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Article

Populism and Technocracy: Pillars of Postwar Representative Democracy in Europe

Abstract: *The established representative democracy in Europe is facing growing challenges. In a rapidly evolving landscape that resolves some crises while encountering new ones, two movements – populism and technocracy – are emerging as alternatives to the traditional party-based system. This article investigates the interaction between these movements and representative democracy, focusing on how they influence and potentially transform the current political framework. My objective is to determine whether the (re)emergence of these movements signifies the decline of representative democracy or if they will instead reshape it and become integral components of the system.*

Keywords: *populism; representative democracy; technocracy; technopopulism*

1. Introduction

Recent political science literature has seen a significant influx of papers examining the rise of far-right political movements both across Europe and globally. This surge is largely fuelled by the growing prevalence of populist, nationalist, and authoritarian forms of government that challenge traditional political norms and institutions. Numerous sources explore the resurgence of populism in Europe, discussing its impact on domestic politics and the potential threats posed for the European Union and its integration process.

Conversely, there is an increasing academic focus on the influence of technocracy in many European countries, particularly during times of instability. As technocratic solutions are highly employed at both the EU and national levels, it is essential to examine their impact on the traditional party-based system, which now faces challenges from multiple fronts.

Political theory contends that the biggest threat to party democracy in Western Europe in the post-war era comes from the emergence of technopopulism. Authors such as Peter Mair assert that “the age of

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party democracy has passed” (Mair, 2013, p.16). But are the days of party democracy really over? Are parties in European democracies truly obsolete?

This article explores the impact of populism and technocracy on key policy areas such as immigration, free trade, and security. Researchers have consistently examined the socio-economic implications of the widespread rise of these movements on the political agendas of winning parties and coalitions. The article also investigates the underlying factors that have contributed to the decline in support for party-based democracy in Europe and identifies the strategies that political parties must adopt to remain central to representative democracy in contemporary times. To this end, I will analyse how populism and technocracy have influenced European politics and have become integral to postwar representative democracy. The discussion will be supported by case studies from six European democracies, highlighting the shift of political parties towards technopopulist features that have become essential for their success.

2. Methodology

This paper aims to examine the hypothesis that the growing popularity of populist and/or technocratic movements leads mainstream parties to adopt certain characteristics of these movements in order to revitalize themselves and attract increased electoral support. The research question under analysis is formulated as follows:

“Are populism and technocracy constitutive features of postwar representative democracy in Western Europe?”

The aim of this study is to combine descriptive and analytical methods to add significant contributions to the existing literature by exploring the social context in which political parties aim to gain the strongest possible support from the electorate. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, this study explores the strategies used by mainstream parties to maintain political power by appropriating characteristics identified in their political competitors. Throughout this paper, I will be examining six case studies from six European democracies. Although the main methodological focus is a qualitative one, scrutinizing the policy proposals of the analysed actors and their impact on the socio-economic environment, as well as on its political counterparts, throughout this paper I will also use the results of multiple elections. The purpose of measuring the results in the national and European elections is to provide a concrete scale used to quantify the popularity and the level of awareness these movements have attained.

Having decided to combine quantitative and qualitative methods and structure my study in a mixed methods research approach (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). The advantages of this practice include improved validity and interpretability, as not only the frequency of an event is analysed, but also the sociological, ideological, and political factors influencing that event (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017).

The research approach applied in this study aligns with Kadlec’s definition of critical pragmatism, which is defined as “the assertion that the purpose of reflexive research is not to discover, recover, or secure principles previously justified by appeals to transcendental universality, but rather to enhance our individual and collective capacity to explore the critical potential of lived experience in a world inherently characterized by flux and change” (Kadlec, 2007, p.12). This definition allows me to properly investigate the actions proposed within the party

system and to interpret from a socio-political perspective the reasons for the changes carried out by mainstream parties in terms of their approach to the emergence of contestatory parties.

This paper is seeking to contribute to the understanding that the popularity of mainstream parties decreases with the emergence of contestatory movements that can come from either the populist or technocratic spheres, it is useful to investigate how these traditional parties try to maintain their electoral support and political power. One such technique is to appropriate characteristics that describe existing trends in the current system. Therefore, the expected result is that technocracy and populism have the power to impose their characteristics on the system to such an extent that they become fundamental characteristics of representative democracy.

In conclusion, today's representative democracy is facing changes that force it to adapt continuously. To maintain their dominant position, mainstream parties have to present themselves as the best option for the electorate and reduce the influence of technocratic and populist opposition parties. This research paper examines how mainstream parties are trying to fulfil these conditions by appropriating some characteristics from the protest movements in order to adapt to the demands of the new political-economic context.

3. The demise of traditional party democracy

Political parties have distanced themselves from the current society to such an extent that they cannot support democracy in its current form anymore (Mair, 2013, 16). To support the claim, an analysis of the elements that made the traditional parties appear outdated for the demands of society is required.

Firstly, as opposed to the representative democracy of late XIXth and early XXth centuries, citizens show unwillingness "to take part in the sort of conventional politics that is usually seen as necessary to sustain democracy" (Mair, 2013, pp.21-22). The reason for this is the incapacity of parties to appeal to the needs of the citizens through their political programme. In this regard, Majone (1994) introduces the concept of "regulatory state", where he argues that the process of expert decision-making is superior to that of political decision-making when it comes to implementing the set of policies that the society needs (Majone, 1994). Because of the weakening shown by party democracy in assessing these changes, citizens find solutions to their problems into populist or technocratic scenarios.

Secondly, another important component for our stance is the voters' turnout. Based on the same analysis of Mair, the level of participation in national elections has decreased, with more and more countries experiencing "record low decade averages in the 1990s" (Mair, 2013, p.37). If we consider the importance of party democracy to be proportional to the involvement of the society in the elective process, then a decrease in the voters' turnout represents a decrease in the trust allocated to parties by the citizens.

Lastly, the third element that illustrates the demise of traditional political parties from contemporary representative democracy is electoral volatility. Mair finds that "the 1990s became the peak decade for electoral volatility, with a score of 12.6 percent, almost 4 points higher than that recorded in the 1970s and 1980s" (Mair, 2013, p.43), showing that the loyalty to one party has continued to cripple in the last decades of the XXth century.

These three factors are not exogenous from each other and they all contribute to the failure of party democracy. The relevant conclusion of this trend is that the citizens have disengaged from the sphere of conventional politics (Mair, 2013, p.39). Therefore, populism and technoc-

racy present themselves as new alternatives to the antediluvian party system, which failed to adapt in the direction desired by the electorate. In order to follow the development of partisan politics into this new stage of evolution, it is necessary to scrutinize how populism and technocracy, both independently and together, have made their return to politics.

4. The Populist Rebirth

This section will cover the rebirth of populism in contemporary politics. Firstly, as the concept itself can be very broad, I will begin by providing a definition of populism using the writings of Cas Mudde and Jan Werner Müller. Secondly, I will provide practical examples in European politics where we can identify populist attitudes embodied by politicians.

4.1. Defining Populism

Throughout this article, I will use with the definition introduced by Cas Mudde, which states that populism is “a thin-centered 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 general will of the people” (Mudde, 2004, p.543). The narrative used by the populists do not only criticize the elites, but also advocates that “they and only they represent the true people” (Müller, 2016, 40). Hence, populism uses the Manichean philosophy, which states that the universe is “divided into two opposing realms: the realm of light and goodness, and the realm of darkness and evil” (BeDuhn, 2000). This strengthens the stance proposed by Mudde in his definition and outlines the continuous conflictual setting that one can observe in populist environments.

Due to the ease of associating politicians with populism by using simple characteristics such as charisma or direct communication with the society, the field of populism would become too cohesive, transforming the movement in an all-encompassing and ever-present attitude identifiable in every political actor. These features are present in populist behaviours, but are neither sufficient, nor self-sustaining in providing a definition for the concept (Mudde, 2004, p.545).

Another important remark that needs to be addressed is where populism finds its support. Although Müller asserts that “especially in Europe, those who vote for what are commonly referred to as right-wing populist parties make less and are less educated” (Müller, 2016, p.14), the right-wing populism goes beyond these predefined groups and finds supporters in every socio-economic group of people. For example, in French politics, the National Front seized the discontent of several social groups and created a platform that had as forefront three themes: immigration, social security and national identity (Mayer and Perrineau, 2012, pp.176-177). The aforementioned areas allowed the movements to appeal to the dissatisfaction of a significant part of the electorate. These people, who previously felt a sentiment of alienation, received a feeling of belonging created by the two political groups and changed their political partisanship towards the right, where they found their needs to be listened to and fought for.

Nevertheless, populism exists only in conflictual settings. Therefore, in order to preserve itself, populism has to constantly find scapegoats to blame for the unwellness of the society. When the populist underdogs become the political elites in the society, they often change their

critiques towards other poorly defined, far-away and hardly-intelligible elites (Müller, 2016, p.30). The most predominant example in this sense is the shift of the narrative from criticizing the government towards putting the blame on Supranational Organizations, with the European Union as a prime example.

4.2. The presence of populism in European democracies

Populism can be seen in European democracies either in power, or in opposition. In both scenarios, it influences democracy and plays a role in the system's development. The most common counter-argument for this stance is that populism can influence democracy only when it wins elections and manages to implement its set of policies and ideas. If it does not win, then the impact of populism would be very limited or inexistent. In this regard, Mudde and Kaltwasser argue that populism in consolidated democracies will have small effects because the state of the democracy gives it little space of manoeuvre (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012, p.23).

Nevertheless, even in opposition, populists continue to influence the features of representative democracy. The argument supporting this view is rooted in the economic landscape of the markets. One rule of the market states that an expectation for a drop in prices will determine a real drop in prices, due to the fact that individuals are utility-maximisers. However, the same argument applies in the case of the populist threat. In the same manner in which politicians acted as utility-maximisers when the ideology-based parties have changed their narrative towards catch-all-ism (Kirchheimer, 1966a), the expectation that a populist party increases its number of votes would be enough for the other political parties to change their approach and to appropriate some of the characteristics presented in the former's political strategy.

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Hereinafter, I will present two cases of populism in European democracy, one in which the populist party was in opposition – in Belgium – and another when it was in power – in Austria –, scrutinizing the direct and indirect impact that it has on democracy and on the behaviour of other actors. I will condone the soundness of the populist programme and the sustainability of its policies because they are beyond the focus of this article.

The Case of Belgian Populism

The parliamentary system in Belgium, along with the cultural and linguistic differences between the Belgian regions, have facilitated the emergence of several populist parties. The most successful one is the Flemish Interest (VB – "*Vlaams Blok*"). VB had its electoral breakthrough in 1988, enjoying a steady increase in the number of votes, attaining 19% in 2007 (De Lange and Akkerman, 2012, pp.28-29). Despite this increase in the support of the party, VB remained in opposition during the entire period. However, this would not prevent the party from influencing both the political scene and the society. As stated before, the sole belief that the party could influence representative democracy once it got into power was enough for the VB to trigger a serious set of changes.

The first impact was seen on the behaviour of the other political parties. When they had to deal with the huge increase of the VB, the mainstream parties "decided to become more responsive to the voters' needs, by presenting new, young party leaders" (De Lange and Akker-

man, 2012, p.36). Many of the parties also changed their names, by adding the regions they represent in order to make the voters feel closer to them – the Party for Freedom and Progress became the Flemish Liberals and Democrats, while the Christian People’s Party became the Christian-Democratic & Flemish (De Lange and Akkerman, 2012, p.36-37).

Another impact of VB was observed with respect to the type of policies addressed. Prior to the emergence of the party, the debates focused mainly on left-right wing policies, whereas after its arrival, “the VB has put a number of other issues on the agenda, the most important being migration and integration” (De Lange and Akkerman, 2012, p.38). This convinced the mainstream parties to assert their positions on these issues. Even though the reforms were the opposites of those advocated by the populists, the influence on the agenda-setting remains unquestionable.

The third impact is the creation of what de Lange and Akkerman (2012) called a “*cordon sanitaire*.” The dissidence of the populist party has led the mainstream parties to position themselves against the populist movement and to isolate the VB, in order to preclude any type of collaboration in the parliament or the government with the latter. Although isolated, the populist party has determined the other parties to act in a different manner than before.

In conclusion, populism in Belgium, even though not in power, has provided the incentive of party democracy to shift its direction. The VB has made the other parties change their composition and their policy programme, while also increasing the “political awareness and participation of a specific group of citizens in the Flemish society” (De Lange and Akkerman, 2012, p.43). Consequently, the Flemish populist party has left its mark on contemporary Belgian politics and become a constitutive feature in its evolution.

The Case of Austrian Populism

One of the most influential right-wing populist parties in Europe at the beginning of the XXIth century was the Freedom Party of Austria (FPO – *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*). The party was formed in 1956, but it started to gain power in national politics after Jorg Haider was elected party leader in 1986. It enjoyed a constant increase in popularity and in 1999 it gained 26.9% of the votes in the legislative elections. FPO became the first party to break the coalition between the Social-Democrats (SPO – *Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*) and the Christian-Democrats (OVP – *Österreichische Volkspartei*) and came to power between 2000-2007, in a coalition government with OVP.

Since its rise to power, the party advocated for an anti-elite, pro-Austrian chauvinism and anti-immigration programme (Fallend, 2012, pp.117-118). Although the rightness of the programme is beyond our scope, the latter had a positive effect on the quality of democracy in the idea that it “gave voice to groups that had not felt represented by the elites” (Fallend, 2012, p.123). The plan put forward by the FPO appealed to other strata of society and made the level of democratic participation more inclusive.

Another important feature of the populist party in Austria is its focus on migration. Just like in the previous case with the VB, Haider and its party made it a prominent issue. He succeeded in influencing its coalition partner, the OVP, which changed its direction towards “the more restrictive line of the FPO” and immigration policy became tougher (Bell, 2003, p.76, 82).

The third impact on the quality of democracy is that the FPO made Austrian democracy more conflictual. The influence of the party was seen in the fact that it “contributed to a growing polarization between governing parties and opposition” (Fallend, 2012, p.124). Due to its partner, the Christian-democratic party has slid rightward during the first half of the 2000s.

In conclusion, populist parties influence democracy and its actors both when in opposition or in power. They complete the agenda with newly introduced, poorly discussed policies (n.a. immigration), and they influence the behaviour of the parties both during and besides elections. One counter-argument that could arise is the idea that both the VB and the FPO have lost support immediately after the period mentioned. While this argument is true, I contend that, even though their support over time fluctuates by high-margins, their influence on representative democracy remains. We can see it now everywhere in Europe, when migration policy, euroscepticism and anti-establishment narratives have become principal headlines in European politics.

5. The Emergence of Technocracy

The second part of this article will address the challenge that technocracy poses on parties and on democracy as a whole, highlighting two relevant countries where technocracy was present.

5.1. Defining Technocracy

The concept of technocracy has enjoyed a revitalization during the last decades, due to the great number of crises that took over Europe. Jean Meynaud defined technocracy as “a system of government in which technically trained experts rule by virtue of their specialized knowledge and position in dominant political and economic institutions” (Meynaud, 1969, p.31). In this regard, knowledge takes over political legitimacy in the sense that non-elected agents become responsible for implementing policies that directly affect the whole population.

The propensity of specialization over pure political representation determined the emergence of a series of contemporary arguments that present technocracy as “an important challenge to the democratic idea of collective self-rule” (Bickerton and Accetti, 2020, p. 30). The challenges posed by technocracy are multiple.

Firstly, it argues that policies have become too politicized and politicians do not have the necessary knowledge to produce the best possible policy (Bertsou and Caramani, 2020, p.6). Secondly, it challenges the ideological feature of representative democracy. Technocracy presents itself as being non-ideological, in the sense that ideologies are by essence pluralist and technocracy, by contrast, is holistic (Bickerton and Accetti, 2020, pp.7-8). Lastly, technocracy champions independence in decision-making procedures. It is neither accountable, nor responsible for the electorate, creating therefore disengagement at the political level (Bickerton and Accetti, 2020, pp. 9-11).

If these challenges are completely carried out, then technocracy can indeed be the kryptonite of representative democracy. However, in reality these perceived challenges are not so extreme, as we often find democracy and technocracy being codependent to each other. Hence, in the future case studies, I aim to present how technocracy is not the end of representative democracy, but more exactly a constitutive feature of it.

5.2. The presence of technocracy in Europe

The pervasive influence of technocracy in Europe prompts to examine its role in shaping governance and policy decisions. Through in-depth case studies, I analyse the nuanced manifesta-

tions of technocratic approaches in Italy and Greece, unravelling their impact on societal and economical dynamics.

Technocracy in Italy

Technocratic governments are rather necessary than wished for. They are generally employed in the face of great crises (i.e. the Sovereign Debt Crisis) and have the sole purpose of implementing the required reforms to undo the unsound policies that previous politicians have pursued. In this subsection, I present the case of Italy, which, in 2011, supported a technocratic government led by Mario Monti, the former European Commissioner of internal market and competition.

The aims set by Monti were “to eliminate the government deficit, reduce government debt and reform the economy to enable renewed growth after a long period of near-stagnation” (Tarlea and Bailer, 2020, p.158). He implemented a series of austerity measures and put forward reforms that had the scope of privatization of some sectors, such as gas, or transport. However, this stance would turn out to be detrimental to its continuity as prime-minister, as the approval rate of the Monti government “plummeted from 71% in November 2011 to 38% in May 2012 as a result of the labor market reforms” (EIU, 2012).

Although unpopular for the masses, technocracy has become a constitutive feature of current representative democracy. Building on the argument posed by Tarlea and Bailer which states that “technocratic solution seemed best because parties were expected to face less opposition” (Tarlea and Bailer, 2020, p.161), the latter can be regarded as a Machiavellian tool employed by the parties to both address the crises with the necessary reforms, while also preserving their image for the future elections.

Moreover, this analysis shows that the ability of Monti to “implement reforms was conditioned by the political support enjoyed by his government” (Tarlea and Bailer, 2020, p.162). This champions the idea that technocratic governments do not rescind democratic institutions, but become agents of those institutions with the purpose of implementing the essential policies. However, the “technocratic challenge” does not address representative democracy itself, but the traditional party systems. Hence, instead of a challenge, technocracy can be rather seen as a characteristic of the new model of democracy.

Technocracy in Greece

The case of Greece is similar to the one of Italy, in the sense that both technocratic governments were formed during the same time, due to the beginning of the Sovereign Debt Crisis. In this regard, “democratically elected leaders in Greece were replaced by politicians more willing to implement austerity measures favoured by the EU” (Culpepper, 2014, *cited in* Tarlea and Bailer, 2020, p.157).

Greece had two technocratic prime-ministers during the crisis: Loukas Papademos, former Vice President of the ECB, and Panagiotis Pikrammenos (Tarlea and Bailer, 2020, p.159). They had to follow the directions set by the Troika (the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund) and implement austerity measures, labour market and pension reforms that proved to be very unpopular for the Greek population. However, in order to diminish the crisis and to maintain the euro, these reforms had to be kept in place for a long period of time (Tarlea and Bailer, 2020, pp.157-160).

Apart from the lack of popularity, this crisis has strengthened this relatively new feature of representative democracy, namely the use of experts, in order to create sound programmes and

policies. I find myself in agreement with the authors in the idea that technocracy presents itself as “a rejection of traditional parties rather than a rejection of public institutions” (Tarlea and Bailer, 2020, p.162). Even though technocracy is more visible during some periods than others and it enjoys different degrees of power over time, it nonetheless remains a part of the current democratic process.

6. Common ground between the two: Technopopulism in Europe

Too often people look at technocracy and populism as opposite terms. In this section, based on the writings of Bickerton and Accetti, I argue that rational actors often combine features of the two in order to maximize their chances of winning elections and of increasing public support. I will begin by providing a definition of the topic, followed by an analysis of two cases in which technopopulism can be identified, France and the UK.

6.1. Defining Technopopulism

The main explanation of the emergence of this term resides in the findings asserted by Peter Mair in “Ruling the Void”. Peter Mair’s stance points out, therefore, that the deterioration of the relationships between partisan politics and societal cleavages became the linchpin in the emergence of technopopulism.

Bickerton and Accetti argue that technopopulism “represents a new organizing logic of political competition” that “stems from an overarching process of separation between society and politics” (Bickerton and Accetti, 2021, p. 24, 10). This new type of political logic has its roots in the phenomenon of interests’ atomization of the society and is strongly supported by Otto Kirchheimer’s argument for the emergence of catch-all parties (Kirchheimer, 1966b).

I adhere to the contention put forward by Bickerton and Accetti that technocracy and populism are not mutually exclusive, but can to some extent be complementary (Bickerton and Accetti, 2021, p.17). For supporting this claim, it is effective to scrutinize two distinctive cases of technopopulism, the British Labour party and the winning French movement in the last two presidential elections, La Republique En Marche (LREM), with the purpose of showing how these two parties modernize the features of constitutive democracy by imposing their principles on the already obsolete model of ideological politics.

6.2. Technopopulism in European democracies

Exploring the political situation in European democracies, this section focuses on the compelling interplay between technocracy and populism – a phenomenon known as technopopulism. The analysis zooms in on the presence of this movement in Great Britain and France, which reshapes the paradigms of governance in these two nations.

The case of the New Labour party in Britain

As the main topic is whether technocracy and populism are constitutive features of contemporary representative democracy, I consider that such a shift into a mainstream party strategy as the one of the Labor party thoroughly supports my claim.

The New British Labour party from 1994 to 2010 was a clear example of technopopulism in European democracies. The party appropriated both populist and technocratic features in its shift towards Giddens' *Third way* politics (Giddens, 1998). On one hand, when it comes to populist elements, the most recurrent feature is the new type of approach used by the party. The party stopped addressing only one particular group of people and instead started to communicate with "an inclusive and undifferentiated group of people, not traversed by any class, or ideological divisions" (Bickerton and Accetti, 2021, p.43). On top of that, the narrative used by the Labour party in positioning itself with regards to the opposition changed from the traditional ideological differentiation towards "a conflict rooted in the opposition between *new* and *old*" (Bickerton and Accetti, 2021, pp.43-44). By acquiring these new strategies, Blair and his party managed to position himself as the new and updated solution for the current demands of the society.

On the other hand, the recipe for success would not be completed without a series of technocratic characteristics. The first technocratic element of the Labour party was its new position regarding policies. The party therefore advocated for "objective solutions to social, economic or cultural problems" (Mair, 2000, *cited in* Bickerton and Accetti, 2021, pp.45-46), which aligns with the idea of depoliticization of policy-making employed by the technocrats. From this, it is possible to derive a second element, which explores the 'reliance on independent experts and autonomous regulatory bodies for implementing public policies' (Castellani, 2016, *cited in* Bickerton and Accetti, 2021, p.46).

In conclusion, this leap that the Labour party made represents strong evidence for the incorporation of these technopopulist features in the body of representative democracy. This new attitude proved to be very useful for the party, enjoying its longest uninterrupted period in power, but also for other parties and movements in Europe that took the Labour party as a model for their own renaissance.

The case of "La République en Marche!"

The French "La République en Marche!" is the political movement which assured Emmanuel Macron the seat of President. It was formed in 2016, and experienced a fast rise to power due to its fresh approach on French politics.

The populist characteristics can be best seen in Macron's declarations. The first striking reference made by the president is that "LREM was neither left-wing, nor right-wing" (Bickerton and Accetti, 2021, p.60). What makes it meaningful is that Macron has decided to overlook the traditional ideological distinction, which is no longer suited for the cleavages and the demands seen in the current society. Another populist characteristic is the contentious technique by which Macron positioned himself in opposition with the establishment that kept France "at an impasse" (2021, p. 62).

The technocratic element of Macron's approach can be best seen at the end of its book, where he states: 'I am a product of the French meritocracy – I achieved success there, but I never went along with the traditional political system' (Macron, 2017, p.212). On top of that, he built his team based on their professional achievements, not based on their political *parcours*. To outline this stance, "a former Olympic fencer was appointed Minister of Sport, whilst one of France's leading hematologists was chosen to run the Ministry of Health" (Bucur, 2017, *apud* Bickerton and Accetti, 2021, pp. 64-65).

The relationship between technocracy and populism in the case of LREM is not a simple conjunction (Bickerton and Accetti, 2021, p.67). In this respect, Macron has managed to combine the appeal of the entire population with a policy programme that is expected to deliver the best outcome for all the people, not just one part of the society. Contrary to the other examples presented above, this was done by employing both technocracy and populism together in a manner that secured both majorities in the National Assembly and two tension-free wins in the presidential election.

Nevertheless, there still exists criticism regarding the two cases of technopopulism, but it is imperative to acknowledge that charisma and direct communication are not sufficient to characterize a party or a movement as being populist. Therefore, I use this chance to point out that neither the New Labour party, nor Macron's LREM are cases of populist parties. Instead, they made appeal to elements of both the populist and the technocratic sphere in order to keep up with the continuous evolution of representative democracy.

7. Conclusion

In this article, I scrutinized whether the concepts of populism and technocracy represent a threat to the current establishment or constitutive parts of it. In order to address this issue, the analysis focused on defining and asserting the movements' limits as perceived by academicians, and then presenting case studies from six different European democracies.

Although the cases were different with respect to their impact or processes, all of them managed to outline the way in which populism and technocracy end up shaping the political environment that is constantly changing in Europe. The multifaceted crises that Europe faces increase the societal demand for contestatory movements, but they also influence the establishment to reside to non-traditional solutions. Therefore, European democracies undergo a process of evolution where the existing constraints compel them to adopt a strategy that allows representative democracies to incorporate characteristics from several spectrums, including populism and technocracy.

Based on the observed impact of these movements on the existing system, I highlighted the positive effect of the former on the development of representative democracy since their appearance on the political scene. Therefore, I conclude that technocracy and populism have the power to impose their characteristics on the system to such an extent that they become fundamental features of representative democracy.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

About the author

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