly vote for populists. This was also due to a long tradition in social scientific literature that considers emotions in people’s political life to be a trait of political immaturity (see the works of classic theorists of elites, crowds or mass society)

and treats rational, cognitive political behaviour as the norm. All this despite Bryan Caplan's argument, more than ten years ago, that the rational voter is a myth (Caplan, 2007).

The perspective on emotion-based voter action has been changing. Along with the populist turn in political practice, there has been an emotional turn in the study of political behaviour. Voters' emotions have become a legitimate object of the study of political life (Svašek, 2002). The emotion factor is playing a growing role in political research (Demertzis, 2014; Valentino et al., 2009), not only in terms of political marketing, political advertising and the psychology of political behaviour. The emotion factor is also increasingly emphasized in the study of political participation and current political happenings in democratic societies. For example, political scientist Peter Učeň explains the success of Smer-SD by the mental satisfaction, rather than material benefits, that the party has been providing to its voters (Učeň, 2009, p. 34).

In spite of a large body of literature on emotions in politics, there has not been sufficient analysis of the role of the emotion factor in the ascending wave of populist actors on the political scenes of liberal democracies. No comprehensive theory of the politics of emotions has been formulated thus far. It is a type of politics based on political leaders' ability to systematically pursue the emotional dimension of the everyday life of both voters and the society as a whole, to employ it in specific political contexts, and to communicate it in the public space. It fundamentally relies on emotionally loaded communication between voters and political leaders which encourages citizens' passion for public affairs and mobilizes them for political participation. The politics of emotions is a contradiction of the routine, technocratic "normal politics" (Moffitt, Tormey, 2014) which is dominated by an administrative, impersonal tone, rather than a vision for the future and decisive leadership. The politics of emotions has two faces: it provides political leaders and their followers with the emotional comfort of harmonic convergence of emotional appeals and responses between them, on one hand, and it contains the confrontational emotional mobilisation against political competitors, on the other hand. The reciprocal satisfaction of emotional needs is accompanied by emotional alarmism, stigmatisation, and the polarisation of opinions. It is the other, confrontational face of the politics of emotions that is typical of populism.

The long-term frustration of voters' emotional needs has given rise to a (collective) emotional deficit (Richards, 2004) and a demand for the politics of emotions, or populism (Gál, 2009). The rational and cognitively demanding

political style of standard political parties is not emotionally satisfactory for many voters and excludes a part of the population from political participation. Many voters welcome the emotional turn in politics brought about by the new wave of populism as an opportunity to break out of their perceived political isolation and loneliness in a situation when the behaviour of traditional elites has undermined their confidence in meaningful political participation (Lasch, 1995).

The goal of this study is to conceptualize the politics of emotions on the dimensions of anti-elitism and anti-corruption rhetoric as a constitutive trait of populist, anti-establishment parties. We are going to document the level of salience of these dimensions in their ideological profiles on the cases of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. We assume that anti-establishment parties will be characterised by significantly higher levels of anti-elitist and anti-corruption rhetoric, which will be reflected in their growing electoral success. We are going to identify the level of populism on the dimensions of anti-elitism and anti-corruption rhetoric using data from Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES)², which has been involved in measurement of the ideological profiles and thematic positioning of political parties in Western Europe as well as in Central and Eastern Europe.

1 Theoretical background

1.1 Anti-elitism as a Constitutive Trait of Populism

Populism is often defined as a narrow, thin form of ideology (Mudde, 2007; Stanley, 2008; Mudde, Rovira Kaltwasser, 2011) or as a political style (Blokker, 2005; Jagers, Walgrave, 2007; Moffitt, Tormey, 2014). In political practice, however, these perspectives represent two inseparable dimensions of the same phenomenon. As for ideology, populism is able to “parasitize” any ideology – and it is also for this reason that it comes in some many forms. Metaphorically speaking, it is an ideological chameleon: It “can be left wing as well as right wing, and it can be organized in both top-down and bottom-up fashion” (Mudde, Rovira Kaltwasser, 2011, p. 7). At the same time, it can be both inclusive and exclusive, progressive and reactionary, but it always rejects the notion that elites and citizens might constitute a harmonic whole (a community based on shared values). The “thin” ideology of populism is centred upon anti-elitism, which

² For more details, see <https://www.chesdata.eu/>

mobilizes ordinary citizens against allegedly harmful political elites (Barr, 2009; Canovan, 2004; Laclau, 2005; Mudde, 2004; Rooduijn, Pauwels, 2011; Weyland, 2001).

Anti-elitism does not admit that elites might represent people's interests. It defines elite rule as illegitimate and unjust. Elites are seen as traitors of people's interests who have formed secret alliances to parasitize the people. Under the anti-elitist motto, "*Vox populi, vox dei!*", populist leaders call for a new distribution of power beneficial to the people (i.e. ordinary citizens), especially by means of referenda or direct democracy (Molyneux, Osborne, 2017), so that "people can govern themselves". They also employ the antagonistic polarization of "us" (the pure people) versus "them" (the corrupt elites).

Anti-elitism is a typical characteristic of populism, whether government or opposition politicians are concerned. Anti-elitism of ruling elites is commonplace (cf. Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán's rhetoric). Europe today exhibits a marked expansion of populist leaders and their use of "political anti-elitism". They are not career politicians, and sometimes they refuse to be called politicians at all (they are recruited from business, academic or artistic circles) and sharply criticize standard politicians for their incompetence and corruption (Hanley, 2013). The same category also includes "entrepreneurial populism" (Heinisch, Saxonberg, 2017), which is typical of the contemporary political landscape of the Czech Republic.

The more hard-core variant of anti-elitism is based on the leadership principle. People select their political leader in a plebiscite to preside over elites and protect the people from their oppressive practices and power games. The leader is in direct, intuitive, even mystical contact with the people (Jensen, Bang, 2017; Musil, 2007), acts in the name of the people, and respects the will of the people. The leader variant of anti-elitism reflects what Max Weber called "plebiscitarian leader democracy", which, however, can only work if authoritarian (Caesarian) elements are introduced into democracy and a "spiritual proletarianization" of followers takes place (Weber, 1998). Characteristically, authoritarian elements (violating the constitution, rejecting constitutional customs, engaging in conflicts with the judiciary, extra-governmental organisations and free media...) have long been exhibited by political leaders in Central Europe, not only the cases of Hungary and Poland.

1.2 The Affective Political Style

Populist politicians are characterised by an affective style of political leadership, which includes specific practices of voter persuasion and mobilisation as well as communication with voters and political competitors. It typically uses frequent and exalted emotional appeals to the ordinary citizen's "common sense" and "natural" resentment towards the elites. It aims at causing a moral shock (Jasper, 1998) to citizens and eliciting a response in the form of moral panic against the elites or other selected population groups. The affective style of political leadership is strategic (intentionally seeks and arouses the feelings of resistance to the establishment), self-reflexive (adapts to popular sentiments) and manipulative of followers (pretends affect and care to gain power). It is also contentious and confrontational. Its agents immerse followers in expressions of love and admiration, providing them with the privileged cultural identity of cultural natives in their own country. In contrast, they hatefully stigmatize and exclude selected groups of people as "cultural aliens" (Bělohradský, 2010), a threat to the community interests of the "genuine" cultural natives.

As opposed to political communication based on impersonal expertise and detached from ordinary people's experience, the affective communication style prefers informal rhetoric filled with quips, humour and ridiculing of the opponents. This leadership style does not respect political correctness, is harsh on opponents, uses vulgarisms and blatant lies, incites hatred and disseminates all kinds of conspiracy theories. At the same time, it works sensitively with followers' emotional responses and strives to enact episodes of positive emotional experience for them, thus affirming emotional unity among them (Maďarová, 2012).

The affective communication style preferred by populist leaders "is much more than a mere top-down appeal because, as we have seen so far, it embodies more complex identity affiliations and emotional interplay between populist actors and their publics" (Block, Negrine, 2017, p. 182). Other populism analysts use similar terms. For example, based on his empirical findings, Moreno Mancosu hypothesizes that followers play an active part vis-à-vis populist leaders, thus supporting the assumption of unfulfilled emotional needs in populism-inclined citizens. He argues that "people could actively seek for emotional appeals and being exogenously more prone, for instance, to present angry responses" (Mancosu, 2016, p. 3). Zsolt Gál, too, uses voter demand to

explain the ascent of the emotional style of populist politics, arguing explicitly that “the key to understanding populism is ... the demand by voters...” (Gál, 2009, p. 192). The success of populists is guaranteed by voters’ “hunger” for a politics of emotions.

The mobilizing effects of populist rhetoric are typically associated with feelings of anger and moral outrage – resentment (Bericat, 2016; Betz, 2002; Demertzis, 2006; Rico et al., 2017; Valentino et al., 2009; Valentino et al., 2011; van Troost et al., 2013; Weber, 2013). The mobilizing power of anger and resentment arises out of definitions of situation as unjust, which in turn legitimize people’s involvement in political (civic) activities to eliminate that injustice. As Demertzis argues, resentment “is mostly equivalent to moral anger—an emotional opposition to unequal and unjust situations, which entails legitimate blame attribution and promotes action against the offender.” Anger is considered to be the key emotion that explains why citizens support populism (Demertzis, 2006, as quoted in Rico, Guinjoan, Anduiza, 2017).

1.3 Anti-corruptism as a “False Card” Of Populist Mobilisation

What is it, what kind of trait do elites have that elicits people’s anger, gives rise to negative emotions and discredits ruling elites? What is it that ultimately exposes elites as traitors to their voters, legitimizing the necessity to replace them? The answer is in plain sight: it is their corrupt character. The term “corrupt elites” represents an indispensable ingredient of both anti-elitism and the ways populism is defined and characterised (Canovan, 1981; 1999; 2002; Meny, Surel, 2002b; Mudde, 2004; 2007; Laclau, 2005; Panizza, 2005; Jagers, Walgrave, 2007; Stanley, 2008).

It was already Vilfredo Pareto (1966), one of the founders of the theory of elites, who wrote about corruption and clientelism as unmistakable traits of ruling elites’ degeneration. Elites decline because corruption networks prevent the natural circulation or replacement of “decadent elements” by “elements of superior quality”. Corruption networks prefer the loyalty principle over professionalism. Elite positions become increasingly occupied by people without talents or the necessary intellectual and moral qualities. This is used by their opponents – members of the ascending elite – in their effort to overthrow the old elites. They arouse anger in people and challenge them to fight against corruption and corrupt leaders. They mobilize the public to help them get rid of the corrupt parasites in high-ranking positions.

Arguably, the new wave of populism in post-communist Central Europe was based on practically the same principle, as it largely took the form of a fight against corruption. There is empirical evidence of a clear association between the level of corruption among ruling elites and the electoral success of populist parties (Agerberg, 2017).³ However, several authors point out that the anti-corruption effort may be misused in the struggle for power. As Bělohradský argues, it may be perverted into a “moral kitsch” (Bělohradský, 2011) and transformed into a threat to democracy insofar as it embraces measures that contradict the very principles of the democratic system (Mareš, 2006; Pehe, 2011). At the same time, the fight against corruption may be merely a means to gaining power. Champions of anti-corruption may forget their cause as soon as they rise to power. We are going to refer to such political parasitizing of the anti-corruption effort as *anti-corruptism*. It represents an inauthentic, simulated fight against corruption with the only intention to win political power. Instead of defeating the corrupt system, *anti-corruptism* seeks to politicize corruption issues and discredit political opponents.

Apparent weakening of anti-corruption initiative on the part of those former anti-corruption champions among political parties and politicians who have gained power (whether as part of the government coalition or as its silent ally) constitutes proof of anti-corruptism. According to Fin Heinrich (2017), this phenomenon is typical of populist political entities. The same is suggested by the results of a study undertaken by Matthijs Rooduijn and colleagues. They found that the level of populism decreases rapidly after political parties' initial electoral success (Rooduijn et al., 2014). As long as populists are outside the parliament or the government coalition, they act as harsh critics of the ruling elites' corruption and mobilize ordinary people's anger against corrupt parties and politicians. At the beginning of their political trajectory, they strive to join the ranks of the anti-corruption community to bolster their credibility and advance their political goals. However, their anti-corruption rhetoric weakens as soon as they gain power. In addition to losing their anti-corruption drive, populist parties that have experienced political success are often affected by their own corruption scandals and their leaders have lasting problems with conflict of interest.

³ Agerberg's findings are based on 85,000 interviews with citizens of 24 European countries.

2 Populist Politics of Emotions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

The ascent of populist emotional mobilisation and the electoral success of new protest or anti-establishment parties have been observed in a number of countries irrespective of the length or strength of their democratic tradition or their socioeconomic situation. In the following section, we are going to present two case studies, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, using two data sources: Chapel Hill Expert Survey ratings of relevant political parties for the years 2014 and 2017, and their actual electoral results in the most recent parliamentary elections (2016 or 2017, respectively).

2.1 Expert Study of Political Parties

The Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) maps the ideological positioning and salience of different issues for political parties in Western as well as Central and Eastern European countries.⁴ Two new variables were included in the 2014 survey, namely salience of the anti-elite⁵ and anti-corruption⁶ rhetoric, which constitute sources of electoral gains for a certain type of parties. The authors argued for the change as follows: “Recent years have witnessed the electoral rise of anti-establishment movements and political parties. These challengers tend to rely on anti-elite rhetoric, pointing out the supposed distance, lack of understanding, and political corruption of political leaders, who—these opponents contend—are aloof from both the needs and interests, as well as the mores, of ‘ordinary citizens.’ European political arenas thus currently face calls for political renewal that combine anti-elite and anti-corruption voices” (Polk et al., 2017, p. 2). For the purposes of our analysis, the salience of populist rhetoric will be represented by the two above-mentioned indicators of the populist politics of emotions, namely the levels of anti-elitism and anti-corruption rhetoric.

The main political parties in the Czech Republic and Slovakia were rated on these new dimensions by CHES 2014 and 2017. This allows us to compare

⁴ CHES identifies the positions assumed by national-level political parties in many European countries on issues such as European integration, ideological and policy issues. The first survey was implemented in 1999, followed by waves in 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 and a “flash” survey in 2017. The number of countries grew from 14 (all Western democracies) to 31 in the year 2014. The number of parties covered increased from 143 to 268 (<https://www.chesdata.eu>).

⁵ Salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric: 0 = Not important at all; 10 = Extremely important.

⁶ Salience of reducing political corruption: 0 = Not important at all; 10 = Extremely important.

data for two points in time. We are going to rank the parties in terms of their scores of salience of anti-elitist and anti-corruption rhetoric, and we are going to observe any shifts of Czech and Slovak political entities on both dimensions between the years 2014 and 2017. The time comparison will allow us to indicate the level of anti-corruptism: we want to know whether a political entity's electoral success between 2014 and 2017 was followed by decreasing salience of its anti-corruption rhetoric. Our study does not primarily focus on voter "demand" or inclination to respond positively to populist appeals; instead, we investigate the "supply" by political parties in terms of their profiles – albeit the effects work undoubtedly in both directions. With regard to political parties, we are primarily going to test the hypothesis that new protest entities place more emphasis on anti-elitist and anti-corruption agendas than traditional political parties. The data presented in the following two tables forms the basis for testing our hypotheses.

Table no. 1: Czech political parties: salience of anti-elite and anti-corruption rhetoric – a 2014/2017 comparison*

Parties	Salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric		Salience of reducing political corruption	
	2014	2017	2014	2017
Freedom and Direct Democracy/Dawn of Direct Democracy (<i>SPD/Úsvit</i>)	9.5	9.9	8.6	8.5
ANO 2011 (<i>ANO</i>)	7.8	9.1	8.5	8.6
Czech Pirate Party (<i>Pirates</i>)	n.a.	8.2	n.a.	9.0
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (<i>KSČM</i>)	5.7	6.8	5.5	5.8
Civic Democratic Party (<i>ODS</i>)	2.2	2.4	5.3	3.2
Mayors and Independents (<i>STAN</i>)	n.a.	2.3	n.a.	6.2
Czech Social Democratic Party (<i>ČSSD</i>)	1.5	1.9	5.2	4.7
Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (<i>KDU-ČSL</i>)	2.5	1.6	5.5	4.4
<i>TOP 09</i>	1.9	1.6	5.1	5.6
Party of Free Citizens (<i>Svobodní</i>)	7.0	n.a.	6.0	n.a.
(Unweighted) mean	4.8	4.9	6.2	6.2

* The Chapel Hill results represent the mean values of expert evaluations on a 0–10 scale where 0 = not important at all 10 = extremely important. Highlighted are figures exceeding the year's mean value on a dimension. Parties are ranked in descending order by the salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric in 2017. Source: Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al. 2017; CHES.

We have verified the assumption that new protest parties and movements (*ANO*, *SPD* and the *Pirates*) would clearly score highest in terms of both the anti-elitist and the anti-corruption rhetoric. They were partially joined by the traditional *KSČM*, which exhibits above-average levels of populism.

Table no. 2: Slovak political parties: salience of anti-elite and anti-corruption rhetoric – a 2014/2017 comparison*

Parties	Salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric		Salience of reducing political corruption	
	2014	2017	2014	2017
Kotleba – People’s Party Our Slovakia (<i>LSNS</i>)	n.a.	9.5	n.a.	7.0
We Are Family (<i>Sme rodina</i>)	n.a.	8.5	n.a.	7.6
Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (<i>OLaNO</i>) (1)	8.5	7.5	8.5	9.2
Freedom and Solidarity (<i>SaS</i>)	5.6	5.9	7.4	8.3
Slovak National Party (<i>SNS</i>)	7.0	5.1	4.8	2.7
Direction – Social Democracy (<i>Smer-SD</i>)	3.7	4.2	3.8	4.0
Network (<i>Sieť</i>)	5.6	3.8	7.8	5.6
Christian Democratic Movement (<i>KDH</i>)	3.8	3.7	5.7	5.7
Party of the Hungarian Community (<i>SMK-MKP</i>)	4.0	3.5	5.3	3.5
<i>Most-Híd</i>	3.5	3.0	6.4	5.0
<i>NOVA</i>	5.5	n.a.	8.0	n.a.
Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party (<i>SDKÚ-DS</i>)	3.4	n.a.	6.3	n.a.
(Unweighted) mean	5.1	5.5	6.4	5.9

* The Chapel Hill results represent the mean values of expert evaluations on a 0–10 scale where 0 = not important at all 10 = extremely important. Highlighted are figures exceeding the year’s mean value on a dimension. Parties are ranked in descending order by the salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric in 2017. (1) In 2017, CHES worked with the *OLaNO-NOVA* coalition. Source: Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al. 2017; CHES.

The Chapel Hill results demonstrate a clear difference between new protest parties and traditional parties in terms of the salience of both types of populist rhetoric, whereas the difference is more marked in the case of anti-elitist rhetoric. New protest parties’ anti-elitism grows in time in spite of the fact that

ANO joined the government coalition as early as in 2014 and its leader became prime minister after the elections of 2017. In contrast, these parties exhibit stable levels of salience of the anti-corruption rhetoric, which contradicts, in the case of ANO, the assumption that a shift to anti-corruptism would take place after electoral success.

The salience of anti-elitist rhetoric among traditional parties (ČSSD, ODS, KDU-ČSL, TOP 09) remained low and clearly below the levels of anti-corruption rhetoric. We can conclude that populism in traditional parties is weak and does not tend to significantly grow in time.

The overall salience of the anti-elitist rhetoric in the Czech political scene grew slightly between the years 2014 and 2017, while the salience of the anti-corruption rhetoric was stable. However, the traditional parties, which are most frequently blamed for corruption, saw a marked decrease in the salience of anti-corruption rhetoric. That decline was outweighed by the emergence of a new protest party, the Pirates, that received the highest expert ratings for anti-corruption of all parliamentary parties.

Like in the Czech Republic, new protest parties obtained the highest scores on both dimensions in Slovakia as well. For the anti-elitist rhetoric in 2017, this is especially the case of *L'SNS* and *Sme rodina*, which only entered the parliamentary stage in 2016. They are followed by the anti-establishment movement, *OLaNO*, which is not an entirely new entity, but its programmatic priorities and image are traditionally underpinned by an anti-establishment (and anti-partisan) agenda. *SaS* also scores slightly above the average value. All these parties are, or were at the time of the survey, in opposition, targeting their anti-elitist appeal primarily against parties of the government coalition. On the other hand, there is an evident decrease in the case of *SNS*, which joined the coalition after the 2016 elections. The bottom section of the ranking is populated by parties that governed the country either in both years (*Smer-SD*) or in one of the years of measurement (*Most-Híd*) or which represent traditional programme-based parties. *Siet'* was an example of a new challenger party in the 2016 elections, yet its short life span does not allow for in-depth analysis.

The *OLaNO* movement and the *SaS* score highest on the dimension of anti-corruption rhetoric (in both years), followed by both new parties in 2017. Therefore, the assumption has been verified that this type of agenda would be salient among oppositional and anti-establishment parties. Lower values are exhibited by government parties, especially the *SNS* in 2017, which was

faced with several corruption scandals at the ministries it controlled after joining the government coalition.⁷

A comparison between the Czech and Slovak results shows remarkable similarity in the case of anti-corruption rhetoric, on one hand, and higher average levels of anti-elitist rhetoric in Slovakia (they are higher even when the different traditional programme-based parties are compared such as *KDU-ČSL* vs. *KDH*). The total average values of salience of the anti-elitist and anti-corruption rhetoric in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are approximately equal, and they either stagnate or grow very slowly over time. However, trends are difficult to establish based on these two instances of measurement only.

The authors of the expert survey compared the party systems of all participating countries in 2014. Since the anti-corruption rhetoric was more salient in countries with lower scores of quality of governance, they concluded that the variability was primarily determined by specific national contexts. In contrast, the salience of the anti-elitist rhetoric was more strongly determined by ideology: parties of the extreme left and extreme right exhibited higher levels of anti-elite rhetoric than mainstream parties (Polk et al., 2017). The same can be demonstrated on the Czech and Slovak cases: the highest levels were found for the extreme right parties of *SPD/Úsvit* and *ĽSNS*, which surpassed the ideologically (or programmatically) more ambiguous protest parties of *ANO* or *OLaNO*. *KSČM*, as the only representative of left-wing extremism in the dataset, also scored high. In terms of the salience of anti-corruption rhetoric, all 26 countries in the CHES database of 2014 were compared. The result was clear: countries characterised by low levels of corruption (Nordic countries, Germany, The Netherlands) exhibited low levels of salience of the anti-corruption rhetoric, whereas countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well as Southern Europe scored high (Polk et al., 2017, p. 6).

2.2 Results of Czech and Slovak Parliamentary Elections

Does the anti-elitism and anti-corruptism of populist, protest parties lead to their electoral success? The results of the most recent parliamentary elections

⁷ At The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, the issue was non-transparent distribution of European research and innovation funding; this scandal resulted in the resignation of minister Peter Plavčan, an *SNS* nominee, in summer 2017. At the Ministry of Defence, there were several issues of non-transparent purchases of military vehicles; however, *SNS* minister Peter Gajdoš fended off the criticism, and so did the third minister of *SNS*, Gabriela Matečná, in the case of agro-subsidies at the Ministry of Agriculture.

in the Czech Republic and Slovakia support the effectiveness of anti-establishment and anti-corruption rhetoric in the political competition. The parliamentary elections were held in autumn 2017 in the Czech Republic and in March 2016 in Slovakia. However, the populist turn had taken place earlier in both countries (Mesežnikov, 2007; Mesežnikov et al., 2008; Učeň, 2009). In the Czech Republic, the populist entities of ANO and Úsvit succeeded as early as in the snap elections of 2013; and the turning point in the rise of new protest parties in Slovakia can be dated to the elections of 2012 (especially in the case of the *OLaNO* movement, which ran separately). However, it was only the “electoral earthquake” of the last election in both countries that swept away traditional political parties and made room for the dominance of new parties of the protest-populist profile, as they obtained much stronger representation in the national parliaments (Rybář et al., 2017; Gyárfášová et al., 2017; Pehe, 2018).

The growth of electoral support for protest parties in the Czech Republic is best exemplified by the victorious ANO, which obtained almost 20 percentage points more votes than the second-ranking ODS. In 2013, the protest parties collectively gained approximately one-fourth of the vote, compared to more than half four years later (Table 3). In contrast, traditional parties were generally losing. The former dominant party of the government coalition, ČSSD, saw the steepest decline. In short, over the course of a single electoral period, the Czech political landscape was transformed fundamentally, primarily by the ascent of new populist protest parties.

Table no. 3: Main results of the 2013 and 2017 parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic

	Vote share (%)		Number of mandates	
	2013	2017	2013	2017
<i>SPD/Úsvit</i>	6.9	10.6	14	22
<i>ANO</i>	18.7	29.6	47	78
<i>Pirates</i>	-	10.8	-	22
<i>KSČM</i>	14.9	7.8	33	15
<i>ODS</i>	7.7	11.3	16	25
<i>STAN</i>	-	5.2	-	6
<i>ČSSD</i>	20.5	7.3	50	15
<i>KDU-ČSL</i>	6.8	5.8	14	10
<i>TOP 09</i>	12.0	5.3	26	7

Source: Czech Statistical Office.

In Slovakia, parliamentary parties with anti-elitism scores above the central value of 5 collectively obtained almost one-half of the vote (46.3%) in 2016, compared to 19.1% in the year 2012 (according to the CHES 2014 survey). The success of anti-elitist entities was bolstered by new parties, *ĽSNS* and *Sme rodina*, which scored highest on anti-elitism. Another symptom of the time was the growth of the anti-establishment quasi-party, *OLaNO*, and the fall of the traditional political parties of *SDKÚ-DS* and *KDH*, which failed to obtain any seats after many years spent in the Slovak parliament.

Table no. 4: Main results of the 2012 and 2016 parliamentary elections in Slovakia

	Vote share (%)		Number of mandates	
	2012	2016	2012	2016
<i>Smer-SD</i>	44.4	28.3	83	49
<i>SaS</i>	5.9	12.1	11	21
<i>OLaNO-NOVA I/1</i>	8.6	11.0	16	19
<i>SNS</i>	4.6	8.6	0	15
<i>ĽSNS</i>	1.6	8.0	0	14
<i>Sme rodina</i>	-	6.6	-	11
<i>Most-Híd</i>	6.9	6.5	13	11
<i>Sieť</i>	0.0	5.6	0	10
<i>KDH</i>	8.8	4.9	16	0
<i>SMK-MKP</i>	4.3	4.0	0	0
<i>SDKÚ-DS</i>	6.1	0.3	11	0

Note: In 2012 only OLaNO, in 2016 NOVA candidates were running on the OLaNO list.
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

3 Discussion

We have demonstrated on simple indicators that the trend of rising influence of anti-establishment entities in the Czech and Slovak political scenes is closely associated with their stronger reliance on the politics of emotions. The evidence presented supports classifying the new protest parties and movement as “populist” and clearly documents their tendency to pursue the politics of emotions. The electoral results suggest that anti-elitism and the anti-corruption rhetoric satisfy the demand of Czech and Slovak voters and thus lead to electoral success. At the same time, we admit that such “demand” is also generated by the “supply side” of populist parties.

Led by the current PM Andrej Babiš, ANO is the number one populist phenomenon of the Czech political scene. After it first joined the political competition in 2011, it only spent the first two years in opposition. During that period, Andrej Babiš presented himself as the country's leading anti-corruption celebrity. Interestingly, ANO retained its high levels of anti-elitist and anti-corruption rhetoric throughout the period of observation (between the Chapel Hill surveys of 2014 and 2017) despite being part of the government coalition. This justifies the question why the case of ANO defies the hypothesis of shifting from an authentic fight against corruption to sterile anti-corruptism.

Of primary importance is the fact that even in government, ANO assumed an "informal" role of opposition against the strongest coalition party, ČSSD. ANO leader Andrej Babiš strived to position himself as a successful entrepreneur, above all, rather than a standard politician; it was the class of standard politicians that he incessantly distanced himself from. He cultivated the image of a rebel who could not be satisfied with being number two in the government because he strived to "clean up Czech politics of corruption" and he could only do so as a dominant actor. It was in this direction, with regard to corruption issues, that he employed an affective political style – and for these reasons, he did not give up that style even as a member of the government coalition. ANO never ceased mobilizing the public against corrupt politicians from the ranks of standard parties because it aimed higher than what could be achieved by a second-ranking actor in the government. And as shown by the 2017 election, it succeeded. This finding goes against the universal validity of Reinhard Heinisch's (2003, p. 91) argument that populism helps parties win the elections but as soon as they join the government, populism causes them to fail because it is incompatible with the nature of public administration.

Second, the situation in the Czech anti-corruption field changed dramatically after the 2017 elections. Compared to the policy statement of the previous ČSSD-led government, the policy statement of the post-2017 government, which was already dominated by ANO, paid significantly weaker attention to the fight against corruption. This fight did not become one of the new government's priorities; the term "corruption" is only mentioned three times in the document and there is practically a single sentence with concrete anti-corruption goals⁸. This is a clear retreat from previous anti-corruption positions. Thus, ANO's anti-

⁸ "In this context, we will submit, in particular, effective legal instruments to protect whistle-blowers and a law to regulate lobbying, based on international recommendations." (Policy Statement, 2018).

corruption rhetoric proved to be pure anti-corruptism, which manifested itself at a time when it assumed a dominant power position. However, the Chapel Hill survey could not yet capture the exposure ANO's anti-corruptism in 2018.

In the meantime, ANO leader and current Czech PM Andrej Babiš also started to be prosecuted for an alleged subsidy fraud in the drawing of European funds. Moreover, he has conflict of interest issues (as former finance minister, he was simultaneously owner of the Agrofert holding, a recipient of government subsidies; in his premier's position, he faces suspicion of continued ownership of Agrofert because his previous transfer of the holding into a trust fund allegedly did not effectively change the owner). As a result of these allegations, anti-corruption NGOs and initiatives (Transparency International, Oživení, Reconstruction of the State or the Anticorruption Endowment) turned their back on the leader of ANO, although he had begun his anti-corruption mission side-by-side with them. This was another blow to the façade of ANO as an authentic anti-corruption fighter. It is safe to say that Andrej Babiš's ANO is moving along the expected "standard trajectory" of populism, namely from a vocal oppositional critic of corrupt elites to corruption scandals and anti-corruptism in its government role.

Slovakia represents a different case of the politics of emotions in the service of politicians. In its formative years, the *Smer-SD* party (established in late 1999, in opposition until 2006) targeted its anti-corruption rhetoric primarily against the government of Mikuláš Dzurinda. When it assumed positions in the government, its fight against corruption effectively ceased to exist and the party itself became targeted by other parties' anti-corruption initiatives. Thus, *Smer-SD*, too, followed the typical populist party's trajectory. Our populism indicators do not cover the years prior to 2014; in the period of observation (2014–2017), *Smer-SD* exhibited stable under-average levels of salience of both anti-elitism and anti-corruption rhetoric. In spite of that, it is often labelled as a populist party, yet such labels are mainly attached by its political opponents with respect to political decisions or proposals such as free train tickets, free lunches, a ceiling on pensions etc.⁹ *Smer-SD*, too, labels other politicians and parties in

⁹ For example: *Obedy zadarmo je populizmus a kupovanie voličov, kriticky reagoval Gröhling na návrh Smeru*. Available online: <https://www.webnoviny.sk/obedy-zadarmo-je-populizmus-kupovanie-volicov-kriticky-reagoval-grohling-na-navrh-smeru/>, *SaS: Návrh na ústavné zastropovanie dôchodkového veku je populizmus*. Available online: <http://www.teraz.sk/najnovsie/sas-navrh-na-ustavne-zastropovanie/347072-clanok.html>

this way.¹⁰ The oppositional parties of SaS and OĽaNO were the “leaders” of populist politics in 2014. According to CHES, anti-elitism was also characteristic of the nationalist SNS, which was in opposition at that time, but not of traditional programme-based parties such as KDH, SDKÚ-DS, SMK-MKP or Most–Híd. The 2016 elections brought about a fundamental change as the ranks of anti-elitist and anti-corruption parties were joined by two new entities, *Sme rodina* and *ĽSNS*, which currently represent the youngest generation of anti-establishment protest parties in Slovakia. As for the success of the politics of emotions, these parties achieved more than others to mobilize former non-voters (of 2012) and first-time voters. *ĽSNS* and *Sme rodina* collectively obtained almost one-third of the vote among these voters (Gyárfášová et al., 2017). Whereas there was no single entity capable of mobilizing former non-voters in the 2012 election, two parties succeeded in doing so in the year 2016. This suggests an inclusive character of the politics emotions these parties deployed when entering the political stage. CHES clearly documents the fact that both parties score highest on the anti-elitism dimension and above the average on the salience of anti-corruption rhetoric (Table 4).

The populist character of these parties’ politics of emotions is importantly illustrated by their ideological profiles. *Sme rodina* is hard to categorize in traditional terms of political science. On one hand, its programme is rather conservative, with a clear anti-minority and anti-immigration rhetoric. It has some shared traits with the Czech ANO: its founder and leader Boris Kollár (the full title of the party even includes his name – *Sme rodina – Boris Kollár*) has an entrepreneurial background and a tabloid celebrity profile, which substantiates categorizing *Sme rodina* as an “entrepreneurial populist” party. On the other hand, given the party’s exclusively oppositional experience and lack of visions for any government role in future, its opinions about more general political issues are hard to assess.

ĽSNS (the full title of the party once again includes the leader’s name – *Marián Kotleba – ĽSNS*) is a textbook example of the extreme right with everything that belongs to such a profile: denial of the fundamental principles and values of liberal democracy; racism and an inclination to fascist ideology; or

¹⁰ For example, at a December 2017 party conference, *Smer-SD* chairman R. Fico said: “It won’t be easy to win the election. We are witnessing a destructive populism and a new style in politics – managerialism...” *Robert Fico: chceme opäť vyhrať voľby, aj keď sme v ére antipolitiky*. Available online: <http://www.strana-smer.sk/o-nas/snemy/post/snem-martin-2017>

rejecting Slovakia's pro-Western foreign policy orientation and advocating for leaving the EU and NATO.

The development in the Slovak political scene is characterised by high volatility, with every election (except the year 2006) introducing at least one new party to the parliament. In addition to their "novelty" bonus, new parties typically mobilize on an anti-elitist and anti-corruption ticket. The results of the 2016 election once again confirmed its attractiveness among voters.

Conclusion

The development of political scenes in democratic countries shows us that the popularity of populist leaders stems not only from their bombastic promises and easy solutions to complex problems, but also from their capacity to integrate in politics such voters who have lost their faith in the ability of traditional political parties to change ordinary people's lives for the better. These voters perceive the anti-elitist and anti-corruption politics of emotions as an effective means to asserting the interests of those who have been pushed aside, forgotten and marginalized, but also humiliated and offended. These voters feel an intensive drive to saturate their needs of self-esteem and dignity – and they have been suffering from failure in this respect. They do not challenge the protest parties' anti-corruptism, their corrupt inclinations and their leaders' conflicts of interest; instead, they transform their worldview and support the non-liberal turn towards a more authoritarian political system supported by populist leaders, i.e. towards a plebiscitarian leader democracy with "Caesarean elements" (Weber, 1978).

The evidence presented above supports categorizing the new protest parties and movements as populist, clearly documenting their tendency to rely on the politics of emotions. Analysis of the salience of anti-elitist and anti-corruption rhetoric suggests that the ascent of anti-establishment parties cannot be explained merely by growing voter discontent with politicians and the economic situation; indeed, any such explanation must also embrace evidence about the politics of emotions that characterizes those parties.

However, our analysis did not support the hypothesis of a populist zeitgeist. Its author, Cas Mudde (2004, p. 563), assumes that populism's political success makes it contagious and over time, even non-populist political entities are increasingly inclined to adopt elements of the populist rhetoric. In the context of the rise of populist parties and movements in the political scenes of democratic

societies, Mudde argues that everyone who wants to succeed in politics will eventually submit to the populist zeitgeist. In contrast, the evidence discussed above warrants the conclusion that traditional parties in the countries studied remain largely immune to populism, even if they pay the price of losing some of their voters (see the examples of *ODS and TOP 09* in the Czech Republic or *SDKÚ-DS and KDH* in Slovakia).

Based on two case studies, our analysis documents the variability of the trajectories of the politics of emotions. On one hand, the approach to indicators of populism taken cannot provide an exhaustive explanation of the phenomenon. On the other hand, it has helped us demonstrate not only its growing presence but also the fact that it is importantly determined by context and the fact that it serves to include citizens in political life. Therefore, it is important to continue identifying factors of the politics of emotions that lead to the success of populist parties; and we should investigate whether similar factors might also strengthen the ties between traditional political parties and their electorates, thus creating conditions for effectively de-accelerating the cycle of new protest parties.

If the politics of emotions is really the pathway that brings ordinary people to political life, then we certainly should not allow irresponsible political leaders to monopolize its practices, argues Martha Nussbaum (2013). At the expense of democracy, emotions in politics continue to be routinely associated with voter irrationality, implying that a decent politician should avoid the politics of emotions. Academic circles frown upon populist politics as something harmful, and the politics of emotions tends to be frowned upon along with populism. However, given the massive spread of populism in contemporary democratic societies, we must also strive to identify its positive (eu)functions, the positive role it plays for those who find standard political parties unappealing. We must pay more detailed attention to what exactly populist leaders provide to their followers and, above all, whether the politics of emotions is able to contribute to solving the current crisis of liberal democracy.

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