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Varieties of Technocratic Populism around the World

Editors

Petra Guasti and Lenka Buštíková

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Academic Editors
Petra Guasti (Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic)
Lenka Buštíková (Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic / Arizona State University, USA)

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Table of Contents

A Marriage of Convenience: Responsive Populists and Responsible Experts
Petra Guasti and Lenka Buštíková 468–472

Populism in Power and Democracy: Democratic Decay and Resilience in the Czech Republic (2013–2020)
Petra Guasti 473–484

Technocratic Populism in Italy after Berlusconi: The Trendsetter and his Disciples
Antonino Castaldo and Luca Verzichelli 485–495

Best in Covid: Populists in the Time of Pandemic
Lenka Buštíková and Pavol Baboš 496–508

Populists and Technocrats in Latin America: Conflict, Cohabitation, and Cooperation
Rodrigo Barrenechea and Eduardo Dargent 509–519

Experts in Government: What for? Ambiguities in Public Opinion Towards Technocracy
Ernesto Ganuza and Joan Font 520–532

After the Cartel Party: 'Extra-Party' and 'Intra-Party' Techno-Populism
Jose Piquer and Anton M. M. Jäger 533–544

Technocratic Populism *à la Française*? The Roots and Mechanisms of Emmanuel Macron's Success
Michel Perottino and Petra Guasti 545–555

Different Strokes for Different Folks: Who Votes for Technocratic Parties?
Maria Snegovaya 556–567

Populism versus Technocracy? Populist Responses to the Technocratic Nature of the EU
Marion Reiser and Jörg Hebenstreit 568–579

Technocratic Populism in Hybrid Regimes: Georgia on My Mind and in My Pocket
David Aprasidze and David S. Siroky 580–589

Table of Contents

Expert Ministers in New Democracies: Delegation, Communist Legacies, or Technocratic Populism?
Elena Semenova 590–602

Politics and Governance (ISSN: 2183–2463)
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Editorial

A Marriage of Convenience: Responsive Populists and Responsible Experts

Petra Guasti [1,*] and Lenka Buštíková [2]

[1] Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, 110 00 Prague, Czech Republic;
E-Mail: guasti@soz.uni-frankfurt.de
[2] School of Politics and Global Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287, USA; E-Mail: lenka.bustikova@asu.edu

* Corresponding author

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Abstract
This thematic issue, "Varieties of Technocratic Populism around the World," investigates ideological origins of technocratic populism and situates it among other types of populism. It is composed of 11 articles that bring together 18 scholars from around the world with a wide variety of perspectives. Technocratic populism is an output-oriented populism that directly links voters to leaders via expertise. It emerges as a response to a crisis of governance, reproaches mainstream parties for it and offers solutions that challenge traditional left–right divisions in politics. New leaders combine populism with technocracy: They offer expertise, often harnessed in business, but also a direct, personalized link to 'ordinary' citizens. Above all, they politicize expertise to gain legitimacy. Technocratic populism primarily responds to frustrations of the electorate with poor governance, not to nativist grievances or to the plight of the most vulnerable citizens. In a new social contract, it is expected that voters renounce politics and political parties and that they turn into spectators who observe how technocratic elites adopt solutions that benefit the 'ordinary people.' Technocratic populism is a growing challenge to pluralistic forms of representative democracy and calls for further scholarly attention.

Keywords
expertise; governance; grievance; pandemic; populism; technocracy; technocratic populism

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue "Varieties of Technocratic Populism around the World" edited by Petra Guasti (Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic) and Lenka Buštíková (Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic / Arizona State University, USA).

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1. Introduction

This thematic issue, "Varieties of Technocratic Populism around the World," investigates ideological origins of technocratic populism and situates it among other types of populism. Technocratic populism is an output-oriented populism that directly links voters to leaders via expertise. It emerges as a response to a crisis of governance, reproaches mainstream parties for it and offers solutions that challenge traditional left–right divisions in politics. New leaders combine populism with technocracy: They offer expertise, often harnessed in business, but also a direct, personalized link to 'ordinary' citizens. Above all, they politicize expertise to gain legitimacy.

Technocratic populism is rooted in two alternatives to representative democracy—technocracy and populism (Bickerton & Accetti, 2017, 2021; Caramani, 2017). Citizens face the duality of technocratic populism. Populism is responsive and places the 'people' at the epicenter of democracy (Kaltwasser, 2014). Technocracy stands for responsible governance, expertise, competence, effectiveness, and 'optimal outcomes.' It is distinct from bureaucracy, which is a mode of governance, because technocracy is a *logic* of governance. Technocratic approaches focus on problem-solving and conflict neutralization (O'Donnell, 1994), and emphasize a regulatory state that makes rules and monitors their implementation (Majone, 1994).

Populists and technocrats are anti-political actors with an 'unmediated,' proceduralist view of democracy (Rosanvallon, 2011; Taggart, 2002), which implies that they embrace a non-pluralist concept of a society, the existence of a unified general interest, and a direct, unmediated, relationship between the people and their leaders. Technocratic populism is an anti-elite ideology that instrumentalizes governance and exploits competence. Technocratic populists cultivate the appearance of authenticity and proximity to the ordinary people but also demobilize the electorate by instilling civic apathy (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). In many instances, technocratic populists claim to 'run the state as a firm,' which gives them cover to delegitimize political opponents because they lack 'expertise' and relish in the cycles of parliamentary deliberations.

Technocratic populism primarily responds to frustrations of the electorate with poor governance, not to nativist grievances or to the plight of the most vulnerable citizens. In a new social contract, it is expected that voters renounce politics and political parties and that they turn into spectators who observe how technocratic elites adopt solutions that benefit the 'ordinary people' (cf. Urbinati, 2014). In sum, technocratic populism is a growing challenge to pluralistic forms of representative democracy. As such, it calls for a scholarly attention both from historical and comparative perspectives.

The thematic issue is composed of 11 articles that bring together 18 scholars from around the world with a wide variety of perspectives. Five case studies investigate the evolution, public support and consequences of technocratic populism for democracy in the Czech Republic (Guasti, 2020a), France (Perottino & Guasti, 2020), Georgia (Aprasidze & Siroky, 2020), Italy (Castaldo & Verzichelli, 2020) and Spain (Ganuza & Font, 2020). Three are also two-country comparisons. Piquer and Jäger (2020) see the cartelization of party systems as a driving factor for the rise of intra- and extra-party techno-populist logic, focusing on the UK and Spain. Snegovaya (2020) compares voter attitudes in France and the Czech Republic. Buštíková and Baboš (2020) explore governance during the Covid-19 pandemic in Czechia and Slovakia. Finally, three articles offer a broad cross-national perspective. Reiser and Hebenstreit (2020) explore the relationship between Euroscepticism and technocratic populism. Semenova (2020) examines the historical legacies of ministerial appointments in Eastern Europe. Barrenechea and Dargent (2020) offer a study of populist governance in Latin America.

2. Five Lessons for the Future of Technocratic Populism

This rich body of original research leads us to derive five lessons for future studies of technocratic populism. First, technocratic populism is a distinct sub-type of populism. Second, it tends to emerge when party systems weaken. Third, technocratic populists offer a direct, unmediated link to voters via expertise. Fourth, when in power, they combine populist responsiveness with expert-driven responsibility. Finally, the pandemic facilitates democratic decay and enhances the appeal of technocratic populism. We outline these lessons in more detail now before we summarize individual papers.

2.1. Technocratic Populism is a Distinct Type of Populism

Technocratic populism is a unique type of populism. It responds to a salient contemporaneous grievance of voters in many democracies related to sub-par governance by mainstream political elites. It is neither a residual category, nor a hybrid type defined by centrism. Populism co-exists with diverse host ideologies and logics, beyond nativism or socialism (cf. Art, 2020; Caiani & Graziano, 2019; Zulianello, 2020). Furthermore, it cannot be automatically linked to illiberalism (Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

2.2. Technocratic Populism Emerges When Party Systems Weaken

Two conditions are conducive for the emergence of technocratic populism—the implosion of the existing party system (Castaldo & Verzichelli, 2020; Perottino & Guasti, 2020) and the exhaustion of the left–right ideological cleavage (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). Technocratic populism combines the redemptive promise of populism with the technocratic promise of competent governance (Aprasidze & Siroky, 2020; Perottino & Guasti, 2020) and can restructure intra-party logic (Piquer & Jäger, 2020). It rejects existing parties and political ideologies as obsolete and it attacks established and other populist parties as incompetent. Populist technocratic appeal enables new anti-establishment leaders to instrumentalize competence, civility and impartiality of knowledge to distinguish themselves from the populist radical right as well as the left (cf. Buštíková, 2020).

2.3. Technocratic Populism Opposes Mediated Politics

Technocratic populism is a strategy to directly appeal to voters and it uses the public's trust in knowledge and expertise as a legitimacy shield (Rosanvallon, 2011). Unmediated politics replace accountability (Guasti, 2020a), through direct channels of communication (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019), democratic innovations (Perottino & Guasti, 2020) and alternative crisis management bodies (Buštíková & Baboš, 2020). Populist leaders concentrate power when they circumvent established institutions and remove expertise from public scrutiny.

2.4. Technocratic Populism Combines Responsiveness (Populism) with Responsibility (Technocracy)

In a crisis, the tension between responsiveness and responsibility increases. When technocratic populists are unable to control negative policy trends, they favor

responsiveness at the expense of responsibility. Selected experts serve at the pleasure of the populist leader. Therefore, unpopular experts are replaced, and popular experts serve to increase the leader's appeal and legitimacy. This leads to the prioritization of policies that deliver instantaneous popularity boosts rather than complex, responsible policies with long-term horizons (Buštíková & Baboš, 2020; Guasti, 2020a; Perottino & Guasti, 2020).

2.5. The Pandemic Facilitates Democratic Decay

To solve the unprecedented Covid-19 health crisis, leaders have to engage with epidemiologists and public health officials. Because they emphasize expertise, technocratic populists might initially benefit from the surge in demand for non-political medical knowledge during the pandemic (Guasti, 2020b). Technocratic populists conceal accountability by hiding behind experts and by shifting decisions on pandemic responses outside of the parliamentary arena. This instrumentalization of technocratic expertise then justifies executive aggrandizement (Bermeo, 2016) which contributes to democratic decay.

3. Overview of Contributions

Now we turn to a brief description of the articles in the order that they appear in the thematic issue.

Guasti (2020a) focuses on the effects of technocratic populism in power on democracy. She highlights the illiberal tendencies of technocratic populism in power, best expressed in executive aggrandizement. Without the restraint of institutional veto points and civil society, technocratic populism undermines electoral competition (vertical accountability), judiciary independence, legislative oversight (horizontal accountability), and freedom of the press (diagonal accountability).

Castaldo and Verzichelli (2020) highlight the interplay between technocracy and populism in Italy. They show the variability of anti-establishment and technocratic appeals: a business outsider taking on the system (Berlusconi); a popular technocrat unsuccessfully trying to turn popularity into electoral success avoiding populism (Monti, Conte); an insider trying to mix populist party leadership with a technocratic executive style (Renzi); and, finally, a populist replacing technocratic appeal with nativism (Salvini). Thus, while latent in Italy, the interplay between technocracy and populism comes in many forms, and adapts and persists over time.

Buštíková and Baboš (2020) explore how populists govern in crisis. They focus on the actions of technocratic populists in power during the first wave of the Covid-19 crisis in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. They identify three features of the populist pandemic response: bypassing established, institutionalized channels of crisis response, responsive policy making and politicization of expertise.

Barrenechea and Dargent (2020) scrutinize conflict cohabitation and cooperation between populists and technocrats in Latin America. They find that cohabitation is more common than conflict and that conflict is moderated by two conditions: the programmatic mandate of populists and the economic context of their rise to power.

Ganuza and Font (2020) analyze public opinion towards technocracy using a unique survey and focus group data from Spain, where a political party, Ciudadanos (Citizens) deploys technocratic populism. They find that, while most citizens are dismayed with the inefficiency of established political parties and in favor of a generic idea of politics with experts, people lean towards a consultative role of experts in politics and support representative democracy.

Piquer and Jäger (2020) investigate two left-wing subtypes of technocratic populism at the party level: Corbynism in the United Kingdom and Podemos in Spain. They find that technocratic traits result from the cartelization of party systems, but also from electoral contexts and policy environments increasingly dominated by expert claims and expert institutions. The Covid-19 crisis has reinforced the technocratic aspects of Podemos as a governing party.

Perottino and Guasti (2020) analyze the electoral success of Emmanuel Macron, who combined personal charisma and technocratic expertise to win the presidency in 2017. Technocratic populism enabled Macron to transcend the political left and right while simultaneously fending off radical populist competitors. Macron refused traditional labels (centrism), elite recruitment patterns, and mediated politics. Instead, he created new forms of responsiveness by 'giving voice to the people' while at the same time relying on technocratic competence.

Snegovaya (2020) compares support for the right-wing parties and technocratic populists in France and the Czech Republic. She finds that voters for right-wing populists share many common features, but voters for technocratic populists have few commonalities aside from higher levels of trust in political institutions.

Reiser and Hebenstreit (2020) investigate the interplay between populism and Euroscepticism at the party level. They show that left- and right-wing populist parties articulate different anti-technocratic positions, in line with their respective host ideology. The technocratic critique of the EU is more complex for technocratic populists, who rely on technocratic appeals domestically. Some (ANO 2011 and GERB) do not have a critical stance towards EU technocracy, while others (M5S and OĽaNO) have utilized technocratic critiques of the EU as a part of their (soft) Eurosceptic posture.

Aprasidze and Siroky (2020) argue that in a hybrid regime, technocratic populism is utilized as a façade to cover authoritarian and oligarchic tendencies and inhibit democratization efforts. Bidzina Ivanishvili came to power in 2012 and, despite not holding any official

position in the government, has since ruled Georgia by proxies using corporatist and patrimonial forms of governance.

Semenova (2020) examines the appointments and survival of expert ministers in eleven Central and Eastern European countries over two decades (1990–2012). Her analysis shows that communist legacies contribute to a congruence between technocratic appointments and public expectations for expertise in government.

4. Conclusions

Technocratic populism is a distinct type of populism. It emerges when party systems are weakened and issues of governance gain salience. It opposes mediated politics and combines responsiveness (populism) and responsibility (technocracy). The Covid-19 crisis is uniquely conducive to the appeal of technocratic populism: The demand for public health expertise is at an all-time high, and good governance is a matter of life and death. This thematic issue shows that the dual approach of technocratic populism to governance makes it competitive against the established parties as well as the right- or left-wing populist parties. When in power, technocratic populism exploits ambiguity: It is flexible in its appeal, but also volatile and diffuse when it comes to the sources of its public support (Buštíková & Baboš, 2020; Perottino & Guasti, 2020; Snegovaya, 2020). Future research should study technocratic populism alongside more traditional types of populism and might focus on the sources of its appeal, executive competence, and its effect on liberal democracy.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Petra Guasti is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Jena. In academic year 2018/2019 she was a Democracy Visiting Fellow at the Ash Centre for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Harvard Kennedy School. Her main research focus is the growing tension within the system of representative democracy in respect to its legitimacy. Her research appears in *Democratic Theory*, *Democratization*, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, among others.

Lenka Buštíková is an Associate Professor in the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University. Her research focuses on party politics, voting behavior, clientelism, and state capacity. Her book, *Extreme Reactions: Radical Right Mobilization in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge University Press), demonstrates that far right parties mobilize against politically ascendant minorities. It received the Davis Center Book Prize in political and social studies. She is currently serving as an Editor of *East European Politics*.

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Article

Populism in Power and Democracy: Democratic Decay and Resilience in the Czech Republic (2013–2020)

Petra Guasti

Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, 110 00 Prague, Czech Republic; E-Mail: guasti@soz.uni-frankfurt.de

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Abstract

Populism and technocracy reject vertical accountability and horizontal accountability. Populism and technocracy can combine to form 'technocratic populism.' The study assesses the extent to which democratic decay can be traced to the actions of technocratic populists as opposed to institutional factors, civil society, fragmentation and polarization. The main findings of this article are that technocratic populism has illiberal tendencies expressed best in its efforts at executive aggrandizement (cf. Bermeo, 2016). Without an effective bulwark against democratic erosion (cf. Bernhard, 2015), technocratic populism tends to undermine electoral competition (vertical accountability), judiciary independence, legislative oversight (horizontal accountability), and freedom of the press (diagonal accountability). The most effective checks on technocratic populist in power, this study finds, are the courts, free media, and civil society. This article highlights the mechanisms of democratic decay and democratic resilience beyond electoral politics. It indicates that a combination of institutional veto points and civil society agency is necessary to prevent democratic erosion (cf. Weyland, 2020). While active civil society can prevent democratic erosion, it cannot reverse it. Ultimately, the future of liberal democracy depends on the people's willingness to defend it in the streets AND at the ballot box.

Keywords

accountability; Czech Republic; democratic decay; democratic resilience; populism; technocracy; technocratic populism

Issue

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1. Introduction

Populism and technocracy have emerged as two important critiques of representative democracy (Caramani, 2017; Urbinati, 2014). Populism pledges to reinstall the (previously excluded) people at the center of democracy by restoring responsiveness (Kaltwasser, 2014). Technocracy promises to rescue democracy with knowledge, competence and effectiveness, producing 'optimal outcomes' and restoring responsibility (Caramani, 2017; Urbinati, 2014). The critical element of technocratic legitimacy is output—it claims its outcomes driven by experts are superior to 'non-experts.' As such, technocracy is plebiscitarian by nature and has profound conflicts with liberal democracy as well as with populism (cf. Urbinati, 2014).

Notwithstanding these tensions, populism and technocracy share a common enemy—representative party politics (Bickerton & Accetti, 2017; Caramani, 2017)—and aim to significantly redefine the notion of democracy. Both rely on a non-pluralist conception of society, the existence of a unified general interest, and an unmediated relationship between the people and the elite. Populism and technocracy therefore reject both vertical accountability—for populism, vertical accountability is 'self-sanctioning'; for technocracy, vertical accountability is 'impossible'—and horizontal accountability, which is seen as a source of 'procedural constraints for the general interests of society' (Caramani, 2017, pp. 60–61).

Given these similarities, populism and technocracy can combine to form 'technocratic populism' (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; de la Torre, 2013; Havlík, 2019), the

theme of this special issue. This study focuses on three aspects of technocratic populism: 1) attempts among populists in power to undermine accountability; 2) their influence on democratic decay; and 3) their failures (when the institutional guardrails and civil society successfully oppose these attempts (cf. Caramani, 2017; Weyland, 2020).

It builds on the literature examining the ambivalent relationship between populism and democracy (Kaltwasser, 2012, 2014; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2014; Weyland, 2020), the negative impact of technocracy and populism on accountability (Caramani, 2017) and its deleterious influence on democracy (Ruth, 2018; Ruth-Lovell, Lührmann, & Grahn, 2019). It advances the literature on how technocratic populism undermines democratic accountability by: 1) distorting the system of checks and balances (horizontal accountability); 2) limiting electoral competition (vertical accountability); and 3) undermining media freedom, and constraining civil society (diagonal accountability; cf. Bernhard, Hicken, Reenock, & Lindberg, 2020).

Accountability is defined here as a constraint on the use of power (Lindberg, 2013)—conceptually distinct from responsibility, responsiveness, and representation (Lührmann, Marquardt, & Mechkova, 2017; Mechkova, Lührmann, & Lindberg, 2019). Using three V-DEM composite indices—horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability—and additional qualitative observation, this article highlights the erosion of all three types of accountability over time (from 2013 until 2019).

This study assesses the extent to which democratic decay can be traced to the actions of technocratic populists as opposed to institutional factors (electoral system, bicameralism), civil society (protests), fragmentation and polarization (cf. Weyland, 2020). It provides new insights about the threat of technocratic populism when technocratic populists are in power in a relatively new democracy—the Czech Republic.

Newer democracies have weaker institutional safeguards and civil society resilience to withstand the (potential) democratic decay caused by technocratic populists' attack on accountability (cf. Bernhard, Hicken, Reenock, & Lindberg, 2015; Weyland, 2020). The main findings indicate that, if left unchecked, technocratic populism undermines electoral competition (vertical accountability), judiciary independence, legislative oversight (horizontal accountability), and freedom of the press (diagonal accountability). Further, the study shows that the most effective check on technocratic populist in power are courts, free media, and civil society, which form an effective bulwark against democratic erosion (cf. Bernhard, 2015; Weyland, 2020).

The study is structured as follows. Section 2 explores technocracy, populism, and technocratic populism as disfigurations of liberal democracy. In Section 3, data and methods are outlined, and the three types of accountability are operationalized. Section 4 examines technocratic populism's effects on three types of accountability and Section 5 emphasizes the erosion of accountability during the Covid-19 pandemic. In conclusion, the article highlights how technocratic populism has undermined democratic accountability and led to democratic decay, but also how courts, independent media, and civil society can be an effective bulwark against democratic decay and a source of democratic resilience (Bernhard, 2020; Weyland, 2020).

2. Democratic Disfigurations and Democratic Decay

While two disfigurations are vital for understanding democratic decay—technocracy and populism (Bickerton & Accetti, 2017; Caramani, 2017; Urbinati, 2014)—these forms of politics have sometimes had an antagonist relationship. This is hardly surprising, since each seeks a profoundly different goal. Populism promises to restore the power of the people. Technocracy seeks to shift power to the experts (Caramani, 2017). For populism, the will of the majority equals the will of the people—monolithic and hegemonic (Laclau, 2005). For technocracy, people are an abstract entity unable to govern, and popular sovereignty can be fulfilled effectively only by impartial experts driven by reason (Rosanvallon, 2011).

At the same time, populism and technocracy share a proceduralist view of democracy (democracy is reduced to a procedure for selecting the leader). They also share several important features: Both reject 'mediated politics' and see themselves as anti-political (Bickerton & Accetti, 2017; Rosanvallon, 2011; Taggart, 2002). While left- and right-wing populisms both have ideological agendas, the 'marriage' of populism with technocracy regards the 'left/right' dimension of political competition as obsolete (cf. Caramani, 2017, on the opposition of technocratic populism to traditional party democracy). Democratic procedures are mere 'approximations' (Rosanvallon, 2011) and 'formalisms' (Laclau, 2005).

Technocratic populism is more than the sum of the two parts, however. Technocratic populism asks people to place the power into the hands of the populist leader who will run the state competently (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). The leader will embody the people and act on their behalf (Laclau, 2005). In a technocratic social contract, the people become spectators of the new political elite—expert technocrats adopting solutions that benefit the 'ordinary people' (Manin, 1997, on audience democracy; cf. Urbinati, 2014, on plebiscitarianism as a form of the populist disfiguration of democracy).

Once technocratic populists attain power, they want the people to believe in their numbers, enjoy their 'normal life,' and let the experts' rule. Here an important caveat, technocratic populism and technocratic rule have a similar root but are not identical (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Pastorella, 2016). Technocratic populism uses the ideology of numbers and the ideology of expert knowledge to appeal directly to the voters using anti-elite, populist rhetoric (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). The state is

seen like a firm, where there is no place for active citizens or civil society between elections. The populist element of technocratic populism weakens checks and balances, especially institutional safeguards (minority protection), facilitates the centralization of power, reduces the diversity of the public forum and transforms political opposition into the enemy of the people (Ruth-Lovell et al., 2019). The technocratic element narrows political competition and eliminates democratic accountability (Caramani, 2017; Urbinati, 2014); the populist element portrays the opposition as the enemy of the (ordinary) people (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018), rather than a legitimate political adversary.

Once in power, and unconstrained by the need for ideological consistency, technocratic populists are free to adopt policies that maintain voter support, for example, by combining inconsistent redistributive and pro-market policies (Buštíková & Baboš, 2020). In the absence of ideology, technocracy provides an alternative legitimation framework—materially-based output legitimacy (Buštíková & Baboš, 2020). Technocratic governments increase pressure on domestic political actors, weaken partisan ideology-based politics and loosen accountability ties (cf. Pastorella, 2016). Executive aggrandizement, which undermines checks and balances in the name of the people (Bermeo, 2016), is the most common form of democratic decay. Democratic institutions are bypassed, transparency reduced, oversight and deliberation are minimized. The source of decay originates in excluding pluralistic voices from debates along with restrictions on political opponents and peaceful civil society (Bernhard, 2020; Vachudova, 2019).

Finally, the rise of populism and technocracy can also trigger liberal pushback, whose strength determines the degree of democratic resilience in the face of technocratic populism. Four conditions, I suggest, are necessary for democratic resilience—a free press (critically assessing information by the government); independent courts (ensuring mitigation measures and restrictions remain within the constitutional framework), effective parliamentary opposition (performing government oversight), and active civil society (mobilizing citizens to defend democracy; cf. Bernhard, 2020; Weyland, 2020).

2.1. Democratic Decay in Pandemics

The Covid-19 pandemic represented an opportunity for the populists in government to consolidate power. During pandemic states of the emergency, core civil rights and civil liberties were suspended. Populist governments instrumentalized the pandemic restrictions to push through policies, laws, regulations, or hold elections to supervisory boards that would—in a non-pandemic context—have resulted in backlash (Guasti, 2020a). Emergency powers also gave populist leaders the ability to bypass checks and balances. As a result, the pandemic seems to have accelerated democratic decay (Guasti, 2020b).

In theory, the resurgence of technocratic expertise during pandemics should fuel support for technocratic populism. The unprecedented health crisis requires expertise—especially epidemiologists and public health officials. These unelected experts gain a significant degree of trust, yet remain largely politically unaccountable for their advice. The source of decay originates in populist leaders' ability to conceal their accountability behind experts and use technocratic expertise to justify their efforts to curb freedoms. The source of resilience is political opposition and civil society's ability to challenge technocratic expertise, demand transparency in the dissemination of facts and data on Covid-19, and to hold politicians accountable for the types of technocratic (usually medical) expertise that they choose to implement.

2.2. Explaining the Erosion of Accountability

We expect to find variations in the erosion of accountability caused by technocratic populists, increasing alongside their growing power:

1) As junior partners in PM Sobotka government (2013–2017), the power of technocratic populists to undermine accountability is limited and indirect—it cannot undermine the judiciary but can skew electoral competition.
2) Leading minority PM Babiš government (2018–2019), the power of technocratic populists to undermine accountability, especially the judiciary grows, but can be constrained by the parliament and the civil society.
3) The Covid-19 pandemic (2020) represents a unique opportunity for further deterioration of accountability. Emergency measures strengthen the executive, weaken parliamentary oversight, and suspend certain rights and liberties (Guasti, 2020b). In this case, the technocratic populists are least constrained, and the strength and resilience of the institutional guardrails and civil society are tested the most (cf. Weyland, 2020). Thus, the pandemic strengthens the cumulative effect of previous erosion of accountability.

3. Concept Operationalization

Democratic decay is operationalized as the decline in horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability, and democratic resilience is measured as the improvement/lack of erosion on one or more accountability types. The change in accountability is measured by three V-DEM indices and their components (V-Dem Institute, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Sweden):

1) Vertical accountability captures the mechanisms of formal political participation. The conceptual scheme for the V-DEM vertical accountabili-

ty index consists of two main aspects: electoral accountability and political parties (Lührmann et al., 2017).
2) Horizontal accountability represents the extent to which state institutions can hold the executive branch of the government accountable (Lührmann et al., 2017). Three institutions are essential in this regard: the legislature, the judiciary, and oversight bodies.
3) Diagonal accountability represents the extent to which citizens can hold government accountable outside of formal political participation (elections; Lührmann et al., 2017). V-DEM models this form of accountability as a function of media freedom, civil society characteristics, freedom of expression, and the degree to which citizens are engaged in politics.

The article supplements the V-DEM accountability indices with annual reports for the Sustainable Governance Indicators by the Bertelsmann Foundation (Guasti, Mansfeldová, Myant, & Bönker, 2014–2020) to explain the causes of democratic decay. Where necessary, data are supplemented by primary and secondary sources. For the Covid-19 analysis, the analysis relies on primary sources (transcripts of parliamentary debates, voting records in parliament, official press releases, court ruling), and on media reporting.

The analysis focuses on the extent to which the erosion of accountability can be traced to the actions of technocratic populists compared to other factors. It covers the increasing power of technocratic populists and their efforts to undermine accountability. The analysis is structured along the three forms of accountability—vertical, horizontal and diagonal. Negative change (erosion of accountability) represents democratic decay, while positive change (strengthening of accountability), and status quo are conceptualized as democratic resilience—the ability of the institutional guardrails and civil society to withstand the attempts of technocratic populists to erode accountability.

4. Democratic Accountability in the Czech Republic (2013–2019)

4.1. Vertical Accountability

Vertical accountability focuses on two interrelated mechanisms of political competition: elections and political parties. In the Czech Republic, both the 2013 and 2017 elections were deemed free and fair (Guasti et al., 2019; OSCE, 2017). No cases of vote-buying were reported in the 2013 and 2017 parliamentary elections. Voter registration is straightforward; all adult citizens, including convicted prisoners, can participate in national elections. There is no voting by mail, which restricts the access of Czech citizens residing abroad, who can only vote at a decreasing number of Czech embassies and consulates. In 2017, voting-counting errors in central Bohemia led to the first recount in the Czech Republic history.

While the electoral procedures themselves are sound, campaign finance was an issue until the introduction of an independent office for the oversight of party and campaign finance in 2016 (OSCE, 2017). The new law requires parties (and presidential candidates) to have transparent accounts subject to monitoring. The law also establishes limits on donations from a single donor. Campaign finance has been under closer scrutiny since 2017, but media access remains an issue. During elections, the Czech electoral law guarantees parties equal access to state radio and television, irrespective of the party's size or past electoral performance. Municipalities also provide space for billboards, and political advertisements are carried in newspapers. However, there are no guarantees of access to private media, nor monitoring of in-kind services (e.g., billboards purchased by a third party). The dailies of the MAFRA media group, owned by Andrej Babiš, have been criticized for their political bias (Jirák & Köpplová, 2020). In both the 2013 and 2017 campaigns, ANO dominated the campaign advertisement landscape. Unlike other parties, ANO finances are not dependent on membership contributions or state funding. Instead, the party has a single benefactor to whom it owes a significant debt for previous campaigns—the party Chairman, Andrej Babiš (cf. Buštíková & Guasti, 2019).

Alongside elections, political competition at the heart of vertical accountability also depends on political parties. The Czech party system has been subject to extreme instability and fragmentation. The previously stable party system of the 1990s and early 2000s, when two parties alternated in power (mostly in coalition governments), became increasingly unstable (Guasti, 2020b). Although overall support for the left and the right remained stable over time, the shifts in voter support happened within the two blocks. On the left, ANO gained the majority of Social Democratic voters and part of the Communist electoral base. On the fragmented right, the significant shifts occurred between Civic Democrats and smaller, liberal parties.

The 2013 elections led to a parliament in which 30.5% of its members represented new political parties. In 2017, this number grew to 64%. Fragmentation doubled between 2010 and 2019—in 2013, seven parties entered parliament; in 2017, it was nine parties. In 2019, the fragmentation within the parliament further increased to 10 parties, as a new splinter party Tricolor (Trikolora), emerged from the Civic Democratic Party. The instability and fragmentation of the Czech party system have made it difficult to form a stable government, to reach a compromise on pressing issues, but also prevented the Hungarian scenario—a constitutional majority fueling democratic breakdown (cf. Guasti, 2020b).

Overall, vertical accountability deteriorated in the Czech Republic between 2013 and 2019, especially between 2013 and 2017 (Figure 1). To a significant degree, it is possible to ascribe this decline to ANO

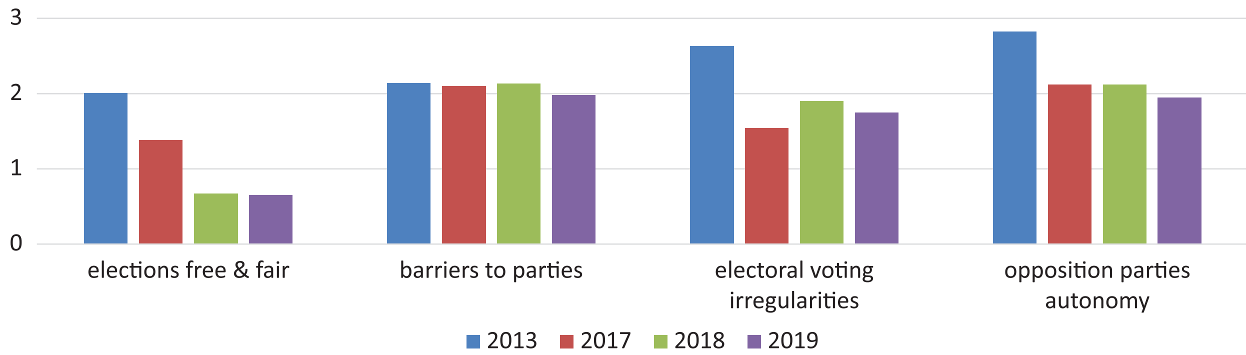

Figure 1. Vertical accountability 2013–2019. Note: Ordinal scale from 0 to 3, the higher the value the higher the quality of measured component. Source: Coppedge et al. (2020).

and Andrej Babiš. In the 2013 elections, Andrej Babiš benefited from unlimited resources, media ownership, and the absence of campaign finance oversight. While the PM Sobotka government amended the law on party finance, the primary source of Babiš's power rested in his media ownership. During the government of PM Sobotka, ANO's electoral campaign never stopped (Balík & Hloušek, 2020). The MAFRA media focused on the successes of ANO ministers and ascribed every misstep to the senior partner (Social Democrats) and the PM (cf. Jirák & Köpplová, 2020). In fact, in 2017, PM Sobotka left politics and, in 2018, joined the anti-governmental protests (Guasti, 2020a).

4.2. Horizontal Accountability

Horizontal accountability focuses on the accountability of the balance of power—the executive branch held accountable by the legislature, the judiciary, and oversight bodies. According to the V-DEM horizontal accountability index, horizontal accountability also eroded between 2013 and 2017, but not between 2018 and 2019 (Figure 2). A closer look indicates the main bulwark is the judiciary—the courts remain independent—and the main weakness is the political opposition. The fragmented opposition struggles to hold the executive accountable and investigate its overreach but has united to prevent executive aggrandizement (cf. Bermeo, 2016).

The Czech Republic is characterized by a weak government and a fragmented opposition (Guasti, 2020b). The relative balance of power between the executive and the legislative branches is because internal divisions have weakened both. Parliamentary oversight is cumbersome, and its dynamics tenuous. The case of Lex Babiš during PM Sobotka tenure exemplifies this. In summer 2016, two of the three governing coalition partners—Social Democrats and Christian Democrats—aligned with the parliamentary opposition to amend the law on conflicts of interest. The law sought to prevent media ownership as well as ownership of companies receiving state funding. The bill put a significant wedge between the governing coalition partners, as ANO and its Chairman Andrej Babiš perceived this to be an attempt to stall his rise. Not a single ANO parliamentarian supported the bill, which still received a constitutional majority, and in January 2017, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, and the parliamentary opposition overruled the presidential veto. The Constitutional Court later upheld the law.

PM Babiš often fails to hide his disdain for parliamentary oversight (and deliberation), which he perceives as impeding governance. PM Babiš's government is more constrained by its lack of parliamentary majori-

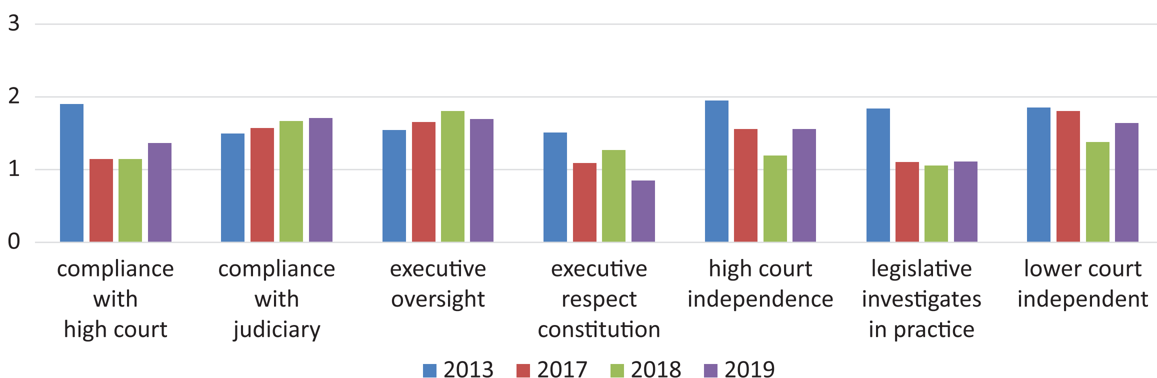

Figure 2. Horizontal accountability 2013–2019. Note: Ordinal scale from 0 to 3, the higher the value the higher the quality of measured component. Source: Coppedge et al. (2020).

ty and internal divisions (Social democrats are not united in their support for governmental bills) than by effective parliamentary oversight. PM Babiš's minority government often relies on the opposition Communists to support its legislation. The support for each piece of legislation is negotiated individually outside the regular channels (parliamentary committees) and without oversight. Babiš's government has attempted but failed to pass some laws that would benefit the PM because the opposition united against it. This was particularly visible during the Covid-19 pandemic and will be discussed in the next section.

Between 2013 and 2017, the party system and its key players were in turmoil—fragmented, facing new challengers (including the re-emerged radical right and the Pirate party) and unable to effectively oppose the rise of ANO. After the 2017 elections, the opposition remained fragmented, and ANO has undercut its coalition partner (Social democrats) using informal deals with the Communists. Between 2013 and 2020, ANO practically cannibalized the left-side of the political spectrum. Support for ANO remains stable, but both Social Democrats and especially the Communists are now hovering around the 5% threshold. While fragmentation undermines oversight, it also has a positive effect. In combination with the electoral law, it has prevented ANO from increasing its support above 32%, thus requiring it to enter into coalition and/or minority governments.

During Sobotka's and Babiš's governments, ANO held the Ministry of Justice. In both, judiciary reforms were proposed and failed. The 2016 reform attempt (by Justice Minister Robert Pelikan) focused mainly on changing the rules on the selection of judges and preventing candidates without trial experience from entering regional courts. The reform was opposed by significant figures within the judiciary who disagreed with the outcome and the process (lack of continuity and lack of consultation with the judicial branch). Based on the strong opposition of the judiciary, tired of ever-changing proposals by every new Minister of Justice (including the current Minister, there were 15 in the period from 1993 to 2016), the reform was postponed indefinitely.

Robert Pelikan was not re-appointed in Babiš's government. Instead, as the fraud and corruption cases facing the PM and his family culminated, Andrej Babiš appointed Marie Benešová as his Minister of Justice. Before her appointment, Benešová was very vocal in her (unfounded) accusation that it is possible to "order police investigations" in the Czech Republic. This was an overt delegitimization of the investigation of the PM. Her appointment raised fears of government overreach and triggered protests. The protests grew even stronger after Benešová denounced the demonstrators as ignorant and capricious children.

In her role, Benešová has clashed with the Prosecutor General, who is in charge of the ongoing investigation into the PM and his family. In 2019, Benešová introduced a new judiciary reform, which would shorten the term of the current Prosecutor General, thus enabling the PM to nominate a 'friendlier' figure. Experts and the judiciary saw the move as political interference and an attempt to curtail the judiciary's independence. Like its 15 predecessors, the reform was dead on arrival—rejected by the judiciary, the public, and the parliament.

The Constitutional Court exercises the most active control over executive actions. It is sometimes described as a 'utility tool for correcting politics' (Pospíšil, 2020). The nomination procedure involving both the President and the Senate ensures balance in judges' political views. The court is fiercely independent, and its judgments have triggered much controversy across the political spectrum (Pospíšil, 2020). While governments clash with the courts, they also predominantly comply (a recent example of a Covid-19 judgment will be discussed in the next section).

In sum, while the erosion of horizontal accountability was an issue during Sobotka's government, it was mainly a result of polarization and fragmentation. An active attempt by the ANO Minister of Justice to curtail PM's investigation failed. Under Babiš government, politically motivated judicial reforms also failed, as did attempts to adopt laws that would resolve PM's legal troubles regarding conflicts of interest. The fragmented opposition is thus capable of uniting to prevent executive aggrandizement (cf. Bermeo, 2016). The courts are independent, and the Constitutional Court acts as a useful corrective (Pospíšil, 2020). Attempts to undermine horizontal accountability and the rule of law have been largely unsuccessful due to a combination of veto points. Furthermore, the attempts by ANO triggered large scale protests (Guasti, 2020a). Both institutional veto points and civil society's agency prevent democratic decay (cf. Weyland, 2020).

4.3. Diagonal Accountability

Diagonal accountability focuses on civic participation and media freedom. Media freedom is crucial in enabling citizens to hold politicians accountable (Lührmann et al., 2017; Mechkova et al., 2019). The willingness of citizens to be engaged in public affairs beyond elections acts as an essential check on government action and a bulwark against democratic erosion (Bernhard, 2020). According to the V-DEM diagonal accountability index, there was no significant change in diagonal accountability in the period under study (2013–2019), but a stable decline since 1990 (Guasti, 2016, 2020b; Jirák & Köpplová, 2020). A closer look at the two types of components—media and civic participation (Figure 3)—suggest the media indicators are in decline, while civic participation criteria are in flux (cf. Guasti, 2016, 2020b).

Czechia has long been characterized by a significant degree of media freedom, partly because of the independence of public media and foreign ownership of private media (cf. Jirák & Köpplová, 2020). However, the

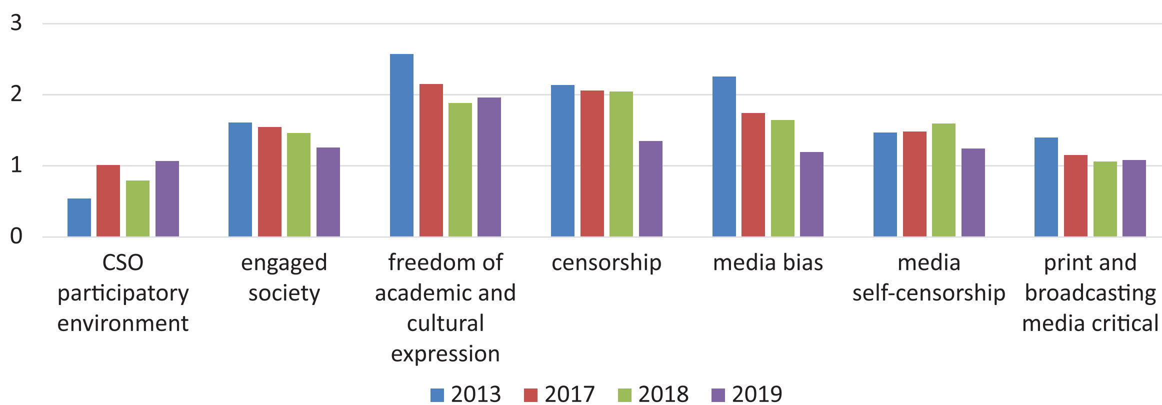

Figure 3. Diagonal accountability 2013–2019. Note: Ordinal scale from 0 to 3, the higher the value the higher the quality of measured component. Source: Coppedge et al. (2020).

private media market in Czechia has changed significantly in recent years. The most critical change has been the concentration of media ownership, the departure of several foreign media owners, and the broadening of the scope of media holdings (print, online, radio, and television). In recent years, print media readership has declined significantly, while online media has grown (Jirák & Köpplová, 2020). Projects include crowd-sourced media outlets, some of which eventually venture into print (e.g. Dennik N). The concentration of ownership in the printed media was not as evident in the TV sector until 2019, when an influential investment company PPF owned by Petr Kellner announced its intention to purchase the U.S. owned Central European Media Enterprises (CME)—a block its TV channels in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania.

Andrej Babiš's acquisition of MAFRA in 2013 was integral to his rise to power. It not only transformed the Czech media landscape but also profoundly skewed political competition (Chaloupkova, 2020). MAFRA dominates the daily print media, with an estimated 2,4 million readers, and online media, with an estimated 3,4 million daily users (Guasti, 2020b). Andrej Babiš has used his media power to support his political rise and denigrate any alternatives (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019).

During 2020, information emerged that state-owned companies such as the Czech railways represent a significant advertiser in MAFRA. Furthermore, pandemic state aid for cultural institutions, announced in June 2020, will disproportionally benefit MAFRA. The argument of the government that the aid is being distributed proportionally according to the readership does not hold water, since the second-largest media group will receive significantly smaller aid - absolutely and proportionally (Kottova, 2020).

The V-DEM components identify media bias (in both 2013–2017 and 2018–2019), print and broadcasting media lacking critical reporting (2013–2017), media censorship, and self-censorship (2018–2019) as the main issues undermining media freedom. The Sobotka period was defined by MAFRA media attacking the PM and social democratic ministers, while praising Andrej Babiš and ANO Ministers. Simultaneously, the rise of alternative online media has contributed to a less biased and more critical reporting. However, the fight for freedom of expression has shifted to the fight for the control of public media and direct and indirect state support for MAFRA (pandemic state aid, advertisement by state companies; cf. Bátorfy & Urbán, 2020 for a detailed look on the transformation of the Hungarian media market via state advertisement).

Moving from media to civic participation beyond elections, I examine three aspects of an 'engaged society'—party membership, civil society, and protests. According to the V-DEM indicators, the Czech Republic's participatory environment remains resilient, although slightly declining under the PM Babiš (2018–2019). Societal engagement slightly declined under PM Sobotka and PM Babiš.

Czech parties have never had a broad membership base (except for the Communist Party, and to the lesser degree Social Democrats). In the last two years, the decline in party membership accelerated. The Communist Party is the largest, with 34,000 members down from over 100,000 in 2004, almost 70%). Civic Democrats have lost almost 70% of their membership since 2009 (now approximately 13,000 members), and a further decline is expected in connection with the new splinter party (the Tricolor—radicalized mainstream right). Christian Democrats lost 35% members in the last three years (now 22,000 members). Social Democrats have lost more than 30% of their members in the last three years (now 13,500 members). The new radical right Freedom and Direct Democracy is the only party that has increased in membership, with a total of 4,500 members since its establishment in 2015 (Rovensky, 2019).

Two new parties that are currently present in the Czech parliament have stable but minimal membership bases. ANO has 3,271 members; the Pirates report approximately 1,000 members (Rovensky, 2019). While similar in terms of extremely narrow membership base, ANO and the Pirates have a diametrically different inter-

nal organization. Pirates have robust internal democratic procedures, while ANO is a party of one man. The billionaire founder Andrej Babiš was reelected chair at the party's congress in February 2017 (95% of the votes) and has ruled the party the same way he does his companies. Babiš lent the ANO party a large sum of money, and his company Agrofert—in trust—provides ANO accounting and PR services (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). In 2017, ANO changed its internal party rules and further strengthened Andrej Babiš by giving him the right to intervene in selecting and ranking party candidates on candidates lists.

Civil society has a long tradition in the Czech Republic and has historically played an essential role in the transition to democracy and keeping governments accountable (Guasti, 2016, 2020a). The 2009 economic crisis acted as a catalyst for citizen engagement in three respects. First, it challenged civil society and trade unions to define their relationship to the state; second, it highlighted the need to communicate with the public and establish active ties between organized civil society and the broader public, and third, it brought civil society closer to private companies—both to ensure financial viability but also to foster engagement (Guasti, 2020a). In recent years number of new NGOs emerged focusing on accountability (Reconstruction of the State, State Watchman; cf. Guasti, 2020b).

Large scale protests marked the period of PM Babiš. The most important initiative that has mobilized crowds of the size unseen since 1989 is A Million Moments for Democracy (MMD). Founded on the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution on November 17, 2017, MMD was launched on Facebook, and called for the Prime Minister to meet his campaign pledge to develop democracy (before the elections, Babiš mailed voters a letter offering a 'new social contract'). When nothing happened, a petition calling for Babiš to resign followed. Since April 2018, there has been an active protest campaign that includes over 300 cities and villages.

From the onset, MMD and its leaders renounced political ambition and signaled their support for democratic political parties (explicitly rejecting the Communists, radical right, and ANO). This is a double-edged sword—it allows the MMD to be inclusive and pluralistic, but limits its political impact. In June 2020, the MMD, for the first time, met with leaders of five democratic political parties to discuss policy and urging the opposition parties to overcome political fragmentation.

In sum, diagonal accountability has remained stable over the period under study (2013–2019), but is a mixed bag. On the one hand, media freedom is increasingly under attack. Established political parties are losing membership at an accelerating speed, and new parties without members (ANO, Pirates) currently control over 42% of parliamentary seats. On the other hand, civic engagement is growing, and protests prevented an erosion of horizontal accountability. Andrej Babiš's political strategy relies on convincing people to remain passive, leaving politics to the experts. However, it has failed to curb participation and civil society (cf. Bernhard, 2020; Bernhard et al., 2020).

5. Democratic Accountability During Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic represents a unique opportunity for the further deterioration of horizontal and diagonal accountability: Emergency measures strengthen the executive, weaken parliamentary oversight (erosion of horizontal accountability), and suspend certain rights and liberties (erosion of diagonal accountability). Under the pandemic state of emergency, technocratic populists were less constrained than they were as junior partners in PM Sobotka government (2013–2017) or while leading PM Babiš minority government (2018–ongoing). The strength and resilience of the institutional guardrails and civil society are being tested (cf. Weyland, 2020).

In the first wave (February to July 2020), the Covid-19 response in the Czech Republic was technocratic—driven by experts adopting swift and aggressive measures, including the closure of borders, a travel ban (citizens not allowed to leave the country), and compulsory masks (Guasti, 2020a). As the critique of the government's initially chaotic (and for some, illiberal) response mounted, the PM backtracked to the standard emergency response enabling the Minister of Interior (junior partner in the government) to lead the emergency response body (Guasti, 2020a). Nevertheless, even then, the acquisition of the personal protection equipment (PPE) for essential personnel continued as a form of political competition between the coalition partners, while failing to satisfy the demand for PPE. The cost of the popularity contest between ANO and Social democrats was a decrease in transparency, a rise in clientelism, and a loss of trust. The backlash against the government's handling of the pandemic grew, but ANO support remained relatively stable, deepening societal polarization. According to some surveys ANO support started to deteriorate during the late summer and especially in September 2020 during the onset of the second wave. However, ANO remains the strongest party (Soukup, 2020).

Parliamentary oversight and investigative journalism were crucial in identifying problems in the government response to Covid-19 (especially the purchase of PPE from companies based in tax havens, rather than domestic producers; the price of PPE). The government initially attempted to instrumentalize the pandemic to push through legislation benefiting the PM (an amendment that would eliminate the PM's conflict of interest by decreasing transparency in company ownership). The media reported on the attempt and explained the amendment's implications. The opposition unified and pushed back against the government—threatening not to reauthorize the state of emergency if the government went ahead. The government withdrew the bill. Similarly, when a group of senators publicly announced their intention to bring the travel ban

to the Constitutional Court for review, the government abandoned the policy.

Perhaps the most significant legal pushback against the government's pandemic measures came from the Prague municipal court. On April 21, 2020, the court ruled that emergency measures, including limits on freedom of movement, the travel ban, and the compulsory closure of large shops, were illegal. The ruling stipulated that the government measures were arbitrary, chaotic, and incomprehensible. The court explicitly highlighted the need to protect both the health of the people and the health of democracy. The government was provided one week to mitigate the situation and legal recourse. After the President and the PM's initial hesitation and attempt to blame the court for endangering public health, the government fully accepted the ruling and amended the situation.

The chaotic Covid-19 response mobilized civil society. In the initial phases of the pandemic, civil society mobilized to produce home-made masks. As the state of emergency ended and the country started to reopen, MMD demanded accountability for the government's Covid-19 response and called for anti-government demonstrations in Prague and across the country for June 9, 2020. The Minister of Health (ANO) accused MMD of undermining the Covid-19 response, called the protests "illegal," and demanded the Police prevent large gatherings (Guasti, 2020a). The Police responded uniquely—reminding the Minister that its role is to protect people's constitutionally enshrined rights to protest. At the same time, it is the responsibility of the public health authorities to protect public health. MMD responded by asking demonstrators to wear masks, respect distance, and use hygienic precautions. The demonstration went ahead and took place in Prague and 166 other municipalities across the country.

In sum, during the first wave of Covid-19 (February to June 2020), the government's technocratic competence was tested, and its increased efforts to undermine horizontal and diagonal accountability failed. During a pandemic, populist rhetoric cannot entirely obscure a lack of competence. Parliamentary opposition exercised oversight by demanding re-authorization of the state of emergency. Even if the Communists vetoed some parliamentary hearings that would shed light on the government's chaotic pandemic response, investigative journalists provided information about gaps and mishaps. Prague's municipal court pushed back against some governmental measures, ensuring that the pandemic response did not undermine democracy and the rule of law. Czech civil society, universities, and startups were able to mitigate the scarcity of PPE effectively and mobilized to defend democracy and the rule of law simultaneously.

6. Conclusions

Previous studies have shown how populism in power erodes horizontal accountability in Latin America (Ruth, 2018), and that diagonal accountability can prevent democratic erosion (Bernhard, 2020; Bernhard et al., 2015, 2020). The main findings of this article are that technocratic populism has illiberal tendencies expressed best in its efforts at executive aggrandizement (cf. Bermeo, 2016). Without an effective bulwark against democratic erosion (cf. Bernhard, 2015; Weyland, 2020), technocratic populism tends to undermine electoral competition (vertical accountability), judiciary independence, legislative oversight (horizontal accountability), and freedom of the press (diagonal accountability). The most effective checks on technocratic populist in power, this study finds, are the courts, free media, and civil society.

This article demonstrates that Andrej Babiš used his political power to weaken his business opponents and exploited his media power to weaken the senior coalition partner (Social Democrats), maintaining support by undermining parties on the left (Social democrats and the Communists), with whom he governs. Over the period under study, all three types of accountability eroded (horizontal accountability only between 2013–2017). However, the erosion of vertical and horizontal accountability resulted from polarization and fragmentation that are conducive to, but not created by, technocratic populism. Only the erosion of diagonal accountability can be ascribed to the technocratic populists (cf. Vachudova, 2019).

Babiš's weaponization of private media led the Social democrats and the opposition to unite and adopt party finance regulations and a new law on conflicts of interest. Still, Babiš continues his attack on diagonal accountability, increasing pressure on state media (attempt at capturing media oversight bodies). At the same time, state-controlled companies represent the primary source of advertisement revenue for MAFRA. Additional ANO attempts to tamper with the court nomination procedures have thus far failed (horizontal accountability). Erosion of horizontal and diagonal accountability backfired and triggered large scale protests.

During the (first wave of the) Covid-19 pandemic, Babiš's government attempted to use broad emergency powers to aggrandize executive power (cf. Bermeo, 2016), weaken oversight, and ban protests (Guasti, 2020a). These attempts were dressed in the language of technocratic competence and public health. However, the courts and civil society largely withstood the pressure. Public protest rejected the new social contract of passivity and demanded accountability (cf. Bernhard, 2020; Bernhard et al., 2015, 2020). Nevertheless, ANO remains the strongest party (cf. Soukup, 2020). While protests are critical in a representative democracy, elections are still the primary legitimation mechanism (cf. Taggart, 2002). Populists in power have effective tools to maintain voter support, including targeted policies (cf. Buštíková, 2019; Buštíková & Baboš, 2020).

Covid-19 presented a unique opportunity for technocratic populists in power to the erode horizontal and

diagonal accountability. Faced with the pandemic, technocratic promises are being tested. Covid-19 outlines the limits of both the technocratic populism and civil society resilience. Opposition, courts, and civil society have been effective at preventing further democratic decay, but the second wave of the pandemic will present new tests.

This article's contribution is three-fold—for the study of populism, democratic backsliding, and polarization. For the study of populism, it outlines the inherent tension between technocratic populism and liberal democracy. For technocratic populism, democracy is a selection procedure for a leader. Technocratic populism, like its left- and right-wing counterparts, opposes the mutual constraints inhibiting absolute power in a democracy (Huber & Schimpf, 2017, pp. 149–152; cf. Zulianello, 2020 on varieties of populist parties and their system integration). Nevertheless, unlike left- and right-wing populists, which often support majoritarian measures such as referenda (cf. Urbinati, 2014), technocratic populists seek passivity or introduce top down innovations (Castaldo & Verzichelli, 2020; Perottino & Guasti, 2020). The people are perceived as capable of selecting the leader, but only the leader and experts can gauge the general will and common interest (Caramani, 2017; cf. Rosanvallon, 2011).

For the democratic backsliding literature, this article highlights the mechanisms of democratic decay and democratic resilience beyond electoral politics (cf. Buštíková & Guasti, 2017). It indicates that a combination of institutional veto points and civil society agency is necessary to prevent democratic erosion (cf. Weyland, 2020). The legitimacy of technocratic populism is in output, so pandemics test the technocratic promise of competence. When competence fails (to maintain support), technocratic populists have turned to more targeted social policies (cf. Buštíková & Baboš, 2020).

For the study of polarization, this article shows that under proportional electoral systems, fragmentation can be conducive to maintaining the status quo, for it not only inhibits the opposition from reversing the status quo but also prevents technocratic populists from turning an illiberal swerve into an illiberal turn (cf. Buštíková & Guasti, 2017). While active civil society can prevent democratic erosion (Bernhard, 2020), it cannot reverse it. Without unified political opposition, civil society can maintain the status quo, but not to bring about change. Ultimately, the future of liberal democracy depends on the people's willingness to defend it in the streets AND at the ballot box. At the moment, two opposing projects polarize the Czech Republic—technocratic populism (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Lorenz & Formánková, 2020; cf. Manin, 1997) versus liberal democracy with active citizens and civil society.

In times of populism, anti-establishment and anti-elite delegitimization strategies are critical (Aprasidze & Siroky, 2020; Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Castaldo & Verzichelli, 2020), and particular attention ought to be paid to the effect of populism in power on democracy (Caiani & Graziano, 2019; Kaltwasser, 2012, 2014). Populists seek to reframe political competition while stifling horizontal, vertical, and especially diagonal accountability (cf. Ruth-Lovell et al., 2019). Future research would benefit from further comparing the effects of populisms (left-, right-, technocratic) in power on accountability, thereby advancing our understanding of the tradeoffs between the positive and negative effects of populism.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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About the Author

Petra Guasti is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Jena. In AY 2018/2019 she was a Democracy Visiting Fellow at the Ash Centre for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Harvard Kennedy School. Her main research focus is the growing tension within the system of representative democracy in respect to its legitimacy. Her research appears in Democratic Theory, Democratization, Communist and Post-Communist Studies, among others.

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Article

Technocratic Populism in Italy after Berlusconi: The Trendsetter and his Disciples

Antonino Castaldo [1] and Luca Verzichelli [2,*]

[1] Instituto de Ciências Sociais, University of Lisbon, 1600–189 Lisbon, Portugal; E-Mail: antonino.castaldo@gmail.com
[2] CIRCaP—Department of Social, Political and Cognitive Sciences, University of Siena, 53100 Siena, Italy;
E-Mail: luca.verzichelli@unisi.it

* Corresponding author

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Abstract
Notwithstanding the speculations from the literature, the empirical analyses still neglect the convergence between populism and technocracy. The Italian case can be of some interest in this perspective, given the rise of technocratic populism since Silvio Berlusconi's rise to power in 1994. By analyzing the style of leadership and the processes of ministerial appointment and delegation, we argue that Berlusconi has been a trendsetter, more than a coherent example of technocratic populist leader. On the one hand, he played the role of the entrepreneur in politics, promising to run the state as a firm. Moreover, he adopted an anti-establishment appeal, delegitimizing political opponents and stressing the divide between 'us' (hardworking ordinary people) and 'them' (incompetent politicians). On the other hand, however, his anti-elite approach was mainly directed towards the 'post-communist elite.' Extending the analysis to the following two decades, we introduce a diachronic comparison involving three examples of leadership somehow influenced by Berlusconi. Mario Monti represents the paradox of the impossible hero: A pure technocrat unable to take a genuinely populist semblance. Matteo Renzi represents the attempt to mix a populist party leadership with a technocratic chief executive style. Finally, Salvini represents the pure nativist heir of Berlusconi, as the new leader of the right-wing camp. The latest developments of executive leadership in Italy, and the re-emergence of other residual hints of technocratic populism, will be discussed in the final section of the article, also in the light of the evident impact of the 2020 pandemic outbreak on the practices of government.

Keywords
Berlusconi; Conte; Italy; leadership; Monti; populism; Renzi; Salvini; technocratic populism

Issue
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1. Introduction

Italian politics have recently offered a fascinating scenario to assess the concept of 'technocratic populism' empirically. This notion refers to a 'thin' ideology that rejects the traditional left–right dimension and promises apolitical expert solutions safeguarding the 'ordinary people' (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019, p. 304). Several authors have placed the roots of a prototypical wealthy techno-pop and businessman approach to political leadership in the crisis of the mid-1990s when the model of party-government democracy known as the 'first Italian republic' was dissolved. 25 years later, the nature of the new model of parliamentary democracy is still under discussion. However, we know that the figure of Silvio Berlusconi was crucial to explain that transition and some of the following political changes.

This thematic issue allows us to evaluate the novelty emerged with the leadership of Berlusconi, and the similarities in the styles of leadership occurred more

recently on the Italian political scene. In this article, we discuss the multidimensional nature of technocratic populism, contending that some of its elements have been relevant during Berlusconi's rise to power. Mixing some prototypical elements of populism with the legitimacy of his professional expertise, he imposed a novel form of leadership, which would have somehow inspired other protagonists. However, such combined rhetoric (unmediated political communication, business expertise, decreasing party organizational influence, direct legitimation of governmental leadership) has met several obstacles in the long run. Already during the consolidation of Berlusconi's leadership, some evident deviations from the technocratic populism model emerged. Other elements of variation from the model arose during the 2010s, when several political leaders tried to take the baton of Berlusconi original style. However, they moved towards different types of leadership.

After a brief conceptual overview and a short presentation of the origins of Italian technocratic populism, we summarize the main elements of Berlusconi's approach as an adaptive and pragmatic leader, able to play the role of technocratic populism' trendsetter' but also to significantly deviate from his original model during his staying-in-power. This account is complemented by looking to other influential leaderships—Mario Monti, Matteo Renzi, and Matteo Salvini—selected on the bases of 'most dissimilar' career characteristics. This comparative analysis brings us to evaluate the controversial legacy of technocratic populism in Italy. The formation of the Conte II government (2019) and the peculiar situation of the limitation of parliamentary democracy during the Covid-19 crisis (2020) affect the irregular trend of populist leadership in Italy once again. However, a few latent and persisting elements of the model still may be found, which let us think that the era of technocratic populism may not be closed.

2. Populism, Technocracy and Technocratic Populism

In recent years, populism has become a hot topic in the academic debate. Consequently, the scientific literature on this phenomenon has expanded exponentially (e.g., Barr, 2009; Castaldo, 2018; Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018; Hawkins, Carlin, Littvay, & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019; Moffitt, 2016; Pappas, 2019; Rovira Kaltwasser, Taggart, Ochoa Espejo, & Ostiguy, 2017; Zulianello, 2020). The intense academic debate has led to several interpretations of such a 'slippery concept.' Firstly, populism has been conceived as a thin and adaptable ideology that sees society as characterized by the divide between the 'pure people' and the 'corrupted elite' (Mudde, 2004). Secondly, populism has been interpreted as a rhetoric that takes advantage of diffuse public sentiments of anxiety, pushing the ordinary people to challenge the political establishment (Abt & Rummens, 2007). Thirdly, several contributions focused on populism as a type of organization, characterized by the presence of (new kind of) charismatic leaders (Taggart, 2000). Finally, populism has been seen as a style of communication that bypasses intermediaries and establishes a direct connection between the leader and the people (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007).

Despite such a variety of interpretations, the critical element at the core of all these definitions is the focus on 'the people.' Populism is based on the idea that the political establishment ignores the aspirations of the people and that a charismatic leader is able to connect directly with the people and to speak on its behalf (Caiani, 2019). Obviously, the definition of this crucial element appears to be ambiguous when used by different populists, and various studies try to clarify who 'the people' actually are. Canovan (1984) identifies three possible populist rhetorical interpretations of the people: 1) A nativist version where the 'us' is the 'nation' and the 'them' are migrants and ethnic/religious minorities; 2) the people intended in economic terms, as the 'underdog,' which is characterized by an intense hostility to economic differences; and 3) a focus on the 'ordinary people' and a nostalgic desire for a simpler life.

Other classifications distinguish between 'exclusionary' radical-right populism and 'inclusionary' radical-left populism (Abt & Rummens, 2007; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). This distinction recalls, respectively, the first two types identified by Canovan. A third category, so far identified as 'mainstream populism' (e.g., Tony Blair; see Mair, 2002) or 'center-right populism' (e.g., Silvio Berlusconi; see Pasquino, 2007), is also relevant. This kind of populism, somehow related to Canovan's third type, is less polarizing than the inclusionary and exclusionary model, focusing on moderate and governmental actors. Technocratic populism can be located in this third category (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019).

Following the definition of technocratic populism provided above, we highlight the core dimensions of this new form of populism: A 'thin' anti-elite ideology that emerges in critical junctures, rejecting the traditional left–right divide and delegitimizing political opponents. The legitimation strategy includes the promise to run the state as a firm, offering expertise to solve the problems of ordinary people. Once in power, technocratic populism's survival strategy is based mainly on two pillars: Attempts to instill civic apathy and discourage mobilization thanks to the formal adoption of a 'technocratic' approach to governance; adoption of short-term policies that allows them to keep voter support, and a combination of redistributive and pro-market policies (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Havlík, 2019).

Given this conceptualization, technocratic populism represents a strong critique of the crucial institutions and practices of representative democracy. Indeed, both the constituting elements of technocratic populism emerged recently as two of the most relevant arguments to dispute the party government model of representative democracy (Caramani, 2017). Despite the antagonism between the primary goal of populism—

restoring people's power—and the technocratic goal of empowering experts (Bickerton & Accetti, 2017), these two elements also share a few features. Both of them picture themselves as anti-politics, sharing a minimalist/Schumpeterian interpretation of democracy and claiming that the left–right dimension should not matter anymore. Hence, the real enemy of technocratic populism is the party government model. Due to their non-pluralistic conception of society, promoters of technocratic populism shared the idea of a united general interest and the will to establish a relationship between the people and the elite, which is not mediated by political parties or other kinds of intermediary institutions (Bickerton & Accetti, 2017; Caramani, 2017).

In this general frame, the present article will try to answer two questions: At first, what about the endurance of Berlusconi's original technocratic populism model? Secondly, what are the legacies of such a model? The first question will be approached looking to the diachronic evolution of Berlusconi's leadership, while the second one may be explored by comparing the experiences of some of the most influencial Italian leaders of the past two decades.

More in detail, we will start from the analysis of the long-term evolution of a trendsetter technocratic populism leader who was able to stand as the most durable candidate premier between 1994 and 2013 (Table 1). At the beginning of such a period, Berlusconi represented an innovative leadership, challenging two figures connected to the previous party government model: the ex-communist Occhetto and the ex-Christian Democrat Segni. Later, Berlusconi won the 2001 and 2008 elections while he was defeated two times (1996 and 2006) by the centre-left coalition led by Romano Prodi, a reputed former technocrat and policy expert who expressed a weak leadership since he was never able to build his personal party. To find other leaders assimilable to the technocratic populism model, Italians had to wait until 2013, when the technocratic prime minister Mario Monti decided to run the political competition, leading a centrist cartel (and a personal party at the core of such a coalition). Monti ranked only fourth in a complicated electoral contest, where nobody won. Indeed, all the leaders standing for the prime ministerial post renounced, and the political game expressed, during the following legislative term, three governmental leaders from the Democratic Party.

Among these three, we selected Matteo Renzi, who cumulated the positions of party secretary and prime minister (2014–2016), reaching high peaks of popularity, but proposing himself as a highly divisive leader. Renzi's resignation opened another political season that culminated in the 2018 elections. During such a period, another significant leadership has been that of Matteo Salvini, who became the leader of the centre-right coalition and probably the most popular personality during the short period of the Conte I government (2018–2019). In this cabinet, Salvini served as vice-prime minister and minister of interior. In sum, Monti (the prime minister who succeeded the trendsetter, as a potential technocratic populist political leader), Renzi (the main political opponent of the latest Berlusconi, often associated to him in terms of style and assertiveness) and Salvini (Berlusconi's successor as a leader of the conservative camp) constitute three dissimilar cases of personalities who may have inherited some (but only some) traits of the technocratic populism model. In the concluding section, we also focus on the personality of Giuseppe Conte, a secondary character of the Five Star Movement (5SM) who showed a relevant political talent, surviving to the breakdown of the populist alliance with Salvini to offer himself as the quasi-technocratic leader of a new coalition with the Democratic party. The emergence of the pandemic outbreak allowed Conte to build a new variant of prime ministerial style, which we will discuss in the frame of the technocratic populism model.

3. From the Sunset of 'Partitocrazia' to the Rise of Technocratic Populism (1983–1994)

Several studies have supported the interpretation of the Italian First Republic as a paradigmatic example of strong party-government. However, doubts have been raised

Table 1. Competition for prime ministerial leadership in Italy (1994–2020).

	1994–1996	1996–2001	2001–2006	2006–2008	2008–2013	2013–2018	2018–2020
Electoral legitimacy	Berlusconi (CR)	Prodi (CL)	Berlusconi (CR)	Prodi (CL)	Berlusconi (CR)		
Challengers	Occhetto (L) Segni (C)	Berlusconi (CR)	Rutelli (CL)	Berlusconi (CR)	Veltroni (CL)	Bersani (CL) Monti (C) Berlusconi (CR) ??? (5SM)	Salvini (CR) Renzi (CL) Di Maio (5SM)
Stand-in leader	Dini (Tech)	D'Alema (CL) Amato (CL)			Monti (Tech)	Letta (CL)	Conte (FSM/Tech) Renzi (CL) Gentiloni (CL)

Note: L = left; R = right; C = centre; Tech = technocrat.

about the extension of 'partyness of government' (Katz, 1987), analyzing the overall process of policy-making (Cotta & Verzichelli, 1996). An unusual element of technocratic presence during that political age consisted of the recruitment of a few 'non-partisan ministers' who helped the Italian coalition governments to overcome policy disagreements and transaction costs (Verzichelli & Cotta, 2018). However, technocratic ministers never constituted an autonomous actor until the 1980s, when the reputation of the traditional governing parties started to vanish. The most significant technocratic 'voice' during that period was that of Guido Carli, former governor of the Italian central bank, who served twice as minister of treasury. Carli and other technocratic personalities pushed the Italian government to support the Delors Plan and the Maastricht Treaty as an act of loyalty to the traditional Italian pro-Europeanism, despite this treaty would have imposed severe retrenchment policies.

Personalities of Europeanist experts (officers of Bankitalia, state managers, and academics) constituted the 'technocratic face' in the Italian debate at the end of the age of 'partitocrazia,' representing a growing segment of the 'ministerial elite' (Verzichelli & Cotta, 2018). Since the mid-1990s, Italy experienced three non-partisan and technocratic prime ministers (Carlo Azelio Ciampi in 1993, Lamberto Dini in 1995, and Mario Monti in 2011) and a relevant number of unelected and non-aligned ministers, vice-ministers and junior ministers in all the executives alternating in power (Table 2).

Another relevant change during that period of crisis was the resurgence of evident hints of populist mentality. The anti-party sentiments already present at the times of the affirmation of the Common Man's Front in 1946 (Corduwener, 2017; Tarchi, 2015) were nurturing the growing consensus to local civic lists and regionalist movements that elected a few MPs in the late 1980s. Among them, Umberto Bossi, the leader of Lombard autonomists, who merged the small regionalist parties from the wealthy Italian Northern area into a single movement. Although present only in a few regions, the Northern League reached the astonishing result of 8% of the vote (nationwide) in the 1992 elections.

In its early days as a parliamentary actor, the Northern League supported another fundamental symbol of populism: The idea that judiciary power should be elevated as the emblematic force of people's morality against the madness of politicians. Indeed, mistrust of parties and politicians led to the rise of other populist figures, as the former Tangentopoli prosecutor and champion of justicialism, Antonio Di Pietro. However, nobody had been able to mix technocracy and populism in the Italian debate until the famous TV announcement of the direct engagement in politics of Silvio Berlusconi (25 January 1994).

4. Berlusconi as a Trendsetter of Italian Technocratic Populism

In Berlusconi's rhetoric, the praise of technocracy was immediately evident, taking a fundamental role during the phase of his rise to power. The man who had gained popularity as an entrepreneur, business, and media innovator was now offering his service to the whole people. This idea of a skill-based political leadership came together with purely populistic references: the superiority of an Italian way of living and the importance of self-made men. As Marco Tarchi argues (2015, p. 278), this mild variance of populism was much more successful than oth-

Table 2. Technocratic and non-elected members of the government in Italy (1994–2020).

	Entire Government			Cabinet ministers		
	% Non-partisan	% No parliamentary experience	N	% Non-partisan	% No parliamentary experience	N
Berlusconi I (1994)	3.1	6.3	64	7.7	11.5	26
Dini (1995)	96.3	94.4	54	95.0	90.0	20
Prodi I (1996)	10.1	17.4	69	14.3	19.0	21
D'Alema I (1998)	6.0	15.5	84	3.7	25.9	27
D'Alema I (1999)	3.0	11.1	99	0	15.4	26
Amato II (2000)	4.9	5.0	81	7.7	19.2	26
Berlusconi II (2001)	4.8	10.7	84	8.0	20.0	25
Berlusconi III (2005)	2.0	10.9	101	3.8	15.4	26
Prodi II (2006)	7.7	26.9	104	3.8	11.5	26
Berlusconi IV (2008)	1.6	9.8	61	0	4.5	22
Monti (2011)	94.0	96.0	50	100	100	20
Letta (2013)	15.4	33.8	65	13.6	31.8	22
Renzi (2014)	8.1	27.4	62	11.8	35.3	17
Gentiloni (2016)	4.9	19.7	61	5.3	31.6	19
Conte I (2018)	9.2	22.7	66	21.1	40	20
Conte II (2019)	1.6	19.0	63	4.5	27.3	22

Source: CIRCaP (n.d.).

er popular figures of that time, as the aforementioned Di Pietro.

Since the fortune of technocratic populism in Italy is inextricably linked to the political trajectory of Berlusconi, we can apply this framework to better explain the relevance of this leader in shaping the different narratives that have crossed the Italian politics. Accordingly, we distinguish the phase of the rise-to-power, when Berlusconi came closer to a pure definition of technocratic populism, from his staying-in-power when he significantly deviated from the model.

In terms of genesis and favorable circumstances for technocratic populism, the Italian case confirms the role of critical junctures. The 1992–1994 period represented fertile ground for such a new narrative. Berlusconi emerged when a deep political crisis generated by corruption and economic recessions had wiped out the old party system. The consequent widespread popular distrust represented a perfect climate for an anti-political message (Tarchi, 2008), focused on the juxtaposition of the inefficient (and corrupted) elite and the image of social fixer and representative of (hardworking) people that Berlusconi offered to his voters (Ruzza & Fella, 2011). Ideas like the 'liberal revolution' and the 'new Italian miracle' constituted the promise of social changes not promoted by "just another party or faction born to divide, but from a positive force which comes now to unify" (Berlusconi, 2000, authors' translation; Foot, 2014). Although the very first act of 'taking the field' was an explicit invitation to prevent the victory of the left (the communists, according to Berlusconi), the traditional left–right cleavage was somehow abandoned and substituted by a vertical one, opposing the corrupted 'ruling class' to the ordinary people (Zaslove, 2008). However, Berlusconi was soon able to occupy the whole center-right camp renovating the old anti-communist argument used in the late 1940s by the Christian Democracy, which gave new significance to the left–right cleavage. Indeed, Berlusconi demonized former Communists (or more generally the 'leftists') as 'enemies' unworthy of either governmental responsibilities or political respect. Left leaders were presented as recycled politicians from the post-war politics and as representatives of an out of touch left-liberal and metropolitan caste (Fella & Ruzza, 2013).

The promise to run the state as a firm is another crucial technocratic populism element touched by Berlusconi's narrative. Presenting himself as a 'man of providence' and projecting the image of a successful self-made entrepreneur (Orsina, 2013), Berlusconi instilled in the electorate the idea that he would be as successful in running the state as he had been in building his economic empire. He stressed his purpose to use the typical private-sector managerial skills to improve the efficiency of the state (Bickerton & Accetti, 2014). This approach was also evident in the innovative procedures he introduced in the process of party building and in promoting political mobilization campaigns. The business-party example of Forza Italia ('Go Italy!'; Paolucci, 2008) was initially shaped with the help of several pollsters and promoters. The members of the early ruling class of Forza Italia were all personalities from the entourage of the tycoon: managers of the family holding Publitalia, long-time members of the editorial teams of his TV networks and newspaper, and lawyers and consultants close to him and his family. The process of parliamentary recruitment was run by candidature casting and other marketing techniques (Verzichelli, 1998).

As said, Berlusconi organized his campaigns around the figure of the entrepreneur as a self-made man. The clear message from his phase of rising-in-power was that everybody is a potential entrepreneur (Bickerton & Accetti, 2014) and that the same passion and requisites that make a good entrepreneur may make a good political leader. Such rhetoric allowed him to abandon the sophisticated political language of the First Republic, using a more pragmatic and somehow vulgar language. The name of the party recalled the chant of supporters of the national soccer team, which meant to appeal holistically to the entire nation (Ragazzoni, in press). He emphasized that Italians are good just as they are, and stated that politicians were responsible for all the problems of Italian society (Orsina, 2013). In his addresses, he offered hope and other positive words (miracle, trust, dream, happiness) and statements like "the victory of love over hate and envy" or that his party is the "party of love'' (Berlusconi, as cited in Körösényi & Patkos, 2017, p. 616).

The leadership of Berlusconi never fitted the technocratic populism ideal-type completely. For example, he never implemented direct demobilization strategies aiming at instilling civic apathy. However, most of his distinctive features resembled, during the rising-in-power phase, such a theoretical scheme. The strong message against the party government model and the emphasis on his role as a social and professional leader, more than as a party leader, support this claim. The direct appeal to the Italian people—another fundamental element of his narrative—was the main indicator of the distance he took from the old 'partitocrazia' (Bickerton & Accetti, 2014). The same direct appeal explained his extraordinary peaks of personal consensus at the time of his 1994 victory and even during the first year of his government in 2001 (Bellucci, 2006).

Most of these elements have been recurrent during Berlusconi's long political career. However, after consolidating the leadership of the center-right camp, Berlusconi and his party went through a process of adaptation and 'normalization,' which led to a partial departure from the technocratic populism model. First, despite remaining a personal party incapable of full institutionalization due to Berlusconi's charismatic leadership, Forza Italia went through a process of consolidation with the entering of relevant cadres from Socialist and Christian democratic traditions. Moreover, its legitimation was boosted by Forza Italia's acceptance into the European People's Party in 1998. Second, Berlusconi's

anti-political and anti-establishment stances were better specified: Instead of overcoming the left–right cleavage, he stressed its significance consolidating his position as the leader of the center-right coalition, and orienting his anti-elite appeal against the post-communist left. Thus, anti-communism became the ideological glue of the new coalition (Ruzza & Fella, 2011). Berlusconi repeatedly utilized such an argument to demonize not only the post-communist parties but also relevant functional elites (e.g., judiciary or media; Ragazzoni, in press; Verbeek & Zaslove, 2016). A significant consequence of this process of 'normalization' was the reduction of Berlusconi's challenge to the party government model. Forza Italia thus became a mainstream 'anti-populist' party opposing the argument of the 5SM and, to some extent, of other radical parties of the centre-right coalition.

Third, the adoption of technocratic expertise as a significant criterion of ministers' selection remained somehow present, but it never became crucial in Berlusconi's practice of government (Table 2). He actually selected a few technocratic ministers (none in his last executive), but not a higher percentage than those appointed by center-left governments in the same period (Verzichelli & Cotta, 2018). Moreover, some of Berlusconi's technocratic ministers were fired or forced to resign more often than the 'purely political' ministers (Verzichelli, 2009).

Other reflections bring us to define the adaptive nature of Berlusconi's approach to technocratic populism during his long staying-in-power. On the one hand, after the end of his first government and the 1996 electoral defeat, Berlusconi introduced precise references to the republican history (e.g., the role of De Gasperi, the centrality of the European people party, the role of European Integration). These references boosted his legitimation both at the national and international levels, and prepared his political revenge: the great victory of 2001, the 'contract with Italians' and his return to government. On the other hand, the anti-political rhetoric kept being a character of his leadership even after the 2001 election, when Berlusconi dissipated lots of governing energies in his fight with media and judges (Bickerton & Accetti, 2014). Several episodes can be recalled in this respect; for instance, the 'Bulgarian Edict': An interview given during a visit to Sofia when, in fact, the leader asked the removal of three 'unwelcome' programs from public television. Or even the frequent announcements of a reform of the judiciary (completed in 2004) were presented as a crucial action to "get back judges on the track." All these episodes were patent elements of the resiliency of the original style. One can say that the features of the 'caiman'—technocratic populist symbology and a 'vocal' style of permanent campaigner—alternated to a modest action as policy innovator, which never revolutionized the machinery of the state, the government and most of the policy domains. This explains why the experience in government of Berlusconi remained, in fact, within the frameworks of standard politics (Pasquino, 2012).

5. Competitors but Disciples: Three Deviations from Berlusconi's Technocratic Populism

Berlusconi's experience left a clear mark on Italian politics, which may have influenced the strategies of other leaders. We argue that the erratic transformation of Italian politics did not follow the peculiar technocratic populism model traced by Berlusconi, while remaining somehow influenced by that. This assertion can be supported by evaluating three different types of leadership emerged during the 2010s: Mario Monti, Matteo Renzi and Matteo Salvini. They may have relied on some aspects of the technocratic populism model. For instance, the self-made man nature of the leader, his policy expertise, the anti-establishment appeal, the hierarchical conception of the personal party.

5.1. Mario Monti: The 'Technocratic Opponent'

Appointed as prime minister in 2011 to deal with the consequences of the economic crisis, after a phase of turmoil for Berlusconi IV government (Pasquino & Valbruzzi, 2012), Monti formed an apolitical executive (100% of non-partisan ministers; Culpepper, 2014) and almost fully technocratic government (88.9% of expert ministers; Verzichelli & Cotta, 2018). A former European commissioner for competition and president of Bocconi University, Monti was a perfect technocrat, but surely not a technocratic populist. In some sense, he tried to take the opposite direction of Berlusconi's trajectory, when he decided to lead a political cartel in 2013. During the electoral campaign, he launched clear populist messages. In particular, he tried to emulate Berlusconi in circulating the ideas of a skill-based leadership and of a self-made man. Just to give a colorful example, as the leader of Forza Italia involved his pet dog during the campaign Monti adopted one too. He promised radical and substancial changes moving from a position of centrist and 'mainstream' institutional office-holder, but also focusing on pure populist messages as 'iron hand' against rich people evading taxes. He finally tried (in vain) to be less 'academic' and more 'ordinary people-like.' In the end, Monti's cartel reached less than 10% of the votes in the election that consecrated the populist 5SM. This electoral defeat also represented the end of Monti's party, which imploded after a few months.

This example resembles the experience of Jan Fischer, who led a popular technocratic government in Czech Republic between 2009 and 2010, running as an independent candidate in the next 2013 presidential elections (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). Both cases highlight the differences between a succesfull technocrat and a technocratic populist: There are few chances to transform a remarkable personal popularity based on technocratic credentials, if that candidate is unable to run a populist campaign. Especially when other influential populist competitors emerge. A similar story is represented by another Italian technocratic prime minister:

Lamberto Dini (former higher officer of the Bank of Italy) who was appointed as a prime minister in 1995. Successively, he started a little centrist party that joined the centre-left coalition, producing a very modest political impact. In the end, the more influential Italian technocratic prime minister was Carlo Azelio Ciampi. A former Governor of the Central Bank appointed prime minister in 1993 in the middle of the Tangentopoli storm, Ciampi became minister of the treasury during the crucial phase of the Euro takeover, and (in 1999) President of the Republic. This without assuming any formal party affiliation and being always out of the daily political debate. Therefore, the 'pure technocrat' Ciampi seems to have had a much longer and stable political influence than ambitious 'technocrats in politics' like Dini and Monti.

5.2. Matteo Renzi: A True Heir in the Other Camp?

Among the narratives here analyzed, that of Renzi is the closest to the first image Berlusconi's leadership. After all, many have identified the former prime minister and Democratic Party leader as the true heir of Berlusconi, though expressed by the opposing political camp. However, the commonalities between these two leaderships are mostly related to the classical features of populism, rather than technocratic populism.

The rise of Renzi's leadership occurred during a critical juncture, thanks to his feature of (party) outsider and to a certain anti-establishment appeal. Renzi was already a young career politician and the mayor of Florence, but his approach shares some essential elements with the first Berlusconi technocratic populism model. Indeed, after the unexpected affirmation in the primary elections contest for the city of Florence (2008) and the good result in his first attempt at the 2010 Democratic Party national secretary election (marked by the slogan "let's scrap old politicians"), he got the party leadership in 2013. Then, he became prime minister in 2014 (Bordignon, 2014).

Renzi's anti-establishment appeal is peculiar. Although he had a clear party connotation, like Berlusconi he addressed a sharp criticism to the party elite, and particularly to the post-communist party oligarchy. Renzi's political project was connected to the concept of scrapping (*rottamazione*), which meant the demotion of the whole party's establishment (Bordignon, 2014). An 'us versus them' characterized his rhetoric, where party oligarchies represented the 'them' while the ordinary people constituted the 'us.' Thanks to this rhetoric, Renzi projected an image of an outsider and self-made leader just as Berlusconi did in 1994. In doing so, he obtained an even higher rate of personal consensus as a chief executive. According to the pollster Demos & Pi (n.d.), the popularity of Renzi as leader reached the astonishing level of 74% in June 2014, 4 months after the formation of his government, while the decline started in January 2015.

During Renzi's staying-in-power, the 'us versus them' divide was expanded, going beyond the boundaries of the party and criticizing the economic and financial power (e.g., banks). Moreover, he attacked the traditional cultural establishment of the left party, dominated by trade unions and bureaucrats. The idea was to elaborate a post-ideological political proposal and a catch-all electoral strategy focused on concepts as innovation, rapidity, and education to appeal to all Italians beyond the classical left–right divide, as Berlusconi did in 1994 (Bordignon, 2014). The style of communication was the dimension in which Renzi was more 'inspired' by Berlusconi. Both of them used simple and popular language, abandoning the formal code of politics, with the same aim of establishing a direct and emotional connection with ordinary people (Bickerton & Accetti, 2014). Renzi, in particular, focused on young people, making frequent references to Matt Groening's The Simpsons or Mary Poppins. His language was simple and made up of slogans and catchphrases, with a rhetorical use of 'stories' of ordinary citizens. Just as Berlusconi, Renzi used the language of hope and love. He affirmed, for example, that mayors write love letters to their cities everyday (Bordignon, 2014).

As said, these similarities relate to classical features of populism. The same cannot be said about the technocratic side of technocratic populism. Contrary to Berlusconi, Renzi never exploited the idea of running the state as a firm, despite several elements stress the presence of some kind of technocracy. In particular, we can mention the following: On the one hand, the plebiscitary approach with the invocation of direct democracy and the attacks on the role of parties; on the other hand, his idea of dirigisme, with a set of policy proposals defined in advance, and thus no longer in need of public debate or justification (Bickerton & Accetti, 2014). Moreover, in his government, he selected a higher percentage of technocratic and non-partisan ministers if compared with Berlusconi (Table 2).

Another difference between Renzi and Berlusconi concerns their anti-elite approach. While the latter used the classical antithetical categories of 'elite' and (hard-working) 'people,' the former introduced a generational divide. However, just as Berlusconi did with the category of 'entrepreneur,' Renzi offered an idea of generational change as a condition of a new spirit of progress (Bickerton & Accetti, 2014). The relationship with their respective parties was another difference between Berlusconi and Renzi. The latter attempted to de-institutionalize his party, aiming at transforming the Democratic Party in a light, open, and leader-centered party (Bordignon, 2014). However, he never reached the full control exerted by the former on Forza Italia until he founded his own small (but personal) party, Italy Alive (*Italia Viva*) in 2019.

5.3. Matteo Salvini: The Nativist Heir of Berlusconi

Matteo Salvini is the successor of Berlusconi as center-right coalition leader. Journalistic and academic analyses often stress the line of continuity between the old

tycoon and the new sovereignist leader, focusing on their strong sense of party personalization, as well as their media omnipresence.

Between his election as Lega Nord's leader in 2013 and his political consecration—the 2018 election when the League for Salvini Premier (a new party name marking a clear personalist and nationalistic drift) became the largest party of the center-right coalition—Salvini imposed a significant change both to the strategy and the discourse of his party. Besides the abandonment of the traditional federal issue, he flirted with fascist groups and oriented the party toward some of the classical radical right issues. For instance, anti-immigration and anti-globalization claims (Caiani, 2019; Pucciarelli, 2016).

A closer look to his political trajectory confirms that Salvini has somehow shared a few features of Berlusconi's technocratic populism. As the 'maestro,' he developed his leadership during a critical juncture of party scandals and consolidated it thanks to the adversarial mode taken by the party against the previous 'pro-Europeanist elites' after the economic crisis 2008–2013. As Berlusconi, he claimed to be an outsider: despite the fact that he had always been a professional politician, Salvini had no previous party/governmental roles. His anti-elite approach was often oriented against the 'left establishment' and against the national and supranational 'strong powers.' Moreover, he developed an assertive style of communication, based on vulgar language and direct connection with the people. In this regard, Salvini even surpassed Berlusconi, adopting a form of mobilization that resembles the pure populist style. Indeed, he boosted a state of permanent electoral campaign, as Trump did in the USA.

It is worth to pause when the problem of 'staying-in-power' comes, to distinguish the purely (right) populist drift of Salvini. Differently from Berlusconi, the personalization of the Northern League did not follow a 'franchising strategy' and did not reach the same level of Forza Italia, although he was more successful than, for example, Renzi in de-institutionalizing his own party. Moreover, ideologically he joined the new European (and international) radical right adopting a nativist perspective (no migrants, Italians first) and a deep anti-Europeanist stance (Albertazzi, Giovannini, & Seddone, 2018). These rhetoric images became, after the 2018 elections, more relevant than the classical people versus élites divide. Moreover, instead of focusing on technocratic management of the state, Salvini impressed a pure political meaning to his participation in the first Conte government. Indeed, he was the most vocal political guide, and he tried to balance the non-partisan nature of the Prime minister with a broad action on different fields of the whole governmental agenda. In doing so, he marked a relevant difference in comparison to the other vice-premier: the 5SM leader Luigi Di Maio (Marangoni & Verzichelli, 2019). The critical targets of Salvini's rhetoric were, in particular, multiculturalism, the politics of retrenchment, and the subordination to the European technocracy. Thanks to the continuous use of these issues, Salvini built his role as a purely right-nativist populist leader.

6. Conclusion: Technocratic Populism Legacies in Italy and the Outbreak Crisis

As we stressed in the introduction, although emerged only during the rising phase of Berlusconi, technocratic populism had evident roots in Italy, due to an ancestral populist mentality and a recurrent demand for 'real skills,' technocratic actions, and limitations of party government. Writing two (complicate) years after the beginning of the XVIII legislative term, marked by the entrance in the government of a purely populist party like 5SM, which was the strongest party to support both governments formed by Giuseppe Conte in 2018 and 2019, we may hypothesize that some of these elements are still latent and they may come back, although taking different routes. The uncertainties of this troublesome period and the 2020 pandemic outbreak may represent a new critical juncture to be governed by changeable and adaptive political narratives. This may lead, in turn, to the rise of a new peculiar form of technocratic populism.

The persisting debate on pros and cons of party government is the first element we can recall to support our impressionistic assertion. The Conte II government was formed in 2019 to reach a new political equilibrium concerning the Italy–EU relationship and in several other policy fields. Conte, a non-partisan figure initially recruited by the 5SM as a potential candidate for the role of minister of public administration reforms, had been promoted to the office of chief executive in 2018, having the two leaders of the populist coalition (Salvini and Di Maio) as vice-prime ministers. After the breakdown of the populist alliance with the League, 5SM joined its forces with the Democratic Party, Liberi and Uguali and the small personal party recently formed by Renzi. To some extent, this can be seen as the return to a more 'familiar' party-government coalition. However, the growing personal popularity (more than 70% in the spring of 2020; see Demos & Pi, n.d.) and the growing independence of the prime minister, both of them boosted by the pandemic crisis, could allow him to play an increasingly political rather than purely technocratic role. Conte could take the lead of a new type of coalition and play the role of a competent professional 'brought into real politics.' Hence, the resurgence of some technocratic populism traits looks possible during such a complicated situation.

A second intriguing element in the evolution of the leadership of Giuseppe Conte during the outbreak emergency is the notion of political responsibility in the context of a permanent change of political agendas. The direct connection between the government and the scientific community, the timely decisions imposed by the crisis, and the trade-off between safety and support to the economy, may have fostered his political leadership. He can be said 'more competent' than ordi-

nary politicians, not too connected to ideologies and, above all, foreign to any party machinery. In this circumstance, Conte has therefore played the role of the expert state-manager, assuring his responsiveness by issuing prompt regulatory measures (both during and after the lock-down) and making extensive use of urgent legislative decrees. More importantly, from our perspective, Conte has developed a rather personalized communicative strategy. More precisely, he has directly addressed the public, and sometimes he has exploited some institutional events to attack opposition figures (in particular the sovereignist leaders Salvini and Meloni) openly. But he has sometimes taken distance also from the same political forces of his parliamentary majority. During the outbreak, Conte has been extraordinarily active on media and social networks, illustrating his visions for the prospective re-launch of the country. In doing so, he has offered his role as a political fixer to solve the dilemma between the confinement measures inspired by and defined with the scientific community (technocratic side) and the needs of the countless sectors of the Italian society penalized by the crisis (populist side).

Conte was heavily criticized by almost all the party leaders (both from the majority and the opposition) for the excessive use of decrees and a growing reliance on his technocratic team (extended during the Covid-19 outbreak to a considerable number of ‘scientific advisors’). Though justifiable by the critical situation, these behaviors may also be seen as possible signs of an emerging challenge to the parliament and representative democracy. Conte cannot count on the personal resources of Berlusconi or the political resources that Renzi had in 2014. He will probably be forced to risk everything in the game of his leadership transformation, being tempted to adopt a more technocratic populist profile. However, such a fluid situation leaves many options still open.

In sum, what we have learned, applying the category of technocratic populism to 25 years of Italian politics, is that, notwithstanding the relevance of Berlusconi as a trendsetter and an inspiring model of a business-party leader, Italy was not the land of technocratic populist conquest. Only the short experience of Renzi as party (and governmental) leader can be, to some extent, associated with this ideal-type. However, after discovering the applicability of a mix between elements of populist mentality and features of technocratic government, Italians are still exposed to such a temptation. Conte, certainly not a populist party leader and a weak technocratic chief executive at the beginning of his political experience in 2018, has become a completely different figure. He may be somehow associated with the return of some elements of technocratic populism, especially in the aftermath of the 2020 outbreak.

In other words, if all the political narratives we have shortly reported above can be compared to the technocratic populism model inspired and interpreted by Berlusconi at the beginning of his political trajectory, all of them had to rearrange the same model in a rather radical way. Conte seems to have built his political leadership from a completely different perspective. But he also presents an interesting adaptive approach, which may lead him to rediscover the advantages of technocratic populism and offer the Italian democracy a new possible future leadership.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Antonino Castaldo is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa, Av. Professor Aníbal de Bettencourt 9, 1600–189 Lisboa, Portugal. He has a PhD in Political Science from the University of Florence. He was Teaching and/or Research Assistant at the University of Science Po (Paris), University of Roma Tre, Luiss University, and University of Oxford. He is currently working on populism and autocratization processes, with specific reference to the diffusion of competitive authoritarian regimes, and a focus on the Balkan region and the Middle East.

Luca Verzichelli is Professor of Political Science at the University of Siena, where he teaches Italian Politics and Global Comparative Politics. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Florence. He has been Visiting Scholar at the Universities of Granada, Jena, Oxford, Montréal and at the Australian National University. He has extensively published in the fields of comparative political institutions and political elites in Europe.

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Article

Best in Covid: Populists in the Time of Pandemic

Lenka Buštíková [1,]* and Pavol Baboš [2]

[1] School of Politics and Global Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287, USA; E-Mail: lenka.bustikova@asu.edu
[2] Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava, 811 01 Bratislava, Slovakia;
E-Mail: pavol.babos@uniba.sk

* Corresponding author

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Abstract
How do populists govern in crisis? We address this question by analyzing the actions of technocratic populists in power during the first wave of the novel coronavirus crisis in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. We identify three features of the populist pandemic response. First, populists bypassed established, institutionalized channels of crisis response. Second, they engaged in erratic yet responsive policy making. These two features are ubiquitous to populism. The third feature, specific to technocratic populism, is the politicization of expertise in order to gain legitimacy. Technocratic populists in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia weaponized medical expertise for political purposes.

Keywords
ANO; Covid-19; Czech Republic; health expertise; nationalism; OL'aNO; pandemic; populism; Slovakia; technocratic populism

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> I will respect whatever the consilium of experts approve. The Chief Public Health Officer makes the final decision.
>
> Igor Matovič, The Prime Minister of Slovakia ("Igor Matovič stojí za," 2020)

> Hi people, the public demanded that we loosen up [Covid-19 restrictions over the summer of 2020], and so, we did. Unfortunately, we were wrong.
>
> Andrej Babiš, The Prime Minister of the Czech Republic ("Čau lidi, byla poptávka," 2020)

1. Introduction

On August 31, 2020, Andrej Babiš uttered the following words at the Strategic Forum in Slovenia: "My profession is businessman, crisis manager, actually Prime Minister of the Czech Republic…we have results, best in Covid" (Bled Strategic Forum, 2020). His statement reflected the general sentiment following the first wave of the pandemic in Europe. The Czech Republic quickly introduced strict measures including mask mandates and seemed to have had the virus under control by early summer 2020. On June 30, thousands of Czechs participated in a farewell party to the pandemic on the Charles Bridge in Prague. However, by mid-October, the Czech Republic had recorded more new cases per million people than any other country in the world (Lázňovský, 2020). In May, Igor Matovič also touted Slovakia as "best in Covid" and emphasized that it had the lowest death rates in the European Union ("Bulharsko a Čierna Hora," 2020). By October, infections started to surge, which forced Slovakia to re-introduce tough freedom of movement restrictions. Technocratic populists in both countries responded quickly to the pandemic threat in the spring, but also to shifts in the public mood during the

summer. In spring, they handled the first pandemic wave well. However, when the public demanded to return to everyday life, governments unraveled restrictions, and a massive second wave ensued.

We explore the inner mechanics of technocratic populism in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Both Prime Ministers (Andrej Babiš and Igor Matovič), leading governing coalitions that grappled with the challenge of Covid-19, afford a rare opportunity to study populist governance in crisis (Caiani & Graziano, 2019; Moffitt, 2015). Our analysis identifies three features of the populist response to the pandemic. First, populists bypassed established, institutionalized channels to combat the crisis. Second, they engaged in erratic yet responsive policy making. These two features are ubiquitous to populism. The third feature, the instrumentalization of knowledge, is specific to technocracy and technocratic populism. Technocratic populists politicize expertise in order to gain legitimacy and use narratives of expert-driven governance to establish a direct link with voters. Therefore, responsive crisis management, legitimized by science and expertise, is especially conducive to their appeal. The Czech and Slovak leaders illustrate this weaponization of medical expertise for political purposes.

Technocratic populism is an output-oriented populism that directly links voters to leaders via expertise. de la Torre (2013, p. 34) used the term to describe President Rafael Correa, formerly an economics professor, as someone who "combine[d] populist rhetoric with top-down technocratic policies," and called for the end of "partocracy" in Ecuador. Technocratic populism arises as a response to the crisis of governance by mainstream parties. When voters in inadequately governed states reject left-wing Tweedledums and right-wing Tweedledees, they opt for leaders that offer expertise outside of the dysfunctional deliberative political realm (Pop-Eleches, 2010).

Berlusconi in Italy, Babiš in Czechia, and Ivanishvili in Georgia turned their business expertise into political capital. Macron in France was trained as an elite-level technocrat but also worked in the banking sector. Matovič started in a publishing business but joined the political opposition in Slovakia during 2010. He tasered the political establishment with clownish stunts and a decade later, he won the elections. All the above-mentioned leaders rejected the notion of a left-right continuum in politics. Some of them might appear centrist, but first and foremost, they adopt policies that are politically expedient and responsive (Mair, 2009) to the immediate needs of pockets of voters, which they strategically target. When in power, they weaponize expertise to undermine accountability and oversight while aggrandizing their own power.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we outline how technocratic populism differs from other forms of populism. Second, we justify the party classification of ANO in the Czech Republic and OĽaNO in Slovakia as populist parties (Zulianello, 2020). ANO (Action of Dissatisfied Citizens), led by Andrej Babiš, presided over the pandemic response in the Czech Republic with the social democrats. OĽaNO (Ordinary People and Independent Personalities), led by Igor Matovič, formed a governing coalition with three other parties after winning the February 2020 elections in Slovakia on an anti-corruption platform. However, the government's agenda was immediately over-shadowed by Covid-19. We discuss the Czech case first, and then compare and contrast it with the Slovak case. The article concludes with a discussion of the broader implications for the study of technocratic populism.

2. Technocratic Populism

Populism is a thin ideology (Hawkins & Littvay, 2019; Mudde, 2019; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018) and a strategy to gain power (Grzymala-Busse, 2019; Hanley & Vachudova, 2018; Taggart, 2000; Vachudova, 2020; Weyland, 2020) that can lead to executive aggrandizement (Bermeo, 2016). Populist ideologies emphasize, as well as combine, economic divisions, identity politics and technocratic expertise. Populist types are defined by the core definitions of the "people." They respond to three different grievances: economic inequality, identity-based exclusion and governance that negatively affects "ordinary people" (Canovan, 1981; Kaltwasser, Taggart, Espejo, & Ostiguy, 2017; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013).

Technocratic populism politicizes expertise to gain legitimacy and instrumentalizes governance (Aprasidze & Siroky, 2020; Perottino & Guasti, 2020; Verzichelli & Castaldo, 2020). However, it is a variant of populism (Bickerton & Accetti, 2017) rather than the rule of experts (Dargent, 2014). Technocratic populists' rule in the name of the "people" on the grounds of expertise. They "strategically use the appeal of technocratic competence and weaponize numbers to deliver a populist message" (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019, p. 304). Furthermore, populists use technocracy in their quest to bypass the institutions of representative democracy (Caramani, 2017; Guasti, 2020a; Urbinati, 2019).

Table 1 locates technocratic populism as a sub-type of populism (which pitches the elite against the "people"). We use Canovan's definitions of "the people" (Canovan, 1981). Technocratic populist parties respond to the grievances of "ordinary people" who are dissatisfied with governance by mainstream politicians and offer both expertise in governance and a direct link to voters. Exclusionary populism responds to grievances associated with ethnic diversity, while inclusionary populism seeks to remedy economic exclusion (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013). When populists opt for divisive identity politics (Buštíková, 2020; Meguid, 2008; Mudde, 2019), they fabricate the category of the "enemy of the people" and apply it to political opponents (Pappas, 2019). Populists maintain flexibility to define "the other" along many identity marks, such as ethnicity, culture, language or gender (Jenne, 2018; Vachudova, 2020). The instrumen-

Table 1. Technocratic populism as a sub-type.

		Governments	
		Responsible	Responsive
		Policies	
People	Grievance	Universalistic	Targeted
Nation	Identity	mainstream right	exclusionary populism
Underdog	Economy	mainstream left (social democrats)	inclusionary populism
Ordinary	Governance	technocracy	technocratic populism

tal use of ideology is a cornerstone of populist policy inconsistency and flexibility.

Once populists are in power, we can observe their policy making. In Europe, the decline of social democracy allowed for a populist shift to the left (Berman & Snegovaya, 2019), yet at the same time it did not displace identity (Kates & Tucker, 2019). In Eastern Europe, populists have effortlessly combined exclusive identity politics with welfare and family protection (Bill & Stanley, 2020; Buštíková & Kitschelt, 2009; Enyedi, 2020). However, populist left-leaning economic platforms do not possess the programmatic and universalistic consistency of social democratic parties. Populist economic platforms are targeted, even erratic, and disregard "responsibility." Mair identified a growing tension between problem solving and satisfying public demands: responsibility and responsiveness. In his words: "governments are now finding it increasingly difficult to be responsive to voters. In seeking to act responsibly, that is trying to…meet the everyday responsibilities of office, governments now find themselves…constrained" (Mair, 2009, pp. 13–14).

In order to account for the erratic nature of populism, we highlight a distinction between targeted, responsive policies and universalistic policies of responsible governments that provide long-term public goods (Kitschelt, 2000). Targeted policies that deliver club goods and cater to blocks of voters are limited in scope, and typically focus on short-term gains. Extreme responsiveness results in ad-hoc and even erratic policies crafted to respond to immediate needs, such as those that arise from social media, which provides populists with instantaneous popularity boosts.

Populists' offerings of state-sponsored benefits to voter-blocks is a responsive, flexible strategy that can be used to secure votes both from the poor as well as from the wealthy. Policy cherry-picking blurs traditional left and right divisions in politics (Edwards, 2010; Pirro, 2017; Rovny & Polk, 2020; Szikra, 2018). Free of responsibility, populists can at the same time lower taxes, inflate deficits and offer "free" public benefits to carefully selected segments of voters.

Most governments must strike a balance between what voters want and what is feasible. We associate programmatic mainstream parties, such as social democratic parties, with "responsibility." Populists, on the other hand, are associated with inconsistency (Grzymala-Busse & Nalepa, 2019) due to their "responsiveness" (Mair, 2009). Technocratic populism is a sub-type of populism. It responds to crisis by initially offering expertise outside the political realm but also a direct, personalized and instantaneous accountability linkage between the leader and "ordinary" supporters.

3. ANO and OĽaNO

How do populists wield power during crisis? We are frequently limited to seeing populists in the opposition benches. But, when populists come to power and experience crisis, we can observe how they govern. Eastern European populists are versatile and defy typological precisions (Bernhard et al., 2020). Nevertheless, quality of governance is a perennial weakness of both countries, since the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993 (Basta & Buštíková, 2016). Two decades later, dissatisfied voters turned to anti-establishment parties founded on the promise to combat political corruption. ANO and OĽaNO are two prime examples.

ANO, a technocratic populist party led by Andrej Babiš, won the 2017 elections and has been leading a minority coalition government since 2018 (Havlík, 2019). Igor Matovič, who leads OĽaNO, won elections on an anti-corruption platform and formed a governing coalition in March 2020 (Gyárfášová & Učeň, 2020). Figure 1 places Czech and Slovak political parties' score on indicators of populism as measured by the Global Party Survey (2019). The mainstream parties are in the bottom-left quadrant, populists are in the top-right quadrant. Both ANO and OĽaNO favor populist over pluralist rhetoric (the x-axis) and populist rhetoric is salient in their platforms (the y-axis).

ANO and OĽaNO reject programmatic divisions and oppose traditional, "establishment" parties on the left and right. Both have flexible and opportunistic policy platforms that respond to shifts in public moods, social media impulses and extensive internal polling, which provides them with flexibility to adjust their policy positions. ANO started as a fiscally conservative party promising effective, lean governance in 2011. However, ANO's core voters in 2020 are primarily retirees who depend on the state.

OĽaNO's is equally versatile. During the 2019–2020 electoral campaign, Igor Matovič declared that he considered most of the far-right ĽSNS voters, as well as most of

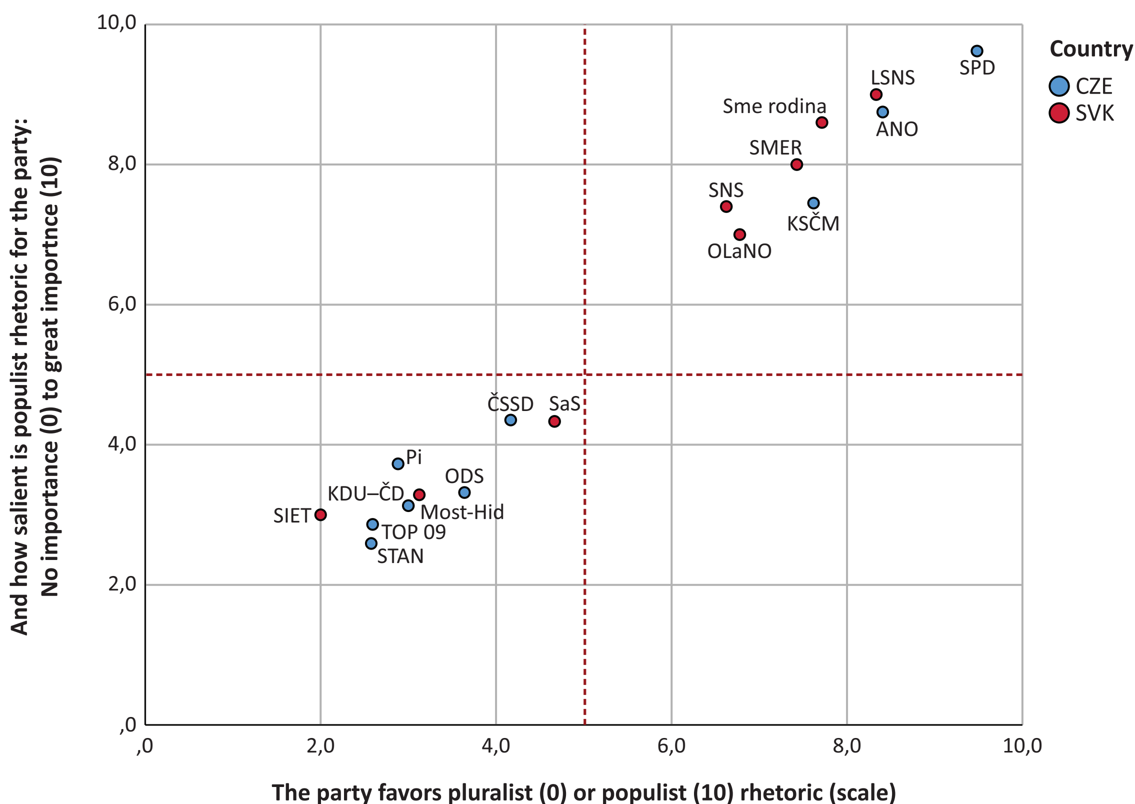

Figure 1. Populist vs. pluralist rhetoric and its salience among Czech and Slovak parties. Source: Norris (2020).

the leftist Smer-SD voters, to be "normal" people and he welcomed their votes. Matovič's lack of traditional ideology is also reflected in the party's manifesto, which does not include a single word that would programmatically relate to the left or right. OĽaNO's manifesto divides people into "us" vs. "them" categories. "Us" are "brave and honest people" who deserve "to live better." "Them" are thieves and mafia-linked politicians who "stole the state" and "friends of these politicians" who benefited from the corrupt system (OĽaNO, 2020, p. 10). Matovič's populist electoral campaign promised justice for all.

In terms of economic policies, both ANO and OĽaNO appeal to the segments of left leaning, working-class constituents. Both "responsively" design targeted economic policies to buy off voters (Baboš, Világi, & Oravcová, 2016; Malová & Dolný, 2016) without the "responsibility" of budget constraints. Matovič advocates for sound public finances. Yet, he refuses to eliminate redistributive policies introduced by the previous party in power, Smer-SD, such as free trains for students or increased pensions. Similarly, since in power, ANO accelerated spending on targeted welfare programs, yet at the same time, decreased taxes.

Reactive, impulsive measures driven by social media popularity or selective access to leaders are symptoms of populism. This is exemplified by Andrej Babiš's appeal on social media to "call me and I will fix it right away" (Landsman, 2018) in his effort to micromanage every aspect of the Czech economy. Instantaneous popularity on social media is the ultimate measure of success. Igor Matovič's style is similar. He refused to hire a professional spokesperson that would represent the office of the Prime Minister. He prefers direct communication with citizens and extensively uses Facebook for policy updates. He even occasionally uploads posts from Slovak cabinet meetings live via Facebook.

Populist reactiveness is exemplified by Andrej Babiš's personalized efforts to "Save Max." Maxík (little Max) was born in June 2018 with spinal muscular dystrophy. Drugs that can cure this condition are expensive, unavailable and not covered by public insurance. The cure is available abroad and must be performed before the second birthday of a sick child. Max's family organized social media campaign and raised over 2 million Euro, predominantly from small donors. Their efforts generated a large wave of solidarity and publicity. Once the collection was concluded, the Ministry of Finance announced that the family will have to pay value added tax (VAT) on the money raised. Public backlash ensued. Max's advocates criticized the state for failing to rescue a sick child as well as for predating on civic solidarity.

Under mounting criticism, Prime Minster Babiš got involved. In his weekly Sunday recordings "Čau lidi" ("Hi people") on Facebook, he proclaimed that he will make every effort to "Save Max." First, Babiš promised to suspend the VAT and to find a legal tax loophole. When no loophole was found, Babiš opted to "have a call" with public health insurance providers. In a miraculous turn of events, in April 2020, the two largest public insurance companies decided to alter their policies

for Max and two other boys in a need of identical treatment for spinal muscular dystrophy (Kubátová, 2020). The insurers decided to fully cover the treatment for three boys. The public was enthusiastic and praised the Prime Minister for saving three kids. Babiš hijacked a civic initiative to increase his visibility and popularity. There was no policy adaptation. Parents and patients in similar situations and in need of unavailable treatments therefore would need to organize an online campaign and hope to catch his eye.

4. Pandemic Response in Czechia

The official platform of ANO revolves around four issues: security, state effectiveness, state investment and human capital investment. Babiš's motto is to "run the state as a firm" as a testament to his business background (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). In 2017, ANO won elections with almost 30% of the vote; and in 2018, it formed a minority government with the Social Democrats. Once in charge, Babiš went on a spending spree with a range of policies targeting older and poor voters. ANO aggressively increased both salaries and the numbers of employees who depend on the state for living.

In 2019, the government's target for 2020 was a budget deficit of 40 billion Czech crowns (1,5 billion Euro). However, the coronavirus crisis forced more spending. In April 2020, the government widened the target to a projected record deficit of 500 billion crowns (18,8 billion Euro). Although ANO runs on a platform of a lean, business-like efficient state, the state under his rule had become over-bloated, even before the pandemic.

The Covid-19 crisis in the spring of 2020 tested the state's effectiveness. The government reacted swiftly and introduced strict emergency measures on March 11. Schools, non-essential business and offices were shut down. Non-essential travel was restricted and borders with neighboring countries were closed. According to the Ministry of Health, as of September 4, 2020, Czechia, a country of 10,6 million people, registered 26,452 cases and 426 deaths. From the standpoint of public health, the first wave of the pandemic was handled successfully (Guasti, 2020b).

ANO imposed unconstitutional measures to protect public health (Guasti, 2020a), including the closure of the border. The Chief of the Emergency Task Force during the first wave, Roman Prymula, floated the idea that borders might remain closed for two years. The government forbade Czech citizens to leave the country (with some exceptions), as part of the emergency measures. For many, it was reminiscent of the iron curtain. Opposition politicians called the measure unconstitutional and the Senate started to prepare a complaint for the Constitutional court. Anticipating legal defeat, the government backed off and opened the borders (for its own citizens) in late April. For foreigners, the borders remained sealed.

A large component of the success in taming Covid-19 has to be attributed to the surge of civil society activism, volunteering, solidarity, human capital mobilization and exemplary compliance with public safety measures, at least during the first wave (Tabery, 2020). The state required all citizens to wear masks in public, initially including streets, parks, shops and public transportation and introduced fines for non-compliance. However, since masks were sold out and practically unavailable both for citizens and health care workers, citizens responded by producing home-made masks and home-made hand sanitizers. These were distributed via friendship circles, civic organizations and volunteer groups. Health and hospital workers lacked masks, respirators and protective gear as well. This led to the outpouring of private donations and to innovation (such as masks printed on 3D printers). Civil society plugged the holes where the state had failed.

Andrej Babiš first mocked the use of masks and then forced the whole country to dig up their sewing machines, while threatening non-compliance with fines. Then, he jumped on the civil society bandwagon. On March 28, 2020, he sent a tweet to President Trump with a link to the viral #Masks4All video: Mr.President @realDonaldTrump, try tackling virus the Czech way. Wearing a simple cloth mask decreases the spread of the virus by 80%! Czech Republic has made it OBLIGATORY for its citizens to wear a mask in the public (Babiš, 2020). Just like with the "Save Max" campaign, the Prime Minister used a viral social-media activity to present himself as a "man of the people" and to claim credit for the actions of civil society.

The crisis showcased Andrej Babiš's instantaneous responsiveness. In a press conference on March 14, Babiš was asked to address severe shortages of respirators in hospitals and among health workers. He denied it: "It is not true that health workers do not have respirators. Tell me where, I will personally deliver (respirators) to them" (Bartoníček, 2020). Babiš later apologized and acknowledged the shortages. To secure the necessary supplies, social democratic Vice Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior Jan Hamáček used personal networks in China to purchase PPE. When a Chinese plane landed in Prague on March 20 with more than one million respirators in the amount of 75 million Czech crowns (2,760 thousand Euros), both the Prime Minister Babiš and the Vice Prime Minister Hamáček greeted the cargo personally at the tarmac. In the midst of the pandemic, the highest officials from both governing parties competed for media attention over the PPE (for which Czechia had overpaid).

Tensions between Babiš's ANO and the Social Democrats, a junior coalition partner, extended beyond the sight of the cameras. Each party controlled different portfolios and the government branches were competing with each other more than coordinating. The Ministry of Health (controlled by ANO) was also purchasing respirators and medical supplies from China, independently of the Ministry of Interior (controlled by Social Democrats),

and for a higher price. The Ministry of Interior paid 1,5 to 2,5 Euro for one FFP2 respirator, but the Ministry of Health paid up to 5 Euro per piece (Novák, 2020). Despite the rhetoric, effective governance was clearly lacking.

Because the government was purchasing medical supplies under emergency measures, oversight and transparency in public procurement were suspended. Small Czech firms and firms with limited political connections were excluded from pandemic-related acquisitions by all ministries. The quick, non-transparent process of spending public funds invited corruption. The Supreme Audit Office (Nejvyšší kontrolní úřad) initiated an investigation into suspicious public procurement of medical supplies immediately after the emergency measures were terminated on May 17.

When recapitulating the crisis, Babiš praised the emergency measures in a radio interview on May 7: "Finally, I was able to run the state as a…firm, it was effective and to the point. We were able to see our decisions implemented right away" (iDNES.cz, 2020). The desire to manage the crisis as directly as possible led to bypassing institutional guidelines that were put in place in cases of emergency. In the initial stages, this led to chaos, but it gave Babiš maximum control over the pandemic response and focused media attention on him. Furthermore, these unorthodox steps were justified by relying on a loyal, handpicked, expert. Epidemiologist Roman Prymula, a non-elected Deputy Minister, became the public face of the pandemic response.

Technocratic populism in a pandemic is a double-edged sword. Expertise was prioritized over deliberation. Panicked citizens followed cues on the importance of masks and distancing, which allowed the government to tame the virus in the first wave. Responsiveness is compatible with "blunt" measures that do not require fine tuning, like shutting the borders or lockdowns. These measures immediately satisfied the public urge for safety and were effective from the public health standpoint. However, in order to combat the virus over the long run, governments need to implement responsible policies that require higher levels of state capacity, coordination and meticulous planning.

Although there is a Central Emergency Task Force (ústřední krizový štáb) to respond to emergencies such as natural disasters and epidemics, which has always been headed by an elected minister, Prime Minister Babiš bypassed the (Social Democratic) Minister of Interior Jan Hamáček. Instead, he selected epidemiologist Roman Prymula to lead the fight against the virus. Babiš bent the rules to control the task force directly. Professor Prymula holds the rank of colonel and is an expert on vaccines and immunization. Even though he lacked the security clearance required for all Deputy Ministers, he activated the Central Emergency Task Force on March 16 and began coordinating the purchase of respirators, medical supplies and PPEs.

Without a minister in charge, the task force's ability to coordinate procurement and response was undermined. On March 30, Prymula was forced out, although during the second wave he became the Minister of Health. Adam Vojtěch, the first sacrificial lamb, was forced to resign on September 21 to deflect blame away from the Prime Minister. His technocratic replacement, Prymula, was sacked on October 23 to appease public anger as the crisis was spiraling out of control in autumn.

During the first wave, Roman Prymula was the star of press conferences along with the Prime Minister. When asked who is in charge to combat the pandemic, Babiš noted: "For me, the biggest expert is the Deputy Minister Prymula. We are in touch online. All the time" (Guryčová, 2020). Prymula's popularity rose. Eventually, he outshone both the Prime Minister and his Minister of Health Vojtěch. A representative survey from early April found that Prymula was perceived by more than a third of the adult population (34%) as the person who contributes most to the efforts to combat the spread of the coronavirus. Minister of Interior Hamáček received the second-best marks, closely followed by Babiš. The public perceived the ANO Minister of Health, Vojtěch, as marginal compared to Prymula, Hamáček and Babiš (National Pandemic Alarm, 2020).

Babiš shielded himself with Prymula's medical expertise, which helped him to usurp power and the media spotlight. He undercut his junior coalition partner and the political opposition. Babiš viewed Hamáček as a competent political rival who could outshine him, which led to tension in the governing coalition. Most importantly, Babiš's decision to elevate Prymula interfered with a delicately designed system of institutional response in which the Ministry of Interior played a vital coordinating role. It undermined the efforts of the Central Emergency Task Force because the Ministry of Interior, controlled by Social Democratic minister Hamáček, could not effectively co-ordinate with a Ministry of Health, controlled by ANO's minister Vojtěch.

After mishaps, chaos and criticism, Babiš eventually ceded. Hamáček took over the Emergency Task Force on March 30. When the crisis eased, the task force was dissolved on June 11. When asked about the tensions over the task force leadership, Hamáček suggested that the Prime Minister:

> Initially did not know what the Central Emergency Task Force is supposed to do. [Babiš] was afraid that this will result in dual governance. I have been telling him since the beginning that nobody questioned the role of government that needs expert recommendations to make decisions. That is the job of the Central Emergency Task Force. (Tomek, 2020)

ANO politicized expertise. State and regional chief hygienists and epidemiology advisors found themselves in the hot seat. Rastislav Maďar, an epidemiology advisor to the Minister of Health Vojtěch resigned in August, after the government issued a set of contradictory guidelines about whether students should wear masks when

they go back to school in September. He refused to be blamed for the chaos.

The Chief Hygienist Eva Gottvaldová who underplayed the threat of Covid-19 was sacked in March 2020. She was replaced by Jarmila Rážová, who was tasked with developing a system of tracing and prevention. The system of tracing (e-Rouška) has been ineffective, despite the state's efforts to implement it since the summer. Citizens were therefore encouraged to make their own calls to people they were in contact with if they tested positive. Do-it-yourself mask making has turned into do-it-yourself tracing. In the words of the Head Hygienist of Prague, Zdeňka Jágrová, "I am very sorry, but we cannot handle tracing" ("Omlouvám se, nejsme schopni to zvládat,'' 2020).

To undermine the system of prevention more, Prime Minister Babiš did not comply with official Covid-19 policies. He refused to go into quarantine, as required, when the Chief Hygienist Rážová was tested positive on September 2, 2020. Babiš and Rážová were in close physical contact at meetings. Complying with a two-week quarantine requirement would diminish Babiš's ability to participate in campaign events for regional and Senate elections in October 2020. In sum, although the number of deaths in the Czech Republic from Covid-19 was comparatively low after the first wave that ended in the summer, the system of prevention was not robust (Guasti, 2020b).

The government used expertise to justify political decisions and was not interested in promoting independent expert deliberations. The opposition, already restrained by emergency measures and tamed by fears of the virus, wanted to scrutinize expertise behind government decisions. It called for numbers, predictions and analysis that validated government steps. Expert-driven response was guided by epidemiological concerns. Data on patients and testing were collected by the Institute of Health Information and Statistics (ÚZIS) at the Ministry of Health (under ANO). The government was criticized for not sharing medical data and the underlying analysis that guided policy decisions. Academics, medical experts and data analysts could not access data to simulate independent epidemiological models (Šustr, 2020). ÚZIS was not even sharing data with other ministries and economic consultants working for the government.

Daniel Münich, a member of the economic advisory team of the Central Emergency Task Force, complained that Prymula kicked him out of the meeting at the Ministry of Health when he asked for more data. In his view, limiting access to epidemiological data hampered his team's efforts to forecast the economic impacts of the pandemic. The Ministry of Health countered, citing privacy concerns over data sharing. Similarly, political opposition also requested more data, transparency and alternative expert views. In May 2020, the Senate issued a public statement asking the government to share expertise:

> When making long term strategic plans, the government does not work in a systematic manner with relevant data. Until to this day, the government did not issue a detailed analysis of the evolution of Covid-19 epidemic and the impact of the epidemic on citizens' health and the Czech economy. (KoroNERV-20, 2020)

Babiš controlled the narrative in the first wave: he saved the country by following the recommendations of a prominent expert. He touted the low infection rate and a low death count as a national victory. Babiš also used the adherence of expertise to stir populist sentiments. When Angela Merkel warned German citizens in March that up to sixty percent of Germans might get infected, Andrej Babiš accused her of spreading panic and suggested that Europe is not doing enough: "The Czech Republic took preventive measures sooner than all countries in Europe, including Germany, precisely so that we prevent massive spread of the virus. We were the first ones to ban direct flights from Italy…we closed schools" (ČTK, 2020).

Initially, the Covid-19 crisis strengthened ANO. In July, polling agencies estimated that up to 32% of respondents would vote for ANO, a two percent increase in preferences since 2017. However, the Senate and regional elections during the outbreak of the second wave in October revealed that ANO's support plateaued. However, due to political fragmentation, no other party is in a position to challenge ANO's dominance (Buštíková & Guasti, 2017). In the pandemic, ANO continued to build a strong electoral foundation by maintaining ideological flexibility, expanding the state, deepening deficits and targeting voters with benefits.

Babiš established a direct link with voters to selectively communicate expertise. The novel coronavirus response was consulted with health experts but was not subject to expert deliberations. Expertise was used instrumentally to bypass institutionalized channels to combat crisis. It legitimized ANO's leadership and strengthened a mode of populist responsiveness. In the first wave, Prime Minister's party ANO won the pandemic popularity contest. We now compare and contrast this with the pandemic response in Slovakia.

5. Pandemic Response in Slovakia

OĽaNO's victory in 2020 signaled a rejection of the incumbent party, Smer-SD (Direction—Social Democracy), which had been in power since 2006. Smer-SD, led by Robert Fico, was founded as a social democratic party but later embraced populism (Bugaric, 2008), building on what has become a perennial feature of Slovak politics. Smer-SD combined targeted welfare policies with fiscal liberalism to maximize power. Two ruptures reshaped party politics in Slovakia and strengthened populist politics. First, the migration crisis of 2015, which coincided with the parliamentary elections campaign in March 2016, destabilized the political system. Second, the politically motivated murder of an investigative jour-

nalist, Ján Kuciak, and his fiancée in 2018 destroyed Fico's legitimacy.

The murder of Ján Kuciak accelerated the rise of an anti-establishment "movement," OĽaNO. Deep ties between the leading figures of Smer-SD, the mafia, and corrupt members of the justice system undermined public trust in the ruling parties and state institutions. Public outrage, followed by mass protests, forced Prime Minister Fico to resign. Igor Matovič, a prominent and credible critic of corruption since 2010, a self-appointed leader of the opposition, seized the opportunity and won the 2020 parliamentary elections with 25% of the popular vote.

Igor Matovič rejected established parties, which he refers to as "the partocracy" (Malová & Dolný, 2016, p. 4). As a very innovative presenter, skilled in utilizing social media and in attracting media attention, he prefers direct communication with citizens and does not have a spokesperson (as of October 12, 2020). Richard Pekar, the head of the Press Office of the Government, told media in June: "Igor Matovič is too sensitive to allow anybody to speak in his name" (Mikušovič, 2020). After being asked if he advised the Prime Minister on what he posts on Facebook, he replied: "No. The Prime Minister considers his Facebook profile to be his personal matter. He insists rather strongly he remains himself" (Mikušovič, 2020).

As a man of the people, Matovič prefers to connect directly with voters, yet at the same time, like Babiš, he exercises a firm grip on his party. Like ANO, OĽaNO has an almost non-existent party organization and no party base. The party had only four members between 2012 to 2016. In late 2019, the government amended the Law on Political Parties, which introduced minimum standards for political parties, such as a minimum number of party members. To comply with the rules, OĽaNO increased the number of its members to 45.

During the 2020 campaign, Matovič broadened the scope of his populist appeals. OĽaNO's core appeal was anti-corruption, but it expanded the platform to include salient issues such as healthcare and childcare. In a brazen populist move, the party crowdsourced its electoral manifesto. Igor Matovič launched an online opinion poll that proposed eleven policy ideas. The poll was open to all Slovak citizens, regardless of political affiliation, and it attracted considerable media attention. 67,415 people participated in the poll. However, most policies proposed by Matovič were impossible to implement or of questionable legal standing. For example, one of the policies was a pledge to cancer patients that they will have a right to be operated in two weeks after their diagnosis. The poll sent a strong signal that OĽaNO responds to ordinary people's grievances.

On February 29, 2020, OĽaNO won elections. Matovič formed a governing coalition and his government was appointed on March 21. The vote of investiture took place in the middle of the pandemic on April 30. In the meantime, the outgoing Prime Minister Pellegrini and the Central Emergency Task Force (CETF) spearheaded the Covid-19 response. The Law on Governing State in Emergency Situations (National Council of the Slovak Republic, 2002) defines the Central Emergency Task Force as the supreme advisory and coordinating body that synchronizes the various ministries, regional authorities and municipalities. The government, as the only executive body with the power to approve binding decisions, has to approve CETF's proposals to make them legally valid.

Initially, an emergency situation (*výnimočná situácia*) was announced on March 11. It allowed the government to procure emergency supplies for hospitals and other medical institutions. The state of emergency was declared several days later. At his request and before assuming the office, Igor Matovič's was regularly invited to the meetings of the CETF organized by the outgoing government. Leaders of the new coalition led by OĽaNO were critical of Pellegrini's pandemic response and viewed the mitigation measures as slow and insufficient.

Igor Matovič assumed power on March 21, 2020 and set upon a course of instantaneous responsiveness. The government was sworn in on Saturday. It worked hard the whole weekend, which signaled to the public that the new team powered through sleepless nights for the benefit of the people. The first wave of the pandemic revealed Matovič's populist tendencies in executive office in three ways. First, he created informal structures, parallel to the state institutions, to address the coronavirus pandemic. Second, in the absence of ideology, he relied on expertise as an alternative legitimation mechanism. Third, like Babiš, Matovič was very responsive to public reactions to the government measures and adapted very swiftly when faced with a vocal, dissatisfied public.

On Monday, March 23, after less than 48 hours in office, Matovič ditched the Central Emergency Task Force (CETF) used by the outgoing government and established a new, parallel institution: "The Permanent Emergency Task Force" (PETF; Office of Government, 2020). PETF was officially tasked with gathering and analyzing pandemic related information and coordinating the government, ministries, and other state authorities. However, PETF was problematic. From a constitutional standpoint, Slovakia has a well-developed system of crisis management, including institutions responsible for particular tasks in crisis management. The legal framework explicitly defines the competences of various actors. However, the tasks and competences of the new PETF institution set up by Matovič overlapped with the existing bodies. Second, PETF was illegal, since Matovič created PETF using his "decree powers": he signed a document that established a brand-new crisis management task force. Only about a month later, Matovič officially provided the cabinet with the "information" that he founded PETF. Afterwards, the cabinet voted to acknowledge it.

Neither the constitution nor any other law gives the Prime Minister the power to create new governing bodies. Therefore, any consequences that originated from, or were based upon, PETF's decisions might be rendered unconstitutional in the future. Moreover, the PETF statute assumes the existence of an appointed staff secretary responsible for producing and keeping meeting records. The PETF never appointed any secretary and no meeting records have been kept. The new government made critical decisions without transparency or traceable accountability. Facing crisis, Matovič abused his power. The existing legal framework had processes in place to provide for an optimal functioning of the legal task force. It was unnecessary to establish the PETF, a parallel institution to CETF. The government violated official procedures and did not comply with institutional rules and norms.

During the first wave of the pandemic, Igor Matovič, as well as Andrej Babiš combined technocratic expertise with populism. Public health epidemiologists played an important role in taming the public health crisis, and during the first wave Slovakia did exceptionally well. Before the second wave hit the country, Slovakia had the smallest number of Covid-19 deaths per capita in Europe. However, Matovič's government also relied on medical professionals to provide legitimacy for other decisions as needed. Two examples illustrate politicized expertise: curfew and supermarket opening hours.

The government introduced a six-day curfew to prevent domestic travel that could increase the spread of the virus, which experts had recommended. To avoid the curfew, many chose to travel one day in advance. Upon introduction, the police units blocked traffic in the capital, and people spent hours stuck on the highway. Dissatisfied people voiced anger on social media, and traditional media soon followed. The Prime Minister deflected the blame for comprehensive controls onto the Police. The Police Chief pushed back and argued that the Police only enforced the government decree, which did not have any provisions that would allow the police to check vehicles randomly. Matovič responded with a press conference and with Facebook posts in which he accused the Police Chief of misunderstanding government intentions. As a true populist, Matovič's resolved the issue directly with citizens, as he was used to doing as an opposition politician. Yet, this time, he attacked his own policy and a branch of government that was implementing his orders.

The second example relates to shopping regulations during the pandemic. The government made two controversial decisions. First, seniors were limited to shop only between 9 and 12 (later reduced to 11) in the morning. The association of seniors, lawyers and the Public Defender of Rights criticized this policy. Matovič resorted to expertise to reject criticism: "I will respect whatever the consilium of experts approve. The Chief Public Health Officer makes the final decision" ("Igor Matovič stojí za," 2020). This time, the Prime Minister put on his technocratic hat and was not responsive for two reasons. Pensioners typically do not vote for OĽaNO and public pressure to change the opening hours was neither strong nor sustained. Second, the Permanent Emergency Task Force decided that shops must close on Sundays to sanitize the shop floors and for workers to rest. The shop closure was unpopular, but Matovič defended it as an expert recommendation: "Some people might want warm pastries [on Sundays], but the experts will decide" (Dibáková, 2020).

The beginning of Igor Matovič's tenure was defined by the combination of technocratic and populist governance. As a former anti-establishment politician who campaigned on mistrust in formal institutions, he established parallel institutions with dubious legal standing to respond to the pandemic. As a technocrat, he relied on expertise from epidemiologists. As a populist, however, he did not hesitate to overturn expert decisions when pressed by public opinion. After winning elections, he further cultivated his unmediated communication style with citizens, even if it undermined his own governance. Responsive and impulsive actions that cater to immediate voter needs have been key to his leadership. He has enhanced his populist appeal further by instrumentalizing expertise during the pandemic.

6. Conclusion

How do populists govern in crisis? This study compares the Czech and Slovak responses to the threat of Covid-19. Igor Matovič and Andrej Babiš followed the recommendations of health experts. From the epidemiological perspective, both countries performed well during the first wave. However, they did not subject officially endorsed health expertise to alternative viewpoints. Furthermore, during the first wave, they did not invest in state capacity required to combat the second wave, such as an effective system of tracing, locating and isolating hot-spots. Public health expertise was exploited to silence criticism and used to justify policies during the state of emergency that did not follow formal rules. Expertise was also used to bypass institutionalized channels to combat crises and to establish a mode of an instantaneous response to the pandemic threat.

Both countries, especially Slovakia, handled the outbreak of the novel coronavirus well. Using politicized expertise, responsiveness and mass mobilization, Andrej Babiš and Igor Matovič, won the pandemic popularity contest in the first wave. The Slovak success can be attributed to the government's responsiveness, but to other issues as well. First, the international mobility of Slovaks is low, which confined the virus territorially. Second, the Slovak health care system is perceived by the public as inefficient. In anticipation of its collapse, citizens obeyed mitigation measures, for they feared that they would not receive adequate care if infected.

Easy come, easy go. Because the first wave was tamed, and because voters wanted to go on vacation and to ditch their masks, Babiš's government loosened

almost all restrictions over the summer. However, new cases started rising up at an astonishing rate in late September, catching the Czech Republic unprepared and without an adequate system of tracing. Nothing can demonstrate the pitfalls of responsiveness better than Babiš's reaction to the autumn surge of positive cases on his weekly Facebook feed: "Hi people, the public demanded that we loosen up, and so, we did. Unfortunately, we were wrong" ("Čau lidi, byla poptávka," 2020).

Crisis strengthens populists and so did the pandemic (Bieber, in press; Guasti & Mansfeldova, 2018; Kriesi & Pappas, 2015; Moffitt, 2015). In Slovakia, a newly elected populist prime minster used expertise to weaken formal institutions and to legitimize responsive, often erratic, decisions. In the Czech Republic, the pandemic entrenched technocratic populism. In both countries, populists used emergency powers to undermine institutional accountability and to paralyze civil society (Bernhard, 2020). Andrej Babiš and Igor Matovič reinforced personalized ties with voters and pursued borderline unconstitutional policies that were both responsive and technocratic. Yet, economies weakened by lockdowns will undermine all governments in the future. The spring surge in solidarity, quick yet blunt measures, and responsiveness driven by medical expertise worked miracles in the first wave. Unfortunately, it may have set the stage for failure in the second wave, which requires responsible, de-politicized and fine-tuned governance.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Lenka Buštíková is an Associate Professor in the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University. Her research focuses on party politics, voting behavior, clientelism, and state capacity. Her book, *Extreme Reactions: Radical Right Mobilization in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge University Press), demonstrates that far right parties mobilize against politically ascendant minorities. It received the Davis Center Book Prize in political and social studies. She is currently serving as an Editor of *East European Politics*.

Pavol Baboš is a Senior Researcher at the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava. His main research area is Euroscepticism and voting behavior. He regularly publishes in international academic journals and contributes to popularization of science in Slovak media. He has rich experience in multinational European research consortia, in the past he taught methodology of political science in Comenius University in Bratislava and Bologna University, Italy.

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Article

Populists and Technocrats in Latin America: Conflict, Cohabitation, and Cooperation

Rodrigo Barrenechea [1] and Eduardo Dargent [2,*]

[1] Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA;
E-Mail: rbarrenechea@pucp.edu.pe
[2] Social Science Department, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 15088 Lima, Peru; E-Mail: edargent@pucp.edu.pe

* Corresponding author

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Abstract
The literature frequently presents populists and technocrats as antagonistic. Although undoubtedly there are good historical examples that confirm this tension, in this article we propose that the relations between economic technocrats and populists are less conflictive than usually assumed and cohabitation a more common outcome than expected. We argue that two conditions moderate conflict between populists and economic technocrats, leading not only to their cohabitation but to cooperation between them: the programmatic mandate of populists and the economic context of their rise to power. We analyse the relations of economic experts with nine populist presidents in contemporary Latin America to show this argument's soundness.

Keywords
Latin America; political economy; populism; technocrats

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1. Introduction

Populists and technocrats are archetypical political actors in Latin America. Myriad authors have studied the relevance and power of leaders who garner widespread support and rule in the name of 'the people's' will. Juan Peron in Argentina, Getulio Vargas in Brazil, and more recently, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela are all examples of this political animal in the region. At the same time, high-ranking policymakers who claim to adopt and conduct policies in the name of technical rationality have also attracted significant academic attention. Be it Money Doctors in the Andes or Chicago, Boys in Chile, experts, and especially economic experts have also shaped their polities in meaningful ways (Centeno & Silva, 1998; Dargent, 2020). Given the long history of these actors in the region, instead of focusing on technocratic populists, as have other contributions to this thematic issue, here we analyse the conditions under which populists and economic technocrats engage in conflict, cohabitate, and even cooperate in Latin America.

The literature frequently presents populists and technocrats as antagonistic. Daniele Caramani, for example, proposes populism and technocracy as alternative ideal forms to party democracy, with "populism stressing the centrality of a putative will of the people in guiding political action and technocracy stressing the centrality of rational speculation in identifying both the goals of a society and the means to implement them" (Caramani, 2017, p. 54). Caramani also highlights the commonalities between these ideal forms as examples of "unmediated politics…between a supposedly unitary and common

interest of society on the one hand and elites on the other," which helps to understand why populists can also exploit technical objective knowledge to attain popular legitimacy (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; de la Torre, 2013; Guasti & Buštíková, 2020). Nonetheless, it is more common that in their quest to respond to the will of 'the people' populists clash with technical and scientific recommendations from policy experts.

Are populists and experts inherently opposed? In Latin America, this question often takes a more specific form and focuses on economic technocrats. Economic technocrats usually are equated with orthodox economists promoting neoliberal policies and as being antagonistic to left-wing policies. We do not follow this approach. It is a mistake to equate orthodoxy with expertise; the region provides numerous examples of heterodox economic technocrats. In this article, economic experts can be orthodox or heterodox, but to be powerful, they must have control over economic policy; in particular, assure a balanced public deficit that proves they are capable of limiting populist leaders' profligate use of public funds to advance political goals. Some scholars studying Latin America even resort to the notion of "economic populism" to refer to a tendency among populist presidents and leaders to engage in unrestricted spending, with little regard for technical and fiscal limits, often leading to inflationary cycles (Acemoglu, Egorov, & Sonin, 2013; Dornbusch & Edwards, 1991; Sachs, 1989).

In answering this question, it is critical to understand who can be considered a populist politician and a technocrat. Building on Levitsky and Loxton (2013), we define populist politicians as those who mobilize support through anti-establishment appeals, who are typically outsiders to the political system, and who tend to reject the intermediation and controls from liberal democratic institutions by claiming to represent 'the will of the people.' These anti-establishment appeals in the case of classical populism were directed against elites, the rich, or the powerful, those preventing the people from participating in politics and improving their standard of living. More recently, as discussed by Weyland, populists have directed their criticisms towards the political establishment represented by ossified political parties or *partidocracia* (Weyland, 2001, 2003). As discussed below, depending on the type of social demands being addressed by populists, these discourses could adopt a left-wing or right-wing discourse.

Technocrats, on the other hand, are distinguished from other political actors by their higher level of expertise certified by their specialized academic training (Centeno & Silva, 1998, p. 2; Williams, 2006, p. 119). David Collier's classic definition captures this characteristic of technocrats: "Individuals with a high level of specialized academic training which serves as a principal criterion on the basis of which they are selected to occupy key decision-making or advisory roles in large, complex organizations—both public and private" (Collier, 1979, p. 403). Expertise is the crucial attribute that technocrats exploit to legitimize themselves as objective public servants, immune to ideological biases. Of course, we know well that expertise claims can be used to downplay quite strong ideological biases, but, in political discourse, these policies are presented as objective and neutral.

From these definitions, we can derive at least two potential sources of conflict with technocrats built into the very concept of a populist politician. First, populists in power tend to have a fragile political coalition made up of politicians glued together only by their opposition to the establishment. This same anti-establishment stance usually prevents Latin American populists from making alliances with existing parties to secure their grasp on power. Hence, populists rely to a much larger extent on popular support than non-populist politicians to keep members of their party in check and their adversaries at bay, which makes them particularly wary of advice that could harm their approval numbers and their potential pool of voters. Consequently, economic technocrats, who under certain circumstances may advocate unpopular yet 'economically sound' measures, can be uncomfortable partners for populists.

Second, the outsider status of the prototypical populists and their anti-establishment appeals are sources of tension with technocrats. On the one hand, given their outsider status, populists do not have the necessary networks to recruit or trust experts with government experience. On the other hand, and especially when people perceive experts as closely tied to the establishment that populists rallied against, breaking with experts, it can be a signalling mechanism to voters that populists are serious about their intentions to punish said establishment and take their country in a different direction.

Although undoubtedly there are good historical examples that confirm this tension, in this article we propose that the relationship between economic technocrats and populists is less conflictive than usually assumed and cohabitation a more common outcome than expected. We argue that two conditions moderate conflict between populists and economic technocrats, leading not only to their cohabitation but to cooperation between them: the programmatic mandate of populists and the economic context of their rise to power. This does not mean that populists will not have other tensions with technocrats in different policy areas (health, commerce, environment, integration), but points to certain fundamental limits to populist power regarding economic management.

The next section explains the logic by which we claim these two conditions change the incentive structure and the resources available for populists to act in confrontation with economic technocrats. Section 3, the article's core, analyses the relations of economic experts with nine populist presidents in contemporary Latin America to show the soundness of this argument. We conclude discussing the limitations and implications of our main assertions.

2. The Political Economy of Populist and Technocratic Relations

In this article, we claim that populists and economic technocrats can cooperate, cohabitate, or be in conflict. By s'cooperation,' we mean that populists and technocrats will have a close relationship that will grant the latter significant leeway and power to shape public policy in economic issues. In situations of 'cohabitation,' populists will neither empower nor give autonomy to economic technocrats, but will not remove them from office, and will respect the budgetary limits adopted by finance ministries. Finally, 'conflict' refers to instances when populists remove economic technocrats from their positions, personalize economic decision-making, and appoint loyalists with little experience or credentials, and hence less autonomy vis-à-vis the President.

What makes populists and technocrats engage in these different dynamics? The first condition to consider is the nature of the populist leader's programmatic mandate. Although populism in Latin America since the times of Juan Peron and Getulio Vargas has been associated with redistributive leaders, the advent of populists who implemented a 'neoliberal' and security-centred program during the 1990s made clear that right-wing leaders can use similar mobilization strategies and discourses as those used by 'classic' populists (Roberts, 1995; Weyland, 1996, 1999). Furthermore, recent developments in the literature that consider populism as an ideological phenomenon in itself, also recognize its capacity to work through different "host ideologies" (Colodro, Cachafeiro, & Marné, 2018; Huber & Ruth, 2017; Huber & Schimpf, 2017; Mudde, 2004; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

In this article, we do not focus on the ideology as an attribute of populist leaders but on their mandate. Some populist politicians will have a more defined ideological profile than others, but all populists who rise to power do so in a context that binds them to a mandate. Their ascent is usually preceded by some kind of crisis and the convergence on the part of established parties around a similar programmatic position to confront it, blurring the differences between them and leaving an opening for populist challengers to outflank them from the right or left (Lupu, 2016; Roberts, 2015; Slater & Simmons, 2013; Weyland, 2002). Hence, the nature of the crisis, and the choices made by established parties to confront it, shape the kind of mandate populists are likely to be given when voted into office.

We propose that programmatic mandates are vital because they shape the voting base and the core constituency that will support populists in power. In turn, these introduce different incentive structures for populists to break with economic technocrats. Populists with a right-wing mandate build their relationship with their voters over issues that are not related to distributive policies, precisely because the crises that they rise from are related to security deficiencies or severe economic mismanagement. Their core constituency, a concept which refers to the social sectors that are the most important for a party's political agenda and resource mobilization (Gibson, 1996), is composed of economic elites and external actors such as foreign investors or multilateral agencies, which provide them with the stability and resources needed to remain in power. As a consequence, they are more likely to cooperate with economic technocrats. The populist base will not reject them as fiercely, and their presence will signal to the constituency that their interests will be protected.

Unlike right-wing populists, who in the region usually rise to power in the context of a security crisis, those with left-wing mandates ride the waves of economic discontent that hit the lower-income groups hardest. Since these populists accumulate support on the promise to end the historical and structural economic injustices that are characteristic of Latin America (Weyland, 2013), lower classes are more amenable to become their most significant supporters.

A lower-class coalition and a redistributive agenda, however, does not preclude them from working alongside technocrats. It is their need to swiftly fulfil this promise, which leads to a push for a quick and vast expansion in spending and hence puts them on a path of conflict with economic technocrats. Furthermore, their core constituency is typically composed of organizations such as labour unions and local industrialists, who seek targeted benefits and protections, and who are usually conceived as 'rent-seekers' by economic technocrats. Hence, voters and key constituencies will produce more tension between economic technocrats and populists with a redistributive mandate, leading to conflict.

This inclination to conflict, however, is moderated by contextual restrictions on spending. Being part of what dependency theorists called 'the periphery,' Latin American economies are heavily conditioned by developments in industrialized countries. The booms and busts in commodity prices usually play the role in enabling and disabling the conditions for the state to be able to quickly attend to redistributive demands and thus affect populists' political opportunities (Weyland, 2020). Crises that follow from commodity busts often lead to the appointment of technocrats or support their continuity. This pattern, by which economic crises lead to technical appointments, has been observed in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, México, and Peru at times in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Kaplan, 2013, pp. 53–54; Teichman, 1997, 2004; Weyland, 2002). Adverse economic conditions will limit populists' capacity to discard experts and lead to what we call 'cohabitation' between left-wing populists and economic technocrats.

Economic booms, on the other hand, lead to conflict by enabling left-wing populists and allow them to fire economic technocrats. This does not mean that the relation between right-wing populists and experts will not be affected by economic booms. As discussed later, a change to more positive external economic condi-

tions can augment tensions between right-wing leaders and experts. Nevertheless, while left-wing populists use this opening to dismantle technocracy, those on the right will not be as aggressive. Unlike left-wing populists, right-wing populists' mandates do not push them to implement redistributive measures or set them in a path of confrontation with economic elites. Hence, the international economic context plays a role in enabling or disabling populist's inclination to enter into conflict with economic technocrats.

We summarize the expected outcomes of the relationship between populism, programmatic mandate, and the global economic environment in Figure 1.

We present this argument by analysing the relationship between nine populist presidents and economic technocrats in contemporary Latin America. Two criteria, one temporal and the other spatial, guided this selection. First, we selected populism cases starting in the era of market reforms in the region during the late 1980s. This timeframe gives us a period with significant variation in the programmatic mandate populists received and the kind of international economic environment they confronted. Additionally, economic technocrats became a more salient feature of the region during these decades than during the first half of the twentieth century, when classic populism took hold.

Second, we limit ourselves to cases within South America, which is our regional expertise. This choice excludes other potential cases such as those of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Manuel Zelaya in Honduras, Mireya Moscoso in Panamá, or Hipólito Mejía in the Dominican Republic. Given that the empirical support for our argument comes mainly from within-case evidence rather than from large-N correlational analysis, regional expertise was an important criterion for case selection. Empirically, our conclusions are thus limited to South America. Theoretically, however, there is nothing about our argument that prevents it from 'travelling' and being tested beyond this subregion.

From the scope of cases within these criteria, we excluded two populists, both from Ecuador. Abdalá Bucaram (1996–1997) ruled for less than six months, and hence it is not possible to distinguish a clear governing pattern in that timeframe. The second exclusion, Rafael Correa's administration, has been labelled as a case of "technocratic populism" by authors such as de la Torre (2013). By this term, he refers to the combination of a populist discourse and a governing logic that bases the legitimacy of its actions on the technocratic credentials of its leader. However, this article does not study technocratic populism, but the coexistence of technocrats and populists in government. Since Correa embodies both of these actors in power, it is impossible to think of a counterfactual scenario in which the populist and the technocratic orientations do not coexist, making it an irrelevant case for empirical testing.

The cases exhibit variation in the programmatic mandate and on the international economic environment in which they governed. Carlos Ménem in Argentina (1989–1999), Alberto Fujimori (1990–2000) in Peru, Fernando Collor de Mello in Brazil (1990–1992), and Alvaro Uribe (2002–2010) in Colombia are four cases of right-wing mandates. Among our five cases of left-wing populists, three rose to power during stringent economic conditions. Lucio Gutierrez (2002–2005) in Ecuador ruled during a financial duress period and cohabitated with technocrats during his term. Hugo Chávez (1999–2013) in Venezuela and Néstor Kirchner (2003–2007) in Argentina eventually enjoyed the benefits of a commodity boom, leading to conflict with experts. Finally, in Argentina, Cristina Fernández (2007–2015) initiated her rule during a period of few budgetary constraints, as did Evo Morales (2006–2019) in Bolivia.

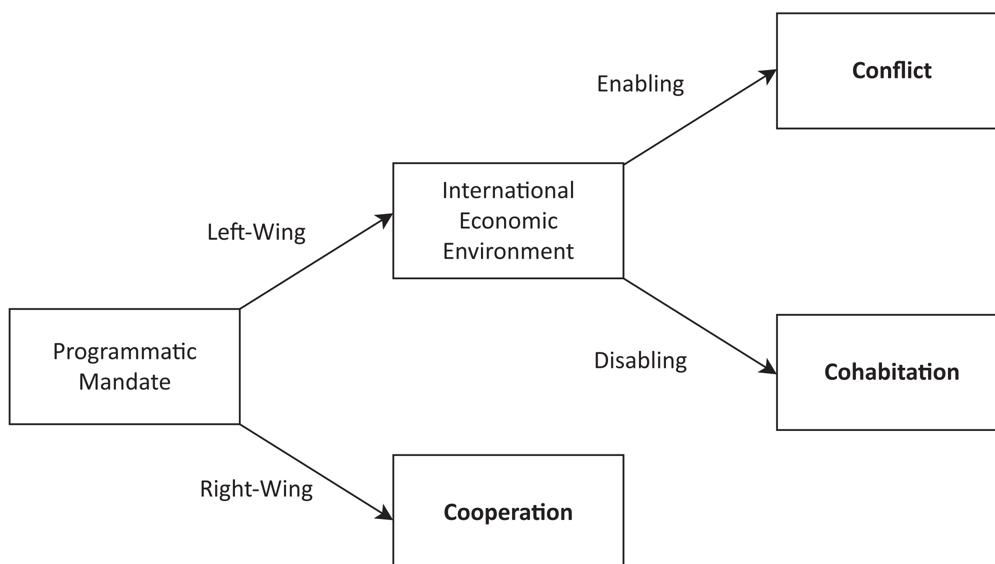

Figure 1. Conditions affecting populists and economic technocrats' relationships and their expected outcomes.

Table 1 presents the different cases considered, as well as their expected outcomes. Although we consider nine presidents, we analyse 11 cases, as some of these presidencies divide into two periods to capture the variation of the international economic environment throughout their tenure. We code these populist presidencies in terms of their programmatic mandate and of the international economic environment they confronted. Ten of the 11 cases fit our prediction, the exception being the case of Bolivian President Evo Morales. We will use this case as it is an opportunity to highlight some additional domestic factors that can affect the relationship between experts and populists, which we believe account for why this case did not fit our expected outcome.

3. Cooperation: Right-Wing Populists and Technocrats

The cases of the right-wing populists Álvaro Uribe in Colombia, Alberto Fujimori in Peru, Collor de Mello in Brazil, and Carlos Ménem in Argentina illustrate the higher likelihood of cooperation between experts and populists. In all cases, experts were fundamental to signal these populists' economic prudence to the right-wings' ruling coalitions.

Alvaro Uribe broke with the Liberal Party to run as an independent in the 2002 election. Uribe sharply criticized the weak stance of the two traditional—and until then dominant—parties (Liberals and Conservatives) against guerrilla groups. The failure of a peace process led by a Conservative president deepened the fracture of citizens from their political elite. This crisis delegitimized both parties and allowed Uribe to win the Presidency with a securitization agenda and a strong anti-leftist rhetoric (Gutiérrez, 2006). Lacking a political party and running on an anti-establishment ticket, Uribe built alliances with other independent politicians and sought to secure a large voting coalition that would allow him to rule with little need for partisan negotiations (Dugas, 2003). Although there was no acute economic crisis in Colombia at the time of his election, Uribe quickly assured business actors that he would guarantee economic stability and fiscal prudence, enhancing his support.

Some authors, such as Dugas (2003), do not consider Uribe a populist, mainly due to his lack of charisma. We do not deem charisma a defining feature of populism, and Uribe's behaviour during the electoral campaign and administration fits our definition. As mentioned, he presented himself as an outsider challenging the political establishment, railing against 'politiquería' in the country, and used public support to defy limits imposed by liberal institutions.

Throughout his two terms in office (2002–2006; 2006–2010), Uribe respected the five-decade-long Colombian tradition of appointing experts in the Ministry of Finance and the National Planning Department, even when he was popular enough to break it with few consequences. Although he increased some social programs that reinforced his close relationship with the citizenry, leading to some public clashes with his finance ministers, in general Uribe was very careful to show that he accepted technocratic oversight and that he was committed to prudent economic management (Dargent, 2015, Chapter 4). These measures guaranteed him support, albeit sometimes unenthusiastic, from business and international actors.

In 1990, Peru faced a double crisis: a hyperinflationary economy and an internal war against the Shining Path, a Maoist guerrilla organization. Fujimori, a complete outsider, won that year's election by surprise partly due to the delegitimization of political parties. His mandate was not originally right-wing. On the contrary, what took him to the Presidency in the second round of the election were the votes of leftists and centrists opposed to the radical market liberalization program proposed by his right-wing opponent, novelist Mario Vargas Llosa. Nonetheless, immediately after winning, Fujimori moved to the right as he realized he needed a right-wing core constituency to stabilize his grasp on power. First, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) conditioned any

Table 1. Cases, moderating conditions, and expected outcomes.

Cases	Moderating Conditions		Outcomes	
	Programmatic Mandate	International Economic Environment	Expected	Actual
Carlos Ménem (1989–1999)	Right-Wing	Disabling	Cooperation	Cooperation
Alberto Fujimori (1990–2000)	Right-Wing	Disabling	Cooperation	Cooperation
Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010)	Right-Wing	Enabling	Cooperation	Cooperation
Fernando Collor de Mello (1990–1992)	Right-Wing	Disabling	Cooperation	Cooperation
Hugo Chávez (1999–2003)	Left-Wing	Disabling	Cohabitation	Cohabitation
N. Kirchner (2003–2005)	Left-Wing	Disabling	Cohabitation	Cohabitation
Lucio Gutierrez (2003–2005)	Left-Wing	Disabling	Cohabitation	Cohabitation
N. Kirchner (2005–2007)	Left-Wing	Enabling	Conflict	Conflict
Hugo Chávez (2004–2013)	Left-Wing	Enabling	Conflict	Conflict
Cristina Fernández (2007–2015)	Left-Wing	Enabling	Conflict	Conflict
Evo Morales (2006–2019)	Left-Wing	Enabling	Conflict	Cohabitation

external loan to the adoption of market reforms and shock treatment. Second, Fujimori aligned with the military to confront the Shining Path and adopted hard-line securitization rhetoric. Fujimori blamed traditional parties for the economic disaster and the failed war against terrorism. In 1992, the President closed Congress in a self-coup and increased his popularity while solidifying the support of business actors and the military. Following international pressure from IFIs and the Organization of American States, Fujimori organized elections in which he won a congressional majority and solidified his power. In 1995, he won the Presidency with 64% of the vote, a result not previously seen in the first electoral round in Peru (Weyland, 1996, 2002).

Fujimori relied on orthodox economic experts to initiate profound market reforms that drastically changed the Peruvian state structure. During most of his two administrations (and some months into his third and unconstitutional term), Fujimori appointed experts in the Ministry of Economics and Finance (MEF). They were widely seen as a guarantee of economic stability for businesses and voters who had been traumatised by financial mismanagement. Additionally, officers influenced by securitization doctrines of the autocracies of the Southern Cone dominated the Armed Forces. Interestingly, the President and some of his military allies had little orthodox economic convictions. Nonetheless, they accepted MEF restrictions, understanding that business' and IFI's support were crucial for their stability (Dargent, 2015, Chapter 5).

Fernando Collor de Mello was elected President of Brazil in 1989 after a meteoric ascent in the polls. He had come to power as an outsider, distancing himself from Brazilian political parties, and promising to end the corruption enabled by the political establishment. The souring of public opinion against the political system came as a result of corruption scandals, meagre economic growth, and economic mismanagement that resulted in hyperinflation (Weyland, 1993). This crisis not only produced the conditions for the rise of an outsider like Collor but also generated a widespread consensus around the need for drastic measures to reform the Brazilian economy and change the development strategy, including austerity measures (Schneider, 1991).

Upon taking office, Collor de Mello appointed Zélia Cardoso de Mello, an economics professor, as finance minister. She was in charge of overseeing the implementation of the New Brazil Plan, a set of policies designed to curb inflation, which became known as the 'Plan Collor.' As many stabilization policy packages around the region at that time, the plan included privatizations, reductions in public employment, and the elimination of subsidies to public utilities. Economic reform plans were conducted with significant autonomy and even isolation from political forces. In this sense, Collor not only cohabitated with economic technocrats, their relationship was one of cooperation. It was partly the exclusive reliance on economic technocrats that led to the erosion of Collor's political and social support coalition and the inability of the government to get the labour and business sectors to cooperate with the government (Schneider, 1991). It was this isolation that eventually laid the ground for Collor's fall. After his plans to turn the Brazilian economy around failed, and without allies or popular support on his side, he resigned in December of 1992 before Congress voted for his removal from office, amid accusations of corruption.

Finally, Carlos Ménem (1989–1999) also exemplifies the tendency among populists with a right-wing mandate to cooperate with technocrats. Menem won the Presidency as the Justicialista Party candidate, a political organization associated with *Peronismo*, which in the history of Argentina has usually meant left-wing redistributive policies. Nonetheless, Menem reached power with the electoral mandate to end the hyperinflationary crisis that had caused a premature ending of his predecessor's government (Weyland, 2002). After some initial failures to end the crisis, in 1991 Menem appointed Domingo Cavallo, a neoliberal technocrat, as Economic Minister. Cavallo adopted an ambitious market reform to stop inflation and privatize public enterprises. Privatization allowed Menem to build a support coalition with business sectors while weakening the support of more traditional Peronist rival leaderships (Weyland, 2003, p. 1100). The government successfully reduced inflation, which gave Menem the political space to reform the Constitution to allow re-election for one term (although reducing presidential terms from six years to four). This technocratic guidance of macroeconomic policy did not prevent Menem from using clientelistic strategies to build alliances and win electoral support. In 1995, Menem won re-election with 49.9% of the vote, 20 points over his closest rival.

After winning re-election, Menem continued his collaboration with Cavallo. New economic problems lead to a change in the Ministry of Economics in 1996, but Cavallo's replacement, Roque Fernández, was also a neoliberal technocrat who achieved similar influence and stability. Fernández kept the position until the end of Menem's government.

In sum, right-wing populists, due to their original mandate and the nature of their coalitions, have fewer incentives to clash with technocrats. As discussed later for the case of Fujimori, the change in economic conditions can lead to some tension between Presidents and experts, but usually not to conflict.

4. Cohabitation: Left-Wing Populists, Resource Scarcity, and Technocrats

As mentioned, left-wing populists win elections with a mandate to subvert political orders perceived as unjust and exclusionary. Economic duress attributed to the failed stabilization plans of right-wing governments and the convergence by traditionally left-wing parties on these policies create the opening for leftist leaders to

reach power. Nonetheless, the international environment moderates this conflict. Reaching power under conditions of economic duress will make populists more cautious in their handling of the economy and more likely to cohabitate with experts to signal financial responsibility. This support will not be enthusiastic, and we can expect more clashes than in the previous cases, but toleration is more likely than conflict.

Three of our five leftist leaders faced this economic restraint. The late 1990s propelled left-wing populists to power and limited their capacity to fulfil the promise of redistribution once in office. Hugo Chávez, Lucio Gutierrez, and Néstor Kirchner all won the Presidency with distributive mandates, and all of them, initially, appointed experts in their ministries of finance. While Gutierrez was never able to break this cohabitation, Chávez and Kirchner eventually fired experts to appoint loyalists.

In Ecuador, Lucio Gutierrez won the 2002 presidential election on an anti-establishment platform and, in alliance with movements and parties to the left of the political spectrum, promised to put an end to austerity policies and increase social protection. The country, albeit inconsistently (Pachano, 2007), had implemented market-oriented reforms in the previous decade and then faced an economic crisis that put the country in a recession.

This scenario made Gutierrez's ascent to power more likely, but also made it more challenging to keep his promises once in office. Gutierrez tried to keep his populist coalition in place by pushing an 'anti-corruption' agenda that sought to signal his commitment to punish political and economic elites, and he switched to austerity policies in the financial realm. Upon taking office, Gutierrez named Mauricio Pozo as finance minister. Pozo, an economist from the University of Notre Dame, at the time, had a decade of experience at Ecuador's Central Bank. Soon after that, his administration signed an agreement with the IMF to receive financial support. Gutierrez's allies on the left saw this as a sign of a plot by elite 'techno-bureaucrats' rooted in the state apparatus, with links to the international and private financial sectors (Buendía, 2004, pp. 71–72).

Three months after assuming office, Gutierrez explained the rationale behind his decisions. He argued the economic crisis left little room for redistributive policies, emphasizing the need to cut spending and recover the country's credibility vis-à-vis foreign investors and international organizations, which became key actors for a country in search of relief ("Entrevista con el Presidente Constitucional", 2003). Gutierrez, however, did not last long in power. After being unable to secure a strong coalition to support him, he abandoned the Presidency and left the country in 2005 amid a popular revolt against his Presidency.

Chávez's stance against technocratic elites was rooted in the mandate upon which he was elected into office. Amid a prolonged economic crisis and a series of corruption scandals that eroded voters' trust in established parties, Chavez came to power railing against them and claiming that power needed to be taken away from political and technocratic elites and given back to 'the people' (Hawkins, 2010). However, the replacement of technocrats with loyalists was not immediate, nor was it without setbacks. Upon taking office, Chávez decided to leave Maritza Izaguirre, an appointee of his predecessor in power, in charge of the Finance Ministry. Chávez had come to the office during one of the worst economic crises the country had ever experienced. Oil, the government's most important revenue source, was at US $9 per barrel in 1998, down from the US $29 it had enjoyed in 1981.

Consequently, the government initially focused on fiscal adjustment and provided international investors with guarantees of contract stability and the possibility of international arbitration of disputes (Corrales & Penfold-Becerra, 2011, p. 51). Izaguirre's appointment was meant to signal to creditors and economic agents that the administration sought to maintain some stability amid low economic performance and uncertainty surrounding Chávez's new direction (Kelly & Palma, 2004, p. 218). The same crisis that had helped propel Chávez to power also constrained him from breaking with the past.

Six months after taking office, and with signs of a recovering economy, Chávez removed Izaguirre from the Ministry of Finance. He appointed three different finance ministers between late 1999 and early 2002: José Rojas, Nelson Merentes, and Francisco Usón. Rojas was a low-level bureaucrat before Chávez's Presidency, and Merentes a mathematician who was also a member of the National Tactical Command of Chávez's party, the MVR (Weyland, 2001, p. 81). Usón, for his part, was a retired general, part of the coalition of military and former military that had joined the new administration.

However, this attempt to break with economic experts would not last, as the performance of the economy was still irregular, and domestic turmoil had again pushed the country into recession. In early 2002, Chávez appointed a University of Chicago-trained economist, Felipe Pérez Martí, to the Ministry of Planning. Similarly, Usón was replaced as the finance minister by Tobias Nóbrega, an economist and a professor at the Universidad Central de Venezuela and the Universidad Andres Bello. The changes aimed at seeking a way out of the severe economic crisis that was consuming the country (Vera, 2015, p. 546). Part of the new policy package that Pérez and Nóbrega put forward included new taxes and slashes to the national budget. Upon announcing the new measures to the nation, Pérez highlighted the critical condition of the economy, and that these initiatives were consulted with domestic and foreign specialists ("Venezuela anuncia medidas económicas," 2002).

Néstor Kirchner won the 2003 Argentinean election with a clear leftist mandate. There were doubts about how Kirchner would handle the economy, but, as President, he cohabitated with experts during his first year. To understand this outcome, one has to look back

at the antecedents and the effects of the 1999 financial crisis in Argentina.

Orthodox economic technocrats had dominated the Ministry of Finance throughout the 1990s. These experts were associated with neoliberal reforms, which stopped the country's hyperinflationary crisis. When orthodox economists were blamed for the 1999 financial crisis, their prestige was severely weakened. The crisis not only profoundly affected the popularity of outgoing President Carlos Ménem (1989–1999) but also ended up with the Presidency of Fernando de la Rúa when he was forced to resign due to his insistence on orthodox measures to control the crisis (1999–2001; Weyland, 2002, pp. 202–204).

After several presidents appointed by Congress resigned in the following weeks, Eduardo Duhalde was able to achieve some stability upon taking office in January 2002 and finish De la Rua's term. Duhalde appointed the heterodox economist Roberto Lavagna as Minister of Economics. Lavagna modified some orthodox policies while maintaining prudent economic management (Panizza, 2014, p. 33).

As a sign of commitment to economic stability, incoming President Néstor Kirchner (2003–2007) maintained Lavagna in his position. Nonetheless, when the crisis receded and Kirchner achieved a landslide victory in the November 2005 legislative elections, the President asked for Lavagna's resignation. According to Kaplan, Kirchner behaved more cautiously than Chávez due to the fear of a hyperinflationary crisis due to a traumatic crisis in Argentina's recent history, but he still fired heterodox experts and increased funding for his support coalition (Kaplan, 2013, pp. 3–5).

Concluding, experts and populists' cohabitation is even possible when left-wing populists are constrained by international conditions, as the previous cases show. The tension between populists and technocrats can emerge and lead to conflict. We turn in the last section to analyse this relation.

5. Conflict: Left-Wing Populists, Resource Abundance, and Technocrats

As discussed earlier, when the international economic context is propitious, there is a higher possibility of conflict between experts and populists. Both the cases of Hugo Chavez and Nestor Kirchner and the continuity of populism under Cristina Fernández show the higher likelihood of conflict introduced by this condition.

The previous section showed how Chávez could not immediately break with economic experts. However, he eventually did. During his tenure, inflation remained among the highest in the region, going from an annual rate of 35.8% when he took office in 1999 to 40.6% in 2013 when he passed away, and then climbing to 65,000% in 2018.

Pérez Martí was removed from the Ministry of Planning in April 2003. According to him, his market-friendly policies lost the President's support following the strike by oil workers and managers of Petróleos de Venezuela S.A., after which hard-line positions made gains within his administration (Barráez, 2019). These changes coincided with a significant shift in the international scenario. The invasion of Iraq by the US in March of 2003 and the rise of China and India would contribute to a surge in oil prices starting in 2003. Nobrega left the finance ministry in December of 2004, amid reports of months of discomfort with the government's direction (Webb-Vidal, 2004). From then on, Chávez's government would run large deficits and maintain an overvalued exchange rate, planting the seed for the future economic collapse and hyperinflation. Later, Pérez Marti would point at the booming oil prices as the primary reason why the government could sustain these policies and avoid the consequences, which were made evident once oil prices went down again after Chávez's death in 2013 (Pérez Martí, 2013).

As mentioned, once the economy had favourable international conditions and achieved a stronger political coalition in the 2005 legislative elections, Néstor Kirchner stopped accepting the limits imposed by economic experts. Kirchner personalized economic decision-making and reduced technical capacity in financial institutions. From then on, his finance ministers were mostly loyalists. Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner succeeded her husband and maintained his coalition, further moving it to the left and increasing personalistic economic management. During her administration, these tendencies radicalized as the international context remained propitious (Kaplan, 2013, pp. 3–4; Redrado, 2010).

Interestingly, in both cases, Argentina and Venezuela, we see that a return to technocratic rule did not happen when economic conditions worsened. Deteriorating conditions did not move Chavez or Kirchner back to technocratic cohabitation or cooperation. As we point out in the conclusion, it seems that once the cohabitation between left-wing populists and technocrats is broken, reconciliation seems unlikely. The risk of weakening a political coalition dependent on public funds, especially in what are likely to be difficult political times, makes populists maintain their grip over economic policy.

Right-wing populists, on the other hand, usually remain within technocratic cooperation or, at most, move towards cohabitation, even under favourable economic conditions. In 1999, under more favourable economic conditions and while seeking a third—and unconstitutional—term, Fujimori fired his orthodox Minister of Finance, Jorge Camet, and appointed a loyalist without similar economic credentials, Víctor Joy Way. Nevertheless, he did keep other technocrats within the ministry in place and later that same year, when the 1999 financial crisis hit Peru, Fujimori moved back to full cooperation.

To conclude, we discuss the case of leftist populist Evo Morales (2006–2019) to explain why we believe it does not fit our model's expected outcome. According to our model, Morales should have had a conflictive

relationship with economic technocrats. Nonetheless, on macroeconomic matters, Morales respected technical-economic guidance. His finance minister, Luis Arce, kept the position during almost all of Morales' Tenure (January 2006–June 2017; January 2019–November 2019).

In this case, we believe, cohabitation is rooted in two factors: hyperinflationary taboos and personal linkages. First, Kaplan (2018) highlights how previous crises in the 1980s increased the perceived political costs of hyperinflation and prevented the personalization and deprofessionalization of management at the Ministry of Finance. Arce's presence signalled economic prudence towards elites and citizens. Second, in this case, there is a relevant factor which is quite difficult to generalize: personal linkages. Morales was known for building strong relationships of trust with some of his collaborators, Arce being one of them. This personal trust is illustrated by the fact that, after leaving office in 2019 amid a popular uprising and a soft military coup d'état, Morales handpicked Arce as his successor to run for the Presidency under the Movimiento al Socialismo ticket in 2020.

6. Conclusion

In this brief piece, we have presented two main ideas about populists and their relationship with experts. First, even if seen as inimical, there are a variety of instances in which populists cohabitate and even cooperate with technocrats. Populists with right-wing mandates have fewer incentives to clash with experts, as economic technocrats can be quite useful for signalling commitment to prudent economic policy to their governing coalitions. Moreover, even in the case of left-wing populists with redistributive mandates, the international context will moderate the tension between these actors. The first conclusion of the article is that experts and populists are not inherently at odds.

A second closely related idea is that these findings question descriptions of populists as ideological zealots, capable of breaking all limits no matter the consequences. Dependent on their support coalitions and international economic conditions, we find a more rational and calculating political actor than expected, even in the case of left-wing actors with a mandate for swift redistribution. The irrational profligate populist seems more a result of favourable international economic conditions permitting high levels of spending than of ideological commitments. Once leftist populists break up with experts and build distributive support coalitions, it seems quite difficult for them to reappoint technical ministers and move back into economic prudence without risking the support of these coalitions. Some path-dependence mechanisms seem to be at work, but laying them out with precision would require further research.

Finally, the case of Evo Morales shows that the two conditions that we identify are not the only ones affecting the relationship between technocrats and populists. Other domestic and, to some extent, idiosyncratic factors can play a role as well. Beyond Morales' personal trust in his finance minister, recent memory of an economic collapse, such as a hyperinflation crisis, will make elites and voters aware that profligate spending can open the door to new crises (Kaplan, 2013, 2018). Economic experts can be perceived as a signal to elites and citizens of responsible economic policy, thus increasing the cost of firing them (Dargent, 2015).

However, this barrier does not seem to be insurmountable. The Argentinian cases prove that, although memories of past inflationary crises can moderate populists' handling of the economy, under favourable international economic conditions Kirchner and Fernández relaxed constraints over public deficits and discarded technocrats. Although Morales' exception is worth noting and explaining, we think programmatic mandates and the international economic context have significant power in explaining the relationship between economic technocrats and populists in Latin America.

Lastly, our analysis can have implications for other realms of public policy under populist administrations. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, cases of conflict between populists and health experts, such as those seen in Trump and Bolsonaro's administration in the US and Brazil, have sparked questions about the relationship between populist presidents and willingness to listen to science. The experience with economic experts reveals that populists are more willing to do so when it does not clash with the fulfilment of their mandate or when they face significant restrictions on their governing options in the absence of experts. This experience suggests that, rather than looking at populists' response to the pandemic as ideologically driven, research on this subject should focus on how the incentives and restrictions in place condition their policy response to the virus. Ultimately, this means focusing on what kinds of sentiments and demands brought them to power and the strength of the social and political coalitions around health experts vis-à-vis those supporting populists in power.

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Conflict of Interests

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About the Authors

Rodrigo Barrenechea holds a PhD in Political Science from Northwestern. He was a Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Weatherhead Center Research Cluster on Challenges to Democracy, at Harvard University, during the 2019–2020 academic year. His research focuses on populism, political parties, and political representation in Latin America. His work has been published in the *Oxford Handbook of Historical Institutionalism*, *Sociological Methods & Research*, *British Journal of Sociology*, and *Quality & Quantity: International Journal of Methodology*.

Eduardo Dargent is a Full Professor of Political Science at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. His main teaching and research interests are comparative public policy and democratization and the state in the developing world. He has published in *Comparative Politics*, the *Journal of Latin American Studies*, and the *Journal of Politics in Latin America*. His book *Technocracy and Democracy in Latin America* (Cambridge University Press) was published in 2015.

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Article

Experts in Government: What for? Ambiguities in Public Opinion Towards Technocracy

Ernesto Ganuza [1,*] and Joan Font [2]

[1] Institute of Public Goods and Policies, Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), 28037 Madrid, Spain;
E-Mail: ernesto.ganuza@csic.es
[2] Institute of Advanced Social Studies, Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), 14004 Cordoba, Spain;
E-Mail: jfont@iesa.csic.es

* Corresponding author

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Abstract
Technocratic governments and similar systems that give more voice to experts in the decision-making process are one of the potential alternatives to traditional representative party government. These alternatives have become increasingly popular, especially in countries where strong political disaffection and previous favourable pro-expert attitudes exist simultaneously. The Spanish case is one of these settings, with the emergence of a political party, Ciudadanos (Citizens), that represents these ideas. This article contributes to the understanding of public opinion support for an expert government, its main motives, and social supports. We claim that experts are not so much a decision-making alternative as they are a desired piece of the decision-making process. Support for a more significant role for experts comes especially from those that credit them with ample technical capacities, but most citizens want them to work as a piece of representative government, not as an alternative to it. The article combines two types of evidence: A survey of a representative sample of the population, including innovative questions about support to expert governments, and 10 focus groups that allow a more in-depth comprehension of the support (and criticism) of an increased role for experts. The results provide a nuanced picture of the types of expert involvement sought and their respective social support.

Keywords
democracy; experts; government; populism; representation; technocracy

Issue
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1. Introduction

Significant theoretical research of the last decades highlights an increased desire for ‘unmediated’ political processes that challenge party democracy (Caramani, 2017; Urbinati, 2014). For some years the debate has been oriented to empirically linking this trend with the study of populist attitudes among citizens. Literature has demonstrated the existence of significant support for a political system away from the central values of party democracy. Furthermore, studies have found a percentage of the population with populist attitudes that are significantly linked to a preference for voting populist parties (Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014, pp. 14–18).

The striking point in the research of populism attitudes has been the (unexpected) link between populism attitudes with those of elitism. Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove (2014, p. 18) note that people who may be attracted to populist parties score high on both the populist and elitist scales. They mentioned that features of some populist parties such as “charismatic leadership, centralized parties, the so-called outsider status of the

leader" may also appeal to those with higher elitist attitudes. Theoretically, the relationship between populism and elitism has been built on the links that technocracy has with the same populism's ideals, because it entails a similar unitary and idyllic vision of society, advocating unmediated political relations (Caramani, 2017). Both would be in opposition to the classic conception of party democracy, questioning (1) the role of mediation of the parties and (2) the procedural conception of democratic legitimacy (Bickerton & Invernizzi Accetti, 2017, p. 190).

From the supply side, it seems that populism and elitism (via technocracy) could be combined. Recent studies have shown the emergence of new political parties bringing together both populism and technocracy ideals, the so-called technocratic populism (Bickerton & Inverzzini Accetti, 2018; de la Torre, 2013). Buštíková and Guasti (2019, p. 304) say that technocratic populism "strategically uses the appeal of technocratic competence and weaponizes numbers to deliver a populist message. It combines the ideology of expertise with a populist political appeal to ordinary people."

From this perspective, we could think that the use of "the ideology of expertise" (technocracy) allows populist parties to reject party democracy from a rational grounding (science). However, from demand side studies, the use of the term technocracy is not so clear. Many studies have found evidence of an important presence of technocratic attitudes in various countries; however, they were attitudes often related to other political procedures such as citizen participation or party elections (Font, Wojcieszak, & Navarro, 2015; Webb, 2013). An international comparative research (Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017) showed a high presence of technocratic attitudes among the European population. However, more recent research, including a new methodology to analyse such attitudes, revealed a significantly lower incidence (Bertsou & Caramani, in press), reducing the percentage of technocratic attitudes among the population dramatically. We can conclude that the most recent studies on technocratic attitudes among individuals are not conclusive. The ideology of expertise can be used by populist parties to legitimate a rejection of party democracy, but it is no entirely clear to what extent individual technocratic attitudes will support it.

This article aims to analyse in detail the technocratic attitudes of the population to shed light on the implications they have on the political regime and to what extent their presence implies a rejection of party democracy. Most of the studies that have shown an indication of some form of technocratic attitudes among the population (Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002) have based their evidence on a single statement: 'Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country' as it appears in the European Values Survey. Following the results of the most recent research (Bertsou & Caramani, in press), we may question whether this statement embraces all the dimensions of the matter related to a government of experts. If we consider the analytical distinction elaborated by Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti (2017), the question may tell us more about the different roles that political agents have in the mediation between citizens and the state than about the procedures of representative democracy. It is very illustrative that in these investigations the relationship between technocratic attitudes and political distrust in government is always high. Even if technocracy, as an ideology of expertise, is not the only way to highlight anger towards party politics, the presence of technocratic attitudes among people could be a way to criticize the functioning of the democracy, rather than a rejection of the principles of representative democracy. In order to develop this argument, we will show the result we obtained by taking the question used to identify technocratic attitudes as it appears in the European Values Survey, and then contrast those results with a question that mentions different ways to engage experts in the government (as advisers or rulers).

The study is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative information which comes from the Andalusia region in Spain in 2015. The result of the qualitative research allowed us to understand the importance that the problem of the procedural conception of democratic legitimacy acquired for citizens when speaking about technocracy. The representative survey adds questions in order to distinguish this problem directly. The results show that the majority of the population wants to listen to what experts have to say without changing the procedural legitimacy of representative decision making. Confidence in the skills of experts (capacity) and, to a lesser extent, preference for a pro-technocratic party (Ciudadanos) are the principal factors linked to supporting a more substantial role for experts in government.

In the next section, we will review the relations between public opinion and views on technocracy. The following section describes and justifies the methodological strategy developed in this article. Subsequently, we engage with the empirical analysis; we start off by looking at the content from the focus groups and use this as the basis for justifying the different views on experts, which are then examined in the succeeding two quantitative sections (firstly descriptively, and then by regression analysis). The article closes with a discussion of the results and their implications.

2. Technocracy and Political Procedures

The study of technocratic attitudes among citizens is not recent. The value of technocracy in politics has been praised because it draws together elements believed to be characteristic of good government, such as distance from clientelist networks and concern with efficiency. The result would be a form of "stealth democracy," a thinly-veiled desire by governments to avoid ideological conflict and situate politics in the domain of impartial and neutral analysis (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse,

2002). Scholars have found growing support for stealth democracy among citizens in several European countries, where it apparently enjoys a large social acceptance (Font et al., 2015; Webb, 2013).

The problem is that these studies are not entirely conclusive. The same works find similar support for other forms of political organization related to citizen participation or the classic representative model. Bertsou and Pastorella (2017) then analyse technocratic attitudes in Europe based on the recent link found between populism and technocracy. They understand their presence in contrast to the current political elites, so "a preference for independent expertise also entails a belief that the people are unable to select worthy decision-makers through the current democratic system" (Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017, p. 433). Therefore, they think that technocratic attitudes will be influenced by individual evaluation of representative democracy in an expected negative relation.

Citizen distrust towards the functioning of party-based politics used to be thought of as an attitude that favoured the desire of the citizenry for greater involvement in decision-making processes (Norris, 2011). This was also the postmaterialist thesis with which Inglehart (1990) linked political disaffection to a greater wish to be involved in political affairs. The studies on stealth democracy were the first to point out that the data indicated more of an inclination towards technocratic modes of government, aimed at making decisions efficiently. The link between populism and technocracy backed by empirical studies (Akkerman et al., 2014; Bertsou & Caramani, in press) has displaced that relationship, suggesting a desire for modes of less openly democratic governance.

The debate around technocracy has been successful in raising the importance that expertise has in contemporary societies and questioning to what extent its desire on the part of citizens can effectively end up displacing the principles of liberal democracy, as it has been suggested by the analysis of the new parties characterized by technocratic populism (Bickerman & Inverzzini Accetti, 2018; Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). It is often taken for granted that technocracy, the ideology of expertise, implies a political relationship 'without mediation' whereby more experts mean fewer parties, as if this were a zero-sum game (Urbinati, 2014). However, the role that technical skills and expertise have played in the development of contemporary societies (Radaelli, 1999; Turner, 2001) may suggest that they are valued positively by citizens, where the presence of more experts does not imply directly fewer parties, but rather more knowledge and science in the execution of some government tasks. Public acceptance of technical skills and expertise could be owed also to a change in the nature of politics, where knowledge has become a key element (Fischer, 1990). We can, from this perspective, understand the role that some individuals attribute to experts (because of their technical skills and expertise) as a facilitator for a rational framework, removed from all that parties are criticised for (egoism, loyalty issues, etc.; Radaelli, 1999).

This demand on technical skills and expertise in the government can be approached from different arguments. On the one hand, it is advocated by those driven by a desire for impartiality, aside from political disputes (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). Commitment to a growing role for experts would mean identifying politics with the idea of truth—government as epistocracy (Urbinati, 2014). Here, experts are expected to rule. On the other hand, other positions back the relevant role of technical skills as an element which supports the government's tasks. From this perspective, it may be considered that contemporary politics simply cannot do without facts and experts in a complex world (Eriksen, 2011; Radaelli, 1999). Here, experts are expected to advise. This means that the inclination towards technocracy may involve (1) replacing elections so that decision-makers are experts or (2) consulting experts in the decision-making process to make politics more efficient.

This distinction is absent in the majority of studies which seek to shed light on society's attitudes to technocracy. If we empirically consider the two analytical key features that Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti (2017) used to identify party democracy—political mediation and the procedural conception of political legitimacy—we can broaden and better approximate the meaning that technocracy can have for citizens. The general question used to link technocracy and populism, as well as concluding that citizenship legitimates a technocratic government, refers us to the first feature that characterizes party democracy (political mediation). According to Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti (2017), this function assumes that parties reflect both material and ideal social divisions and are politically constituted as competitive visions of the common good. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) convincingly analysed the relationship between the desire for more experts and citizens' negative evaluation of disputes between political representatives. The typical question posed to emphasise technocratic attitudes tends to focus on comparing the merits of experts to those of other actors (parties and political leaders) who generate little trust. It is therefore not strange to find a negative relationship between technocratic attitudes and representative democracy in empirical studies (Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017). But it is worth asking whether this relationship (political mediation) is directly linked to the rejection of the political procedures that characterize party democracy, where experts are expected to advise. Considering the procedures means keeping in mind that the results of party democracy do not depend on a pre-political conception of truth, but rather depend on a more complex and diffuse process, in which the majority is obtained from the elections and subsequent negotiations between different agents (Bickerton & Invernizzi Accetti, 2017). If this is the case, we might think that the high presence of technocratic attitudes may be based on the trust that cit-

izens have in experts, and less on a distrust of the procedural principles of liberal democracy, such as elections. In order to get closer to the value that citizens give to the political procedures of democracy by parties, we will compare the support of the public for a decision-making procedure that includes experts as rulers and as advisers.

The question in this research is based on how experts are valued by society. In all surveys, support for scientists is usually greater than that for politicians (Krause, Brossard, Scheufele, Xenos, & Franke, 2019). The expert, contrary to the politician, is valued on the basis of merits and qualities which do not depend on their political position, but rather on their knowledge and technical skills. This confers on them a significant prestige, based on its singular capacities, in contrast with politicians who forge their success by means of capacities founded on privilege, not prestige.

Thus, our objective is to distinguish citizens' support for a government where experts are present from that for one where they are effectively in charge of its political steering. Are we talking about a government of experts as an alternative to a representative government or do we mean an accompanying presence of experts within the context of a representative democracy? In view of this framework, we formulate the following hypotheses:

> H1: Preferences for experts in government are reduced when their specific role in the political decision-making process is stressed. Many citizens who support the presence of experts in government, do not support that they make final binding decisions.

> H2: All preferences for experts in government are related to their perceived technical skills (capacity) to resolve public affairs.

> H3: All preferences for experts in government are related to support for a pro-technocratic party (Ciudadanos).

> H4: The explanatory factors that support a government in which experts advise will differ from those supporting a government in which they make binding decisions. For example, leftist voters may not be against experts advise, but will reject a government lead by experts.

3. Methodology and Data

We have combined quantitative and qualitative research in a mix method strategy. On the one hand, qualitative research allows us to look deeper into the arguments used by people when they discuss the political crisis and the alternatives they envision. A qualitative investigation with focus groups gives participants time to think through answers and engage in a discussion with others. In our case, it was through the focus groups that we were able to appreciate that the problem of technocratic attitudes was more complex; when talking about the suitability of experts for political positions, among other things because they are considered to be better prepared, the question of the legitimacy of the political results obtained always arose as an insurmountable problem for the majority. By using this method, we elicit what Stoker, Hay, and Barr (2016) call 'slow thinking,' giving people the necessary space to reflect on complex issues. On the other hand, the survey will enable us to analyse citizens' preferences about different political processes (direct democracy, technocracy, and representative democracy) and will, in particular, allow us to test the conclusions of the qualitative study on technocracy views on a representative sample of the population.

The focus groups took place between March and September 2015. There were 10 in total, with 6 to 8 participants of homogenous profiles in each group in order to facilitate a debate. The sample framework design is based on variability criteria related to socio-political positions. Six groups were designed according to the education, professional and associative profile of the participants, as well as their age (high income and high-level education group vs low income and low-level education; group of young university students vs group of young people without any studies; group of activists in traditional organisations vs groups of young alter-globalist activists). A further four groups were designed with the aim of directly recording the opinions of supporters of the four principal political parties at that moment—PSOE (Socialist Workers' Party, centre-left), PP (People's Party, right), Ciudadanos (Party of the Citizenry, centre-right), and Unidas Podemos (UP, United We Can, left). That's to say, we aimed for variability, at the same time as ensuring we could study some positions in particular detail. Details about the make-up of groups appear in Ganuza and Font (2018). The distinction between politicized and non-politicized groups is based on previous studies which indicate how significant personal experience related to politics and resources available to individuals are when evaluating technocratic attitudes (Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017). Data was transcribed and analysed using Atlas.ti. All references to 'experts' were codified, with the objective of identifying the key issues for the study: (1) the value of experts in politics; and (2) their role in government.

The survey uses a probability sample. The fieldwork was conducted between November and December 2015 (EP-1510 IESA/CSIC). The 1081 interviews carried out, with their corresponding weighting, are an adequate representation of the region's adult population. The survey results have an estimated level of absolute maximum sampling error of ± 3.1% for a 95% confidence interval. Participants completed the questionnaire online (53%) or by phone (47%).

Andalusia is a region that provides an interesting context for the study of views on technocracy; there is an elevated level of distrust in institutions and an interest in politics situated below European standards—two

indicators related to the increase of technocratic attitudes amongst the population (Ganuza & Font, 2018). The region shares common characteristics with the rest of Spain with regards to the high level of positive responses to the traditional question about support for an expert government (Font et al., 2015). Moreover, it is there that Ciudadanos, a political force which defends technocratic arguments, first gained an important position in elections, becoming the chief political ally of the Andalusian socialist government after the elections in December 2015. The party's stance shares some characteristics with what Buštíková and Guasti (2019, p. 302) call technocratic populism, such as 'the appeal of technical expertise' and 'promising to run the state as a firm.' Although a more in-depth study of the party's discourse would be necessary to find out if it indeed fits in this category, their defence of the 'government of the best' is a constant feature. Within this context, where Ciudadanos and its proposals are deemed relevant and enjoy sufficient visibility, a particularly interesting setting emerges for the study of relations between a political force and citizens' attitudes to technocracy. Lastly, this Andalusian investigation is based on previous work about the Spanish case (Font et al., 2015; Ganuza, García-Espín, & de Marco, 2017) which has facilitated the construction of the hypotheses tested here through the inclusion of additional new questions in the survey.

4. Qualitative Empirical Evidence: Experts vs. Democracy

All focus groups openly criticized the current state of democracy and in particular the way political parties operate. But democracy, as a political framework, was not questioned. Parties are responsible for distorting the political game of representation, with internal relations governed by loyalty to leaders where merit is absent. Such a system nourishes corruption and clientelism, and the emergence of politicians 'who are not qualified.' This is a core point in the debate surrounding the political crisis and is the reason why so many participants value merit and knowledge in politics, and connect them to experts.

For example, for supporters of the conservative party (PP), the problem was the absence of politicians with a professional profile who 'should have worked in something else beforehand.' However, the value of 'knowledge' and 'merit' as a crucial variable to evaluate politics is, albeit with varying intensity, very similar in the majority of focus groups. For supporters of the socialist party, politicians also 'should know more.' People who have knowledge are people who have studied and have had a job because they know how to do something, as opposed to politicians. They are usually identified by participants as experts—people with technical skills.

Young people represent the part of civil society which most strongly defends experts. For young people without studies, it is experts who 'know the truth.' For them, anyone aspiring to rule should emulate the meritocracy inherent in a professional career, in other words 'in order to rule one should have one or two degrees and be experienced.' University students were also manifestly in favour of technical skills and expected knowledge from those who work in politics. Only precarious and low qualified workers had a discourse which rejected meritocracy as the backbone of politics.

The importance attached to knowledge and merit may partially explain the allure of experts in politics. They reflect the idea of a profession underpinned by technical skills and capacities, and free of ideological bias. The debate amongst participants of most groups always featured the ideal technocratic scenario pointed out by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002)—impartial and contrasted by almost everyone with the way politics functions normally.

That said, participants' conversations in all groups highlighted that it is one thing to talk about political efficiency, where knowledge and expertise should be present, and quite another to define a government just around experts, opposed to the procedural conception of democratic legitimacy, which resides with citizenry and elections. Here, notable differences emerged amongst the groups, but the debate moved towards defining the significance that experts should have in a democratic framework. The global response to a government of experts regarding democratic legitimacy was more negative than positive. For most, it is a question of avoiding 'clientelism' and 'favouritism,' not so much of organising a government with a uniquely expertise dimension. The two most polarised groups in this respect are young university students and precarious workers. The latter do not trust the figure of an expert who is cut off from reality and who 'does not have people in mind.' For them, a government of experts only cuts expenses and crunches numbers: 'if the numbers don't add up for the mathematician, we'll end up with nothing.' At the other extreme, we find the young university students. For them the issue of experts is important and they dedicate plenty of time to it in their conversations. They are convinced that a government should be chosen by 'the people' (elections), although some would want to combine a system of experts with the democratic standards of an eligible and revocable government, and speak of a political government (not formed of experts), but selected 'by public oppositions.'

This idealised vision of experts (in the politically most conservative groups and amongst young educated people) stands in contrast to that of the more progressive groups. For them, experts have an ideology and are indebted to a particular vision of society, amongst other reasons because 'they normally come from the upper classes, from well-off families.' For young people, from alter-globalists associations and supporters of left-wing parties, experts come hand-in-hand with academic qualifications, although this is separated from another value—experience, real contact with people, which comes with

having a job. With this differentiation (experts versus experience), the more leftist participants imply that any person without studies may have valuable experience without necessarily having specialised knowledge. For them, experts' knowledge has a place in government, but it only makes sense to consider the value of experts in public management when experts and experience are set apart, with the latter not only extant in the domain of those with the highest formal education.

Experts' knowledge is defended in quite a different way by more politically conservative groups (centre-right voters and qualified workers). The rejection of an experts' government rests on a functional differentiation between politicians and experts: the former rule and the latter manage. The groups mount a radical defence of the role of experts and would even increase their role in detriment of that of politicians, reducing the scope of action that politicians currently have ('Why do we need so many politicians to move the mechanism of the state if there are magnificent civil workers who are trained, qualified and brilliant at doing so?'), but they never accept a government of only experts.

We can observe how some groups take a line of defending technocracy as an ideology of expertise, although none reject the idea that a democratic government should be elected and that therefore, there is no room for a government formed entirely of experts. In the very instant that procedures in democratic legitimacy are contemplated within perspectives on technocracy, participants' discourse shifts and the call for an increased role for experts is not accompanied by a desire that they should actually rule, only that they are there to be consulted. In the next section, we will look at this point in more detail, given that this tension has been taken into consideration in the survey.

5. Quantitative Descriptive Evidence: The Apparent Charm of Experts

The survey also shows that citizens have considerable support for a greater presence of experts in decision-making processes. Figure 1 reflects the significant backing enjoyed by experts, in contrast to what we may identify as the model of representative democracy (those who govern take decisions). As other studies have shown (Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017), about half of the sample is fully supportive (8–10 agreement on a 0–10 scale) of the possibility of important decisions being taken by independent experts, with the number increasing if instead of asking about taking decisions we speak of 'consulting.'

However, as already identified in the focus groups, when experts' increased role is compared with alternative political procedures to decision-making, support is attenuated (Figure 2): If instead of mentioning 'rulers,' we focus on the procedure that characterizes party democracy—elections—we find that support for elections is clearly stronger (62% choose a value from 8 to 10) than for experts taking important political decisions (46%).

A similar pattern is observed if we make the comparison with participative mechanisms. For example, decision taking in assemblies enjoys more high support (52% from 8 to 10) than experts making decisions (30% as opposed to 20%). Support is only somewhat lower for referendums. As we saw with the focus groups, when we shift the question to a broader political procedural perspective, support for formulas based on experts is less substantial if we compare it with other decisions—making procedures.

This result can be better understood if we observe the precise role which citizens want experts to have in a hypothetical government. Following on from what

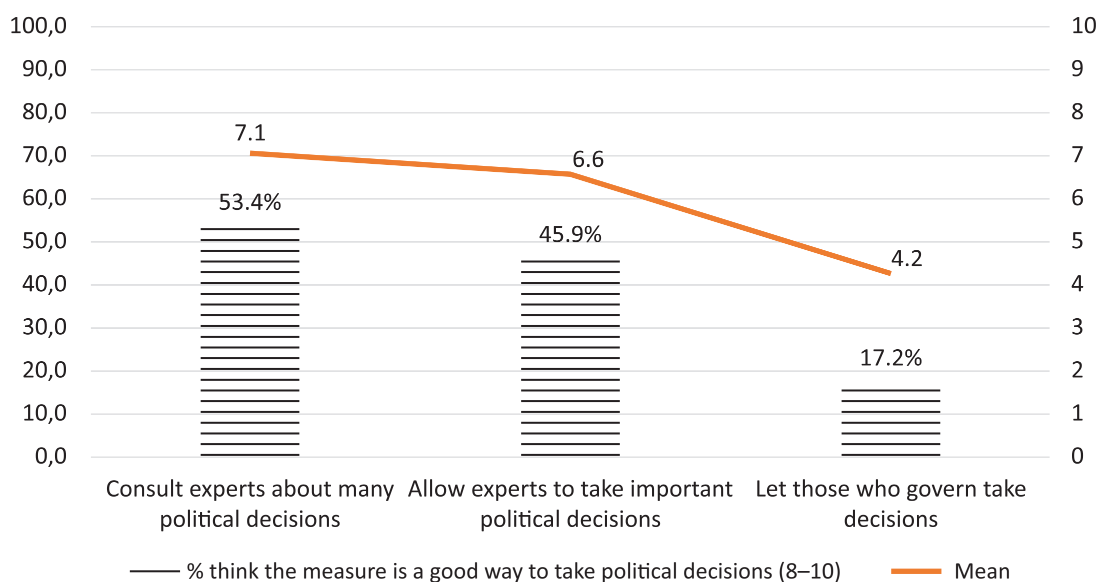

Figure 1. Agreement with expert role in government.

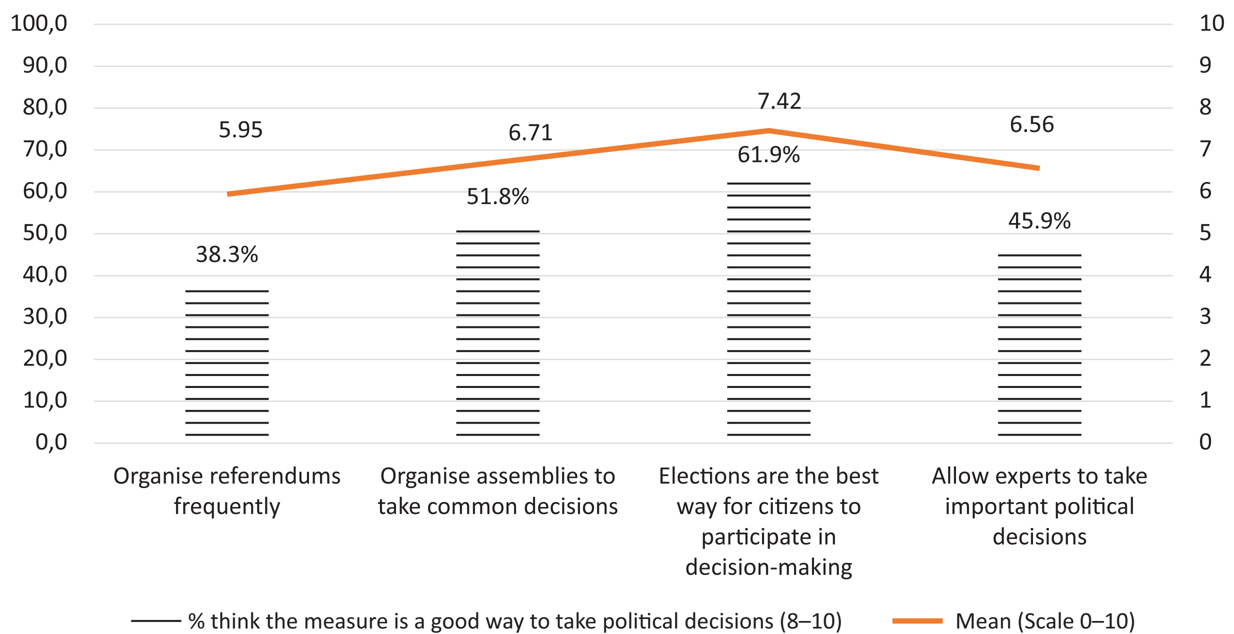

Figure 2. Support for alternative procedures to decision-making.

participants in the focus groups highlighted, survey respondents had to choose between the following three options: (1) forego experts altogether; (2) listen to them but do not have them take decisions; and (3) allow them to participate in decisions directly. The results show clearly that very few citizens think that experts are expendable (6.3%), while the most common position is 'listen, but not decide' (66.3%). Support for experts in government is notably lower (25.6%). Our first hypothesis is therefore supported.

Social support to each of the positions is quite unevenly distributed. Thus, amongst those most reluctant to listen to experts, we find left-wingers and some of the social groups in a more precarious situation—profiles similar to those observed in the focus groups. On the contrary, those most in favour of an expert government are older people and voters of Ciudadanos. The regression analysis in the next section will enable us to analyse these differences in detail.

6. Who Supports Experts and Why? Regression Analysis

Support for an increased presence for experts changes if we look at generic support or at the possible functions of experts; it is therefore reasonable to expect that the underlying factors that explain these attitudes also differ. The majority of research carried out until now has analysed the first of these attitudes (Del Rio, Navarro, & Font, 2016; Rapeli, 2016), and here we compare it with support for a scenario where experts are not only listened to but also take decisions.

We therefore use two dependent variables. Firstly, the affirmation 'allow experts to take political decisions' (scale 0 to 10). This question is similar to that used by most research about technocratic attitudes as it appears in the European Values Survey. Secondly, the question about what role experts should occupy in government, differentiating between those who are in favour of experts taking directly political decisions and those who hold different views (to be consulted or without any role). This question tries to capture the importance of political procedures, because participants have to choose between experts as rulers or advisers.

What factors help us to understand support to both attitudes? We include two main explanations and a wide set of control variables. Firstly, there is a variable which refers to the qualities of decision makers. According to Del Rio et al. (2016) the (perceived) qualities of the main actors in decision—making (experts, in our case) become an important explanatory factor. This argument fits in with the significance of skills attached to experts in the qualitative study and, in particular, their capacity based on merit and knowledge, which will consequently be the quality we use. Del Rio et al. (2016) explicitly acknowledge that one of the limitations of their work was the lack of data on citizens' perception of the qualities of experts. Our survey allows to analyse, on a scale of 0 to 10, if this measure is important. Table 1 shows the descriptive characteristics of all the independent variables used.

Another important set of factors useful for understanding support for experts are political preferences. Although Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) argued that people's support for political processes were independent of ideology, several works (Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017) have shown the impact of ideology, and in particular the difference between progressist and other values. We distinguish between leftist voters (positions 0–3 on a 0–10 scale), versus the rest.

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of the independent variables.

Variable	Min	Max	Mean value	Standard dev.	Categories of answer
Capacity (skills) of experts	0	10	7	2.2	Scale 0–10
Left ideology (0–3)	0	1	0.22	0.41	Categorical—0: No; 1: Yes
Vote	0	4	—	—	0: Others (Reference category); 1: PP; 2: Cs; 3: PSOE; 4: UP
Efficacy, not debate	1	4	3.2	0.8	Scale of 1: Strongly Agree; to 4: Strongly Disagree
Politics difficult for people like me	1	4	2.5	0.9	Scale of 1: Strongly Agree; to 4: Strongly Disagree
Political trust	0	40	14.5	9.4	Additive scale 0–40
Social trust	0	10	5.5	2.7	Scale 0–10
Participation vs representation	0	10	4.6	2.8	Bipolar scale 0–10 (0: participation; 10: representation)
No Materialism	0	1	0.32	0.47	0: Materialists; 1: non materialists
Education	1	5	2.3	2.21	Scale 1–5
Age	16	91	46.4	16.7	Continuous

Moreover, in Spain a new political party, Ciudadanos, has emerged; both the party's discourse and the profile of its elites manifestly defend a greater presence of experts in the decision-making process (Lavezzolo & Ramiro, 2017). Thus, we included vote recall in the last regional election as an independent variable.

The control variables introduced correspond to alternative explanations of preferences for political processes suggested by previous research:

- Views on how much debate versus efficacy there should be in our form of government (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). A scale of 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree' with the following statement: 'Institutions should focus on being efficient and dedicate less time to debating different points of view.'
- Internal political efficacy (degree of agreement with the statement 'politics are too difficult for people like me').
- Political trust is one of the basic underlying factors that explain preferences for representative or alternative political processes (Bengtsson & Mattila, 2009; Rapeli, 2016; Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017). We use an additive scale of the four traditional indicators of political trust available in the survey: overall confidence in political parties, central government, judicial power and political system. Cronbach's alfa is 0,83.
- Low levels of social trust may also encourage preference for an expert government, as has been pointed out by previous research (García-Espín, Ganuza, & de Marco, 2017). We include the classic scale (0–10) used to measure social trust.
- Font et al. (2015) highlighted a negative relation between participative and technocratic preferences. We use the bipolar participation versus representation scale mentioned in their work: "On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means that citizens should take directly all decisions and 10 that politicians should take all decisions, where would you place yourself?"
- These process preferences should be related to the desired role for citizens in political life. To measure it, we incorporate the most traditional measurement (postmaterialism) of these values, in the analysis (materialist citizens versus the rest). The survey included the usual two-fold question about materialist versus postmaterialist priorities. Given that the number of absolute postmaterialists was very low, we used a dichotomous variable created on the basis of these priorities, which distinguishes between those who chose two materialist options from others who did not do so (postmaterialists or mixed cases, in the traditional terminology).
- We included a variable for education, as other international research (e.g., Coffé & Michels, 2014) and our own focus groups show that it could be an important explanatory factor.
- Finally, since age has been shown to be related to preferences for expert government (Rapelli, 2016), we also include this variable with no further transformation.

Table 2 shows the results of a linear regression for the traditional variable representing support for the idea of an expert government. The first thing which stands out is the especially high (and significant) effect of the perceived capacity (technical skills) of experts, as it was suggested by our second hypotheses. An individual who rates all other variables 0 and also gives 0 to capacity of experts may have a 3 on the scale (0–10) of support for

Table 2. Explanatory factors of support for experts (linear regression).

	Scale 0–10 support for experts		
Variables	Coef. b	Coef B	Sign
Constant	2.73		0.00
Capacity (skills) of experts	**0.50***	**0.37**	**0.00**
Left	0.25	0.04	0.25
Voters of Ciudadanos	**0.73***	**0.07**	**0.02**
Voters of PP	−0.30	−0.04	0.26
Voters of UP	0.32	0.04	0.22
Voters of PSOE	**0.57***	**−0.09**	**0.01**
Control Variables			
Efficacy, not debate	−0.20	−0.05	0.07
Politics difficult for people like me	0.10	0.03	0.30
Political Trust	**0.03***	**0.08**	**0.02**
Social Trust	−0.02	−0.01	0.64
No Materialism	**0.54***	**0.09**	**0.00**
Participation vs representation	**0.09***	**0.09**	**0.00**
Education	−0.14	0.06	0.06
Age	0.01	0.03	0.26
Nº of cases		1027	
R^2		0.21	

* Coefficients where $p < 0.05$.

political decision-making by experts. If the same individual rates the capacity of experts with a 5, their support for political presence will increase to 5.5, and if experts are considered very capable (10) then the support for this formula of government will jump to 8. The result is particularly robust given that it remains stable regardless of any other control variables that may be included in the model.

There are six other significant variables, although with a lesser explanatory capacity. Firstly, Ciudadanos voters are more in favour of an expert government than the rest of the population, confirming results by Lavezzolo and Ramiro (2017), supporting our third hypotheses. Parties also matter in the case of socialist voters who appear to have a significant lack of confidence towards experts, a tendency which has also been suggested by our focus groups. In both cases, being a voter of one of these parties increases (or decreases) the overall tendency to support experts by more than half a point (in a 0–10 scale).

Among control variables, post-materialist individuals are more inclined towards forms of government with a stronger presence of experts, a result hitherto not observed. The participation versus representation scale has a modest influence, contrary to the direction expected (Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017): more inclination towards representative models (rather than participative) translates to a stronger support for experts in politics. This result is coherent with the positive effect registered for political trust and coincides with the association between technocratic and representative preferences suggested by Font et al. (2015) for the Spanish case, as well as with the qualitative analysis: support for the role of experts is especially clear among those satisfied with representation.

Table 3 shows the results of the second dependent variable, support for a wholly expert government, based on a logistic regression. Here, the explanatory variables which reach statistical significance are reduced considerably: experts' perceived capacities (skills) and two ideological variables are important—left-wingers are more reluctant to the idea of expert government and voters of Ciudadanos particularly inclined to it—as well as one of the control variables, age. Figure 3 shows the marginal effect of the main explanatory variable (perceived capacity of experts), showing its clear consequences in the expected support for an expert government.

Some of the explanatory variables (perceived capacity and vote for Ciudadanos) are the same ones, but others change from the previous case, as suggested in our fourth hypothesis. Leftist voters, for example, are not overtly against experts (first dependent variable), but are more clearly reluctant to the idea that they should directly make collectively binding decisions.

Both models are free from multicollinearity problems: all correlations among independent variables are below 0.4, VIF for all variables are all close to 1 and always below 1.5 and the highest Condition Index among all variables is 25.6 for education, still below the conventional 0.30 threshold.

It could be argued that the perceived capacity (skills) of experts is a characteristic which is conceptually too

Table 3. Explanatory factors of support for decision-making by experts (logistic regression).

	Support for expert government	
Variables	Coef. b	Sign
Constant	−3.32	0.00
Capacity (skills) of experts	**0.21***	**0.00**
Left	**−0.54***	**0.01**
Voters of Ciudadanos	**0.51***	**0.04**
Voters of PP	−0.23	0.33
Voters of UP	0.08	0.74
Voters of PSOE	0.03	0.88
Control Variables		
Efficacy, not debate	0.07	0.51
Politics difficult for people like me	−0.00	0.97
Political Trust	−0.01	0.40
Social Trust	−0.02	0.45
No Materialism	0.05	0.78
Participation vs representation	0.01	0.86
Education	0.07	0.32
Age	**0.01***	**0.02**
Nº of cases	1049	
R^2 Nagelkerke	0.08	

* Coefficients where $p < 0.05$.

close to the reality to be explained, so that this factor could be unmasking the importance of other variables. To avoid this risk, we have replicated the two models, excluding this variable. Crucially, the results do not change: among the 26 coefficients included in Tables 2 and 3 only one control variable changes from significant to not significant (or vice versa)—materialism would no longer be significant in Table 2 with this exclusion. Clearly, the explanatory capacity of the models is drastically reduced, but the substantive story behind them suffers no significant changes, if we choose to drop this variable from the analyses.

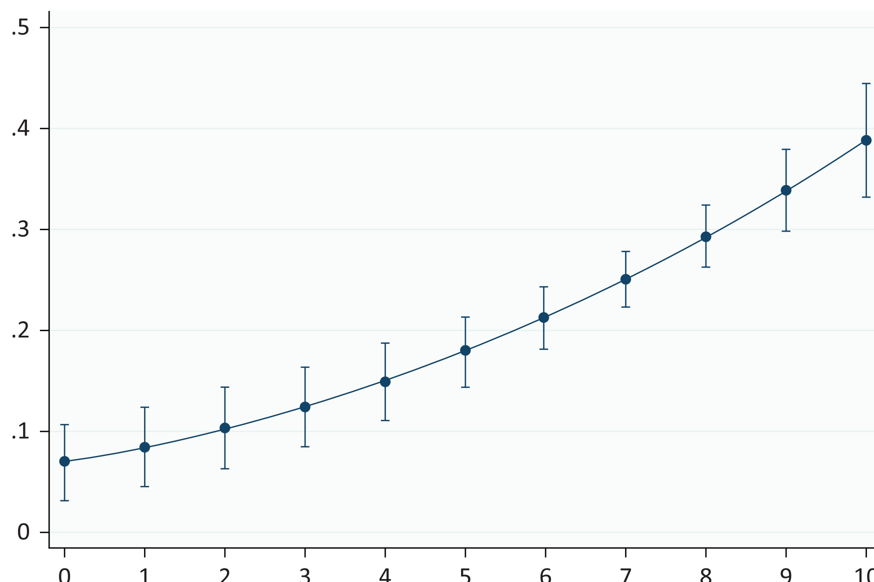

Figure 3. Marginal effects of perceived capacity (skills) of experts in support for expert government (95% confidence intervals). Notes: X axis shows the values of the perceived capacity (skills) of experts. Y axis represents the level of predicted support to expert government.

7. Discussion

Previous research has shown the relationship of technocratic attitudes with citizens' desire for political relations without any mediation, with less public debate and more political efficiency (Akkerman et al., 2014; Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017). Our study contributes to widening the scope on this issue. The prestige attributed to experts in our society, as opposed to parties and representatives, may suggest a negative relationship between these phenomena with the idea of politics without politicians. This is, nevertheless, wrong. The majority of citizens are in favour of a generic idea of politics with experts. People think experts are important because of their knowledge and technical skills. But when it comes down to detailing their precise functions procedurally, they lean towards a consultative role. Both focus groups and quantitative analysis suggest that, for many citizens, demands for experts are not at odds with representative democracy.

We find similarities and differences in the patterns for social support of both types of pro-technocratic attitudes. There are two factors clearly linked to them: trust in experts' skills (perceived capacity) and support for a pro-technocracy party such as Ciudadanos. The first is a conclusion which had been reached for other types of political processes—a higher degree of confidence in representative or participative democracy, dependent on the degree of trust bestowed on, respectively, politicians' or citizens' capacities (Del Rio et al., 2016). Our analysis allows to extend this pattern to the case of experts: trusting the capacity of the crucial actors in the political process is an almost necessary condition to support it.

The relationship of technocratic attitudes with Ciudadanos voters had already been pointed out by Lavezzolo and Ramiro (2017). However, our analyses show that this idea holds in all of the three different scenarios: the conclusion remains valid with two different measures of support for technocracy, in a political context where visibility and support for Ciudadanos is greater, and also when the equations include a larger number of control variables. The direction of causality between these variables may be argued, although their persistent relation is an interesting fact which helps understand the nature of support for political forces with technocratic components which are not situated at the extremes of the political spectrum, as may be the case with Macron in France or with several Eastern European parties (Engler, 2020).

However, the distinct content of these two types of support also implies that the remaining variables associated with them are different. The only additional variable related to support for the stronger version of technocracy is (absence of) left ideology, which is more disinclined towards the idea that experts should have the last word in decision-making, a relationship that also came up in the focus groups. If, on the other hand, we look at the more generic support for experts, we observe that it is less pronounced amongst socialist voters and people with a lower level of education (both, in quantitative as well as in qualitative analysis) and amongst people who are confident in the representative system; this reaffirms the idea that for these supporters technocracy is not in any way seen as an alternative to representative government, but rather as a possible and desirable component of the latter.

Our results do not suggest that the technocratic inclination of citizens is not an important factor, as many articles in this monograph demonstrate. Rather, we confirm the existence of an important inclination of citizens for technocratic efficiency. The problem that our research opens up is that this desire for political efficiency does not yet appear to have fractured the basic procedural principles of party democracy. On the contrary, apparently representative democracy and technocracy ('the ideology of expertise') mix well for many citizens. If the ideology of expertise can be used by populist parties to legitimate a rejection of party democracy, we need more research to be clear to what extent individuals will definitely support a non-pluralistic system. Following our results, they won't.

The results leave several unanswered questions to which we need to heed close attention in future research. Firstly, if until now postmaterialist values have been associated with a predisposition to participative processes, our results suggest that such values may also influence positively the degree of support for the political presence of experts. That is, it could be that people with more cultural resources (traditionally postmaterialists) do not want to be involved in politics directly, but may be more prone to having different voices heard in the decision-making process (not only politicians) and experts seem to be a key figure in this postmaterialist narrative. Secondly, there are many coincidences between the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses; it would, therefore, be desirable to extend the triangulation of methods to other studies in this field. For example, there are characteristics, such as the clear distinction between the two sets of centre-right voters (PP versus Ciudadanos) which were observed less clearly in the focus groups and should consequently be the subject of future research. The distinction between these different families of centre-right voters regarding their relationship with expert government should also be explored in different political contexts to determine whether this is emblematic or not of the Spanish case. Thirdly, it would be worthwhile to investigate if the distinction between weaker and stronger forms of support for technocracy is only typical of highly pro-technocratic societies, such as Spain and Andalusia, or whether it is also present in other polities less enthusiastic about experts (Finland, for example).

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Ernesto Ganuza is a Research Fellow at the Spanish Research Council (IPP-CSIC). He studied in Madrid, Spain, and he's been Visiting Researcher in Berlin (Centre Marc Bloch), Paris (CNRS) and Providence (Brown University). He works on issues of Democracy, Civil Society or the contemporary political space open to participation and the democratization challenges resulting. He has published essays and books on these topics. He's recently published (with Gianpaolo Baiocchi) *Popular Democracy: The Paradox of Participation* (Stanford University Press).

Joan Font is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Advanced Social Studies (IESA-CSIC). He has conducted research about elections, surveys and participatory institutions and has published in journals like European Journal of Political Research, Public Administration or International Journal of Urban and Regional Research. He is Co-ditor (with Donatella della Porta and Yves Sintomer) of *Participatory Democracy in Southern Europe* (Rowman & Littlefield).

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Article

After the Cartel Party: 'Extra-Party' and 'Intra-Party' Techno-Populism

Jose Piquer [1,*] and Anton M. M. Jäger [2]

[1] Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, CB3 9DT, UK;
E-Mail: jp766@cam.ac.uk
[2] Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, CB3 9DT, UK; E-Mail: ajaeger1@hotmail.be

* Corresponding author

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Abstract
This article reads the restructuring of European party systems in the 2010s as a transition from cartel to techno-populist parties, with a specific focus on left-populist challengers. Adopting a historical-institutionalist perspective, it demonstrates how a long-term cartelization and particular mode of crisis management after 2008 drove the gradual replacement of the party cartel with a cohabitation of populism and technocratic politics: techno-populism. Although this techno-populist template has been deployed for parties such as Five Star Movement and some right-wing populist outfits, it has usually been left aside for left-wing variants. This article investigates two techno-populist subtypes from the left: Corbynism in the United Kingdom and Podemos in Spain. The former took place within a cartel party ('intra-party'), while the latter occurred from outside the party cartel ('extra-party'). Although such party cartelization cuts across cases, the rise of Corbynism and Podemos took place under different institutional conditions: different electoral systems, different European Union membership and different dynamics of party competition on the left. The article concludes with the observation that rather than an anomaly, the presence of techno-populist tropes in and outside of parties and across institutional settings indicates the pervasiveness of these logics in contemporary European party politics.

Keywords
cartelization; Labour Party; party politics; Podemos; populism; technocracy; technopopulism

Issue
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1. Introduction

The aftermath of the 2008 crisis saw the reintroduction of a curious term into the English lexicon: 'techno-populism.' Launched by political scientists Chris Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi in 2018, the term was previously deployed in the early 1990s by the political scientist Carlos de la Torre to characterise a series of Latin American politicians (de la Torre, 2013). In 2020, however, the term was meant to denote the increasing cohabitation of technocratic and populist elements in the same political camps, from the Italian Five Star Movement to the Dutch Forum for Democracy (FVD) to Macron's En Marche (Bickerton & Invernizzi, 2017, 2018). The term's relaunch in the late 2010s also came as no surprise.

At the close of the 2010s, upheavals from both left, right and centre reconfigured party systems across Europe and marginalised existing traditional parties. Two terms—'populism' and 'technocracy'—have proven particularly apt at capturing these shifts. Both indicate the decline of classical party politics and the rise of new models of political organization across the ideological spectrum. Both are also typically conceived as opposites. While populism celebrates the wisdom of the 'people,' technocrats plead for expertise and seek to insulate policy-making from partisan interference. This dichotomy has steadily settled into mainstream politi-

cal science, with populist and technocratic styles of governance now regularly contrasted in comparative work (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Urbinati, 2020; Weyland, 2017). Other studies, however, have hinted at the surprising degree of convergence between both political currents. Rather than a stark opposition, technocracy and populism seem to share an essential 'complementarity' in their rejection of party mediation (Bickerton & Invernizzi, in press; Caramani, 2017). Both exhibit a refusal to filter collective wills through intermediary bodies and an antagonism towards social pluralism. As Bickerton and Invernizzi note, "populist and technocratic forms of discourse can be considered as two sides of the same coin" (Bickerton & Invernizzi, 2017, p. 16).

Techno-populist manifestations are often considered to be confined to new, less partisan formations or separate from the respective left-wing parties. However, additional ground can be explored regarding the co-existence of these two logics upon different party families and their wider effects on party systems. In this regard, recent work on populism has introduced a helpful distinction between 'extra-party' and 'intra-party' populism (Bale & Watts, 2018). The former occurs when novel populist parties compete with established parties, while the latter denotes the strengthening of populist forces within established parties and the reordering of these parties from the inside. Working with and through this distinction, this article applies the 'internal–external' motif to two populist cases on the left: Corbynism in the United Kingdom (UK) and Podemos in Spain. Both can be typified as 'left-populist' movements that arose in response to a similar set of processes: a short-term austerity consensus taken up by established social democratic parties during the 2008 crisis and a deeper process of party system cartelization. The Corbynite movement and Podemos also adopted, both by choice and necessity, a political model anchored on expertise and technical competence, thus representing a particular 'techno-populist' subtype of left-populism.

Corbynism and Podemos took place in different institutional contexts, which inflicted the distinct mode in which 'left techno-populism' arose in both countries: *inside* and *outside* the existing parties. Table 1 summarises the commonalities and institutional differences that created the conditions for the rise of Podemos and Corbynism in Spain and the UK. Such institutional differences spanned: (i) electoral systems—first-past-the-post vs. proportional representation; (ii) type of European Union membership—euro-out vs. euro-in; and (iii) competitive dynamics within the left—monopolistic in the UK vs. more fragmented in Spain. In the UK, in turn, the opening of the Labour Party's list to external voters with semi-open primaries proved a crucial catalyst for the rise of Corbynism.

Scholars have put forward a flurry of explanations for the rise of populist contenders (Bickerton & Invernizzi, 2017; Eichengreen, 2018; Goodwin & Eatwell, 2018; Hopkin & Blyth, 2019; Manow, 2016; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Rodrik, 2018). Although not necessarily compatible with each other, these explanations have contributed to a better understanding of the complex interplay of social, political and economic changes behind the re-emergence of populism in established democracies. While we do not engage with all of these explanations, we argue that the cartelization of parties and party systems operates as a relevant meso-level factor, especially for sociological and institutional accounts. In deploying a historical-institutionalist approach, the article offers a historical overview of recent left-populist experiments whilst mapping the changing institutional environment in which party politics takes place.

The first section of the present article investigates the concept of 'cartelization' as theorised by an earlier generation of party politics scholars. The article specifically offers a theory of how different institutional conditions facilitate both intra- and extra-party changes after the passing of the cartel party. It then provides a short primer on 'techno-populism' as a compound of two separate but complementary political logics. The article then argues for an extension of this hybrid techno-populist logic to specific left-populist cases. The second half of the paper tests the concepts of 'cartelization' and 'techno-populism' for the cases of Corbynism and Podemos, arising in both intra- and extra-party contexts. The results are instructive: The presence of techno-populist tropes in and outside of parties, including a newly oppositional left, indicates the *pervasiveness* rather than marginality of these logics, and signals a deeper change in Europe's party democracy (Bickerton & Invernizzi, in press).

2. Cartelization, 'Intra-Party' and 'Extra-Party' Change

'Cartelization' has flourished as a subfield of political science during the last three decades. Chiefly driven by

Table 1. 'Intra-party' and 'extra-party' techno-populism: Commonality and institutional differences.

	UK	Spain
Commonality	Party cartelization Fiscal response to the 2008 crisis	
Institutional Differences	'Intra-party'	'Extra-party'
Electoral System	Majoritarian 'first-past-the-post'	Proportional representation
EU Membership	Euro-out	Euro-in
Left Competition Dynamics	Hegemonic	Fragmented

political scientists Peter Mair and Richard Katz, the 'cartel party thesis' aimed to make sense of wide-ranging developments taking place within political parties and the party systems of advanced capitalist states (Blyth & Katz, 2005; Hopkin & Blyth, 2019; Katz & Mair, 1995, 2009, 2018; Kitschelt, 2000; Koole, 1996). The cartel thesis was able to spotlight many changes of its contemporary political landscape, emphasising the increasing retreat of parties into the state, declining party membership, the increasing programmatic convergence between parties and the growing influence of technocrats on policy-making.

Cartel theorists thus drew attention to changes occurring between and within political parties. More precisely, at the systemic level, the thesis tracked a pattern of inter-party competition characterised by collusion between relevant parties; a collusion that was largely driven by shifts in the institutional environment where these political parties operate. Meanwhile, at the level of party organisation, the thesis posited the emergence of a new type of party distinct from the catch-all party. This cartel form of party was likely to emerge in democracies characterised by "the interpenetration of party and state and by a tendency towards inter-party collusion" (Katz & Mair, 2009, p. 755). Though analytically distinct, both notions—the party cartel at the systemic level and the cartel party at the organisational level—remained closely intertwined (Katz & Mair, 2009, p. 757).

The transition from 'catch-all' politics to cartelization was not linear but occurred in many Western European party systems. Cartelization was already visible in Switzerland, Austria and the Netherlands as early as the 1960s, emerging in Italy in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and by the late 1990s had become the norm in most established democracies (Bickerton & Invernizzi, in press; Katz & Mair, 2018, pp. 133–134). Importantly, the re-emergence of 'anti-party' parties in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis has been posited as a direct reaction to cartelization; as an antithesis to post-catch-all, cartel politics (Hopkin & Blyth, 2019; Katz & Mair, 2018, p. 151; Roberts, 2017, p. 292). This dialectical logic of party development has been modelled as an "endless series of thesis-antithesis-synthesis" whereby each new party form stimulates an adaptation by its opposition (Katz & Mair, 2018, p. 151). Thus, our central argument concerning the role of cartelization upon the rise of left-wing populism has a clear affinity with those put forward by Katz and Mair (2018) and Hopkin and Blyth (2019).

Post-cartel politics have taken shape under various institutional conditions. In this article, we highlight three: diverse electoral systems, different types of EU membership, and contrasting competitive dynamics between parties on the left. First, electoral systems establish certain structural conditions for the success of political entrepreneurship. For instance, electoral barriers for new parties tend to be higher in majoritarian systems than in proportional representation (PR) systems. A relevant factor is the so-called 'break-even point,' i.e., the percentage of votes beyond which a party obtains a relative advantage in terms of seats per votes (Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). Typically, this threshold is higher in the British first-past-the-post than in PR systems such as the Spanish, making it more difficult for third parties in the UK to translate votes into seats.

We can therefore speculate that, in an environment of high electoral barriers, the chances of success of a populist alternative increase if it takes place within an electorally dominant party rather than as an 'extra-party' alternative. Under more benign electoral conditions, however, the cost of presenting an extra-party alternative to the party cartel decreases. A case in point is the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) which in the 2015 general election won 12.6% of the vote and only secured one MP. By contrast, in the 2015 Spanish general election, Podemos won 12.6% of the vote and secured 42 MPs. Whilst these parties received identical vote share, they differ significantly in terms of seats and political influence. In our comparison of Corbynism and Podemos, this factor is relevant because it will shed light on the different extra- and intra-party manifestations of political entrepreneurship from the left.

The second relevant institutional condition we raise concerns whether a country is a member of a common currency area. Membership of these areas determines how governing parties can respond to an economic crisis, especially how monetary and fiscal responses can be coordinated. In the European Union, governments in the euro area ('euro-in') face greater policy constraints to coordinate these responses than non-euro area governments ('euro-out'). During the 2010–2012 sovereign debt crisis, for instance, a number of 'euro-in' governments had to implement a fiscal adjustment mainly focused on expenditure cuts as a condition for EU external and monetary support. To the extent that the party cartels accepted the fiscal orthodoxy attached to this support, contesting this orthodoxy from inside these parties was more difficult than challenging it from the outside. The cases of the Italian Five Star Movement, the Greek Syriza and the Spanish Podemos illustrate such a predicament well (Bickerton & Invernizzi, 2018).

Conversely, challenging the policy orthodoxy from within the party cartel is likely to be less costly when a party's defence of austerity is not associated with its political stance on EU membership, nor with the country's structural position as a member of the euro. Within the Labour Party, for instance, anti-austerity views could be dissociated from the party's views on EU membership (cf. Bremer & McDaniel, 2020), unlike in Spain, Greece, Italy or Portugal, where a radical critique of austerity from within the party cartel would almost necessarily entail questioning support for euro membership. More generally, therefore, we can posit that euro membership makes it less likely that an anti-austerity populist insurgency would emerge from within the cartel party. Instead, such populist insurgency is more likely to be 'extra-party.'

The third and final relevant institutional condition we will raise regards contrasting competitive dynamics between parties. The patterns of party competition in a given ideological camp is likely to influence how party changes may occur within this camp. Specifically, radical left politics may find different institutional avenues depending on whether the competition between left-wing parties is monopolised by a hegemonic party or fragmented between moderate and radical left parties and factions.

The Spanish case provides a helpful example. For decades, the centre-left Socialist Party (PSOE) has been the leading party of the Spanish left, but various political forces have always coexisted to the left of the PSOE. In 1986, following a series of bad electoral results and organisational crisis, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) formed Izquierda Unida (IU, United Left), an electoral coalition made up of seven smaller parties. By 2014, when Podemos was founded, IU remained electorally unsuccessful and relatively traditional in ideological terms (Ramiro & Gomez, 2017, p. 111). The successive electoral failures of the radical left, together with the internal factionalism and ideological purism of the IU (cf. Ramiro & Verge, 2013) are two relevant factors to understand why the founders of Podemos decided to create a new populist ('extra-party') alternative, instead of seeking the internal route through the pre-existing Communist left.

Contrastingly, party competition on the left has followed a different pattern in the UK. With only minor exceptions (e.g., the creation of the Social Democratic Party in 1981), the British left has been the exclusive dominion of the Labour Party, strengthened by its ties to established unions and the persistence of the first-past-the-post system. This hegemonic position reduced the space of manoeuvre for left-populist challengers in the 2010s. However, following the adoption of a partial primary system in 2014 under the leadership of Ed Miliband, an intra-party space was opened up for a left-populist takeover in the Labour Party.

From these comparative historical experiences, we posit that a radical alternative to the party cartel is more likely to adopt an extra-party character under conditions of fragmented party competition. Although not sufficient in itself, this factor is necessary to explain the different intra-party and extra-party characters of Corbynism and Podemos. While there are additional contextual and individual-level factors that would provide an even more detailed explanation, we argue that the three conditions outlined here (the dynamics of party competition, type of EU membership and electoral barriers) offer a minimal institutionalist account for the 'internal–external' modes of populism in our two cases.

3. Varieties of Populism

Any study of populism must be situated—as Kenneth M. Roberts suggests—in the larger domain of political representation. In this sense, populism is necessarily intertwined with the study of party politics (Roberts, 2017, p. 287). Mainstream definitions of populism have focused on its ideological and discursive tendencies. Following an interpretation of populism as a 'thin ideology' (Mudde, 2004), most recent scholars see populism as an ideology which divides the population into two opposing and homogeneous camps: 'people' and 'elite.' As a political discourse, populism is predicated on a fundamentally moral conflict between the corrupt elite and the people (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Thus, the 'moralisation' of politics stands out as the defining feature of populist discourse, along with the idea that political sovereignty belongs and should be exercised only by the 'people' (Pappas, 2016).

Although not necessarily compatible with other definitions, Mudde's hegemonic interpretation overlaps with discursive and strategic currents, which see populism as a 'people-centric' strategy or a discourse seeking to gain power from an existing power bloc (Laclau, 2005; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2013; Weyland, 2017). Ideational definitions have been faulted, nonetheless, for their overtly normative overtones (Moffitt, 2020). These and other conceptual concerns have led some scholars to prefer the term 'anti-establishment' or 'anti-system' parties (Fernández-Albertos, 2018; Hopkin, 2020; Sartori, 2005; cf. Zulianello, 2019). Yet such formulations lack references to the kind of *representation* inherent to populism, which includes references to the 'people' above all and relies on a different type of political mediation than that exercised by classical parties.

A more descriptive approach has recently become available in the party politics literature. This approach investigates the ongoing transformations of European party systems and distances itself from normative judgements on the dangers of populism and its purportedly 'democratic' or 'anti-democratic' nature. Instead, this approach focuses on how the mechanisms of representation associated with populism interact with changing party systems. This method ties together parties from the Five Star Movement to Podemos to the British Conservative Party as partaking in the same shift from party-based representation to a different kind of representative regime, thereby contrasting two distinct modes of democracy. Here, populism can be conceived as a political *logic* specific to late modern party democracies which sees the replacement of party mediation with more direct forms of political representation (Bickerton & Invernizzi, in press).

3.1. On 'Techno-Populism'

Populist parties rarely appear in pure versions and often combine their claims with different left and right ideologies. Recently, Zulianello (2020) has qualified and expanded previous typologies of populist parties in contemporary Europe (March, 2011; Mudde, 2004). Beyond the general categories of left- and right-wing populism,

Zulianello identifies a separate category of 'valence populism.' This type of populism would define parties that predominantly compete on non-positional issues such as competence and performance. Valence populism would thus be neither right or left, nor exclusionary or inclusionary. In such a categorisation, all other ideological elements are diluted or non-existent, forming a new category rather than a subtype of right-wing or left-wing populism. Unlike this categorisation, however, we are interested in identifying a populism that is ideologically anchored on the left but also displays technocratic traits, a subtype that does not clearly fit under Zulianello's typology.

While technocracy is commonly singled out as the polar opposite of populism, a closer examination of both logics reveals some abiding similarities. Both technocracy and populism share a difficult relationship to 'indirect' or 'mediated' representation (Caramani, 2017). In opposing mediation, they also share a conflicting relationship to intermediary bodies which organise social life and individuals' relationships to states, such as parties, unions and traditional media. This compatibility in part warrants the term 'techno-populism.' In this constellation, technocratic and populist themes are unified to combine a double attack on mediation.

From this perspective, technocratic elitism is not necessarily inimical to populism (Pappas, 2016). There are historical instances that bear out this compatibility. Populist and technocratic forms of politics have been combined in Latin American politics. Notably, the former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, who won three presidential elections as a left-of-centre politician with a populist platform that had a curiously elitist and technocratic bent (de la Torre, 2013, p. 33). In North America, the Canadian Social Credit movement became one of the most successful (populist) movements and argued for a largely technocratic regime (Mudde, 2004, p. 547). In Europe, several examples of this mixture became visible throughout the 2000s. Figures such as Pim Fortuyn hoped to replace the Dutch government with an 'administration of experts' while installing monthly referenda (Pels, 2005). Thierry Baudet has similarly railed against the Dutch 'party cartel,' seeking to replace the current government with a 'business cabinet.' Fortuyn and Baudet were preceded by Belgian politicians such as Guy Verhofstadt, who proposed the introduction of an American-style Supreme Court in Belgium in the early 1990s coupled with periodic referenda (Elchardus, 2002). As mentioned, this mixture is less paradoxical than it might seem. It is in the void left behind by the decline of party democracy in which *both* 'technocracy' and 'populism' thrive (Mair, 2011), occasionally coagulating into the 'techno-populist' hybrid.

Our study focuses on two historically and geographically specific manifestations of left-wing techno-populism, emerging in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis in Spain and the UK. An application of the term 'techno-populism' to Podemos and Corbynism might seem counterintuitive at first. We stress that there is no need to call these parties 'techno-populist' monoliths since they display other residual ideological elements, ranging from socialist to syndicalist traditions. In the post-cartel era, however, 'technocratic' and 'populist' elements have found their ways into these new formations—both out of choice and of necessity. Rather than as a full-blown 'techno-populist' party, these variants are best understood as instantiating *subtypes* of their broader left-populist tendency.

The technocratic traits of Corbynism and Podemos are visible in the adoption of a language of expertise and technical competence and their enthusiasm for what Paulo Gerbaudo has styled the 'digital party' (Gerbaudo, 2018) Furthermore, de la Torre (2013) identifies a figure that is apt to capture the technocratic nature of both political projects: the 'post-neoliberal expert.' As their neoliberal counterparts on the right, post-neoliberal experts see themselves as transcending particularistic criteria in order to act in society's best interest (de la Torre, 2013, p. 39). Both the neoliberal and post-neoliberal experts respond to a similar ideology of method (Centeno, 1993; Pastorella, 2016), though they lean towards different methods (see, e.g., Silva, 1991, pp. 390–394). Post-neoliberal experts are situated within think-tanks and academia and they uniformly reject the neoliberal economic order and its emphasis on unfettered markets. To the extent that post-neoliberal experts claim to possess a specific competence for the conduct of policy affairs, we can think of the partisan use of this expertise as technocratic. As we emphasize in our analysis, these experts have played an influential advisory role in both movements. Finally, the 'techno-populist' subtype exemplified by Corbynism and Podemos was necessitated by systemic pressures. The need to pose as 'competent' competitors of established political forces, which had advocated for technical competence as an electoral quality and delegated more policy-making powers to independent bodies (e.g., central banks, fiscal councils), compelled the leadership of these parties to compete according to a technocratic logic.

4. 'Intra-Party' and 'Extra-Party' Techno-Populism

4.1. Intra-Party: Corbynism

Few movements have enjoyed such unlikely success as the Corbynite movement of the British Labour Party of the last five years (Bolton & Pitts, 2018; Seymour, 2016). Put forward for merely tactical reasons by party leaders in 2015, the democratisation of the leadership contest led to an influx of external party members. In 2017, it vied for power in an election with Theresa May and achieved 40% of the vote, the largest voting increase for Labour in the post-war period. Three years later, Corbyn was out of power and a new group of moderates reclaimed the saddle. What had happened and what drove the Corbynite insurgency? Like its counterpart

Podemos, the rise of Corbynism requires understanding on a double timeline, the first one long-term—the increasing intra-party cartelization of the British Labour Party—and one short-term, relating to the fallout of the 2008 credit crisis.

In answering these questions, the sense in which Corbynism qualifies as 'populist' will also become clearer. Taken on its basic colloquial level, application of the term 'populist' seems perhaps unwarranted. Applied in an organisational and ideological sense, however, the populist character of Corbynism becomes more understandable (Bale & Watts, 2018; Mouffe, 2018). Corbyn invoked the older Blairite slogan 'the many against the few' and saw itself as representing a forgotten 'people' in British politics distinct from the Tory coalition. The institutional legacy of a British form of cartelization played a paramount role here. Blair steadily cut ties with the remaining union influence and his commitment to scrapping Clause IV exemplified a broader ideological shift, centralising power around him inside the party while decreasing parliamentary supremacy in Britain as a whole. As Peter Mair noted, this led to a peculiar adoption of consociational ideas for a country whose political culture hardly had such precedents (Mair, 2000). Blair introduced regional assemblies for Wales and granted Scottish autonomy. Furthermore, although never a supporter of the euro, Blair remained a participant in European unification efforts through the Lisbon and Nice treaties. Central bank independence was one of Blairism's most hallowed goals. Driven by Ed Balls, New Labour looked at the Bank of England as a powerful counterforce to inflation thanks to its status as an unelected power (Keegan, 2004). Together with the increasing influx of non-party members into its administration, from experts in 'quangos' to spin-doctors, Labour engaged in a specifically British cartelization within a bipartisan, parliamentary system with a strongly technocratic basis in the civil service (Mair, 2000, 2005).

At the same time, populist elements ran through the New Labour project from the beginning. Rather than going through classical party channels, Blair sought direct connection with electorates outside of the party and relied on Public Relations means. He also switched an older language of 'class' to that of the 'people,' exemplified by his Diana elegy. By 2008, Blair had completed the techno-populist hybrid. Worried by Labour's lack of support in middle-class sectors, Blair promised decreasing union militancy and expanded homeownership, consolidating the financialisation of the economy ushered in by the Thatcher era. Since working class voters had 'nowhere else to go,' Labour retained a broader coalition between propertied middle classes and post-industrial working classes.

The 2008 crisis ripped apart the fractious social contract which had tied this Labour coalition together. Austerity shrunk public sectors across the country, pushing a large part of the domestic working class into destitution. Its impact was also generationally skewed. Younger citizens now faced an economy with declining investment in long-term jobs and increasing precarity. While fighting the central banking crisis saved a financial sector, it also resulted in ushering further rentiership through the backdoor. As investments were drawn out of the real economy, capital increasingly flowed into asset-holding. This drove up rent prices in many central cities, where many young Britons ended up after their university studies. The confluence of these factors proved incendiary, driving younger voters into a Labour Party still dedicated to austerity but unable to cater for a new urban electorate.

Three main factors explain the internal nature of Corbyn's populist revolt. As discussed above, unlike the Spanish case, the majoritarian aspect of the British electoral system made external party success more difficult. The case of UKIP winning 12.6% of the vote in 2015 but only securing one MP exemplifies the limits of constructing a viable left-wing alternative to Labour in the Commons. In 2013, filmmaker Ken Loach and a group of Socialist Workers Party-affiliated activists tried to field candidates for exactly such an alternative. These options quickly faced a stark electoral ceiling, however, and found it difficult to make inroads in established Labour constituencies. When Corbyn ascended to the position of leader in 2015, the group duly supported Labour again. Here, internal radicalism had solved the problem of an alternative; there were no competing arguments on the left.

Although a powerful driver, the first-past-the-post system is not sufficient to fully explain Corbynism's intra-party nature. As Corbyn himself acknowledged in 2015, a strong second factor was the ideological presence of an Old Labour tradition within Labour itself (Seymour, 2016). In the 1970s, Corbyn already allied himself with Bennite currents in Labour and continued to oppose EU membership for the party (Medhurst, 2014; Rentoul, 2013). Throughout the Blair years from 1998 to 2010, Corbyn remained a recalcitrant backbencher and defied party whips several times. His commitment to anti-imperialist positions and vocal opposition to the Iraq War distinguished him from mainstream party opinion in the 2000s. Added to the restrictions of first-past-the-post, this maintenance of an alternative tradition within the Labour party also made intra-party populism a more viable alternative than extra-party intervention.

A final driving factor was a consequence of 'latent popularisation'—Ed Milliband's opening of the party list to external voters (Atkins & Gaffney, 2017). Milliband introduced American-style primaries to Labour and made it possible for non-members to vote on party members on the condition that they would pay a small fee. This reform radically lowered the threshold for a populist overhaul.

One way of gauging the co-existence of technocratic and populist registers in Corbynism is purely ideological. In its emphasis on technological innovation and automation, Corbyn enjoyed a momentum centred around technical expertise. Yet there also was a strongly

organisational legacy on this techno-populist front. The Labour-supporting grassroots organisation Momentum, for instance, combined focused electoral campaigning with digital outreach, in which members could consult online and vote on policy platforms. Such emphases on digital democracy were coupled with discourses celebrating full automation and a new jobless economy. Continuities with Blair's techno-populism went beyond the merely rhetorical, however. Sociologically, Corbynism also seemed to draw on the same bases as the Blairite coalition—an urban precariat and middle class—and lived by a 'hyper-urbanism.' By bringing in think-tanks and side-lining unions, Corbynism combined an appeal to a popular subject with emphases on technical expertise and digital democracy. Except for its personalism ('no Corbynism without Corbyn'), Corbynism thus saw itself as the representative of a non-class-based majority which could rely on technocratic assistance to achieve social justice.

One sign of this technocratic bent was an increasing reliance on think-tanks and economic experts within the Corbynite party administration. Exemplified by figures such as James Meadway, Ann Pettifor, Joe Guinan, Mariana Mazzucato, Anastasia Nesvetailova or David Blanchflower, Corbyn's Labour Party saw its own proposals to end austerity as part of 'economic commonsense' and politically rational. Together with Momentum's reliance on online outreach and the construction of a 'digital party,' the specifically technocratic nature of Corbyn's left-populism came to the fore (Gerbaudo, 2018). As with Podemos, however, the origin of these technocratic elements was more external than internal. Previous Labour cabinets (both shadow and in office) had been suspicious that their party would not enjoy trust as a deliverer of policy; consequently, Corbynites sought to counter these suspicions by presenting their own programmes as "sound policy" and "sensible politics" (Bolton & Pitts, 2018). Both on the level of policy and politics, Corbyn combined these 'technocratic' and 'populist' elements while also remaining rooted in an older left-wing tradition.

4.2. Extra-Party: Podemos

4.2.1. The Long Cartelization

From 1982 to 2015, the centre-left Socialist Party (PSOE) and the centre-right Popular Party (PP) dominated Spanish politics. Over time, this dominance created the equivalent of a party cartel. The cartelization of the Spanish party system started in the late-1980s and peaked in the mid-2000s. This process was characterised by the growing dependence of the dominant parties on the state, a pattern of inter-party collusion and 'constrained policy competition.' Over the long run, this cartelization set the conditions for the rise of techno-populism as an 'extra-party' intervention after the Great Recession.

Between 1989 and 2008, the PSOE and PP moved decisively towards the state. As these parties alternated in power, they both recognised a 'shared' interest in minimizing the costs of electoral defeats. One 'risk minimization' strategy was political patronage: appointments of party officials to high-level public positions, access to well-paid destinations in EU institutions for former politicians and privileged employment in privatised companies. Internally, this patronage also served as a leadership tool to defuse intra-party pressures, turning party activism into an attractive vehicle for individual careerism. In the mid-1980s, for example, the PSOE had offered activists the possibility of holding no fewer than 25,000 political positions in the public administration (Gillespie, 1989, pp. 131–132). By 1988, 70% of PSOE's congress delegates were already on government payroll (Ban, 2016, p. 51). As the privilege of appointing party representatives to public institutions at all levels of government was enshrined in law, catch-all party politics was gradually replaced by the politics of a cartel (cf. Katz & Mair, 2009, p. 757). The two parties increasingly tied themselves to the state apparatus, while moving away from their bases and society at large (cf. Mair, 2011).

However, the excessively close relationship of the parties with the state bordered on the corrupt in the semi-public banking sector. Here, cartelization was equated more clearly with 'rent-seeking,' i.e., the extraction of revenues higher than those that would be allowed by competition between non-cartel parties (cf. Katz & Mair, 2018, pp. 138–139). Prior to the crisis of 2008, the involvement of the main parties in the (mis)management of the regional savings banks (*Cajas de ahorros*) reveals a crucial instance of inter-party collusion. Formally, the 45 savings banks were private deposit institutions, but local governments could regulate and control them; over time, many *Cajas* ended up being run by politicians with no previous banking experience (Cuñat & Garicano, 2010). These institutions ended up in the financial epicentre of the brick-and-mortar bubble of the 2000s. When the housing bubble burst in 2008, the symbiosis between the political parties and the *Cajas* had slipped into nepotism. In 2012, the nationalisation of Bankia triggered Spain's request of an EU-backed financial bailout. Amidst ruinous investments and corruption scandals, public cynicism towards the main parties increased.

4.2.2. The Great Recession and the Cartel Breakdown

The fallout of the 2008 crash set the conditions for the breakdown of a hyper-cartelized party system. Between 2008 and 2014, Spain experienced a financial crisis while going through two consecutive recessions. The financial crisis turned into a sovereign debt crisis in 2012 that worsened in the wake of the balance-of-payment crisis. By early 2014, when the first signs of economic recovery arose, the Spanish economy had been in recession since the second half of 2008, one-quarter of the Spanish work-

force had been out of work and youth unemployment had surpassed 50%.

The party cartel did not break up overnight though. The PSOE, in government during the first stage of the crisis, was punished in the 2011 general election, when it lost about 20% of the vote share. It was replaced by the PP, which obtained the second largest majority in the democratic era. In the first year of government, however, the PP had already lost half of its electorate (Orriols & Cordero, 2016, p. 475). From May 2010 onwards, the programmatic differences between the Socialists and the Conservatives faded away. At the height of the euro crisis, Spain almost lost access to international bond markets. To regain market credibility, the two governments implemented drastic fiscal adjustments. In 2011, pressured by the European Central Bank and Northern eurozone governments, the main parties rushed to constitutionalise the prevailing fiscal orthodoxy in the eurozone: Budgetary balance and the absolute priority for debt repayment. This constitutional reform did not prevent the government from having to rescue the financial sector in 2012 with EU support; a financial rescue that was followed by further cuts in public expenditure and tax increases. Thus, the central question of whether it makes a difference who wins the election, as Katz and Mair would put it (2009, p. 757), was unequivocally answered in the Spanish case. Despite the alternation in power, it hardly made a difference in terms of policies.

Over the past two decades, the narrowest gap in the economic left/right axis between the PP and the PSOE, as perceived by country experts (Bakker et al., 2020), has been observed in 1999 and 2014—the two periods coinciding with Spain's accession to the euro and the euro crisis. At critical junctures, therefore, party competition became less about offering meaningful economic alternatives than about 'constraining' the policy space. In the wake of the 2008 crisis, both parties accepted that fiscal austerity has turned into a macroeconomic imperative for a debtor country. The cartel's firm commitment to euro membership foreclosed the possibility of an intraparty challenge to this consensus. In 2015, this sense of 'choiceless' competition will be exploited by Podemos (cf. Errejón & Mouffe, 2016, p. 65).

4.2.3. The Rise of 'Extra-Party' Techno-Populism

While the economic crisis was a sufficient condition to destabilise the two-party cartel, actors' agency is a necessary condition for party system change. If a few university lecturers had not decided to create Podemos in 2014, the two-party system might have been weakened but still survive the crisis. In the 2015 general election, the cartel model of 'constrained competition' reached its limits. Support for the two main parties collapsed. For the past two decades, the two parties have obtained more than 80% of the seats; in 2015 they only managed 61% (Orriols & Cordero, 2016, p. 470). The Parliament fragmented: The effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) rose from 3.3 in 2011 to 5.0 in 2015 (Orriols & Cordero, 2016, p. 479). Podemos became the third largest parliamentary force with 20.7% of the vote. Podemos concentrated a large part of the protest vote against the cartel parties, but its parliamentary rise was also facilitated by institutional electoral factors. Spain's proportional system is less punitive with third parties than the British majoritarian system. And so, despite having lost votes and seats since 2016, Podemos has still managed to maintain its relevance in Spanish politics.

Podemos is an ideological hybrid, blending populist and technocratic traits while remaining firmly rooted on the left (Bickerton & Invernizzi, in press). As a political project, it displayed an unusual combination of deep theoretical reflection on Laclau's populism (Laclau, 2005) and direct involvement with left-wing populism in Latin America (Kioupkiolis, 2016). In the Spanish context, this 'reflexive praxis' was translated on a 'populist hypothesis:' "the traditional ideological categories of 'left' and 'right' have become historically exhausted" and a new dimension of political confrontation ought to be created between 'the people' or 'democracy,' and 'elites' or 'la casta' (Bickerton & Invernizzi, in press).

Such populist hypothesis interpreted political struggles almost exclusively in discursive terms, accepting that political preferences are not predetermined by positions in the social structure (contra Lipset & Rokkan, 1967): "[The thesis] was that politics is construction of meaning and that therefore discourse is not a 'garment' of political positions pre-determined elsewhere (economy, geography, history) but the fundamental battleground for…changing the balances of forces in a society" (Errejón, 2016). Central to the party's populist discourse was the notion of 'la casta' (Kioupkiolis, 2016, p. 5), which captures a recognisable aspect of the old party cartel. *La casta* refers to a distant and corrupt elite operating in a (cartelized) system where parties collude for their own gain at the expense of 'ordinary people.' "The old political parties," the leading founder of Podemos observed, "appear to the citizens as little more than machines for getting access to the state administration by electoral means" (Iglesias, 2015, p. 20). The new party constructed a frontier between the 'people' and the 'oligarchy' by proclaiming a 'regime crisis': the "exhaustion of the political and social system that emerged from the post-Franco transition" (Iglesias, 2015, p. 10).

In comparison to its populism, Podemos' technocratic features are less obvious. Podemos was created almost exclusively by a few university lecturers, most of whom were political scientists. All the founding members—Pablo Iglesias, Juan Carlos Monedero, Carolina Bescansa, Luis Alegre and Íñigo Errejón—shared a similar academic background, the same judgement of the 'Bolivarian' experiences in Latin America and, in several cases, the common experience of working as advisors for various Latin American governments through the think-tank Fundación Centro de Estudios Políticos y Sociales (CEPS). Podemos does not fit the model of a porous organiza-

tion, nor one created by plural and diverse personalities, but one led by a small group of experts with almost identical backgrounds who claim to have a special knowledge of politics and whose offering is predicated on a binary, absolute and moralistic understanding of politics: the many and the few, the decent and the corrupt, right and wrong policies. This sociology of the party's leadership gave rise to a particular form of *left-wing elitism*, which fits with the kind of post-neoliberal expertise that Carlos de la Torre associated with Rafael Correa's techno-populism in Ecuador (cf. de la Torre, 2013).

Other observers have highlighted a different techno-political aspect of Podemos; namely, its adoption of digital media in a hybrid party structure that shows characteristics of digital networks and social movements (Kioupkiolis & Perez, 2019, p. 28; cf. della Porta, Fernández, Kouki, & Mosca, 2017). Like Corbynism, Podemos' use of social media and new digital technologies has challenged the traditional role of media in the construction of political discourse. While this interpretation of tecno-politics equates the 'techno-' with the use of new technologies in political communication, it relates to our broader understanding of techno-populism in one crucial respect. The preference for digital technologies to communicate directly with the people, while bypassing and criticising the intermediary role of the media, dispense with the functions of *political mediation* in a democracy, advocating instead for more direct and less pluralistic practices of political representation.

Podemos' technocratic traits arose also from external or systemic pressure. Against the backdrop of collusion and institutional capture by the two major parties, Podemos accepted the need to appeal to expertise as a precondition for governing in post-crisis Spain. By 2014, the idea that experts should take more decisions in public office had become a popular proposition among Spaniards, as consistently shown by public opinion surveys (cf. Fernández-Albertos, 2018, pp. 91–93). In government, Podemos has insisted on this idea to justify, for example, the appointment of the renowned sociologist Manuel Castells as the Minister of Universities.

Furthermore, the party has accepted to govern under the supervision of all independent and specialist bodies created after the 2008 financial crisis. Not because Podemos has turned sympathetic towards unelected power, but because the party has accommodated its political offer to the prevailing technocratic logic; a logic that increasingly forces political parties to appeal to expertise and to govern along with the actors who reportedly possess it. It is in this precise sense that we claim that the transition from cartel to techno-populist parties is taking place both out of choice and of necessity.

4.2.4. The Aftermath: Adaptation, Crisis and Government

New parties cannot define all the relevant dimensions of political competition by themselves, even when they claim otherwise. In post-crisis Spain, the left/right divide has proven very resilient (Vidal, 2018). As voters, the media and other parties consistently placed Podemos on the far left, the party ended up competing more explicitly from the left. In the May 2016 general election, Podemos ran in coalition with IU and other left-wing forces. This coalition became the third largest force in the Parliament, only 14 seats behind the PSOE. At that time, the leaders of Podemos were still waiting for the 'Pasokization' of the PSOE in the hope of overtaking it as the main opposition party.

However, this strategy was not fully endorsed inside the party. The internal division in Podemos was most bitterly expressed in the disagreement between two of the leading founders, Pablo Iglesias and Íñigo Errejón. According to Errejón (2020), "it was clear that there are not five million communists in Spain." The party should aim to consolidate a more ideologically diverse coalition. To this end, the populist strategy seemed more effective. But at the second Party Congress in February 2017 (Vistalegre II), the more leftist theses defended by Iglesias prevailed over the 'populist-transversal' vision championed by Errejón. In 2019, Errejón abandoned Podemos to create a new political platform (Mas Madrid/Mas País).

After the fourth general election in as many years, Podemos entered a coalition government with the PSOE in December 2019. Only two months later, the Covid-19 crisis hit the world. In 2015, Podemos had entered the Spanish parliament reclaiming the power of the people, for the people and against 'la casta.' It has ended up co-managing a global pandemic at the behest of experts and, reportedly, on the basis of scientific knowledge. Thus, if there is one recent European experience where extra-party techno-populism is being put to the test, it is undoubtedly the Spanish one. While it is too early to assess the political legacy of the Covid-19 crisis, there is now less doubt about the analytical utility of understanding Podemos from the perspective of techno-populism.

5. Conclusion

This article has emphasized the complementarity of populism and technocracy through a comparative study of two recent techno-populist experiences: Podemos and Corbynism. Firmly anchored on a left populist platform, neither Podemos nor Corbynism moved into the openly 'techno-populist' territory of parties such as the Five Star Movement. But the integration of distinctly technocratic elements is evidenced by their reliance on 'post-neoliberal experts' and the preference for unmediated forms of communication through the use of digital technologies. Their technocratic traits are also the result of systemic pressures, arising from electoral contexts shaped by claims to competence and policy environments dominated by the influence of independent, non-partisan and expert institutions. These factors are not exclusive to Podemos and Corbynism but com-

mon to most political parties in the post-2008 era. The Covid-19 crisis only seems to have exacerbated the pervasiveness of this technocratic logic in contemporary European politics.

In our two cases, the long-term party cartelization and the fiscal response to the global financial crisis cut across other institutional differences in Spain and the UK. But these institutional differences set the conditions for the distinct 'intra-' and 'extra-party' manifestations of techno-populism. Three factors need highlighting in our comparison. The first is the persistent *creativity* of populist logics across party and electoral systems; whether in two-party or multi-party systems, majoritarian or proportional representation systems, populism will adapt to given ecosystems by opting for intra-party or extra-party strategies. What might drive the occurrence of such intra- or extra-party manifestation has been the main question driving this paper. The second factor, however, is the sheer *contingency* of the populist success story. For instance, if in the 2017 general election Corbyn had won the same votes under a Spanish-like electoral system, the balance sheet on left-populist success would have looked different. Therefore, the main conclusion pertains to the *institutional contingency* of populism's success, which often relies on a slim set of institutional factors. Finally, there is no need to homogenise different populist experiences. Cartelization did express itself as a cross-national phenomenon but never took on a perfectly homogeneous form. Researchers will have to insist on national and historical particularities in each case. The same holds for its ongoing techno-populist reaction, which is adapting itself to different party landscapes and institutional parameters.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Jose Piquer is a Doctoral Candidate and Marie Sklodowska-Curie Fellow of the PLATO project (Post-Crisis Legitimacy of the European Union) at the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge. His research interests span the broad disciplines of political science, political economy and European studies. His current research project aims to bridge a focus on changing macroeconomic conditions with questions of transformation within representative politics in Europe. His writings have appeared in Anglophone and Spanish outlets such as the *New Statesman*, *The Monkey Cage* (*The Washington Post*), *Política Exterior* and *Expansión*.

Anton M. M. Jäger is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Cambridge and the Université Libre de Bruxelles, working on the history of populism in the United States and its intersections with contemporary debates. His writings have appeared in anglophone and Dutch outlets such as *Jacobin*, *LSE Review of Books*, *The Guardian*, *De Groene Amsterdammer*, *De Standaard*, *LA Review of Books* and *London Review of Books*. Together with Daniel Zamora (Université Libre de Bruxelles) he is currently working on an intellectual history of basic income.

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Article

Technocratic Populism *à la Française*? The Roots and Mechanisms of Emmanuel Macron's Success

Michel Perottino [1,*], Petra Guasti [2]

[1] Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, 112 00 Prague, Czech Republic; E-Mail: perottino@fsv.cuni.cz
[2] Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences, 110 00 Prague, Czech Republic; E-Mail: guasti@soz.uni-frankfurt.de

* Corresponding author

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Abstract
This article focuses on the roots and mechanisms of Macron's success, arguing that in 2017 two conditions were essential in Macron's rise—the implosion of the established system of the French Fifth Republic in which the two main parties were alternating in power; and the rise of anti-establishment populist challengers on the right and on the left (cf. Stockemer, 2017; Zulianello, 2020). It was anti-establishment appeal that put Macron on the map, but the appeal to technocratic competence that won him the presidency. Technocratic populism transcends the left–right cleavage and, as a result, has a broader appeal than its left- and right-wing counterparts. Emmanuel Macron was an insider taking on the (crumbling) system and positioning himself as an outsider—refusing the traditional labels, including centrism, elite recruitment patterns, and mediated politics. Instead, Macron and *La Republique en Marche* attempted to create new forms of responsiveness by 'giving voice to the people,' while relying on technocratic competence as a legitimation mechanism. In power Emmanuel Macron attempts to balance responsiveness and responsibility (cf. Guasti & Buštíková, 2020).

Keywords
France; Macron; populism; technocratic populism

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1. Introduction

Commentators consider the French presidential election in May 2017 as a disruption (Perrineau, 2017) in the long tradition of French politics. The dramatic changes include failure of the mainstream candidates on the right and the left in the first round of the presidential elections, the use of social media, and a relatively high abstention rate. The most significant change was the winner of the election himself: Emmanuel Macron, a young newcomer. Macron was elected at the age of 39, the youngest elected President of the Fifth republic before him was Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, elected at the age of 48. This youth was also a part of the newness and freshness. Before the Presidency, Emmanuel Macron never held an elected office. Even though he was Minister of Economy, Industry, and Digital Affairs in Manuel Valls' government (2014–2016), Macron successfully presented himself as an outsider. Macron cultivated the image of a (moderate) challenger of the old system, the only one able to transcend the stale establishment of French politics and reform France, the only candidate to overcome the old sterile French cleavages.

This election seemed to fulfil the idea of a successful third way, neither right nor left, breaking the traditional cleavage typical for the last seven decades of French politics. Emmanuel Macron won both the first and the second round of the presidential elections, even

though it was his first election. This victory of a newcomer was confirmed by the general election results a month later. Macron's new 'party' *La Republique en Marche* (The Republic on the Move, LREM), gained an absolute majority. It enabled Macron to form a Government able to enact Macron's ambitious plan to transform French politics and society. Like their leader, the majority of the new parliamentarians were newcomers and had never held elected office before (LREM lost a part of its deputies quite rapidly, and in the spring of 2020, it lost its absolute majority; Momtaz, 2020). This was seen as evidence of the promise of the renewal of French politics (Surel, 2019).

As in other cases of successful personalist populist parties founded by outsiders and disrupting difunctional party systems (Berlusconi's Forza Italia in 1994 and Babiš's ANO in 2013), Emmanuel Macron's rapid 'march to the power' started officially almost a year before, without clear electoral support, with a relatively weak program and blurred campaign funding (Kuhn, 2017). Berlusconi and Babiš both combined populist and technocratic appeal to broaden their electoral chances. Both have been studied through the lens of technocratic populism, used initially to study Latin America (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Castaldo & Verzichelli, 2020; de la Torre, 2013; Havlík, 2019). As Emmanuel Macron shares many of their characteristics, this article applies the technocratic populism perspective to test whether Macron is a technocratic populist.

This article proceeds as follows. In part two, we clarify some of the terminology and concepts (focusing on technocratic populism) used to show how and why Emmanuel Macron (as a leader) matches these categories (as a charismatic leader claiming technocratic competence, against the established political elites). In part three and four we explain how and why Macron's success was possible and to what extent he is a technocratic populist in power, mainly by focusing on the ways he governs.

2. Varieties of Populism and the Technocratic Populism

The debate on the conceptual definition of populism and the terminology is still open (for instance, see Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018).

Some of the commonly used criteria to define populism are 'thin ideology', people vs. elites, specific political rhetoric and style, or strategy. Populism varies across time and space and has many faces beyond the classical (extreme) right-wing (Norris, 2020; Zulianello, 2020). In order to classify whether and what type of populist Emmanuel Macron is, we draw on classical scholars of populism (Canovan, 1999; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018), a contemporary contribution (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019), and theoretical scholarship on similarities and differences between populist and technocratic critiques of party democracy (cf. Bickerton & Accetti, 2017; Caramani, 2017).

Using the literature on varieties of populism (Caiani & Graziano, 2016; Zulianello, 2020) and the case of France, we show the vast differences among various populisms present on the French political scene and the long and rich history of populism in France—for instance, the boulangism (1885–1889) or the poujadism in the 1950s (Birnbaum, 2012; Surel, 2019). We can identify Marine Le Pen and her National Rally (ex-National Front; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his France Unbowed (*La France Insoumise*; Ivaldi, 2019; Norris, 2020; Rosanvallon, 2020; Surel, 2019) as populist (Zulianello, 2020). Both represent different populism types, as the host ideology diverges—the National Front is a radical right-wing populist party and France Unbowed, on the contrary, is a radical left-wing populist party. The disparities in terms of leadership, style, rhetoric, and above all in terms of programs are quite significant. However, they share some similarities (like the positioning against the EU; cf. Halikiopoulou, Nanou, & Vasilopoulou, 2012).

At first sight, Emmanuel Macron has nothing in common with Marine Le Pen and Jean-Luc Mélenchon. The Chapel Hill Survey (2019) shows that Macron's LREM is quite far away from the positions of both right-wing and left-wing populist parties, especially on the EU (LREM is broadly pro-European), protectionism, and other policies. Most importantly, compared to the National Front and France Unbowed, Macron's LREM also scores relatively low on anti-elite salience. However, while Emmanuel Macron and his LREM position themselves as the representatives of a moderate part of the French political arena, LREM scores higher on anti-elite salience than other moderate French parties. According to CHES experts, LREM is a moderate, non-populist party. However, for Norris and Inglehart (2017, p. 12), Emmanuel Macron is a centrist populist leader. As Pippa Norris mentioned:

> Despite often being labelled 'radical right,' in fact, populist parties are also distributed in the other quadrants….There are also a few populist parties scattered in the other quadrants, such as President Macron who campaigned for *La République En Marche!* as an anti-establishment outsider, while advocating moderate economic policies and a pro-EU stance. (Norris, 2020, p. 15)

The core of Macron's populist appeal relies on the critique and rejection of intermediate bodies, combined with a robust anti-establishment discourse and a specific call to the French people. Macron has already been classified as a populist by political scientists (Ivaldi, 2019), sometimes in a specific way ("populist from the extreme-centre,'' Godin, 2016; "antipopulist populist," Bordignon, 2017). To some extent, the rise of Emmanuel Macron should be seen as an effect of the Fifth Republic system, but in a new populist logic dominating the French political landscape.

The adaptability of populism to various ideologies is not new (Mudde, 2004; Taggart, 2000). One of our primary hypotheses is that populism, mainly as a discourse and a style, is not limited to the political extremes on the left and the right and should not be reduced to a democratic threat (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018; Stavrakakis & Jäger, 2018). The concept of centrist populism has been used to describe parties neither on the left nor on the right. It is based on an assumption of an ideal political space, an in-between, rejecting the ideological extremes.

Mattia Zulianello (2020) has significantly contributed to conceptualizing this residual category into a new type. Valence populist parties compete predominantly, if not exclusively, by focusing on nonpositional 'valence' issues, such as the fight against corruption, increased transparency, democratic reform, and moral integrity, while emphasizing anti-establishment motives. There is no ideological positioning on the difference between the mentioned centrist populist and the claim of competence and performance (Zulianello, 2020). Historically, valence populist parties emerged mainly in Central and Eastern Europe (Haughton & Deegan-Krause, 2015; Učeň, 2007).

We argue that the concept of valence populism (Zulianello, 2020, p. 329) is a good starting point to capture Emmanuel Macron and his LREM for two reasons. First, Emmanuel Macron rejected being positioned in the center—for him, the left, the right, and the center are obsolete categories. Second, using the flexibility of valence populism enables us to identify Macron's key valence issue—technocratic expertise. Emmanuel Macron presents himself as an expert in both the public and private spheres. The concept of valence populism captures both Macron's refusal to be positioned on the left–right continuum and his self-presentation—founding his legitimacy in his career in the state apparatus and the banking sector.

Focusing on Macron's self-identification as an expert and his career as a technocrat also resonates with the concept of technocratic populism. Technocratic populism as a 'thin ideology' is based on the rejection of the traditional political parties and on the promise of apolitical expert solutions that benefit the 'ordinary people' (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019) As showed by Buštíková and Guasti, "it combines the ideology of expertise with a populist political appeal to ordinary people," "technocratic populism uses the ideology of numbers and the ideology of expert knowledge to appeal directly to the voters using an anti-elite, populist rhetoric" (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019, p. 305). Interestingly the technocratic populism undermines the principle of horizontal and vertical accountability, as Caramani showed (Caramani, 2017; Guasti, 2020).

Two key features of Macron's appeal match this conceptualization. His strong rhetoric against his former Socialist party and broadly against all the French political elites—an anti-establishment strategy. Second, the use of personal competence as a form of legitimation and a strategy to distinguish himself from his anti-establishment competitors, especially his main competitor in the second round of presidential elections, Marine Le Pen.

Nevertheless, let us summarize some criteria of the technocratic populism: A charismatic leader calls for the fight against the political establishment in the name of the people, denouncing the intermediate bodies (in a broad sense, including parties), and communicating directly with the people. Technocratic populism does not only appear as an alternative to the ideology of liberal democratic pluralism (Havlík, 2019) but also when the traditional party system is exhausted, and stale mainstream parties are unable to effectively react to new challenges (cf. Caiani & Graziano, 2016). Under these conditions, a weakened party system creates an opening for newcomers (cf. Aprasidze & Siroky, 2020; Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Castaldo & Verzichelli, 2020; Ganuza & Font, 2020).

3. The Origins of Macron's Technocratic Populism

3.1. The Social and Political Frame of Macron's Technocratic Populism

In explaining the rise of populism to power, it is essential to consider the appeal and strategies of ascending populists and the political context. To some extent, they are the product of their time and, above all of the society from which they arise and which allows them to win elections (on the long-term changes in politics and society in Western Europe, see Lynch, 2019; on populism and crisis, see Caiani & Graziano, 2016). The rise of Emmanuel Macron is both the result of his charisma, political acumen and successful strategy, but also of the state of French politics.

The initial roots of Macron's success seem to be in the economic and financial crisis in the late 2000s when the French government's attempt to find a solution seemed ineffective. Nevertheless, we have to look at its deeper roots in French history. The main change we have to point out is the progressive disappearance of the clear left–right cleavage. This cleavage is linked to the beginning of the French Revolution after 1789 and the confrontation of 'two Frances.' In the second half of the 20th century, we can see that for the first time, this cleavage was suppressed by the rise of the French Fifth Republic under the leadership of Charles De Gaulle and the beginning of 23 years of 'dextrism' (the government of the right).

The French Fifth Republic was confrontational. While the right was in power, the left alternative was clear and sharp (but also divided between the declining Communist party and the growing Socialist party). The shift from right to left occurred in 1981 after the success of Francois Mitterrand in the presidential election. It was seen as a revolutionary or a catastrophic moment (depending on the analyst).

After some years, the leftist policy showed its limits, and Mitterrand decided to turn in 1983–1984. The government began to take a much more liberal line. This historical change (practically the abandonment of a long-term program of the French left) was not successful. After the 1986 general elections, France experienced, for the first time, the cohabitation of the left and the right, and the reverse policy of privatizations.

The ideological rapprochement of the left and its embrace of the liberal paradigm blurred the traditional differences between the left and the right—both were practically calling for the same solutions and became indistinguishable, especially on economic issues. What remained was a vast difference between the moderate right and the moderate left regarding social positioning (identity issues). The economic and financial crisis brought the political compromise about the liberal paradigm to the fore and engendered the anti-establishment critique of Jean-Marie Le Pen, who denounced both the left and the right as 'bonnet blanc et blanc bonnet' or, in other words, the plot of the collusion of political elites that were seemingly in opposition.

In the years leading to the 2017 presidential elections, the moderate right lost an essential part of its electorate to the radical right. Yet, its electoral failure is a result of the scandals of the Republican candidate François Fillon. Macron presented himself as the only real alternative to the old, and delegitimated the political establishment from both sides, moderate right and left. The key to Macron's rise was the breakdown of the Socialist party, which made the shift of the left-wing electorate to LREM possible. This new situation appears clearly if we compare, for instance, the results of the Socialist's candidates in the first round of the presidential elections in 2012 and 2017 (Hollande 28.63% and Hamon 6.36%, respectively). We can make here a parallel with the situation in the Czech Republic, where the technocratic populist A. Babiš won a large part of the left-wing electorate in 2013 and 2017 (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Stauber, 2019) or to the rise of Igor Matovič in Slovakia (Buštíková & Babos, 2020).

Due to the failure of the mainstream parties on the left and the right, Emmanuel Macron was seen as the sole candidate likely to defeat Marine Le Pen in the 2017 presidential elections. He was also seen as the representative of young modern France—a leader proposing a genuinely modern vision and reforms necessary to save France from its long-term social and economic difficulties.

3.2. A Specific Career of a Technocrat

Emmanuel Macron is a classical product of the French technocracy that appears after the Second World War. The reform of the state was driven by the idea of a professional depoliticized administration. The new model, which persists today, has at its top the National School of Administration (*Ecole Nationale d'Administration*, ENA). ENA still forms the elite of the French civil servants. Macron (who studied at Sciences Po Paris before ENA) ranked fifth in his group at the end of the cursus, thus demonstrating an extraordinary competence.

For a long time, ENA has been criticized as a form of elite reproduction. The first systematic critic of this school and the elites it produced appeared in the late 1960s (Mandrin, 1967). Very little has changed since, and the critique can be considered just as relevant today. ENA is an elitist and technocratic school. It produced generations of high civil servants, who made a career not only in the French high administration but also in politics and the private sector.

Emmanuel Macron is a typical product of ENA. After ENA, Macron had a short career in the Inspectorate General of Finances and then moved to a multinational investment bank and financial services company Rothschild & Co. Some of the first information about Macron to appear in the French media, in Summer 2014, emphasized his "impressive curriculum vitae" (Chabas, 2014). We can recall here the words of Paul Taggart: Populism "requires the most extraordinary individuals to lead the most ordinary of people" (Taggart, 2000, p. 1; see also Mudde, 2004).

Macron turned against this form of elite reproduction, as a consequence of the 2019 debate. Macron—part of an elite—turned against the elite and espoused anti-elite discourse. In the aftermath of the November 2015 terrorist attacks, he said: "The elites, not the society, bear a responsibility" ("Radicalisation: Macron juge les élites," 2015). Emmanuel Macron was a high technocrat with experience in both the public and the private sectors. In 2015 he turned populist, but his technocratic competences (and efficiency) remains the source of his legitimacy. Macron was the right man at the right place in the right time—technocratic populist at the critical juncture of French politics marked by the breakdown of left–right cleavage. The second round of the 2017 election was Emmanuel Macron or Marine Le Pen—technocratic populist palatable for many, or radical right leader, unacceptable for the voters of mainstream parties (cf. Stockemer, 2017).

3.3. The Rise of a Charismatic Technocrat

From the beginning of his successful electoral campaign, Emmanuel Macron presented himself as the champion of the fight against the political system. He introduced himself as an outsider—a new politician who is not linked to the establishment and the old-fashioned parties and elites. He vowed to abandon outdated ideological discourses and practices and focus on practical and effective solutions to contemporary economic and societal problems. In a 2016 debate with Columbia University students, Macron embraced anti-establishment rhetoric and reiterated the refusal to be placed on the LR continuum by his opponents (Robequain, 2016). Macron saw himself as fighting the

old and ineffective model of French political competition; as somebody who transcends the more than 200-year-old left–right cleavage.

During his brief career as a minister, Macron identified as a Socialist. But in 2016, he rejected this 'label' along with the 'centrist' label, preferring at that time 'man of the left' or 'liberal' (Macron, 2016). He also started to cite a broad list of references (mixing Pierre Mendès-France, François Mitterrand, but mainly Charles de Gaulle). Nevertheless, his policies could certainly be seen as centrist in the French context (Barlow, 2017). His positioning between the oldest (formerly) dominant parties (the Socialist party on the left and the Republicans on the right) is seen in France as evidence of this. To some extent, Macron and the LREM symbolically pushed the old-fashioned 'centrists' from the Mouvement Démocrate to the right.

The ability to attract media coverage is crucial to understanding the speed of Macron's political rise. Emmanuel Macron succeeded in portraying an image of a political outsider taking on the old dysfunctional establishment that did not match the reality—with his past career within the system he criticized since the beginning of his path to the French presidency. The changes in French society, namely its de-ideologization and de-politicization (Perottino, 2016), contributed to the appeal of an apolitical technocracy (cf. Putnam, 1977).

Macron's 2016 arrival on the political scene as a presidential candidate is simultaneous with the profound crises of the French establishment political parties on the left (Socialists) and on the right (Republicans). In the second round of the 2017 elections, Emmanuel Macron also presented his new movement (LREM) as the only alternative to the extreme right populist Marine Le Pen's National Front (today National Rally). The alternative to the exclusionary populism of Marine Le Pen was Macron's new formula mixing anti-establishment populist discourse with an appeal to technocracy and expertise.

Sofia Ventura showed that, during his campaign, Macron denounced the political elites and the gap between the elite and the people: "They no longer speak for the people, they speak for themselves" (Ventura, 2018, p. 95). In his book, Macron rejected at that time the French political elite as a whole (Macron, 2016). Finally, in November 2018, in front of the French mayors, Macron presented himself and LREM "as real populists, we are with the people, every day" (Jublin, 2018). By doing this, Macron draws a line between populism and demagogues (i.e., Le Pen).

The populist appeal of a former Minister and technocrat remains counter intuitive. Nevertheless, Macron was described as a populist (Bordignon, 2017; Godin, 2016; Norris & Inglehart, 2019) and embraced the label himself (Jublin, 2018; Macron, 2016). This article aims to question both these premises and demonstrate the extent to which Emmanuel Macron can be described as a technocratic populist. To do that, we analyze the French specificities and show how this new reality matches the ideal type of technocratic populism.

3.4. Macron as the Only Possible Solution

As we already stated, one of the key factors of the Macron's success was (and still is) the failure of the well-established parties of the moderate left and right (cf. Castaldo & Verzichelli, 2020, for parallel development in Italy). These parties were alternating in power since the 1970s, dominating French political life. Their domination progressively eroded due to the growing electoral success of the anti-establishment radical right National Front, which challenged the political establishment. However, the progressive weakening of the establishment parties was mainly due to internal causes (incapacity to select competent elites or corruption; Perottino, 2016). As the establishment eroded, and the radical right remained unpalatable for mainstream voters, a window of opportunity opened for Macron, who successfully used it.

Macron started his political career with the Socialist Party (he was a ranking member of this party in 2006–2009; "Emmanuel Macron n'est plus encarté," 2015). However, he rose in the ranks thanks to his professional technocratic career, competence, and networks (social capital). His legitimacy claim was to be an outsider, even if he was one of the essential ministers before running for President (Pietralunga & Bonnefous, 2016). This (relative) newness was also underlined by his age and largely contradicted the 'normal' way to enter politics in France. Once again, Macron was the insider-outsider product and a part of a system he denounced: "Faced with the system, my will to transgress is strong" ("Emmanuel Macron: Face au système," 2016).

Macron refused to play the game of the left and declined participating in the presidential primaries de facto organized by his former party. This refusal was quite logical as Macron refused to be seen as a part of an ending world and to risk losing his main advantages without gaining anything. He was criticized for his weak ideological anchoring, and a blur program. Macron's approach and action can be seen as returning to what Maurice Duverger called the 'swamp' (*le marais*; see Elgie, 2018). As mentioned by Mayaffre, Bouzereau, Ducoffe, Guaresi, and Precioso (2017, p. 135): "Emmanuel Macron's speeches cultivate dynamics more than they work on themes; they rely on the modalities of politics and action (bringing together, setting in motion, building consensus) more than on the political program itself.''

Emmanuel Macron entered the political world as a technocrat, not through the classical electoral path. He never ran at any level of the French political system. His legitimacy was only technocratic, as a high civil servant and as a top bank manager. Macron's two years engagement as a minister gave him a high capacity to show his know-how and provided necessary credibility

as a social-liberal. His private sector career equipped him to present himself as more transparent and efficient than his fellow ministers in the Socialist government. While the government was facing strong critiques, part of the opposition presented Macron as a 'good minister doing good things.' During his time as a minister of economy, Macron's signature legislation was the Law for growth, activity and equal economic opportunities (French Republic, 2015), known as Macron Law (broad law composed of measures concerning a large part of the economic activity, changing numerous rules, for instance, the work at night or on Sunday, the taxes or liberalizing coach transport). Macron's capacity to harness support for the law among both left and right was evident, foreshadowing his capacity to establish LREM as a movement logically bridging or transcending the left and the right.

Hand in hand with the changes that occurred in the French society during the last three or four decades, Emmanuel Macron as a minister and as a presidential candidate practically embodied the modern spirit, dominated by the (neo)liberal discourse. In other words, he appeared the contrary of the old elite: Young, modern, uncorrupted, competent, and fulfilling the ideal of the technocrat from both public and private sectors. During a 2017 TV debate with Marine Le Pen, Macron's competence, knowledge, and effectiveness were evident, and he successfully outperformed Le Pen, demonstrating his qualities.

4. Technocratic Populist in Power

Macron's undeniable personal competence, culture, and charm made him a charismatic presidential candidate. On 7 May 2017, the 39-year old disrupter became the youngest President in the history of France. In his inaugural speech, Macron combined an appeal to the people, with the promise of competence and renewal—highlighting the redemptive politics of populism (Canovan, 1999):

> My dear fellow citizens, a new page in our history has been turned this evening. I want it to be that of renewed hope and confidence. The renewal of our public life will be a requirement for everyone as from tomorrow. Raising moral standards in our public life, recognizing pluralism, and democratic vitality will be the bedrock of my action from the first day. I will not let any obstacle get in my way. I will work with determination and with due respect for everyone, because through work, school and culture, we will build a better future. (Macron, 2017b)

For Macron, the sui generis candidate, the election was a turning point, as he faces the choice between three archetypal presidential postures. First, the 'partisan President'—ideological, engaged in everyday politics and deeply unpopular (Hollande). Second, 'performative president'—highly active and visible known as the 'hyperpresident' (Sarkozy). And third, a 'Jupiterian president'—detached from everyday politics above 'the political scrum' and beloved by the people (de Gaulle). Macron, a long-time admirer of de Gaulle, embraces the latter symbolically and in his presidential posture—his official presidential photograph prominently features de Gaulle's war memoirs opened on President's desk (Boudet, 2017). As a President, Macron communicates less, leaves everyday politics to the government, while engaging on the global scene. This detached style enables Macron to maintain support and deflect critique for unpopular aspects of reforms ("Macron ne croit pas," 2016; see also Cole, 2018). It also enables him to distinguish himself from the highly political presidents of the Third and the Fourth Republic (Cole, 2018). Macron largely maintained this de Gaule-inspired hands-off style until the Covid-19 pandemic when he became more involved (Pietralunga, Zappi, & de Royer, 2020).

4.1. Responsiveness: The Leader Giving Voice to the People

The vehicle for Macron's rise was his movement LREM. Multiple versions of the party's name existed over time, the initial *En Marche!*, with an emphasis on the EM acronym, evolved into today's LREM. LREM, a broad movement, enabled Macron to form a base and societal support "the raison d'être of LREM is to gather goodwill (and support) around a positive ambition for our country" (En Marche, 2020). The LREM founding myth is that it was formed from the bottom-up, from the "desire to rebuild from below" (En Marche, 2020). However, LREM is a top-down movement—part communication strategy, part political organizing—but Emmanuel Macron, his advisors and staff, 'give people the voice' (En Marche, 2020). It is Macron who enables the people to express their will through the unmediated relationship with him (cf. Caramani, 2017). At the core of LREM is technocratic populism. Macron outlined his agenda before the first round of French presidential elections in 2017: "A France which goes beyond the old divisions to put in place the solutions that work, and which finally leads to a real moralization of its political life" (Macron, 2017a). Technocratic populism best captures this mixture of populist and technocratic appeals.

En Marche started in May 2016 with a large door to door campaign. In the 'Great Walk,' 4,000 volunteers surveying 100,000 citizens, providing the basis for LREM's program. The aim of the 'Great Walk' was to project responsiveness and competence—LREM surveyed the will of the people and processed this will into a 'unified interest of the country.' In reality, this was an effective campaign using techniques and staff with experience working on the campaigns of Francois Hollande and Barrack Obama. The survey was processed and analyzed by 200 experts and spin doctors (Dryef, 2017; Strudel, 2017).

The main innovation (compared to campaigns run by political parties), was ‘giving voice to the ordinary people’ to draft the party program. LREM drew historical parallels to the letters of grievances (*Cahiers de doléances*, drawn up in 1789), but using experts’ competence to aggregate the answers into a coherent electoral program. The collection of people’s grievances was a way to create a direct linkage between the people (everybody can participate) and the leader, eliminating intermediate bodies (including political parties’ role as ‘transmission belts’; cf. Sartori, 1976).

Facing the Yellow Vests protest in 2018, Emmanuel Macron scaled the 2016 ‘Great Walk’ to the national level. In December 2018, the Great National Debate, a ‘listening tour’ comprised of more than 10,000 local meetings, generated more than two million proposals on four topics: energy transition, economy (including taxation, retirement age, pensions), democracy, and citizenship (including immigration, ‘political Islam,’ and reform of state and public services—including the role of elite schools such as ENA; “Key points of Macron’s plans,” 2019). Emmanuel Macron, whose popularity decreased significantly between 2017 and 2018, participated personally in dozens of these sessions, promising to dedicate the second part of his mandate to “putting citizens at the center of his agenda.” The debates coincided with the beginning of the electoral campaign for the European parliament elections, and Macron’s critics viewed it as a political strategy to improve the President’s image—highlighting the exaggeration of the number of participants, as well as the fact that the government is still to take up the proposals.

As a follow up to the 2018 Great National Debate, a Citizen Assembly was organized between 2019 and 2020. In October 2019, 150 randomly selected citizens participated in debates focused on climate change. The debates were broad and democratic, producing a large set of proposals. However, similarly to the Great National Debate, reservations prevail about the future of the proposals—in contrast to the initial announcement, the President decided to dismiss some of the proposals. Furthermore, the draw method for random selection was unclear (the Harris Interactive polling institute selected the 150 citizens), and the Parliament was excluded from the process.

All three procedures for engaging citizens—the ‘Great Walk,’ the ‘Great National Debate,’ and the ‘Citizens Assembly’ represent new forms of direct linkage between the people and the reader. They bypass traditional representative institutions and do not offer any form of clear accountability. Unlike the institution of referenda, which has previously destabilized presidents’ positions (1969 and 2005), these new democratic innovations combine the appeal of responsiveness, without accountability (Macron has full control over the implementation of outcomes). The debates ‘give voice to the people’ as the President ‘listens,’ politics is unmediated and personalized, and the leader remains unconstrained and has experts on his side to help him decipher the will of the people (cf. Caramani, 2017).

4.2. Responsibility: The Reforms and the Limits of Technocratic Populism in Power

Historically, French pension reforms trigger backlash—popular mobilization and strikes—and can lead to the fall of government (1995 pension reform). In fall 2019, Macron’s government initiated major pension reform. In contrast to 1995, Macron’s government has a more efficient communication strategy—combining populist and technocratic appeals of ‘us vs. them’—the clash of the old and the new systems, experts vs. ideologues, the necessity of reform vs. the irresponsible status quo. Unlike in 1995, the contemporary opposition was unable to formulate an understandable critique, trade unions were weakened, and the society was depoliticized.

Like in 1995, the 2019 reforms led to large-scale protests. While the reaction to the 2018 Yellow Vest protests was populist responsiveness, the reaction to the 2019 protests marked the return of technocratic populism. Emmanuel Macron portrayed himself and his government as the representatives of modernity, promoters of expert solutions, and the legitimate voice of the people. He denounced the protesters as illegitimate, imprudent, promoting illegitimate social gains for few (protesters, strikers, trade unions) at the expense of the many. In the case of the Yellow Vests, instances of violence during some demonstrations were instrumentalized to delegitimize the movement and its grievances. The pension reform protest was delegitimized on the grounds of lacking the competence to understand complex issues.

Similarly to the pension reform, the Covid-19 crisis also follows the technocratic populist playbook (cf. Buštíková & Babos, 2020; Guasti, 2020). During the pandemic’s initial phase, the President was mostly absent, and the government in charge. As the critique of the government intensified, Macron changed his approach and took the lead. The President became personally engaged, not in drafting and implementing solutions; instead, Emmanuel Macron set out to search for the best solution. This included a personal visit to the proponent of hydroxychloroquine and media darling, Professor Raoult in Marseille, to personally discuss the potential of hydroxychloroquine as a cure. Professor Raoult was at odds with the other experts, but the President presented himself as ‘open-minded’ and searching for effective solutions.

The reaction to the 2019 protests show the complicated relationship between technocratic populism and the will of the people—when people reject his politics, Macron delegitimizes their voices because they are outside of the unified will of the people he embodies and because their knowledge is inferior to the expertise of the President and his advisors.

5. Conclusion

In 2017 Emmanuel Macron transformed French Politics. He emerged when the embattled traditional party system imploded, and populism rose (radical left and radical right). This article argues that Emmanuel Macron's presidential bid succeeded because he combined populist anti-establishment appeal with a technocratic appeal to competence. He was able to transcend the exhausted politics of the left and the right, while simultaneously fending off radical populist competitors (especially the National Front) using technocratic populism.

Emmanuel Macron was an insider taking on the system and positioning himself as an outsider. He refused the traditional labels, including centrism, elite recruitment patterns, and mediated politics. Instead, Macron and LREM attempted to create new forms of responsiveness by 'giving voice to the people,' while relying on his technocratic competence and that of his expert advisors. Macron success highlights the exhaustion of the left–right cleavage and the appeal of the new politics.

Technocratic populism in power attempts to balance responsiveness and responsibility (cf. Guasti & Buštíková, 2020). In terms of responsiveness, Macron initiated new procedures for engaging citizens, forming a new direct linkage between the leader and the people. These procedures create an alternative to the traditional representative institutions, unmediated politics without accountability. The unified conception of the will of the people combined with the belief in experts' superior knowledge does not allow for dissent. Opposition (such as the 2019) protests are delegitimized as uncivilized and/or uninformed.

After reaching power, Emmanuel Macron sought to distance himself from everyday politics. The Covid-19 crises forced him to reengage. In power, Macron is no longer an outsider 'taking on the system.' Nevertheless, he continues to use the same anti-establishment and (selectively) anti-elitist discursive strategy of bringing the 'people' back. Some aspects of Macron's technocratic populism remain salient—competency (partly showed during the Covid-19 crisis), the necessity to reform France (the Covid-19 crisis has simultaneously delayed reforms, but made them more salient), the denouncement of the intermediate bodies, or the rejection of the old elites (against their comeback to power). The power of Macron's technocratic populism has weakened, but it remains an effective strategy against his mainstream and populist competitors.

The contribution of this article to the study of populism is threefold. First, it provides a systematic analysis of Macron's rise. Second, it highlights an important condition for the rise of populism—the implosion of the established party systems (cf. Caiani & Graziano, 2016; Castaldo & Verzichelli, 2020; Ganuza & Font, 2020; Guasti & Buštíková, 2020). Third, it illustrates that populist rhetoric is not limited to the extremes on the right or the left (Norris, 2020).

Emmanuel Macron was undoubtedly a formidable candidate. Both charismatic and credibly competent, he stood in stark contrast to both the established parties and their populist challengers. Macron combined the redemptive promise of populism—to rejuvenate the country with the technocratic promise of competent governance (cf. Canovan, 1999). LREM also sought to build a new, direct link with the people by introducing democratic innovations as a way to map people's grievances.

Two conditions were essential in Macron's rise: The implosion of the established system of the French Fifth Republic in which the two main parties were alternating in power; and the rise of anti-establishment populist challengers on the right and on the left (cf. Stockemer, 2017; Zulianello, 2020). In was his anti-establishment appeal, which put Macron on the map, but the appeal to technocratic competence won him the presidency. Technocratic populism transcends the left–right cleavage and, as a result, has a broader appeal than its left- and right-wing counterparts.

Finally, the rise of Emmanuel Macron and LREM demonstrates that populism does not necessarily imply a threat for liberal democracy and cannot be automatically linked to illiberalism (cf. Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Populist rhetoric and thin-centered ideology can be found in other 'quadrants' than on the extreme right and extreme left (Norris, 2020). New forms of populism include valence (cf. Zulianello, 2020) and technocratic populism (cf. Buštíková & Guasti, 2019).

Future research should focus on the analysis of the LREM. Beyond its leader's technocratic populism, it would be essential to analyze this new' party's institutionalization and programmatic orientation. Furthermore, comparatively, LREM could be analyzed in the context of similar party-movements such us the Italian Five Star Movement, Spanish Podemos, Czech ANO, and Slovak Party of the Ordinary People. The recent dissent of a large part of LREM's MPs, decline in support for Emmanuel Macron, and LREM MPs' defections hint at the degree of volatility these disrupters of the established political order face. The Covid-19 response and subsequent elections will test the competence and lasting appeal of technocratic populists.

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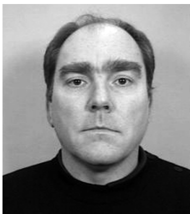
About the Authors



Michel Perottino is an Associate Professor and a Head of the Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague. Between 2000 and 2013, he was the General Secretary of the French Centre for Research in Social Sciences (CEFRES) in Prague. His research specializes on the French and the Czech political systems (political regimes, institutions, and actors) and political parties (especially on the Czech political parties). He is the author of the monograph *French Political System* (SLON, 2005, in Czech) and published on the transformation of political parties and party systems in Europe, the French presidency, and depoliticization.

Petra Guasti is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Jena. In academic year 2018/2019 she was a Democracy Visiting Fellow at the Ash Centre for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Harvard Kennedy School. Her main research focus is the growing tension within the system of representative democracy in respect to its legitimacy. Her research appears in *Democratic Theory*, *Democratization*, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, among others.

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Article

Different Strokes for Different Folks: Who Votes for Technocratic Parties?

Maria Snegovaya

Kellogg Center for Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA 24061, USA; E-Mail: marias20@vt.edu

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Abstract

In this study, I look at two types of political actors commonly described as 'populist' in literature—namely, rightwing populists and technocratic leaders like France's Emmanuel Macron and the Czech Republic's Andrej Babiš. While both types of political actors tend to emerge as a response to a decline in trust in established parties and adopt platforms with anti-establishment and monist elements, they also possess noticeably different qualities. Unlike rightwing populists, technocrats lack a distinctive ideological profile and tend to adopt more inclusive rhetoric by appealing to a broadly-defined community of people. When contrasted with supporters of rightwing populists, empirical analysis of supporters of Macron's and Babiš' parties shows that the two have few commonalities. Relatively few examples of such political leadership, the lack of a distinct ideological profile and the variation of their support bases suggest that one should use caution when conceptualizing technocratic populists as a distinct theoretical type.

Keywords

nativism; populism; radical right; technocrats

Issue

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1. Introduction

The increase of populist political leaders across the world in the last decade has attracted considerable attention in political science literature (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013; Panizza, 2005).

Despite the proliferation of varying types of populist figures, recent studies have primarily paid attention to rightwing populist parties in European countries, including Alternative for Germany, UK Independence Party, and France's National Front (FN, more recently National Rally; Ivaldi, 2018; Schmitt-Beck, 2017; Siri, 2018; Stockemer, 2017). A key defining feature of these parties is an anti-elitist message and the use of a thin-centered populist ideology which views their respective societies as being in a state of constant Manichean struggle between the 'people,' whose interests they claim to represent, and malevolent or corrupt elites (Mudde, 2004, 2007).

In recent years, scholars have also increasingly paid attention to technocratic leaders, who adopt anti-establishment appeals to reject the establishment politics on both sides of the political spectrum, while offering their own technocratic competence and expert solutions to benefit the 'people' (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Havlík, 2019; Heinisch & Saxonberg, 2017). Studies have referred to the political leadership of Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, Andrej Babiš in the Czech Republic, Emmanuel Macron in France, Donald Trump in the United States, Bidzina Ivanishvili in Georgia, and Rafael Correa in Ecuador as examples of such political actors (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; de la Torre, 2013).

Despite the existence of substantive literature on the rightwing populists and the profiles of their support bases (Pauwels, 2014; Rooduijn, 2018), few studies have focused on the comparison of these figures and technocratic leaders. This article aims to fill that gap. In this text, I focus on two countries, France and the Czech Republic, as examples of nations where technocratic leaders (Emmanuel Macron and Andrej Babiš) were electorally successful in the last decade. I analyze similari-

ties and differences between technocratic leaders and rightwing populists in their respective countries (namely, Marine Le Pen and Tomio Okamura). In this study, I find that while all such leaders use anti-establishment and monist appeals, the salience of populist elements in their platforms varies quite dramatically. In contrast to rightwing populists, technocratic leaders lack a distinctive ideological profile and offer a broader, more inclusive vision of the community of people whose interests they claim to represent, as opposed to a more exclusive nativist vision of 'the people' that is offered by rightwing populists.

In addition, I also find that the parties led by these politicians tend to attract vastly different electorates. Using the European Social Survey (ESS) data, I compare voters of these parties in their respective countries. The results show that while Le Pen's FN and Okamura's Freedom and Direct Democracy attract similar social groups from lower socioeconomic strata, as well as voters with Eurosceptic, anti-establishment and anti-immigration attitudes, supporters of the parties led by Macron and Babiš tend to cut across class lines, differ in their positions on Euroscepticism and immigration, and have higher (rather than lower) levels of institutional trust. Therefore, being distinctly different from supporters of rightwing populist parties, the electorates of La Republique en Marche! (LaREM) and ANO 2011 (Action of Dissatisfied Citizens) have few commonalities between each other, if any.

Relatively few examples of such political leadership, lack of a distinct ideological profile, and variation of their support groups suggests that one should use caution when conceptualizing technocratic populists as a distinct theoretical type.

2. Commonalities between Rightwing and Technocratic Populists

The most widely accepted definition of populism focuses on its tendency to assign a binary moral dimension to political conflicts by drawing a Manichean distinction between the 'good people' and the 'bad elites' (Hawkins, 2009, 2010; Mudde, 2004, 2007; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Populists, therefore, are monists in the sense that they tend to conceive of society as a singular unitary body (Canovan, 1981; Taggart, 2004). Populists are 'people-centrist' in that they argue that the will of the people should be the point of departure for all political decision-making and claim to represent the 'people,' a vaguely-defined homogeneous entity which could refer to a nation, ethnic group, culture, religion, civilization, etc. (Müller, 2016; Rooduijn, 2018; Taggart, 2000). Populists are also anti-establishment—that is, they accuse the 'elite' of being incompetent or corrupt (Barr, 2009; Canovan, 2002). Paradoxically, rising to power and becoming members of the elite themselves does not dissuade populists from using this rhetoric. When in power, populists continue to use anti-elite appeals to demobilize and delegitimize their opponents (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019).

The thin nature of the populist ideology allows it to combine with additional ideological elements (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Zulianello, 2020). As a result, scholars often find 'populist' parties on both sides of the political spectrum.

In recent years, scholarship has devoted particular attention to a broad category of rightwing populists. In the past, radical right populists used to be selected as a separate conceptual category, yet in recent years, many of these figures have moderated their previously radical stances on ethnic minorities and immigration (Héjj, 2017; Mondon, 2017). As a result, their platforms became less extremist, and now they are often grouped together in one conceptual category with national-conservative populists and radicalized mainstream politicians (Zulianello, 2020). The key commonality across all these actors is that they tend to combine their populist anti-establishment overtones with nativism, an ideology which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state (Mudde, 2007, p. 19; Mudde, 2010).

In their populist appeals, rightwing populists often rhetorically intertwine the defense of 'the people' with the defense of an ethnicity, culture, or nation (Jenne, 2018; Vachudova, 2020). For example, in the Czech Republic, Tomio Okamura's rightwing populist party Dawn of Direct Democracy has politicized the divide between the 'citizens' and the elites. The party received almost 7% in the 2013 parliamentary election vote; however, in 2015, the party split and several of its members, including Okamura, founded a new political party dubbed Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD). In the 2017 parliamentary elections, the SPD entered the Chamber of Deputies with the fourth result. In his public speeches, Okamura portrays himself as the ultimate guardian of the 'will of the people' while attacking the alleged enemies of the 'people'—that is, mainstream Czech politicians, mainstream media, and the European Union (Chovanec, 2020). His party's platform describes political elites in the Czech Republic as "godfather party mafias" and offers removal of established politicians as the solution for the country's problems (Úsvit přímé demokracie, 2013). These populist appeals are mixed with explicitly nativist overtones through an emphasis on the threat of immigrants allegedly taking away Czech citizens' jobs, as shown by the slogan "support to families, not to unadaptables. Work to our [people], not to immigrants" (Kim, 2020).

Similarly, another rightwing populist, a leader of the FN, Marine Le Pen, presents herself as "the voice of the people, the spirit of France" and the representative of the French "honest and hard-working people" who are governed by "corrupt elites" (Stockemer & Barisione, 2017). The populist overtones of these appeals have a distinctly anti-establishment and nativist

element. The FN advances an exclusionist, ethno-cultural conception of the people by portraying immigration as a "threat to national identity" and a burden for the French welfare system and finances. This threat, according to the FN, calls for the enforcement of "national priority" (Ivaldi, Lanzone, & Woods, 2017). In the 2012 and 2017 parliamentary elections, the FN won 13.6% and 13.2% of votes respectively, and in the 2017 French presidential election, Marine Le Pen made it to the presidential runoff.

The second group, technocratic leaders, also portray the society as being in a state of a Manichean struggle between the 'bad elites' and the 'good people' whose interests they claim to represent. However, instead of nativist ideology, these leaders employ a more inclusive vision of 'the people' and combine populist appeals to ordinary people with promises to resolve societal problems through their own technocratic competence (Havlík, 2019). Andrej Babiš in the Czech Republic and Emmanuel Macron in France are often used as examples of such political leadership (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Havlík, 2019; Maynard & Lahdelma, 2018).

These leaders tend to marry technocracy with populism by creating an anti-establishment and anti-elitism rhetoric which combines attacks on the corruption of the established parties with technocratic promises that target the inability of established parties to deliver in terms of governance (Bickerton & Accetti, 2018; Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Guasti, 2020). Both Andrej Babiš and Emmanuel Macron emphasize their technocratic credentials as a tool to solve the challenges faced by their respective societies. Babiš, for example, has repeatedly stressed that he does not trust traditional politics, and has advocated for a different, managerial approach to politics where ministers are experts rather than career politicians. Babiš portrays himself as an outsider of the system, that is, not a politician, but an amicable, philanthropic manager who knows how to care for those in his charge (Engler, Pytlas, & Deegan-Krause, 2019; Kopeček, 2016). Babiš' party ANO 2011 has fiercely criticized established political parties for the alleged corrupt behavior of their representatives (Havlík, 2019). ANO offered to "make everything better for the ordinary people" through an "expert and businesslike" governance style which runs "the state as a firm" (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Guasti & Buštíková, 2020). High salience of anti-corruption and anti-elitism distinguished ANO from other Czech parties (Havlík, 2019) and helped it become the most successful Czech political party since the fall of communism. Notably, ANO received about 19% and 30% of the vote in the 2013 and the 2017 elections.

Another example of technocratic leadership is France's Emmanuel Macron, who achieved a landslide victory in the 2017 presidential elections by receiving 66.1% of the vote. His party LaREM subsequently secured a majority in the French legislative elections. Macron's program can be described as populist, especially given his continuous portrayal of French society as being divided into two camps—the backward-looking conservatives and the progressive reformers. He makes an explicit connection between national sovereignty and reclaimed agency for ordinary people (Fougère & Barthold, 2020). Macron's populist rhetoric disqualified the two traditional (left and right) ruling parties as part of the failed, old-guard elites, while portraying himself as an outsider of the system and emphasizing the "modest backgrounds" his parents came from (Macron, 2017, p. 17). Macron has also described himself as a political leader who is uniquely capable, through the expert knowledge he gained working as a Minister of Economy under former president François Hollande, to address problems facing the French people. While in power, Macron continued using populist appeals, claiming to defend his expert decision-making on behalf of the peoples' interests against those of the illegitimate, imprudent elites on the other side of the society (Perottino & Guasti, 2020). These anti-establishment tones were also reflected in Macron's En Marche! movement, which subsequently transformed into the political party La Republique en Marche! Upon its founding, consistent with Macron's anti-establishment discourse, the party did not accept members of other political parties or established politicians. Instead, LaREM was comprised of local online-constituted committees with no formal hierarchy (Fougère & Barthold, 2020). Subsequently, the salience of anti-elite themes remained high for LaREM in comparison to most other French parties (except FN and Unbowed France; Perottino & Guasti, 2020).

Direct ideological appeals to 'the people' over the heads of 'the discredited elites' is the key reason why political leaders as different as Tomio Okamura, Marine Le Pen, Andrej Babiš and Emmanuel Macron are 'lumped' together as populists. However, rather than being an end in itself, these appeals often reflect the current crisis within political systems from which these politicians tend to emerge. Anti-establishment sentiment flourishes in an atmosphere of declining political trust, critical evaluation of political parties, and negative attitudes toward politicians and politics in general (Kriesi, 2018). Studies have found a direct link between policy convergence of the political mainstream and a subsequent emergence of populist parties that offer alternative policy options (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006; Kitschelt & McGann, 1997; Meguid, 2005). Failure of mainstream parties to truly represent the interests of their voters erodes their own support, decreases satisfaction with democracy, and contributes to the electoral success of populists (Caiani & Graziano, 2019; Kriesi & Pappas, 2015). The populist platforms of the rising challengers that emphasize their appeal to 'ordinary people' over the allegedly corrupt or malevolent elites is often a natural response to the existing dissatisfaction of their voters with the political establishment.

All of these parties and leaders, therefore, tend to come to power in an atmosphere of declining trust in established parties. Since populists are a response to

popular dissatisfaction with political mainstream, it is not surprising that electoral successes of technocrats and rightwing populists go hand in hand—both reflect voters' dissatisfaction with traditional politics. For example, the rise of Macron in France occurred amidst a growing distrust of political leaders and institutions, which fueled the rise of populist parties and drove voter abstention to unprecedented levels (Chamorel, 2019). The emergence of Macron coincided with a surge in popularity of Marine Le Pen, with whom he competed in the runoff of the 2017 presidential elections. Macron's 2017 election victory was, to a large extent, a function of his outsider status, the collapse of the traditional political establishment, and the rejection of Le Pen's rightwing populism. Similarly, in the Czech Republic, ANO's success in the 2013 and 2017 parliamentary elections coincided with the rise of the Dawn/SPD.

However, while studies have paid particular attention to rightwing populist parties in the context of their responses to widespread disillusionment with the country's ruling elite and claims to restore responsiveness in the political system, few have analyzed a second type—the technocratic populist response and characteristics of their support bases (Caramani, 2017; Dargent, 2015).

3. Differences between Rightwing and Technocratic Populists

Similarities in these leaders' discourse should not conceal critical differences between rightwing populists and technocrats.

First, technocratic leaders are often described as non-ideological, "ideologically unfocused" (Havlík, 2019), or ideologically "thin" (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). This vagueness is strategic in so far as it enables these leaders to overcome the left-right divide and combine a broad variety of policies across both sides of the political spectrum (Guasti, 2020). Unconstrained by the need of ideological consistency, technocrats have the flexibility to choose from a wide array of policies, including both redistributive and/or neoliberal policies (Guasti, 2020). In recent years, for example, ANO, a party that originally embraced neoliberal policies consistent with Babiš's self-portrayal as a businessman, has moved to the left on economy and has used targeted welfare policies to buy off segments of the electorate. Ideological vagueness like this makes it harder to classify these political actors into one homogeneous party family.

ANO, for instance, comes up ideologically short in comparison to many ideologically-driven rightwing populist parties (Hanley & Vachudova, 2018). Babiš is primarily a pragmatic businessman, that is, a manager rather than a politician, whose idea of effective governing is to run the country like a company (Pehe, 2018). This made some scholars reluctant to classify ANO as a populist party (Engler et al., 2019). Similarly, Macron's 2017 electoral campaign adopted a deliberate ideological vagueness by describing himself as "both rightwing and left-wing" (Fougère & Barthold, 2020). To preserve this ideological ambiguity, Macron even delayed publishing his electoral program until less than two months before the presidential election. This delay made some observers argue that "it is inconceivable that candidates for the highest office in any other major democracy would express themselves [so vaguely]" (Fougère & Barthold, 2020; Hazareesingh, 2017), while making some question to what extent Macron could be described as a populist (Jones, 2017).

Second, unlike rightwing populists, technocrats do not define 'the people' in strictly nativist terms. In contrast to rightwing populists, they adopt more inclusive rhetoric by appealing to a broadly defined community of people.

Andrej Babiš' discourse, for example, does not describe the Czech Republic in nativist terms. Instead, it presents the country as a land of people who are exceptional for their diligence, extraordinary manual skills, brightness, and wit (Havlík, 2019). ANO defines itself as a party for everyone that cross-cuts existing cleavages (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). Similarly, Macron's 2017 electoral rhetoric cut across partisan, ethnic, and religious lines by offering a broader notion of community and attempting to "bring together people from the left, center and right who want to work together" (Fougère & Barthold, 2020). Macron criticized Marine Le Pen, a leader of the rightwing populist FN party, for her adoption of divisive "hate-filled speeches" towards minorities, while portraying himself as being more inclusive of all French people (Cuny, 2017).

4. Variation across Electorates

As a result of these important differences, rightwing populists and technocrats should attract supporters who, while all dissatisfied with mainstream politics, represent different social groups, socioeconomic statuses, and attitudinal characteristics.

Scholarship on populism in Europe has argued that supporters of populist parties have a number of commonalities.

First, studies in Western Europe have found that rightwing populist parties tend to attract supporters with lower socioeconomic status, especially working-class electorates, a phenomenon that became known in the literature as "proletarization" of the populist right vote (Arzheimer, 2013; Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002; Oesch, 2008; Spies, 2013). In Central and Eastern European contexts, however, the impact of individual socioeconomic status on the support for these parties is less straightforward. Some studies found that while working-class constituencies in Hungary supported populist right parties (Győri, 2015; Knutsen, 2013), in countries like the Czech Republic and Slovakia these groups were more likely to associate with left-oriented parties (Hloušek & Kopeček, 2008; Linek, 2015). This relationship

between socioeconomic status and support for rightwing populists might be conditioned by the economic positions of competing parties (Snegovaya, 2020).

In contrast to rightwing populists, the more inclusive appeals of the technocrats should cut across class lines, while their emphasis on the importance of expertise and qualifications should appeal to more educated voters. In line with this expectation, earlier studies have demonstrated that unlike support for other Czech parties, support for ANO is not predicted by ideology, policy attitudes, or a specific social class (Havlík & Voda, 2018; Maškarinec, 2017). Macron's electoral base was found to be disproportionately urban, financially well-off, and well-educated (Chamorel, 2019).

I therefore expect rightwing parties to attract working-class electorates, while technocratic parties attract voters across class lines.

Second, studies of populism have identified that populist voters tend to have lower levels of trust in established parties and politicians. This stems from the nature of the populist parties that politicize anti-elite sentiment and attack political establishments by presenting themselves as defenders of 'ordinary people' (Mair, 2002; Mudde, 2007). Studies have found that such ideological appeals attract voters who are dissatisfied with political establishments and have higher levels of political mistrust (Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Oesch, 2008; Santana, Zagórski, & Rama, 2020).

I therefore expect both types of populist parties to attract voters with lower levels of political trust.

Third, populist voters also tend to be more Eurosceptic, due to the anti-establishment nature of such parties. Euroscepticism may be understood as an 'anti-political establishment' position (Schedler, 1996) that affords populist parties an issue in which they might cast themselves in opposition to the political class as a whole (Harmsen, 2010). Populist parties often channel the disaffection of their voters with mainstream politics by questioning European integration and depicting the European Union as a threat to the identity and nationhood of their respective societies. As a result, studies have found that supporters of populist parties tend to be Eurosceptic (Ramiro, 2016; Visser, Lubbers, Kraaykamp, & Jaspers, 2014; Werts, Scheepers, & Lubbers, 2013).

I therefore expect both rightwing populists and technocrats to attract voters with higher levels of Euroscepticism.

Ultimately, in recent years, following the wave of refugees that entered Europe in 2015, the anti-EU sentiment has become closely linked to an opposition to immigration and open borders. The subsequent surge in support for populist right parties has been linked to the growth in levels of immigration to Europe (Grzymala-Busse, 2019; Norris & Inglehart, 2019, p. 179). These anti-immigration views should be primarily associated with support of rightwing populists whose nativist stances mix well with rejection of immigration (Allen, 2017; Arzheimer & Berning, 2019; Shehaj, Shin, & Inglehart, 2019). While nativism is conceptually distinct from attitudes towards immigration, it is inherently linked to the idea that immigrants represent a "cultural threat" (Knoll, 2013), and has previously been shown to have a significant effect on immigration attitudes and immigration-related policy preferences (Citrin & Sides, 2008).

I therefore expect anti-immigration stances to be more pronounced among supporters of rightwing populists.

While many papers have focused on the electorates of rightwing populists, few have attempted to analyze them in comparison to supporters of technocrats. In the following sections, this article fills in this gap by focusing on socioeconomic and attitudinal characteristics across the electorates of parties led by Macron's LaREM in France and Babiš's ANO 2011 in the Czech Republic, and contrasts them to supporters of rightwing populist parties FN and Dawn/SPD in their respective countries. First, I focus on various sociodemographic indicators, like education, income, and social class, that might predict support for these parties. Second, I focus on the attitudinal preferences of these electorates, specifically analyzing their levels of trust in political institutions (a proxy for anti-establishment sentiment), Euroscepticism, and anti-immigration attitudes, in comparison to supporters of mainstream parties in respective countries.

5. Data and Analytical Procedure

For my analysis, I devised a study modeled after previous research (Allen, 2017; Rooduijn, 2018; Santana et al., 2020). The analysis is set at the individual level and is based on the data from the ESS, which is collected biennially in 2014, 2016, and 2018, when data on parties in their respective countries is available.

The dependent variable is based on the ESS question: "Which party did you vote for in the last election?" I recoded this variable so that a respondent scores a "1" if they voted for one of the analyzed parties, and a "0" if they voted for one of the mainstream parties in the parliament at the time of the survey. If a respondent voted for another party, this variable was set to missing.

All regressions include a number of sociodemographic variables: sex, age, quadratic age term, education (primary—base category, secondary and tertiary), household's net income, and unemployment status. To control for respondents' occupational status, I used the commonly-employed Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero classification schema, which transforms the ISCO-88 codes into the following categories: 1) "higher-grade professionals"; 2) "lower-grade professionals"; 3) "routine non-manual employees in administration and commerce, sales personnel, other rank—and file—employees"; 4) "small proprietors including farmers and smallholders"; 5) "skilled manual workers and manual supervisors"; 6) "semi- and unskilled manual workers" (Erikson, Goldthorpe, & Portocarero, 1979; Hendrickx,

2002). The "higher-grade professionals" were chosen as the base category.

The level of political mistrust, which is commonly used in the literature as a proxy for anti-establishment sentiment (Santana et al., 2020), was measured based on three correlated (0–10 scale) standardized variables that asked about respondents' levels of trust in political parties, politicians, and a country's parliament (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.74$). The lower value of the coefficient of this variable corresponds to lower levels of institutional trust.

Euroscepticism is measured using the ESS 11-points question about whether European unification has already gone too far (0) or should go further (10). The negative coefficient of this variable indicates higher levels of Euroscepticism.

To control for immigration attitudes, I performed a factor analysis of three highly-correlated (0–10 scale) standardized variables that asked about respondents' attitudes toward immigrants (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$). The questions asked to assess whether immigrants are bad (0) or good (10) for the economy, undermine (0) or enrich (10) culture, or generally make the respondent's country "worse" (0) or "better" (10).

Because of the binary nature of the dependent variable, I ran probit models controlling for a linear year trend to account for time-level variation. The observations were weighted using the ESS design weights to correct for the fact that respondents in different countries have different probabilities of being sampled. Observations with missing values were deleted.

While the data on ANO, Dawn/SPD, and FN is available for 2014, 2016, and 2018, Macron's LaREM party was absent before 2017.

Instead of a pooled analysis, I analyzed the electorates of all of the selected parties separately. The reason I chose to run separate regressions for each selected party is that the effects discovered from a pooled analysis may confound important variation on the country-level and overestimate the effects of the variables of interest.

6. Findings

For the sake of my analysis, the size of the effects is less important than their sign and significance. Hence the below Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview of the direction of the regression coefficients and show whether they are positive or negative. Marginal effects are provided in the Supplementary File, Appendix II.

Table 1 focuses on the electorates of rightwing populist parties Dawn/SPD in the Czech Republic and the FN in France in comparison to supporters of mainstream parties in parliament at the time of the analysis. The Dawn of Direct Democracy party fell apart in May 2015, when a number of MPs split from it and founded a new party (SPD). Both parties attract similar type of supporters (Kaniok & Hloušek, 2018). To preserve a higher number of observations, I analyzed supporters of the Czech parties Dawn and SPD together. Columns (1) and (3) include basic sociodemographic controls, while columns (2) and (4) add in the analysis attitudinal characteristics of their voters.

Overall, the findings in Table 1 go in line with the expectations and previous literature on this topic. First, in terms of their socioeconomic status (columns (1) and (3) in Table 1), supporters of rightwing populists tend to be working class (in case of FN) and low controllers' status (in case of Dawn/SPD). This is consistent with the literature which found that while in the Western European context there is a strong link between working-class status and rightwing populist vote, in Central and Eastern Europe this association is less straightforward. There is also a consistent negative association between age and support for right populist parties, suggesting that younger voters are more likely to vote for such parties.

Second, based on the coefficients in Table 1 (columns (2) and (4)), supporters of rightwing populist parties in both countries have significantly lower levels of trust in political institutions, and higher levels of Euroscepticism and anti-immigration sentiment. Marginal effects (Table 4 in the Supplementary File, Appendix II) suggest that the size of the effect is larger for the immigration variable, which is consistent with the emphasis these parties make on nativism. This goes in line with earlier studies that have identified these characteristics as distinguishing the electorates of rightwing populists from voters of other parties. In other words, rightwing populists constitute a coherent party family which unites parties that are ideologically close and attracts similar types of supporters.

Next, I repeat this analysis by focusing on parties led by technocratic leaders in respective countries. Table 2 focuses on voters of ANO and LaREM in comparison to supporters of other mainstream parties in parliament at the time of the survey. Columns (1) and (3) include respondents' basic sociodemographic controls, while columns (2) and (4) add their attitudinal characteristics.

First, in terms of their socioeconomic status (columns (1) and (3) in Table 2), supporters of ANO and LaREM do not seem to have many characteristics in common and do not differ much from the electorates of mainstream parties. Here, the effect of education is not consistent (the effects of the education variable disappear after the inclusion of attitudinal variables). Overall, the results are somewhat in line with the original expectations—technocratic populists cut across class lines and appeal to voters belonging to various socioeconomic groups.

Second, in terms of their attitudinal characteristics (columns (2) and (4) in Table 2), the results also do not confirm the expectations. The only variable whose coefficient is consistent across ANO and LaREM is institutional trust, but the sign of the coefficient goes in the direction opposite to the expectations—the supporters of these parties have higher levels of trust in political institutions as compared to voters of mainstream parties. One pos-

Table 1. Probit regression model explaining voting for rightwing populist parties (mainstream parties in parliament as base category).

	(1) Dawn/SPD	(2) Dawn/SPD	(3) FN	(4) FN
Male	0.125	0.223***	−0.285***	−0.187
	(0.096)	(0.107)	(0.146)	(0.165)
Age	−0.009***	−0.014***	−0.024***	−0.033***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Unemployed	0.200	0.178	−0.707	−0.550
	(0.260)	(0.286)	(0.605)	(0.615)
Income	−0.052	−0.079***	−0.056	−0.080
	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.080)	(0.090)
Education:				
Secondary	0.431***	0.488***	−0.153	0.040
	(0.223)	(0.239)	(0.185)	(0.207)
Tertiary	0.211	0.322	−0.942***	−0.581***
	(0.244)	(0.260)	(0.258)	(0.287)
Socio-economic status:				
Low controllers	0.311***	0.429***	0.414	0.427
	(0.155)	(0.178)	(0.311)	(0.398)
Routine nonmanual	0.048	0.170	0.288	0.388
	(0.163)	(0.186)	(0.335)	(0.407)
Self-employed	0.150	0.249	0.749***	0.376
	(0.186)	(0.207)	(0.349)	(0.477)
Skilled manual	0.012	−0.005	0.836***	0.766***
	(0.177)	(0.207)	(0.355)	(0.441)
Semi-unskilled manual	0.115	0.130	0.702***	0.475
	(0.164)	(0.191)	(0.321)	(0.391)
Trust in institutions		−0.171***		−0.233***
		(0.056)		(0.113)
European unification go further		−0.128***		−0.262***
		(0.055)		(0.085)
Immigration		−0.260***		−0.655***
		(0.059)		(0.094)
ESS round	0.097***	0.104***		
	(0.052)	(0.058)		
Constant	−2.426***	−2.417***	0.375	0.875
	(0.525)	(0.596)	(0.464)	(0.553)
Observations	3,325	3,048	777	737
r2_p	0.0291	0.102	0.158	0.377

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

sible explanation is that both ANO and LaREM were in power at the time of the study, and hence higher levels of institutional trust may reflect their voters' satisfaction with the political institutions that allowed these parties to win (Petrova & Snegovaya, 2020). However, this result contradicts the original expectation, as well as the essence of populist ideology, which tends to mobilize voters through anti-elitist messages (Hameleers et al., 2018).

In reference to Euroscepticism and anti-immigration attitudes, the results are also not consistent across both parties. While ANO, as expected, tends to attract more Eurosceptic voters than other parties, supporters of LaREM do not differ from mainstream parties on their levels of Euroscepticism. Additionally, Macron's voters tend to be more oriented in favor of immigration, while Babiš' voters do not differ on this issue from voters of other parties.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that while supporters of the rightwing populist parties tend to have similar attitudinal preferences, voters of parties led by technocratic leaders represent quite different social groups, especially in relation to their socioeconomic status and attitudinal characteristics. Supporters of these

Table 2. Probit regression model explaining voting for technocratic parties (mainstream parties in parliament as base category).

	(1) ANO	(2) ANO	(3) LaREM	(4) LaREM
Male	–0.051	–0.052	0.164	0.158
	(0.056)	(0.058)	(0.115)	(0.122)
Age	–0.005***	–0.005***	0.005	0.006
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Unemployed	–0.424***	–0.417***	–0.316	–0.377
	(0.208)	(0.219)	(0.389)	(0.391)
Income	0.045***	0.045	0.052	0.025
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.069)	(0.074)
Education:				
Secondary	0.229***	0.193	0.065	0.038
	(0.113)	(0.120)	(0.173)	(0.189)
Tertiary	0.172	0.171	0.399***	0.198
	(0.124)	(0.130)	(0.194)	(0.210)
Socio-economic status:				
Low controllers	0.021	–0.019	–0.207	–0.181
	(0.088)	(0.091)	(0.163)	(0.167)
Routine nonmanual	0.036	0.035	–0.340***	–0.395***
	(0.092)	(0.096)	(0.199)	(0.204)
Self-employed	–0.011	–0.082	–0.378	–0.413
	(0.114)	(0.121)	(0.254)	(0.269)
Skilled manual	0.077	0.063	–0.246	–0.190
	(0.098)	(0.103)	(0.296)	(0.311)
Semi-unskilled manual	–0.057	–0.045	–0.582***	–0.609***
	(0.096)	(0.100)	(0.229)	(0.239)
Trust in institutions		**0.088*** **		**0.238*** **
		(0.031)		(0.079)
European unification should go further		–0.051***		0.101
		(0.031)		(0.065)
Immigration		–0.023		0.192***
		(0.035)		(0.072)
ESS round	0.065***	0.049		
	(0.031)	(0.033)		
Constant	–1.039***	–0.816***	–0.896***	–1.078***
	(0.313)	(0.336)	(0.389)	(0.422)
Observations	3,179	2,917	680	644
r2_p	0.0103	0.0118	0.0500	0.0988

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

parties vary dramatically in terms of their stances on Euroscepticism, and, contrary to expectation, show higher levels of trust in political institutions than voters of other mainstream parties. This last finding should be interpreted as a warning against theorizing the technocratic populist parties as a distinct theoretical concept, as this contradicts the core of populism—its anti-elitist message.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, I have looked at two types of political actors who are commonly described as 'populist' in literature—namely, rightwing populists and technocratic leaders. I have analyzed similarities and differences in the platforms of these leaders and their respective parties. In addition, I have empirically compared the electorates of parties led by technocratic leaders—Emmanuel Macron's Republic en Marche in France and Andrej Babiš's ANO 2011 in the Czech Republic against the electorates of rightwing populists in their respective countries, namely, the FN led by Marine Le Pen and Dawn/SPD led by Tomio Okamura.

While both types of political actors tend to emerge in response to a decline in trust in established parties

and adopt platforms with anti-establishment and monist elements, they are also quite different. In contrast to rightwing populists, technocrats deliberately adopt an 'ideological vagueness' that allows them more flexibility in choosing policies which ensure voter support and use a more inclusive notion of 'the people.'

While dissatisfied with established parties, supporters of rightwing populist and technocratic parties represent different social groups, especially in relation to their socioeconomic status and attitudinal characteristics. The rightwing populist parties (Dawn/SPD and National Front) tend to attract voters with lower levels of political trust, higher levels of Euroscepticism, and stronger anti-immigration preferences. These findings are consistent with existing literature on rightwing populists that has identified commonalities across these parties' electorates (Allen, 2017; Rooduijn, 2018; Santana et al., 2020). A distinct ideological profile coupled with specific social groups receptive to their narratives allows us to identify rightwing populist parties as an analytically distinct party family.

By contrast, the empirical analysis of Macron's LaREM and Babiš' ANO parties shows that while cutting across class lines, their supporters have few commonalities in their attitudinal characteristics. These parties' electorates vary in terms of their stances on Euroscepticism and immigration attitudes. These results generally are backed by earlier studies which found that, for example, support for ANO is not predicted by specific ideology, policy attitudes, or a social class category (Havlík & Voda, 2018; Maškarinec, 2017). The heterogeneity of their electorates is, at least, in part driven by the ideologic ambiguity of these parties and leaders, which allows them to attract diverse support.

In addition, contrary to previous expectations, I find that voters of LaREM and ANO have higher levels of trust in political institutions than voters of other mainstream parties. This finding is at odds with the heart of populist ideology, which tends to mobilize voters through anti-elitist appeals (Hameleers et al., 2018). Overall, these results cast doubts on arguments for classifying ANO and LaREM together into a distinct party family (Havlík & Voda, 2018; Maškarinec, 2017).

While the rise of parties combining anti-establishment and monist appeals with an emphasis on technocratic governance can be attributed to a decline in trust in established party elites and rising corruption concerns, it is less clear to what extent these parties can be grouped into one analytical category. These parties adopt populist narratives in response to a perceived crisis of representation in their respective polities, but it is questionable whether they constitute one distinct ideological group of political actors. The relatively small number of such parties, the lack of a distinct ideological profile, and the variation of their support groups suggests that one should use caution when conceptualizing technocratic parties as a distinct theoretical type.

Scholars who have recognized this problem sometimes offer discourse, rather than ideology, as evidence for classification of 'technocratic populists' into a distinct party family. For example, Bickerton and Accetti (2018) argue, using the example of the Five Star Movement and Podemos, that these parties employ a unique type of rhetorical appeals which mix 'anti-system,' 'anti-establishment,' and 'populist' elements with 'technocratic' themes. Other studies, however, have shown that in recent years the number of various political actors (not just those usually labeled as populist) using anti-establishment rhetoric has increased dramatically in many European countries (Engler et al., 2019). Because of this, rhetorical appeals alone may not be sufficient to uniquely distinguish these parties as a separate family. In-depth quantitative analysis of their electoral platforms is needed to confirm that rhetorical appeals of technocratic parties and leaders are indeed distinctly different from those of other political actors.

There are several limitations of this study that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis in this article is limited to 2018, the last year for which ESS data is available. However, in recent years, Babiš and his party ANO have moved more to the left on economic policy to attract new segments of the electorate (including older people and pensioners) through targeted welfare policies. Future studies, therefore, may find that ANO support is more strongly associated with lower socioeconomic status, a fact which might render its voters' profiles closer to that of rightwing populists.

Second, the data availability has also limited the number of parties that could be included in the analysis. Ideally, future studies should expand the analysis to other technocratic leaders and parties, such as Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, Donald Trump in the United States, Bidzina Ivanishvili in Georgia, and Rafael Correa in Ecuador.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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About the Author

Maria Snegovaya (PhD) is a Visiting Scholar at George Washington University, and a Postdoctoral Scholar at the PPE program at Virginia Tech. She is a comparative politics, international relations, and statistical methods specialist. The key focus of her research is democratic backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Russia's domestic and foreign policy. Her research results and analysis have appeared in policy and peer-reviewed journals, including *Journal of Democracy*, *Democratization*, and *Post-Soviet Affairs*. Her research has been referenced in publications such as the *New York Times*, *Bloomberg*, the *Economist*, and *Foreign Policy*. She is frequently invited to give talks at U.S. universities and think tanks.

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Article

Populism versus Technocracy? Populist Responses to the Technocratic Nature of the EU

Marion Reiser * and Jörg Hebenstreit

Department of Political Science, University of Jena, 07743 Jena, Germany; E-Mails: marion.reiser@uni-jena.de (M.R.), joerg.hebenstreit@uni-jena.de (J.H.)

* Corresponding author

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Abstract
While populism and technocracy have attracted enormous scientific attention in recent years, surprisingly how the two concepts relate to each other has rarely been investigated. Looking at the case of the EU, we investigate how populist parties position themselves in relation to technocracy in general and the technocratic nature of EU institutions in particular. In a first theoretical step, we identify the core elements, modes of governance, and policy output of technocratic governance and use them to derive potential responses of populist parties. In the empirical part, we investigate these aspects of technocracy by applying quantitative and qualitative approaches using the 2019 European election manifestos of 12 populist parties. We show that left- and right-wing populist parties articulate anti-technocratic positions, particularly regarding the core elements of technocratic governance. The concrete technocratic critique differs regarding the respective host ideology. However, within the group of hybrid populist parties, ANO 2011 and GERB appear not to have a critical stance towards technocracy and thus can be classified as technocratic populist parties.

Keywords
bureaucracy; European elections; European Union; Euroscepticism; populism; regulation; technocracy

Issue
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1. Introduction

> It is not the French and their Marine Le Pen, not the Austrians and their Heinz-Christian Strache, not the Hungarians and their Viktor Orbán, and it is not us Germans from the AfD who are driving Europe against the wall, but it is these Brussels technocrats who do it and it is to these people that we are declaring war. (Jörg Meuthen, top candidate of the AfD for the European elections 2019 at the AfD European election campaign kick-off on 06 April 2019 in Offenburg; AfD, 2019a)

> After 20 years of experience with governance by our political parties, I do not much trust the flowery claims. What I believe in…is that a state can be run like a private company, not like a chaotic juggernaut, where the godfather's right-hand does not know what the left one is doing. (Andrej Babiš of ANO 2011 in 2013, as cited in Havlík, 2019)

With the rise of both populism and technocratic governance in recent years, there has been extensive research on these two phenomena (e.g., Caramani, 2017; Mair, 2013; Mudde, 2004). Since both are perceived as symptoms of a broader crisis of democratic legitimacy and as types of 'democratic disfiguration' (Urbinati, 2014), the literature has focused on the commonalities and differences in their relation to representative democracy (e.g., Bickerton & Invernizzi Accetti, 2017; Caramani,

2017). However, hardly any research has explored how the two phenomena relate to each other. It is argued, that adopting a unidirectional perspective helps to better understand the specific relations between them as well as the phenomena themselves. We aim to do this by exploring the responses of populist parties to technocratic governance. The above-quoted statements of the two populist parties AfD and ANO 2011 point to different perceptions of technocracy: While Jörg Meuthen from the German right-wing populist party AfD is 'declaring war' to the Brussels technocrats, Andrej Babiš from ANO 2011 promises to 'run the state as a firm' and promotes technocracy and efficiency as the main solution for politics (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Havlík, 2019). This raises questions about varieties of populist responses to technocratic governance and whether there are distinct responses depending on the type of populism. To investigate this empirically, the EU provides an ideal case since its technocratic nature is regularly and harshly criticized, it has also been noted by Habermas that the EU is in "the lure of technocracy" (Habermas, 2015, p. 3; see also Pirro, Taggart, & van Kessel, 2018; Radaelli, 1999). Therefore, the central research question is: How do populist parties respond to technocracy and, in particular, to the technocratic nature of EU institutions and governance?

A comparative framework is proposed to analyze whether and how the populist core and the host ideology of populist parties influence the positions of the populist parties to technocracy. Therefore, we investigate populist parties' responses towards the technocratic nature of the EU through a comparison of different types of populist parties (right-wing, left-wing, hybrid [including technocratic]) based on the party manifestos for the European elections 2019. In the following, based on the central concepts, the conceptual framework and the hypotheses are developed. The third section presents data and methods, followed by the analysis and the conclusions.

2. Theoretical Framework: Connecting Populism and Technocracy

Despite being a contested concept, the sharp contrasting of the 'pure people' and the elite is the core characteristic of almost all definitions of populism (Mudde, 2004; Roberts, 1995). Instead of a corrupt elite, politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* of the people and needs to directly communicate with the people (Urbinati, 2014, p. 132; see also Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Rooduijn, 2013). Given its nature as a 'thin-centred ideology,' populism "can be easily combined with very different (thin and full) other ideologies" (Mudde, 2004, p. 544; see also Heinisch & Mazzoleni, 2017; Taggart, 2004). Therefore, populist parties are not only characterized by their populist element but also by their host ideology. Thus, different forms have been distinguished: as well as right-wing and left-wing populism, a third cluster is characterized by a fuzziness on the left-right spectrum and has been defined as hybrid (Bickerton & Invernizzi Accetti, 2018), centrist (Ivaldi, 2020; Stanley, 2017), or valence populism (Zulianello, 2020). Recently, technocratic populism has been discussed as a distinct form of valence populism. Since it uses "the appeal of technical expertise to connect directly with the people" (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019, p. 302; see also Havlík, 2019), it is of particular interest for the focus of this article.

The technocratic conception of politics suggests that political decisions are taken by unelected experts, rather than by traditional elected representatives. A transfer of authority to expertocratic institutions is believed to ensure that decisions are rational, depoliticized, and impartial (Caramani, 2017; Putnam, 1977). The EU has been characterized as the "the ultimate technocratic project" (Leonard, 2011, p. 2) because of its large number of technocratic institutions (e.g., European Central Bank, the European Court of Justice, other Independent Regulatory Agencies).

2.1. Relating Populism and Technocracy: Commonalities and Differences

Research has analyzed the commonalities and differences of populism and technocracy particularly in their relationship to representative and party democracy (Urbinati, 2014). By applying such a 'relational perspective,' both phenomena are perceived as symptoms of a broader crisis of democratic legitimacy that share "a unitary, nonpluralist, unmediated, and unaccountable vision of society's general interest" (Caramani, 2017, p. 54) and have party democracy as their common enemy. Thus, the two phenomena are perceived as "mirror images of each other" (Müller, 2014, p. 490). But there is also a second—diametrically opposed—perception that they are "two extreme poles of the continuum of politics" (Worsley, 1993, p. 730) because of the differences in relation to central features of representation such as legitimacy, political authority, and the role of the people.

From this perspective, technocracy and populism seem incompatible. However, surprisingly, populism and technocracy have rarely been directly connected. It is argued in this article, that adopting a 'unidirectional perspective' that looks at technocracy through populist glasses is important to better understand the specific relations between the two phenomena as well as the phenomena themselves.

2.2. Adopting a Unidirectional Perspective: Populists' Responses to the Technocratic Character of the EU

In order to analyze how populist parties position themselves in relation to technocracy, it has to be clarified which dimensions are relevant from a theoretical perspective. In line with the literature on technocracy (Bickerton & Invernizzi Accetti, 2017; Caramani, 2017; Urbinati, 2014), three central dimensions can be identified and used to derive potential responses to tech-

nocracy: (1) the core ideas, (2) the modes, and (3) the output of technocratic governance. These aspects can be addressed by both critical and approving responses. Before elaborating on these three dimensions, it has to be stressed that due to the focus on technocracy and populism other populist responses to the EU—pro-European and Eurosceptic positions—are not in the scope of this article (see Section 3 for details). Euroscepticism has been defined as the "idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration" (Taggart, 1998, p. 366). The degree of opposition ranges from hard to soft Euroscepticism and comprises critique from an economic, cultural, or political perspective (Hooghe & Marks, 2007; Taggart, 2004). Within this debate, technocratic critique has been conceptualized as an element of the political criticism of the EU. Research has revealed that—in particular right-wing—populist parties in Europe are often Eurosceptic (e.g., Harmsen, 2010; Pirro et al., 2018). However, it has been stressed that populists are not Eurosceptic per se (e.g., Kneuer, 2019). For instance, Kaniok and Havlík (2016) show that ANO 2011—despite being a populist party—has a pro-European attitude. Hence, although Euroscepticism and technocratic critique of the EU overlap, they are neither conceptually nor empirically congruent. Thus, conceptually, populist responses to technocracy can refer to the following three central dimensions.

First, responses to technocracy can refer to its core idea of a unitary, common, and objective interest of a given society. Technocratic governance implies the presence of technocratic elites, which identify the objective interest based on expertise and "rational speculation" (Caramani, 2017, p. 61). By refraining from mediation and aggregation of different conflicting interests (e.g., by political parties), depoliticized, and rational solutions to problems can be achieved. These central ideas can be positively approved by populist parties or criticized. Criticism could refer to a lack of input legitimacy due to the unelected nature of technocratic elites and institutions, as well as decisions which break the chain of delegation and lack popular sovereignty. Other arguments could refer to a lack of responsibility and control and the depoliticized nature of politics.

Second, building on these central ideas, responses can also refer to the modes of technocratic governance. While bureaucracy is a constitutive element of all forms of government, it is—together with regulation—considered as of particular importance for a technocratic way of governing (Esmark, 2020; Majone, 2007). As Scicluna and Auer (2019) demonstrate, the monetary crisis has made the EU government more technocratic and increased the 'regulatory space.' This includes regulations of policy areas by implementing regulatory standards through expertocratic and non-majoritarian regulatory bodies such as the European Central Bank or the European Commission. Since the activities of technocratic elites are described as mostly non-transparent (Radaelli, 1999, p. 155), responses are also expected from this perspective. Although technocratic institutions may appear to be less vulnerable to lobbying due to their independence from the electoral process, the danger of 'corporate' and 'regulatory capture' is nevertheless part of the standard critique of technocratic institutions (Majone, 1994, pp. 10, 21). These modes of governance can be evaluated positively as efficient and rational forms of governance, or they may be criticized from two perspectives: Either because of their lack of transparency, or their overregulation.

A third dimension of responses refers to technocratic output and policy results which are ascribed to the technocratic nature of decision-making. In relation to the EU, it is assumed that responses refer in particular to those policy areas which are increasingly tackled at the European level such as monetary and fiscal policy, economic policy, migration policy, austerity policy, and consumer protection policy. Technocratic output is open to criticism because it involves political decisions taken by democratically illegitimate, unaccountable, and non-transparent actors—or in other words, by technocratic institutions. For instance, the austerity measures adopted by the Troika could be criticized both explicitly and implicitly, for being legally binding but created without democratic legitimacy, accountability, or transparency (e.g., Barrett, Corbet, & Larkin, 2019).

How do populist parties respond to technocracy? Do they criticize or approve of the technocratic nature of the EU? And which aspects of technocracy do they respond to? As argued, we expect a variety of populists' responses. We assume that both dimensions, the populist core and the host ideology (Akkerman, 2015; Huber & Schimpf, 2017; Mudde, 2004), influence the responses of the populist parties to technocracy.

2.2.1. Responses of Populist Parties Concerning the Populist Core Element

Considering the characteristics and dimensions of technocracy, from the perspective of the populist core of the parties, there are two ideal-typical responses to technocratic political approaches.

The first response is a rejection of technocracy because of the antagonism between populism and technocracy regarding their notion of the will of the people, representation, legitimacy, and political authority (Caramani, 2017). As such, it is linked to the idea that populism "is a reaction against the growing technocratization of contemporary politics" (Bickerton & Invernizzi Accetti, 2017, p. 336). Since technocracy is based on the rule of legal, economic, technical, or scientific experts, it resembles a clear violation of the expression of the general will of the people. Thus, while populists identify the hegemonic unity of the true people as the ultimate guideline of representation, the cutting of ties between political decision-making and the people, as

advocated by technocracy, represents a radical departure from this standard. As a consequence of the different notion of representation, anti-technocratic populists criticize a clear lack of input legitimacy present in technocratic governance. The same should be true for political authority, which in anti-technocratic populist terms legitimately only can be derived from the will of the 'true people' and in turn explicitly cannot be legitimized on the basis of rational, impartial, and correct decisions generated by distant technocratic institutions.

In contrast to this first ideal-type reaction, a second potential response is a positive assessment of technocracy by combining populist and technocratic elements (Bickerton & Invernizzi Accetti, 2017; Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; de la Torre, 2013) based on the described commonalities of a unitary conception and unmediated interest of society. As such, it uses the pretext of technocratic expertise to rule in the name of the people (Müller, 2016). Such a response might also rely on the shared criticism of populism and technocracy against the current ruling political elite as well as party democracy. In contrast to the first response, it is assumed that this response does not refer to a lack of input legitimacy but rather stresses the role of the output legitimacy that could be reached if the current political elite were replaced with technocrats to transform the general will of the true people.

Since the unidirectional perspective reveals more differences than commonalities between populism and technocracy, we expect that populist parties are more likely to reject technocracy than approve it. The second response is thus expected to be rather an exceptional case. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 reads as follows:

> H1: Populist parties are more likely to criticize the technocratic nature of the EU than approve of it.

2.2.2. Responses of Populist Parties Concerning the Role of the Host Ideology

Second, we expect considerable variation in the responses to technocracy depending on the attitudes that constitute the respective host ideologies (Akkerman, 2015; Katsambekis, 2017). In particular, we assume that the responses of the left-wing and right-wing populist parties to the modes of technocratic governance and the technocratic output will differ. Since left and right conceptions of politics vary considerably in terms of the size of the state and the extent of regulations that can aim at virtually all aspects of public life (Budge, 2013; Sartori, 1976/2005), it is to be expected that left-wing populists are open to regulation and bureaucracy. Research shows that right-wing populists are more heterogeneous: while neo-liberal populists are generally opposed to government intervention (Betz, 1993), radical right-wing populists are not necessarily opposed to these interventions (Otjes, Ivaldi, Jupskås, & Mazzoleni, 2018). Nevertheless, we assume that averagely left-wing populist parties are less critical to regulation and bureaucracy than right-wing populist parties. Research on Euroscepticism has revealed (e.g., Pirro et al., 2018; Pirro & van Kessel, 2017) that left-wing populist parties criticize the EU for its 'neoliberal' agenda and the austerity measures imposed by EU institutions, and their negative economic and social consequences. Accordingly, it is assumed that the response to technocracy is also particularly related to issues such as austerity policy and economic policies. In contrast, as a result of nativism being their core ideological element (Mudde, 2007), right-wing populist parties are assumed to perceive the EU as a threat to cultural homogeneity and national sovereignty (Pirro et al., 2018). In line with this, we assume that right-wing populist parties respond to technocracy particularly in relation to policy issues of migration, and border protection. Assumptions about hybrid populists who reject placing themselves on the ideological left-right spectrum are by contrast hard to formulate. Due to their chameleon-like nature, they are expected to show characteristics of both classic left- and right-wing populist actors. Due to the positive evaluation of technocracy, technocratic populists are expected to not criticize modes of governance and policy results as a result of the technocratic nature of the EU. Therefore, the Hypotheses 2a–2c read as follows:

> H2a: Left-wing populist parties are less likely to criticize regulation and bureaucracy as technocratic modes of governance than other populist parties.

> H2b: Right-wing populist parties are more likely to criticize policy results which are ascribed to the technocratic nature of decision-making in fields related to cultural issues. In contrast, left-wing populist parties are more likely to criticize policy results related to economic issues.

> H2c: Technocratic populist parties are less likely to criticize technocratic modes of governance and policy results in relation to the technocratic nature of decision-making.

3. Methods, Case Description and Data

The empirical analysis is based on the party manifestos for the European election, 2019. The ninth election of the European Parliament took place on 23–26 May 2019, with the election campaign being dominated by economic issues such as economic growth and the fight against unemployment (Eurobarometer, 2019). While the importance of migration policy issues appears to have diminished, growing importance was attached to the issue of climate protection. According to a tally by Ivaldi (2020, pp. 77–78), in the 2019 European Parliament elections right-wing populist parties campaigned in 20 countries, left-wing populist (left-wing populist) parties in 12 countries, and hybrid populist parties in nine countries which also comprises the type of technocratic populist party (see also Rooduijn et al., 2020; Zulianello, 2020).

In order to analyze whether there are systematic differences between these types of populist parties, we systematically selected 12 cases based on two main criteria: First, we selected for each type four parties, which were assigned to the same type in both Zulianello's (2020) and Ivaldi's (2020) classifications. Second, these parties had to cover Western Europe, Southern Europe, as well as Central and Eastern Europe. Based on these criteria, the following cases were included in the sample: DIE LINKE (Germany, left-wing populist), Podemos (Spain, left-wing populist), Syriza (Greece, left-wing populist), Levica (Slovenia, left-wing populist), M5S (Italy, hybrid populist), ANO 2011 (Czech Republic, hybrid populist), OL'aNO (Slovakia, hybrid populist), GERB (Bulgaria, hybrid populist), AfD (Germany, right-wing populist), RN (France, right-wing populist), Vox (Spain, right-wing populist), and Jobbik (Hungary, right-wing populist). Since there is no hybrid populist party in Western Europe and only one in Southern Europe (M5S; see Zulianello, 2020), three hybrid populist parties are included from Central and Eastern Europe (ANO 2011, OL'aNO, GERB). ANO 2011 has also been characterized as a technocratic populist party. The selected cases include government (e.g., ANO 2011) and opposition parties (e.g., AfD). This might be of relevance as governing parties can be expected to be less Eurosceptic since they are at least partially responsible for staff and content of European policy. Moreover, the selected parties vary regarding their position to the EU, from hard Euroscepticism (e.g., RN) to pro-European (e.g., GERB), which allows for better disentanglement of the relationship between technocracy, populism, and Euroscepticism.

Election manifestos are appropriate documents since they are "the only authoritative collective statement" (Hansen, 2008, p. 203) of parties and thus show what a party stands for at a certain point of time. They allow for cross-national studies and have been used widely to study populist parties (e.g., Manucci & Weber, 2017; Rooduijn, de Lange, & van der Brug, 2014). The manifestos were analyzed through a qualitative and quantitative content analysis (Mayring, 2015). The deductive content analysis is based on the central categories elaborated in Section 2.2 (see Table 1). For the qualitative analysis, it is combined with inductive logics (see Table 2). This is the most common way to measure the manifestos of populist parties (Rooduijn et al., 2014). The unit of measurement is the sentence. The scores in Table 1 represent the percentages of words for the different categories of each manifesto. Each sentence has only been assigned to one category. If a sentence contains messages of two or more categories, the sentence was assigned to the most dominant message.

During the process of coding, it was important to separate criticism of technocracy from other forms of Euroscepticism. Theoretically, statements can connect Euroscepticism and criticism of technocracy in three different combinations: A statement can be (1) Eurosceptic but not critical of technocracy, (2) Eurosceptic and critical of technocracy, and (3) non-Eurosceptic and critical of technocracy. While the second and third combination are relevant, the first combination is not part of the analysis since it is not related to technocracy. Examples are critical statements about the federation principle, violations of the subsidiarity principle or doubting the competence of a member state. The option (2) combines a Eurosceptic with a technocratic-critical message and thus cannot be entirely disentangled. An example is the following statement by the AfD:

> Due to a lack of a close relationship with the citizens, the intransparency of the EU institutions, their far-reaching regulatory power and their decisions on enormous financial resources, a machinery of representatives involving more than 25,000 lobbyists established in the control centers of the EU. (AfD, 2019b, p. 13)

It combines a Eurosceptic (general democratic deficit) stance with a distinctly technocratic-critical perspective. An example of the third combination is when a party has a pro-European stance but criticizes the technocratic mode of governance.

Concerning the evaluation of the technocratic nature of the EU (see Table 2), it was coded '0' if there was no statement in the manifesto. A relevant statement which criticized technocracy was labelled with a '–' (e.g., a call for "debureaucratization"; DIE LINKE, 2019, p. 28). If the intensity and tonality of the criticism were extreme, the code '– –' was assigned (e.g., demands for a "shrinkage of the inflated bureaucratic apparatus"; AfD, 2019b, p. 12). The same principle was applied for positive responses to technocracy. To assess inter-coder reliability, all manifestos were coded by both authors. The percentage agreement and Cohen's Kappa are almost perfectly consistent (Landis & Koch, 1977).

4. Empirical Evidence

As a first step of the data analysis, we analyze whether and to which extent the different populist parties respond to the technocratic nature of the EU in the electoral manifestos (Table 1). Notably, every election manifesto contains elements of responses to technocratic governance, though the share varies considerably between 0.2% and 27.2%. In particular, the manifestos of M5S (22.6%) and RN (27.2%) contain very high levels of reactions to the technocratic governance of the EU. For the other parties, with an average value of 5.7% and a range between 0.2% and 7.5%, technocratic responses are less dominant. Nevertheless, this share of technocracy-related messages is of a similar level as the share of *populist* messages of populist parties in their manifestos: For example, the study of Rooduijn et al. (2014) reveals that an average of 7.4% of the paragraphs of the election manifestos of populist parties contained populist messages (ranging between 1.0% and 23.1%). This points to

Table 1. Share of populist parties' responses to the technocratic nature of the EU.

Type of Populist Party		Left-Wing Populist				Hybrid Populist				Right-Wing Populist			
Response to Technocratic Governance of the EU	Dimension	DIE LINKE GERMANY	Podemos SPAIN	Syriza GREECE	Levica SLOVENIA	M5S ITALY	ANO 2011 CZECH REPUBL.	OL´aNO SLOVAKIA	GERB BULGARIA	AfD GERMANY	RN FRANCE	Vox SPAIN	Jobbik HUNGARY
Core Features	Input Legitimacy	1.33%	0.66%	—	1.14%	—	—	—	—	0.84%	3.16%	0.49%	—
	Control and Accountability	0.26%	0.81%	—	0.39%	—	—	—	—	0.17%	4.91%	—	1.17%
	Representation	0.22%	0.46%	—	—	4.0%	—	—	—	—	2.4%	—	—
	Elites	—	0.77%	4.15%	—	—	—	—	—	—	3.91%	2.96%	0.58%
	Response to Core Features	1.81%	2.70%	4.15%	1.53%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.01%	14.38%	3.45%	1.75%
Modes of Governance	Regulation	—	0.07%	—	—	7.62%	2.8%	—	—	1.21%	2.53%	0.87%	—
	Bureaucracy	0.13%	0.53%	—	—	3.81%	1.0%	5.43%	0.22%	1.81%	2.96%	0.12%	1.29%
	Transparency	0.44%	1.4%	—	0.63%	—	—	3.18%	—	0.8%	—	—	1.37%
	Role of Corporate & Interest Groups	0.97%	1.22%	—	0.81%	—	—	—	—	0.57%	1.82%	0.25%	—
	Responses to Modes of Governances	1.54%	3.22%	0.0%	1.44%	11.43%	3.8%	8.61%	0.22%	4.39%	7.31%	1.24%	2.66%
Output	Economic	1.81%	0.92%	3.18%	0.86%	7.14%	—	—	—	1.16%	4.6%	0.44%	1.71%
	Cultural	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.23%	0.93%	—	—
	Other	0.52%	0.2%	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.74%	—	0.84%	—
	Responses to Technocratic Output	2.33%	1.12%	3.18%	0.86%	7.14%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.13%	5.53%	1.28%	1.71%
Responses to Technocracy		5.6%	7.0%	7.3%	3.8%	22.6%	3.8%	8.6%	0.22%	7.5%	27.2%	7.1%	6.11%

Table 2. Evaluation of the technocratic nature of the EU by populist parties.

Type of Populist Party		Left-Wing Populist				Hybrid Populist				Right-Wing Populist			
Response to Technocratic Governance of the EU	Dimension	DIE LINKE GERMANY	Podemos SPAIN	Syriza GREECE	Levica SLOVENIA	M5S ITALY	ANO 2011 CZECH REPUBLIC	OL´aNO SLOVAKIA	GERB BULGARIA	AfD GERMANY	RN FRANCE	Vox SPAIN	Jobbik HUNGARY
Core Features	Input Legitimacy	––	––	0	––	0	0	0	0	––	––	–	0
	Control and Accountability	–	––	0	–	0	0	0	0	–	–	0	–
	Representation	–	––	0	0	–	0	0	0	0	––	0	0
	Elites	0	––	––	0	0	0	0	0	0	––	––	–
	∑	–	––	–	–	–	0	0	0	–	––	–	–
Modes of Governance	Regulation	0	–	0	0	++	–	0	0	––	––	––	0
	Bureaucracy	–	–	0	0	–	–	–	–	––	––	–	––
	Transparency	––	––	0	–	0	0	–	0	–	0	0	–
	Role of Corporate & Interest Groups	––	––	0	–	0	0	0	0	–	–	–	0
	∑	––	––	0	–	+&–	–	0	–	––	––	–	–
Output	Economic	––	––	–	––	–	0	0	0	––	–	–	–
	Cultural	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	–	–	0	0
	Other	–	–	0	0	0	0	0	0	–	0	–	0
	∑	–	–	–	–	–	0	0	0	–	–	–	–

Notes: ++ = very positive; + = positive; 0 = no reference; – = negative; –– = very negative.

a high importance of populists' responses to the technocratic nature of the EU. The analyses of the parties' positions to the core ideas of technocratic governance reveal a clear pattern regarding the types of populist parties: All examined left- and right-wing populist parties criticize central core features of technocratic government. In contrast, among the hybrid populist parties, this is only true for the Italian M5S, while ANO 2011, OL'aNO, and GERB neither criticize a lack of input legitimacy, missing accountability, nor the existence of technocratic elites. Overall, one-half of the parties examined criticize the lack of input legitimacy and thus the insufficient integration of the 'general will of the people' due to the technocratic nature of EU governance. The AfD (2019b, p. 7), for example, states "that, without the consent of the citizens, an artificial state far removed from the citizens is being created." Similarly, the RN (2019, pp. 4, 17) declares that "the power should be given back to the people by abolishing the European Commission" since the 28 commissioners "were not chosen democratically." Yet, this kind of criticism is not exclusive to right-wing populists; left-wing populist parties such as Podemos (2019, p. 9) also criticize a "breach of legitimacy" and admonish that the "EU Parliament is inferior to bodies with little democratic legitimacy such as the Council and the Commission." DIE LINKE (2019, pp. 8, 27) points to the "undemocratic orientation of the European Central Bank and the Troika." In the same way, the Slovenian Levica (2019, p. 13) finds fault with "the unelected technocrats [who] have no right to write our future." Moreover, six parties also see a lack of democratic control and accountability due to technocracy. In their view, the "technocratic bodies [are] beyond" (Levica, 2019, p. 9) or "far removed" (Podemos, 2019, p. 9) from any principle of democratic control while this important aspect in the context of EU governance is generally "totally inadequate" (AfD, 2019b, p. 11).

In addition, five parties stress the technocratic nature of the elites and thus combine the populist core element of anti-elitism with criticism of technocracy. Similar to Syriza and Vox, the RN's election manifesto repeatedly mentions so-called Eurocrats, i.e., a combination of the words 'Europe' and 'technocrats'/'bureaucrats.' In principle, the term contains three dimensions of populist criticism: In addition to a Eurosceptic attitude, the term also rejects the technocratic style of government, and finally criticizes a particular elite, namely the 'Eurocrats.' Similarly, Jobbik (2019, p. 5) states that "[t]he bureaucratic elite of the EU does nothing to solve our common European problems." The word 'technocracy' itself appears verbatim with a negative connotation in the manifestos of AfD, Levica, OL'aNO, Podemos, and RN. Referring to both quantity and quality of critique, these five parties give significantly more weight to technocratic critique compared to the others, in particular Syriza and M5S, which criticize only one or few core elements of technocracy. Despite these quantitative differences, all these populist parties share the view that technocracy is in clear opposition to the idea of the general will of the people. As mentioned above, the parties ANO 2011, OL'aNO and GERB clearly deviate from the technocratic critique of the right- and left-wing populist parties since no single element of criticism to the core features of technocratic governance can be found in their European election manifestos. In sum, based on the observed cases, being against the technocratic nature of the EU seems to be the default position of left- and right-wing populist parties. Since, numerically speaking, 75% (or 9 out of 12) of the parties investigated respond negatively to the core features of technocratic governance, there is evidence for the first hypothesis. However, the results for the three hybrid populist parties from Central and Eastern Europe, OL'aNO, GERB, and ANO 2011, clearly deviate due to their neutral or even positive stance towards technocracy. This corresponds with the findings of Buštíková and Guasti (2019) and Havlík (2019) which classified ANO 2011 as a technocratic populist party.

All examined populist parties—independent of their host ideology—criticize modes of technocratic governance. However, patterns, extent, as well as the political style of the messages differ substantially. The right-wing populist parties are significantly more critical towards regulation and—to a lesser extent—towards bureaucracy of the EU than left-wing populist parties. For instance, RN (2019, p. 5) blames the European Commission for an "irresponsible inflation of rules, constraints, and standards," and Vox (2019, p. 22) asserts that "European over-regulation and bureaucracy have ended up dynamiting innovative projects." The AfD (2019b, pp. 43, 11) refers to an "excessive bureaucracy" and demonizes a "European frenzy of regulation." Moreover, Jobbik (p. 7) criticizes the "unshakable bloc of power represented by the bureaucracy of the EU." Although left-wing-populist parties also criticize modes of technocratic governance, they do it to a lesser extent and also less aggressively. For instance, DIE LINKE (2019, p. 28) states that the party "advocates debureaucratization." These differences in the extent and tonality of criticism can presumably be explained by their respective host ideologies. Another striking observation is that all four hybrid populist parties studied criticize aspects of bureaucracy. An example of this observation is the Slovakian party OL'aNO, which advocates a "substantial reduction of bureaucracy" (OL'aNO, 2019, p. 2). With regard to transparency and the danger of "interest group capture," no substantial differences can be identified between left and right-wing populists. However, it is interesting to note that—with the exception of OL'aNO—the hybrid or technocratic populists do not criticize these dimensions. With regard to transparency, the cases of ANO 2011 and GERB also tell a similar story. Overall, there is some evidence for H2a, even though the differences in terms of bureaucracy and regulation between left-wing and right-wing populist parties are rather marginal.

With regard to policy output, the analysis reveals that right-wing populist parties criticize particularly the technocratic nature and output in the field of monetary and

currency policy (banking union, Euro-ethics). For example, the AfD (2019b, p. 8) condemns the "banking union with the communitarization of unlimited liabilities and assistance." Left-wing populist criticism is instead directed in particular at problems that arise in the field of austerity and neoliberal economic policy. For instance, DIE LINKE (2019, p. 25) states that "the European Crisis policy of the Troika…under the leadership of the German government has plunged millions into misery." In a similar vein, Levica (2019, p. 12) states that "restricting democratic decision-making with the aim of imposing neoliberal policies is a key reason for the spread of anger, frustration and hopelessness across Europe, which encourages the growth of the far right." Criticism of particular policy output is often accompanied by a criticism of technocratic elites. For example, Syriza (2019, p. 3) argues, in the context of austerity policy, "that the ruling European elite wanted to teach the Greeks a lesson." Overall, the qualitative analysis reveals that criticism in relation to policy output is—in contrast to the other two dimensions—hardly explicit but in most cases only implicitly linked to technocracy in the manifestos, for instance by referring to the technocratic institutions, modes of governance, or the "bureaucratic elite" (Jobbik, 2019, p. 5). On the one side, it could be argued that these statements are rather examples of Euroscepticism and anti-elitism but not for technocracy-related critique. But on the other side, it could also be argued that the output is also criticized because political decisions have been taken by technocratic institutions which are perceived as undemocratic actors. Hence, there is some evidence for criticism of policy output, which is indirectly ascribed to the technocratic nature of decision-making. However, both left- and right-wing populist parties link this predominantly to economic policies. While right-wing populist parties focus on monetary and fiscal policy, those on the left-wing refer to austerity policies. Criticisms of the EU for cultural reasons, in particular in the fields of immigration policy and border protection, are important statements in the manifestos of the (right-wing) populist parties. However, interestingly, criticism in these policy fields is not linked to technocracy. Therefore, H2b has to be rejected. In contrast, H2c is confirmed since ANO 2011 and GERB as the two technocratic populist parties in the sample criticize neither the modes of technocratic governance nor policy results in relation to the technocratic nature of decision-making (ANO 2011, 2019; GERB, 2019).

5. Conclusion

The central research question has been how populist parties react to technocracy in general and to the technocratic nature of the EU in particular. In contrast to the relational perceptive in the existing literature, we have argued that a unidirectional perspective is required to unbox the relation between populism and technocracy. The quantitative and qualitative analyses of the European election manifestos of 12 populist parties show that the default stance of European left- and right-wing populist parties is anti-technocratic. As such, it is not the commonalities between populism and technocracy, such as a unitary, non-pluralist, and unmediated approach of politics (Caramani, 2017) that are relevant for populist responses to technocracy. Instead, as a general rule, left- and right-wing populist parties criticize the core elements of technocracy because of the antagonism between populism and technocracy regarding their notion of the will of the people, representation, and legitimacy. In particular, technocracy is criticized because it cuts the ties between political decision-making and the people.

With regard to the category of hybrid populist parties, the picture is more complex. ANO 2011 and GERB are populist parties which do not have a critical stance towards technocracy. This result underlines the existing analyses by Buštíková and Guasti (2019) and Havlík (2019) who classified ANO 2011 as a technocratic populist party. Our results likewise give reason to interpret technocratic populism as a distinct type of populism that is significantly different from left- and right-wing, but at the same time from other hybrid forms of populism. To put it another way: ANO 2011 and GERB should therefore be classified as technocratic populist parties. In contrast, there are two hybrid populist parties in our sample, M5S and OL'aNO, which can—if at all—only partially be classified as technocratic populist. Although both parties are modest (M5S) in their criticism regarding the core features and the output of technocratic governance, or even entirely refrain from it (OL'aNO), the manifestos nevertheless clearly contain anti-technocratic stances: M5S (2019, p. 1) demands "more power for citizens' representatives, less for bureaucrats" while OL'aNO (2019, p. 2) states that "[t]he technocratic mentality that prevails in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg is leading to an increase in the sense of distance between European officials and those they are meant to serve—European citizens." Accordingly, the results for OL'aNO are conceptually and empirically highly relevant for this article: the Slovakian party is not considered to be Eurosceptic (Rooduijn et al., 2020) but criticizes the technocratic nature of EU governance. Consequently, non-Eurosceptic populist parties can indeed be anti-technocratic. This supports our argument that Euroscepticism and technocratic criticism are distinct phenomena, even though they may overlap.

In addition, our analyses have shown that the technocratic critique differs with regard to the respective host ideology of the populist parties: Right-wing populist parties tend to criticize bureaucracy and regulation as modes of technocratic governance more harshly than left-wing populists which is in line with the general stances of their host ideologies. There is also some evidence for criticism of policy output which is ascribed to the technocratic nature of decision-making, but this is less explicitly articulated in the manifestos. In contrast to the results of the existing literature which suggests

that left-wing populist parties tend to criticize the EU for economic reasons, whereas the right-wing do so for cultural reasons (Otjes et al., 2018; Pirro et al., 2018), our analyses identify technocratic critique from both types of populist parties predominantly in relation to economic policies. While right-wing populist parties focus on monetary and fiscal policy, left-wing populist parties more frequently refer to austerity policies. Criticisms of the EU for cultural reasons, in particular in the fields of immigration policy and border protection, are an important part of the manifestos, in particular of the right-wing populist parties. However, it is interesting to note that criticisms in these policy fields are not linked to technocracy.

Overall, this study has shown that the relation between populism and technocracy is also crucial to be able to understand the phenomena themselves. However, further analyses are needed to improve our understanding of their relationship. It is assumed that the responses of populist parties to technocracy at the level of the EU are partly linked to a general Eurosceptic stance of these parties. This makes it difficult to disentangle criticism of the technocratic nature of the EU from other forms of Euroscepticism. Moreover, it is possible that populist parties may criticize or reject the technocratic nature of European institutions simply for strategic reasons (Weyland, 2017). For example, it is conceivable that the EU per se could be portrayed as a scapegoat and that the supranational level, in general, might be used as a sort of lightning rod. In this respect, the rejection of technocratic EU institutions would be based on strategic motives, while populist actors might not have substantive problems with technocratic solutions. These aspects make it difficult to entirely disentangle the complex relationship between populism, technocracy, and Euroscepticism. Therefore, further studies should investigate the national level in European countries but also other regions. Another aspect of relevance is the distinction between government and opposition populist parties. Since ANO 2011 and GERB make up the governments of their countries, future research needs to address the question of whether there is a causal link between a lack of technocratic critique and the takeover of government offices. In addition, future studies should also include non-populist parties and their attitudes towards technocratic solutions and compare them with those of populist parties. This would allow the analysis of whether criticism of technocracy is stronger among populist parties than among other parties and thus if populism drives criticism of technocracy.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Marion Reiser is Professor of Political Science at the University of Jena (Germany) and holds a PhD (University of Goettingen) and a Habilitation (University of Frankfurt) in Political Science. Previously she was Professor at the University of Lüneburg and held postdoctoral positions at the Universities of Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Halle (Saale), and has been Visiting Fellow at the universities of Copenhagen, Birmingham, and Oslo. Her research interests cover political parties, elites, representation, and subnational politics.

Jörg Hebenstreit is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Department of Political Science at the University of Jena (Germany) and holds a PhD (University of Jena) in Political Science. His doctoral thesis dealt with the issue of campaign finance in the United States and its influence on the outcome of elections as well as the overall political system. Among his further research interests are non-majoritarian and technocratic institutions, responsiveness, and political inequality.

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Article

Technocratic Populism in Hybrid Regimes: Georgia on My Mind and in My Pocket

David Aprasidze [1,]* and David S. Siroky [2,3]

[1] School of Arts and Sciences, Ilia State University, 0162 Tbilisi, Georgia; E-Mail: david_aprasidze@iliauni.edu.ge
[2] School of Politics and Global Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287, USA; E-Mail: david.siroky@asu.edu
[3] Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Science, 110 00 Prague, Czech Republic

* Corresponding author

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Abstract
Most studies of technocratic populism have focused on democracies under stress (e.g., Italy, Czech Republic). This article builds on and extends these studies by analyzing a hybrid regime—post-Soviet Georgia—and argues that technocratic populism in this context is utilized as a façade to cover authoritarian and oligarchic tendencies, while suspending (or reversing) democratization efforts. The state apparatus is weaponized against current and potential political opponents. Ideology is irrelevant, loyalty is key, and passivity is encouraged. The government aims to chip away at institutional checks and balances, and to demobilize the public by undermining confidence in the country's representative institutions while increasing dependence on experienced personalities, the 'can do experts.' The result is most often a stable partial-reform equilibrium. We illustrate this argument with evidence from Georgia, where Bidzina Ivanishvili, the richest man in the country, came to power in 2012 and, despite not holding any official position in the government since 2013, has run the state as a firm.

Keywords
Georgia; hybrid regimes; Ivanishvili; populism; technocratic populism

Issue
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1. Introduction

Managing 'the state as a firm,' and using expertise to bypass accountability, is now emerging as a respectable method of governance that has become known as 'technocratic populism' (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). While the rise of modern populism has been extensively studied in the scholarly literature (Caiani & Graziano, 2019; Canovan, 1999; Grzymala-Busse, 2019; Mudde, 2004; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012; Pappas, 2019; Stanley, 2008; Weyland, 2020), and there are now several studies of technocracy (Bickerton & Accetti, 2017; Caramani, 2017; De la Torre, 2013), technocratic populism is still relatively underexplored (see Guasti & Buštíková, 2020). Building on this emerging literature, we understand technocracy and populism as two alternatives challenging representative, party-based democracy (Caramani, 2017). Yet, at least in some ways, technocracy and populism contradict each other, for populism views direct link with voters as a source of its legitimacy, whereas technocracy is premised on the rule of experts (Bartha, Boda, & Szikra, 2020). However, when technocracy merges with populism, both change in a dialectical fashion: The populist element rests on the capabilities of the leader to connect with voters beyond the established institutional channels of representation; the technocratic element legitimizes the leadership in its quest to resolve issues of governance by relying on the outsider expertise (e.g., business savvy).

Technocratic populists do not necessarily pit the elite vs. the 'people,' especially when in power, but instead

carve out a category of the 'ordinary people' (Buštíková & Babos, 2020; Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). As an output-oriented governance strategy, technocratic populism supplants the traditional right–left political landscape by appealing to the people with all-purpose expertise garnered outside politics (Guasti, 2020). Despite its potentially broad applicability, technocratic populism as a framework has mostly been applied to analyzing democracies under stress in Western Europe (Silvio Berlusconi in Italy), Eastern Europe (Andrej Babiš in the Czech Republic) and Latin America (Rafael Correa in Ecuador). There is a need to extend this focus, first and foremost we suggest, to analyzing governance in hybrid regimes, and secondarily beyond Europe (its EU part) and Latin America.

This article aims to do both; specifically, this study asks: How and under what circumstances does technocratic populism emerge in hybrid regimes? What are its principal characteristics, and what strategies do technocratic populists use to stay in power and govern? Drawing on evidence from Georgia—a hybrid regime that, since 2012, has witnessed the gradual emergence of technocratic populism—we address these questions and show that hybrid regimes offer fertile soil for technocratic populism to take root because party systems are under-institutionalized, the nature of governance is elitist (March, 2017) and its quality is poor. We conclude that technocratic populism represents a new and non-trivial obstacle for democratic transitions that needs to be incorporated into debates on democratization.

First, we describe the emergence of technocratic populism and identify its main features in Georgia. This focuses on how Ivanishvili entered politics and succeeded in defeating political opponents, and then on how he constructed a new government using an 'ideology-free' business model in which he is the CEO and his main task is to select good managers. Next, we examine the specific management strategies that have characterized technocratic populist rule in Georgia. This emphasizes the specific methods that technocratic populists tend to use in an effort to undermine representative institutions, to contain opposition and to manage crises with ideology-free balancing and the leader's direct personal involvement. The final section summarizes the analysis and discusses its implications for democratization.

2. Technocratic Populism in a Hybrid Regime

> I think the experience and characteristics that I gained as a result of my long business activities…will help me to correctly pursue my activities in politics. (Ivanishvili, 2011b)

This study examines the logic of technocratic populism in a hybrid regime, and focuses on Georgia—a country with a political system that has been variously characterized as 'feckless pluralism' and 'dominant power politics' (Berglund, 2014). In 2011, Bidzina Ivanishvili—the richest Georgian (Ivanishvili's fortune amounted to US $5,3 billion in 2013, corresponding to almost half of Georgia's GDP; Bloomberg, 2020; Gente, 2013)—created a new party, the Georgian Dream, which one year later won the parliamentary elections by a landslide. Thus began the era of technocratic populism in Georgia.

In this section, we illustrate how Ivanishvili established his image as a respectable businessman and at a crucial juncture successfully invested it into Georgian politics. Then, we describe the key characteristics of the governance model he has implemented since 2012.

2.1. Winning in Business, Investing in Politics

Ivanishvili's was born in a small village in western Georgia. From a working-class family, he later moved to the capital and graduated with distinction from Tbilisi State University, then to Moscow where he received his PhD (*Kandidat nauk*, or Candidate of Sciences) from the Moscow Institute of Labor and Social Issues in 1986 (Stevenson, 2010). Ivanishvili soon abandoned the scientific path and turned to business, a largely unknown profession before Gorbachev's Perestroika. He founded a cooperative—the only private company allowed in the Soviet Union of the 1980s, followed by other firms and then a bank (Gente, 2013). While there is much we still do not know about this period of his life, we do know that post-Soviet oligarchs were usually not shy about using all available means—including corruption and criminal networks—to survive and thrive in the new era of capitalism in 'the wild East' (Braguinsky, 2009; Guriev & Rachinsky, 2005). In his rare interviews, Ivanishvili acknowledged that in order to protect himself and his businesses, he collaborated with Russian law enforcement agencies, in particular with Moscow's Regional Office for Combating Organized Crime of the Ministry of Interior. Ivanishvili even partially funded the office, which not only defended his business from criminals but also helped to 'persuade' hesitant debtors to pay their loans back on time and substituted for paying the mafia for protection and extortion ("The most mysterious," 2005).

Ivanishvili returned from Russia and settled back in Georgia in 2004, following the Rose Revolution of 2003—a peaceful upheaval that brought a new generation of politicians into power under the leadership of Mikheil Saakashvili (Siroky & Aprasidze, 2011; Wheatley, 2005). Saakashvili's government-initiated reforms propelled Georgia's rapid modernization. Ivanishvili initially supported Saakashvili in his reforms, especially during the first years when he was providing financial assistance to Georgian law enforcement agencies (Buckley, 2012). Otherwise, Ivanishvili remained behind the scenes like the mysterious Maecenas, funding theaters and museums, and bringing the intelligentsia—famous writers, actors and athletes—onto his payroll. He did not criticize the Saakashvili government, even during the 2007 crisis, when the Georgian government responded to growing political opposition with the violent dispersal

of rallies and the closing down of TV channels sympathetic to the opposition. He also remained silent in 2008 during the short Russian–Georgian war (Lanskoy & Areshidze, 2008).

In October 2011, however, the mysterious billionaire suddenly issued his first public statement, and announced his decision to create a new political party, saying he would run for parliamentary elections, scheduled exactly one year later, for October 2012. Ivanishvili underlined his reasons—that the authoritarian rule of Saakashvili left him disappointed and that he decided to enter politics to prevent the regime from manipulating the constitution and elections (Ivanishvili, 2011a). He stated:

> Many people ask and many people are surprised, why I, a successful businessman and an absolutely prosperous person, risked everything and decided to go into politics? The answer to this question is very simple—because I see that I am losing my homeland, and when you are losing your homeland, nothing has any price—neither your property nor money, nor any privileged status. (Ivansihvili, 2011b)

This strong personal appeal came as Georgia had arrived at a critical juncture—Saakashvili's two terms in power had expired and he was banned by the constitution from the next presidential elections in 2013. A year before Ivanishvili's appeal, Saakashvili's party—the United National Movement (UNM)—had initiated constitutional revisions that would have moved Georgia from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary model. This caused speculations about Saakashvili's plans to become the next prime minister (Walker, 2011), and fueled animosity towards Saakashvili's semi-authoritarian rule and harsh methods, which alienated not only other political parties but also most of the population. UNM controlled all branches of the central government, regional as well as local administrations, and marginalized all non-UNM actors. The separation between the party and the state had become increasingly blurred. Media and most of the opposition were silenced. The security services used surveillance and blackmail to harass and intimidate opponents. The appropriation of private property for dubious reasons became common practice (Hammarberg, 2013).

The fragmented opposition, with no access to necessary resources or media, was not in a position to challenge UNM in the 2012 elections. Ivanishvili changed this when he created a new party—the Georgian Dream—and forged an alliance with major oppositional parties. Ivanishvili's financial resources and media access leveled the playing field. He reopened TV Channel 9, which had been defunct since 2004, and thereby provided the opposition with a nationwide platform. With the help of this coalition, Ivanishvili achieved a remarkable victory in very tense and contested parliamentary elections.

As the new prime minister, he portrayed himself as 'the nation's savior' (Atilgan & Aprasidze, 2013). His candidate, Giorgi Margvelashvili, easily won the presidential elections one year later, which completed the first peaceful transfer of power ever in Georgia. Almost immediately, however, Ivanishvili resigned and left his formal position in politics. He announced that his task—removing the authoritarian regime of Saakashvili and installing a democratic regime—had been fulfilled. He promised to be an active citizen and support and check the government as a member of civil society. He noted:

> I am quitting politics, but I remain an active citizen….I promise that for at least next twenty years I will put my energy, knowledge and experience in the service of getting my homeland on its feet. I will support any government, which will serve the people. I will not get tired by reminding those who are in power that the government should serve the people and not vice versa, that we need laws to secure more freedom and not for imposing more restrictions. (Ivanishvili, 2013)

Ivanishvili never actually ceded control over his party and never truly departed from power, however. Today, he is still the most influential figure in the country and became the party chairman again in 2018. After almost eight years in power, many issues with which Ivanishvili was discontent during the Saakashvili era—political interference in business, the media and the judiciary—still remain serious problems. Moreover, as we argue in the next sections, Ivanishvili created a new obstacle in Georgian politics—technocratic populism—that has largely stalled Georgia's democratic transition and resulted in what has been called 'a partial reform equilibrium' (Hellman, 1998).

2.2. Georgia: A Joint Stock Company

Ivanishvili has utilized his power to run Georgia as a firm—or, more precisely, as a joint stock company. If the CEO selects qualified managers (to fulfill the role of politicians)—Ivanishvili has repeatedly argued—the country will run smoothly like his firms. "The fact that businesses I have launched in Russia are working absolutely properly, although I have not been in Russia already for nine years, is enough proof speaking in favor of my managerial skills" (Ivanishvili, 2011b). The important trait for Ivanishvili's managers is not only competence or experience but also loyalty, which has generated a faux technocracy. Indeed, the key figures in the government are his closest followers, often former employees of his companies. Out of four prime ministers who headed the government of Georgia after him, three of them were previously managers in his companies. The current Minister of Interior (previously head of State Security Agency) and the Head of Special State Protection Service (protection of high-ranking officials) are his former personal bodyguards. The most recent Prosecutor General was his family lawyer. The current and previous Ministers of Health previously managed

the hospital which Ivanishvili has been funding in his home municipality. Though the list is not exhaustive, it reveals that Ivanishvili runs the country like a joint stock company, where he is the Chair of the Board (and only shareholder); and the ministers and public officials are his executive officers, who can be appointed, moved, removed and reappointed at any time the chair decides based on their performance.

Ivanishvili is surrounded by an 'inner circle,' comprised mainly of former employees in his businesses that serve in key power positions. The 'outer circle' is composed of actors that are indirectly linked to the center, usually through actors in the inner circle. For instance, the parliament and ruling party are run by immediate associates of Ivanishvili, who enjoy the direct links with him, while 'the Marsh' (using an analogy to the majority in the National Convention during the French revolution of late 18th century) consists mostly of businessmen who seem more interested in securing their business interests than in the public service. Law enforcement agencies, especially the security services and prosecutor's office, are important verticals that channel information to the chair and send signals down the system. The state security agency is involved in conducting 'loyalty checks' for potential managers (in the outer circle) to determine if they can be trusted. At the same time, Ivanishvili has his own 'parallel intelligence' through a group of trusted individuals who deliver the vox populi to the leader. These individuals do not occupy any formal positions but have frequent contact with the Chair. Even in the case of closed and directly subordinated power centers (the inner circle), Ivanishvili has installed parallel mechanisms that serve as a check on them (comparable with the strategy described by Migdal, 1989). In fact, the political weight of public figures is not necessarily bound to their official positions but is based on whether or not they have direct access to the Chair. Although Ivanishvili does not seem to be directly involved with the outer circle or in every-day operative management, his existence nonetheless limits managerial creativity, especially in the outer circle, since managers wait for signals, fearing possible negative reactions, and therefore do not invest in creative solutions or take initiative without prior approval.

The result is a distortion of accountability mechanisms—high ranking officials (executive officers) feel responsible towards Ivanishvili (the company chair/the owner) rather than to public institutions with oversight functions or to the public. In short, the technocratic populist leader in a hybrid context can easily exploit and capture key institutions at the expense of its capacities and legitimacy, since politicians are managers bound to the polity *through* the Chair. This adaptive clientelistic network that has captured the state and its institutions is the real backbone of the technocratic populist system of governance in a hybrid context and generates a serious impediment to further democratization, reform and innovation.

2.3. Ideology is Dead! Long Live Trust!

Technocratic populism is distinguished in part by its absence of political ideology, its unmediated relation with voters and its emphasis on expert knowledge as a source of legitimacy. It 'just gets things done,' and emphasizes trust in the leader (Guasti, 2020). The six party coalition forged by Ivanishvili in 2011–2012 was an ideological mixture of rather incompatible political voices, including left-centrist (Georgian Dream itself), liberals (Republicans, Free Democrats), center-rights (Industrialist), and nationalists (Conservative Party, National Forum) as well as few individuals representing pre-Rose Revolution era political and business groups, who saw the opportunity to return to the political scene (Atilgan & Aprasidze, 2013). Since 2016, Georgian Dream has been ruling alone, without coalition partners, but still remains an amalgam of dissimilar ideologies. Officially, Georgian Dream presents itself as a center-left party (Georgian Dream, 2020). However, this ideological angle was selected more to distinguish itself from its main adversary—the center-right UNM—since indeed, the policies of the Georgian Dream government have been all over the ideological map and not at all consistent over time (see also Section 3.3).

It is true that political parties, especially ruling ones, often lack clear ideological profiles in the post-Soviet space (Hale, 2010), and more frequently represent mechanisms of top-down political mobilization and control, centered around a single leader or a small group (Bader, 2009). It is also true that all parties in Georgia, including the UNM, have exploited populist rhetoric and policies over time, but some parties, and UNM in particular, have advanced a clear vision for modernizing the country. Georgian Dream and Ivanishvili have never tried to advance any overarching vision for Georgia's development, either domestically or in foreign policy. Instead of ideology, strategy or vision, Ivanishvili's message to the public is to trust him personally because of his managerial skills and expertise in business.

In a 2018 interview, Ivanishvili indicated that he intends to continue to play a role in the country's future for at least another decade, asking the voters to stick with him and the government of his choosing until at least 2030, when he expects Georgia to have finally reached the promised land. Georgia will at that point be past the point of no return, Ivanishvili said, with the country's gross domestic product per capita having almost tripled to $10,000 or—fingers crossed—even $12,000, and the Georgian dream of joining the European Union already a reality (Lomsadze, 2018).

3. Technocratic Populism in Three Steps: A MBA's Guide to Running a Country

Although there is often no grand vision that unites technocratic populists, it is possible to identify several management strategies or 'best practices' that character-

ize their governance, including delegitimizing democratic institutions, weakening parties, containing opposition, balancing with ideology-free populist moves, and the leader directly addressing the masses in order to demobilize public distress or protests. We address each of these in turn, and illustrate each with examples from Georgia.

3.1. Delegitimizing Democratic Institutions

At the institutional level, technocratic populism—as we see with Ivanishvili—is particularly concerned about the autonomy of representative and intermediary institutions. It seeks to undermine public trust in them. Ivanishvili's efforts have thus far mainly focused on the presidency, the parliament and political parties. Indeed, public opinion polls show declining public trust in the key institutions, such as the presidency and parliament, since 2012 (see Figures 1 and 2).

Ivanishvili's efforts to undermine the power of the presidency began by promoting candidates who were neither popular nor had political experience. In the 2013 presidential elections, Ivanishvili personally, without consulting with his colleagues, nominated Giorgi Margvelashvili. A philosopher by background, Margvelashvili was appointed Minister of Education in the new government. But he lacked political experience and political party support. Many had expected Irakli Alasania—a popular politician and leader of the coalition member party Free Democrats, defense minister and Deputy prime minister in the government of Ivanishvili—to be nominated ("PM Ivanishvili," 2012). In next 2018 elections, Ivanishvili backed an independent candidate, Salome Zurabishvili. The daughter of Georgian emigrants, born and raised in France, she was a political unknown, without political or public support. Zurabishvili won elections only thanks to Ivanishvili's efforts ("Highlights," 2019). However, her public approval ratings remain among the lowest in the country. Whereas only 16 percent of people thought the president was doing a 'bad job' in 2015, 54 percent thought so by end of 2019 (see Figure 1).

Public confidence in the parliament as an institution dropped in tandem. Whereas only 14 percent of people thought the parliament was doing a 'bad job' in 2012, a staggering 57 percent thought so by 2019 (see Figure 2). During 2012–2016, Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream representation in the parliament included several representatives from other parties and the parliament was relatively more active. In the 2016 elections, Georgian Dream managed to secure a supermajority without coalitional partners. However, the party's popularity has since declined, and many of its prominent members have left its ranks. The party still retains an absolute majority in the parliament, mainly thanks to the so-called businessman-MPs in the 'outer circle' (i.e. businessmen interested more in securing their business interests than in the public service). In the last parliament, the number of businessmen-politicians further increased (Transparency International, 2017). Although, this group is usually inactive, they have been mobilized when necessary. For instance, in November 2019, the Georgian parliament (thanks to this group) blocked the country's transition from the current mixed system to a fully proportional electoral system, which had wide support from the opposition, civil society and international actors, and that the Georgian Dream and Ivanishvili personally had promised the public (Antidze, 2019).

3.2. Weakening Party Landscape and Opposition/Ally Management

The weakening of the parliament has gone hand in hand with the assault on political parties. Already during the 2016 parliamentary elections, Georgian Dream started

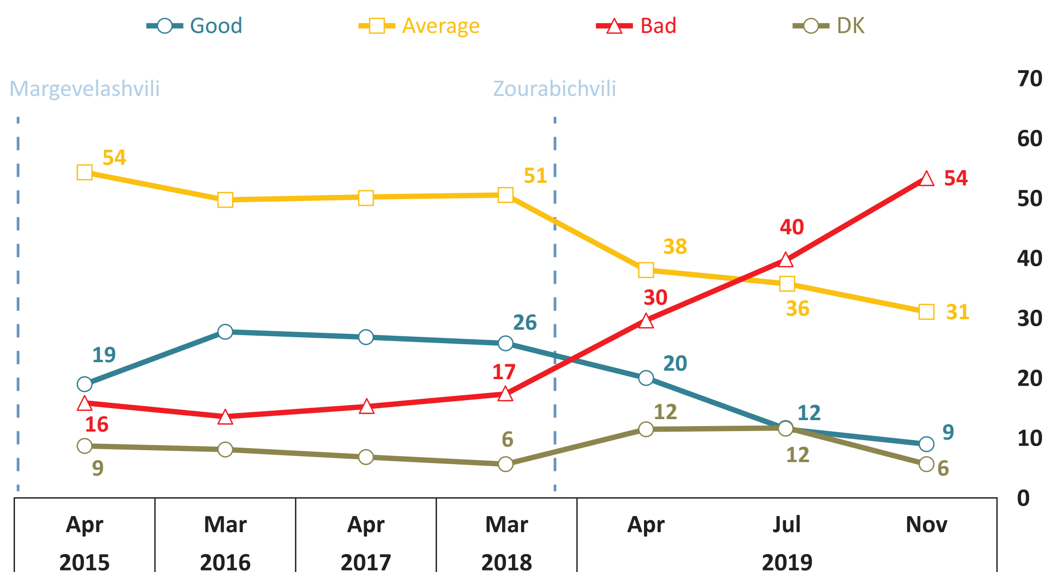

Figure 1. Declining public opinion ratings for the president. Source: National Democratic Institute (2019).

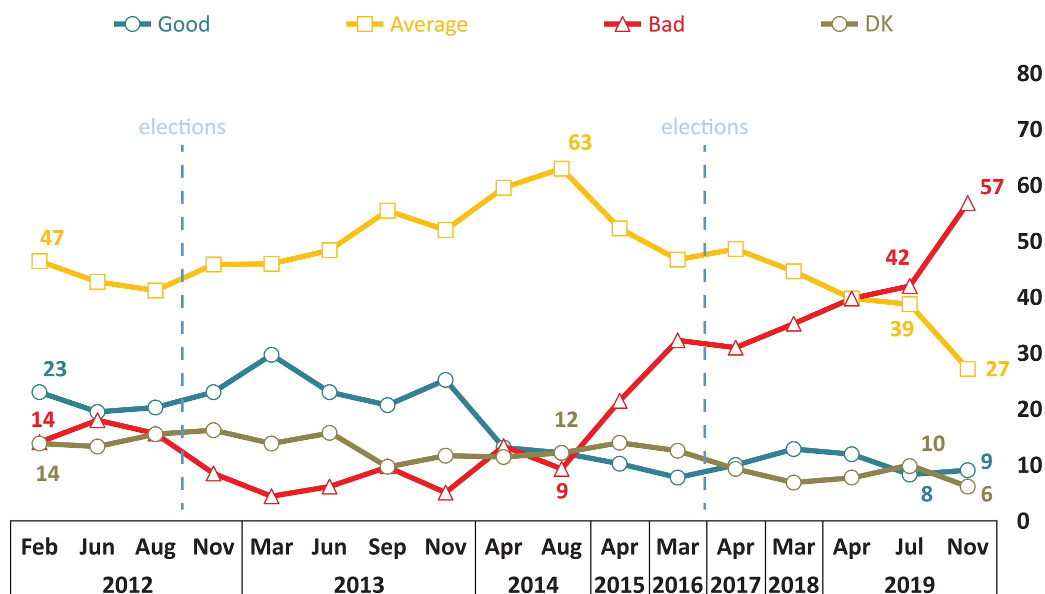

Figure 2. Declining public opinion ratings for the parliament. Source: National Democratic Institute (2019).

attacking its former coalition allies, blaming them for cooperating with the former ruling party, UNM. In this way, Georgian Dream tried to hinder the emergence of alternative players. Its motto 'restoring justice' (arresting officials from the previous administration and the de-facto expelling of several others) served to deflect public attention away from the deterioration of democratic institutions and other domestic problems by reminding society that the mistakes of the Georgian Dream are nothing in comparison with crimes of the previous UNM government: "Our opponent is not a political party. Today, unfortunately, we stand opposite the same brutes united for revenge," said Ivanishvili amid the second round of presidential elections 2018 ("Ivanishvili addresses,'' 2018).

Georgian Dream-affiliated groups have used social media and the judiciary to attack (potential) opposition leaders. One famous case is the story of a cyber-attack on the TBC Bank (one of the two leading banks in Georgia), whose leader—Mamuka Khazaradze—had announced his political plans. When the TBC Bank administration determined the location from which the attack was coming, and the media reported about the incident, the authorities did nothing because the company belonged to individuals who were perceived as friends of Ivanishvili (Transparency International, 2019). Later, however, the prosecutor's office launched an investigation into an 11 year-old case involving Khazaradze and his companion, Badri Japaridze ("Ombudsperson," 2020).

Ivanishvili's style of 'opposition and ally management' was also on display when the former Tbilisi mayor and one of the leaders of the UNM, Gigi Ugulava, was arrested in 2014 on charges of misusing public funds for party purposes. In January 2017, the Tbilisi Court of Appeal decreased the prison time and he was released. Not by chance, his release coincided with a dispute between supporters of Saakashvili and his opponents within UNM ("Gigi Ugulava," 2017). Ugulava belonged to the wing of the opponents that split UNM into two parts. Later Ugulava became very critical of Ivanishvili and, in February 2020, Ugulava was arrested again. This time, the Supreme Court changed the ruling of the Court of Appeal and increased his prison term ("Opposition leader,'' 2020).

Finally, Georgian Dream has also pursued cooptation when necessary. In 2012, right after the election, the process of defecting lawmakers from UNM began. The UNM entered with 65 mandates in the 150-seat parliament and after one year had only 52 seats (Atilgan & Aprasidze, 2013). Many members of the 2016–2020 parliament within Georgian Dream ranks were formerly associated with UNM.

In general, when it comes to restoring justice, it is clear that cases are pursued selectively to intimidate specific individuals and create negative publicity against them, using the technocracy of the judiciary to blackmail and control current and potential adversaries.

3.3. Balancing and Crisis Management

Since 2012, Ivanishvili and Georgian Dream have faced several challenges and even crises. The reactions in these critical moments can shed further light on how technocratic populists govern under duress. Crises sometimes bring technocratic populism to the fore, as when the leader engages directly with the public, appealing to his personal ability to solve predicaments.

Technocratic populists try to avoid organized protests and often follow ideology-free flipping and zigzagging. In 2014, despite criticism from nationalist forces close to the influential Georgian Orthodox Church, the Georgian Dream dominated parliament adopted an anti-

discrimination law, which was a requirement to get the visa-free regime approved by the EU. At the same time, however, Georgian Dream specified (in the constitution) that marriage is a union of a woman and a man to please the forces propagating the idea that the West would force same-sex-marriage onto Georgia (Legislative Herald of Georgia, 2018, Art. 30). In a similar balancing act, Georgian Dream introduced universal health care in 2013 to fulfill one of his electoral promises, but when public expenses skyrocketed from US$100 million in 2014 to US$300 million in 2017, the government reverted back to a non-universal system (Absandze, 2018).

During the presidential elections in 2018, when the Georgian Dream candidate Salome Zurabishvili failed to win in the first round, and faced the UNM candidate in the second round, Ivanishvili himself became involved in the campaign. He addressed the population with an open letter, recalling UNM's crimes, while at the same time apologizing for not having fulfilled the promises he made before: "In one year's time, I pledge to correct every mistake in governance and to use all my resources to ensure the irreversibility of the country's development"("Ivanishvili addresses," 2018). In parallel, Ivanishvili's own Qartu foundation announced an initiative to buy the so called 'bad debts' of citizens owed to banks and other lenders, worth GEL1.5 billion in total, which would concern almost 600,000 individuals ("Government announces," 2018), equaling 17 percent of all eligible voters.

'Gavrilov's Night,' in June 2019, represents another critical moment in which technocratic populist rule was on display. As part of a forum of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy held in the building of parliament of Georgia, Sergey Gavrilov—a Russian MP—opened the forum from the chair of the speaker. Observing a Member of Parliament of Russia, which is officially regarded as an occupant in Georgia, sitting in the chair of the speaker, caused an immediate protest among the population. Thousands of people spontaneously gathered in front of the parliament building and some protesters tried to get into the parliament. The police used force, injuring more than 200 people, including police officers ("240 injured," 2019). Protests continued despite the violent collapse of the demonstration. The government acted swiftly—the speaker of parliament resigned, and Ivanishvili promised to change the electoral system to a proportional system in 2020, instead of 2024 when it had been previously planned to transition. This was the fundamental demand of the opposition and civil society, and it deescalated the situation. Later, however, when the protest wave dwindled, Ivanishvili and the Georgian Dream failed to deliver on their promise, and blamed the parliament for blocking it (Antidze, 2019). Only under international pressure was the new deal reached to change the electoral legislation in time for the 2020 elections.

In sum, technocratic populism in a hybrid regime context focuses on undermining accountability and delegitimizing democratic, representative and intermediary institutions, which could challenge the personalistic legitimacy of the populist leader if they actually carried out their watch-dog functions effectively. Technocratic populists seek to keep the opposition fragmented and discredited, for this enables the effective application of containment-cooptation strategies. Ideology-free programs and initiatives, which often contradict one another, are proposed to win popular support and to selectively buy-off voters but are withdrawn later if and when they prove too costly and/or unnecessary. Ideological flexibility allows populists to be responsive to the immediate needs of pockets of voters and to boost their popularity ratings. Most importantly, when a crisis erupts, the leader is ready to intervene and use his external expertise to fix the situation personally.

4. Conclusions: Technocratic Populism in Transitioning Countries

Like Berlusconi and Babiš, Ivanishvili came into politics from the outside (as a businessman), and believed unequivocally that he could transplant the business model he had learned (in the early days of Russian capitalism) to the political realm. His experience, as it turns out, was from operating a business in the shadow of a state that had been effectively captured and was largely beholden to private interests through a parallel system of informal rule bypassing government processes.

Within a short period of time, Ivanishvili implemented a similar system in Georgia by recruiting government personnel based on personal loyalty and installing himself as the key stakeholder of the firm. Democratic institutions (parliament, presidency, political parties, civil society) that possess their own legitimacy and therefore represent a challenge to the leader are purposefully targeted and undermined. Policies are based on the promises of the leader, who presents himself as the only person in the country capable of solving its pressing problems. There is no political ideology or principle—it is just the perception that things are getting done.

In functioning democracies, if a state is captured by business, it raises concerns because it undermines liberal principles and accountability, strengthens various populist movements, and can contribute to democratic backsliding. In hybrid regimes, however, it is much worse, since it forms a new obstacle to democratization and provides incentives for stakeholders to maintain the partial equilibrium of 'façade democracies' (Carothers, 2002). In other words, the 'state as a firm' in hybrid regimes looks less like corporate capitalism and more like 'illiberal oligarchy' ("Illiberal oligarchy," 2019), where both the liberal and majoritarian foundations of democracy are renounced in favor of a corporatist and patrimonial form of governance. Technocratic populism reduces the state into a start-up firm with a small number of stakeholders and a disengaged public sphere. In a weakly institutionalized environment, this bodes ill in

a world where liberal democracy seems almost everywhere under attack.

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Conflict of Interests

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About the Authors

David Aprasidze is a Professor of Political Science at Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia. He received his PhD from Hamburg University, Germany, and was a Fulbright scholar at Duke University, North Carolina, US. At various times, he has worked for public agencies and international NGOs operating in Georgia and has expertise in higher education management. His research interests include on political institutions and democratization.

David S. Siroky is an Associate Professor of Political Science in the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University, where he is a Core Faculty Member of the Center for Social Dynamics and Complexity and the working group on Nationalist and Ethno-Religious Dynamics, as well as a Faculty Affiliate of the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, the Center for Jewish Studies, the Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies, and the Center on the Future of War.

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Article

Expert Ministers in New Democracies: Delegation, Communist Legacies, or Technocratic Populism?

Elena Semenova

Institute of Political Science, Free University of Berlin, 14195 Berlin, Germany; E-Mail: elena.semenova@fu-berlin.de

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Abstract
This article examines the appointments and survival of expert ministers (i.e., ministers with educational and professional expertise in the portfolio to which they are appointed) in new democracies. Using a novel data set on 11 Central and Eastern European countries from 1990 until 2012, I test competing hypotheses derived from delegation theory, communist legacies approach, technocratic populism studies, and semi-presidentialism literature. The first study shows that experts without political experience (technocrats) have specific cabinet appointment patterns distinguishing them from party politicians and politically experienced experts. For example, technocrats have high chances of being appointed during an economic downturn. The conditional risk set survival analysis has revealed that compared to their politically experienced colleagues, technocrats have higher chances of remaining in their positions if there was a change in the PM's candidacy. Moreover, they have long careers independently of the continuity of the PM's party in government and the PM's partisan status. Strikingly, patterns of portfolio specialization from the communist period remained in place after the regime change (e.g., expert ministers holding the portfolios of finance and economy). However, holding these specific portfolios does not decrease the minister's risk of being dismissed. These findings have ramifications for issues surrounding cabinet formation, institutional choice, and populism in new democracies.

Keywords
communist legacies; economic crisis; politically experienced experts; post-communism; semi-presidentialism; technocracy; technocratic populism

Issue
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1. Introduction

Populism and populists are on the rise around the world. What unites populists is the appeal to 'ordinary people' and the massive critique of the 'political establishment'—although these politicians might have been an integral part of this establishment themselves (e.g., Donald Trump in the United States). Populists argue that 'the people' are the sovereign that was robbed of their sovereignty by 'the corrupt elites' and only they, the populists, can restore justice (e.g., Mudde, 2004). Populism has been seen as an alternative to party democracy. Technocracy, or the governance by technical expertise, is allegedly another alternative (Caramani, 2017). Recently, a new form of populism well known from Latin American context (e.g., Rafael Correa in Ecuador) has begun to appear in European countries, exemplified by Emmanuel Macron of France and Andrej Babiš of the Czech Republic. Using a technocratic approach, these politicians connect populist promises to politics, claiming to produce better policies in a more efficient way (e.g., Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Havlík, 2019). Technocratic populism represents a new threat to party democracy and, therefore, warrants close examination.

Studies of technocratic populism have provided crucial insights for a better understanding of presidential

leadership (e.g., de la Torre, 2013), and the political style of techno-populist prime ministers (e.g., Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Havlík, 2019; Valbruzzi, 2018; see also contributions on France, Italy, and Georgia in this thematic issue). Researchers have also looked at techno-populist policy agenda setting and policy implementation, particularly in the Latin American context (e.g., de la Torre, 2013; Roberts, 1995). One understudied aspect of technocratic populism is how populists use technocracy as a strategy to realize their policy preferences and gain public support. The most apparent strategy is to use technocratic discourse during political campaigns (e.g., Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). Another strategy—complementary to the first one—is to appoint technocrats to government. In doing so, politicians signal to other parties and to the electorate that not only they will run the state efficiently, but also that they know the right persons to do this job on their behalf (see also contribution on Italy in this thematic issue). The latter aspect (i.e., the reasons for technocratic appointments to governments) is the focus of this article.

I argue that new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe provide a fruitful ground for using technocratic expertise in government for two reasons. The first is party systems' weakness and blurred societal cleavages in these countries (e.g., Whitefield, 2002). After decades of communist domination, the transition to democracy provided a unique window of opportunities for new parties (Lewis, 2002). Despite developing under challenging conditions (e.g., the lack of territorial party organizations, high electoral and party volatility, and strategically disloyal behavior of politicians; see, e.g., Semenova, 2015; Tavits, 2005), party systems in new democracies have become more consolidated over time. Since the 2000s, party systems of new democracies have become more fragmented. Unorthodox parties of various stances—including (centrist) populist parties with the high personalization of leadership and technocratic appeal—have emerged and became electorally successful (e.g., Pop-Eleches, 2010). The electoral success of newly emerged unorthodox parties has been considered one of the reasons for an increased demand for technocracy and technocrats in new democracies (e.g., Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). The second reason is a generally positive perception of technocracy and technocrats among the public and politicians of new democracies (e.g., Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017). I argue that public preference for technocracy originated in the late communist period, when professional expertise in the respective policy area became the primary credential for a government position (e.g., Hanley & Treiman, 2005). These communist legacies have continued to affect cabinet formation in new democracies even after the collapse of communism (Semenova, 2018).

This article examines the appointment of expert ministers (i.e., ministers with educational and professional expertise in the portfolio to which they are appointed) to cabinets in 11 post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In doing so, I consider two research questions. The first is under what circumstances a minister's expertise has been an important credential for being appointed to a cabinet. The second question is how the PMs and popularly elected presidents influence the survival of ministers in post-communist countries. Using delegation theory, semi-presidentialism, technocratic populism, and communist legacy studies, I show that the value of expertise differs among ministers with and without political experience. The results of a binary logistic regression estimated in this article have shown that experts without political experience have specific appointment patterns distinguishing them from party politicians in government. Using a conditional risk set Cox regression model, I provide evidence that technocrats have different patterns of survival in cabinet compared to their politically experienced colleagues.

This article contributes to the existing literature in four ways. First, it demonstrates that expert ministers with different profiles are more likely to be appointed under specific institutional, political, and cultural circumstances. Although scholars have addressed the appointment of ministers recruited from outside of parliaments (also experts, e.g., Neto & Strøm, 2006; Semenova, 2018), few have considered experts specifically (but see, Bertsou & Caramani, 2020) or delineated the effects of political, institutional, and economic determinants on the recruitment of different types of expert ministers—both of which this article seeks to do. Second, this article contributes to the literature on the effects of economic and political crises on the appointment of experts (e.g., Pastorella, 2016) by showing that, in post-communist countries, a poor economic situation is a decisive factor in the appointment of technocrats but not of expert ministers with political experience. Third, this article contributes to the discussion of communist legacies (e.g., Kitschelt, 1995) by demonstrating how recruitment and portfolio allocation patterns originated in the communist period effect ministerial appointments in the post-communist period. Fourth, the article contributes to the literature on ministerial survival by showing differences in the survival of technocrats and politically experienced ministers. This article introduces the original data set on ministerial recruitment in 11 new EU Members states of Central and Eastern Europe. The findings presented in this study have ramifications for issues surrounding cabinet formation, ministerial careers, institutional choice, populism, and party politics in new democracies.

2. Cabinet Appointment of Expert Ministers: Theoretical Considerations

The appointments of technocrats (i.e., ministers those primary credentials are their professional expertise and not their party experience) expose two theoretical divides in the literature. The first is whether party democracy is the dominant model of the political process or

there are alternatives to it. The second is whether the party government is the best strategy to govern. In studies on cabinet formation, these divides often operationalize through the value of political experience versus expertise for ministers.

Starting with the question about party democracy, most approaches to ministerial appointments can be arranged between delegation theory and technocratic populism, representing the opposite sides of this continuum. Delegation theory embraces party democracy. It considers the formation of cabinet is just a step in the delegation chain, i.e., the voters elect political parties; the winning political parties build a government and select the PM who is, in turn, in charge of selecting their ministers (Strøm, Müller, & Bergman, 2008). Delegation theory predicts two important factors for the understanding of ministerial appointments. The first is that the relationship between the PM and their ministers may be conflicted because of the asymmetry of information between the sides and the possibility that ministers may pursue a hidden agenda. The second is that the PM and political parties try to minimize delegation conflicts by carefully screening the candidates for a ministerial position and testing their political loyalty. Parliaments and party organizations are the best platforms for such screening because the principals have a large number of candidates whom they may observe over a longer period (e.g., Blondel & Thiébault, 1991; Dowding & Dumont, 2009; Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008).

In contrast, technocratic populism rejects party democracy and mainstream parties of all ideological orientations (Bickerton & Invernizzi Accetti, 2017). Like other types of populism, technocratic populists criticize political parties and other institutes of mediation as unnecessary and prone to manipulation and corruption (Bickerton & Invernizzi Accetti, 2017). They also criticize the ideas of procedural legitimacy by arguing that the source of legitimacy is 'the ordinary people.' Instead, "technocratic populism strategically uses the appeal of technocratic competence and weaponizes numbers to deliver a populist message" (Buštíková & Guasti, 2019, p. 304). For technocratic populists, ministers with political experience represent the 'establishment' and should, therefore, be excluded from the pool of ministeriables.

These approaches also oppose each other in their perception of whether party government is the best available option to govern, a question related to the value of professional expertise for cabinet ministers. For delegation theory, the minister's professional expertise does not play any prominent role. Indeed, it expects that ministers provide political guidance according to their party's preferences, while professional expertise is provided by bureaucrats in the respective ministries (Huber, 2000). Delegation theory suggests that the appointments of experts increase the asymmetry of information between the PM and the minister, which may allow expert ministers to extract greater benefits from their position—either in terms of policy or material assets—than the PM would like. Sometimes, experts must be appointed (e.g., because of public expectations that a good performance in some portfolios can only be achieved by experts; see Bakema & Secker, 1988). Nevertheless, the delegation theory predicts that these expert ministers will have political experience because the minister's party loyalty will decrease the probability of delegation problems between the PM and her ministers and ensure party preferences in the policy areas controlled by expert ministers.

For delegation theory, the appointments of expert ministers without political experience (i.e., technocrats) are dysfunctional. Researchers on parliamentary systems characterize these appointments as a consequence of a political (e.g., coalition conflicts) or economic crisis (Alexiadou & Gunaydin, 2019; McDonnell & Valbruzzi, 2014; Pastorella, 2016). However, the appointment of politically inexperienced experts is often of a short duration. Delegation theory expects that after crisis climaxes, the party government will be reinstalled, and politically experienced ministers will replace their technocratic counterparts (e.g., Semenova, 2018; Yong & Hazell, 2011).

Technocratic populism, in contrast, maintains that only technocrats can provide solutions to the problems that are relevant to the entire society, as opposed to particularistic decision-making essential to party government (e.g., Bickerton & Invernizzi Accetti, 2017; Havlík, 2019). Appointing technocrats is a crucial strategy for increasing the legitimacy of the populist government and creating public acceptance for neoliberal reforms (e.g., Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Roberts, 1995). Moreover, during political crises, populists prefer to appoint technocrats in order to make their government functional and less conflictual (Pastorella, 2016; Valbruzzi, 2018).

Between both approaches (i.e., delegation theory and technocratic populism) lie semi-presidentialism and communist legacies approaches. Similar to technocratic populism, semi-presidential studies consider the appointments of politically inexperienced ministers rational. Scholars have maintained that in semi-presidentialism—where PMs have to share executive powers with the popularly elected president (Elgie, 1999, p. 13)—the presidents have greater institutional powers to influence the government formation, for instance, by refusing to confirm the ministers proposed by the PM or even appointing some ministers discretionally (Semenova & Dowding, 2019; Tavits, 2009). Furthermore, non-partisan ministers promoted by the president are considered his natural allies; therefore, their appointments are just one strategy to ensure the realization of presidential policy preferences in government (Neto & Strøm, 2006; Schleiter & Morgan-Jones, 2009; Tavits, 2009). Most importantly, the survival of such ministers depends on presidential support (Semenova, 2018; Semenova & Dowding, 2019). Unlike technocratic populism, semi-presidentialism studies do not examine the importance of the minister's expertise for cab-

inet appointments. Presidential appointees have to be non-partisan, although they may also be experts (e.g., Tavits, 2009).

Finally, communist legacy studies suggest that the ministers' professional experience is the most critical criterion for their appointments. I posit that two communist legacies are particularly influential. The first is the importance of a professional education and relevant occupational experience for ministers. As scholars on communist politics have underlined (e.g., Harasymiw, 1984), from the early 1970s until the collapse of communism, political (i.e., within the Communist Party hierarchy) and professional careers (including ministerial positions) were largely separated and required different credentials. For entry to party positions, political loyalty was the major credential. For entry into professional positions, tertiary education and relevant occupational experience were necessary (Hanley & Treiman, 2005; Hough, 1973, p. 6). Using the legacy argument, I expect that this pattern continued to be in place after the regime change, particularly in countries with high political continuity after the collapse of communism. The second legacy that might survive the collapse of communism is the pattern of specialization within bureaucratic organizations. As Hough (1973, pp. 142–143) has revealed, in the Soviet Union, some policy areas were more often occupied than others by bureaucrats with relevant educational and professional experience. Among these policy areas were government positions in the military, economy, health, education, science, and technology. Because many practices developed in the Soviet Union were later adopted by other communist countries (e.g., Hanley & Treiman, 2005), I assume that other communist countries shared these preferences for experts in the aforementioned policy areas. These preferences were also likely to survive the collapse of communism because technocratic leadership as a form of governance enjoys strong public support in former communist countries (Bertsou & Pastorella, 2017).

By stressing the minister's expertise as a significant credential for cabinet appointments, communist legacies studies resemble the technocratic populism approach. However, the legacies approach does not reject ministers with political experience from the ministerables, as technocratic populists do. Instead, the legacies approach considers expert ministers the norm rather than the dysfunctional exception. It expects that both PMs and popularly elected presidents should actively appoint such ministers (independently of their political experience).

To test the expectations derived from four types of literature (i.e., delegation theory, technocratic populism, semi-presidentialism, and communist legacies), I conducted two studies. The first study dealt with the determinants of the appointments of expert ministers to cabinets in post-communist countries. It answered questions about who is selected and under what circumstances. The second study analyzed the determinants of ministerial tenures in cabinets; to this end, the research question concerns who remains in cabinets longer and what that tells us about the power of PMs and presidents.

3. The Operationalization of Expert Ministers

This article will focus on the appointments of two groups of expert ministers. The first group consists of ministers who are experts in their policy area (i.e., they have advanced educational training and relevant professional experience; see Camerlo & Pérez-Liñán, 2015, p. 318) and they had no parliamentary or party-leading experience (compare McDonnell & Valbruzzi, 2014); I define these ministers as *technocrats*. The second group includes ministers who are experts in their policy area with parliamentary and/or party-leading experience; these ministers are *politically experienced experts*. Because membership in each of these groups is counted at the time of the minister's first appointment to cabinet, it is mutually exclusive. The residual category includes *party politicians* (i.e., politicians with leading party and/or parliamentary experience) without expertise in their portfolio.

4. The Determinants of the Appointments of Experts to Central and Eastern European Cabinets

4.1. Hypotheses and Indicators

Each type of the literature (i.e., delegation theory, semi-presidentialism, technocratic populism, and communist legacies approaches) predict the recruitment of ministers with different types of credentials. The delegation theory predicts that experts are recruited to the cabinet if PMs and presidents have powers to do so (the political opportunity argument) and if they have an increased need for expertise during crises. Starting with the political opportunity argument, the type of cabinet is expected to structure the PM's opportunities to appoint expert ministers (see the Supplementary File for indicators and descriptive statistics). Compared to minority cabinets, in majority cabinets, PMs have a larger pool of candidates from which to recruit (Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008). Therefore, I expected that minority cabinets will have fewer technocrats and fewer politically experienced experts than their majority counterparts (H1a). The fractionalization of cabinets may restrict the PM's opportunities to recruit experts. Fractionalized cabinets often experience a high level of intra-coalitional conflicts (Warwick, 1994), which decreases the PM's opportunities to appoint politically experienced experts because their appointments may lead to additional delegation problems. In highly fractionalized cabinets, PMs will prefer to appoint technocrats instead of politically experienced experts (H1b).

The delegation theory also suggests that PMs and presidents have a greater need for ministerial expertise in times of economic crisis (e.g., Alexiadou & Gunaydin, 2019). Therefore, poor economic situations (i.e., an eco-

nomic downturn and high inflation) will increase the likelihood of the appointment of both technocrats and politically experienced ministers (H1c). Expert ministers are also more common in times of political crises (compare Pastorella, 2016). In particular, in countries with a low level of democracy, parties are expected to be less consolidated and, as a consequence, less able to control ministerial appointments. Therefore, I expect that technocrats and politically experienced experts are more likely to be recruited in countries with a low level of electoral democracy (H1d). Unconsolidated party systems are also expected to be the phenomenon of democratic transition. I anticipated that both technocrats and politically experienced experts are more common in the earlier periods of transition, eventually disappearing when the democracies become more consolidated (H1e).

The second set of hypotheses is related to the technocratic populism approach. The literature suggests that technocrats are the best choice for populists during political crises. As for indicators of a political crisis, I will use the minority status and the cabinet's fractionalization. Minority cabinets need to seek parliamentary support beyond their parties, which may be difficult to do in ideologically fractionalized parliaments. As a consequence, minority cabinets are less stable than their majority counterparts. Similarly, in order to avoid a minority status, ideologically diverse parties may build a coalition. Such coalitions are known for a high level of internal conflicts and, as a result, their instability (Warwick, 1994). Under both circumstances, populists will appoint more technocrats to their cabinets to prevent party conflicts (H2a).

The technocratic populist literature also suggests that populists appoint more technocrats during an economic crisis in order to be able to realize unpopular reforms (e.g., Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). Therefore, I expect that poor economic conditions (i.e., an economic downturn and high inflation) will lead to more technocratic appointments (H2b). Finally, studies on technocratic populism have argued that populist parties with technocratic appeal have emerged in the 2000s (Pop-Eleches, 2010). Therefore, I expect that the more years since the democratic transition has passed, the more technocrats will be appointed to cabinets (H2c).

According to the semi-presidentialism approach, popularly elected presidents are more interested in appointing politically inexperienced ministers because of their expertise and their political dependence on the president (e.g., Tavits, 2009). Therefore, I expect that cabinets under popularly elected presidents (i.e., in semi-presidential systems) will include more technocrats than politically experienced experts (H3a). The presidential opportunities to appoint experts to cabinets should be even higher if the presidents can discretionally dismiss cabinets (as in Croatia until 2000). I expected, therefore, that if popularly elected presidents have extensive cabinet-dismissal powers, the likelihood of technocratic appointments will be higher, while the probability of appointments of politically experienced experts will be lower (H3b).

The fourth set of hypotheses addresses the communist legacy effects of communist recruitment and specialization patterns on the appointment of experts. I expected that patterns of specialization common in the communist ministries continue being applied after the collapse of communism because of support from both politicians and the general population. Therefore, policy areas that were subject to expert appointments during the late periods of communism will continue being occupied by both technocrats and politically experienced experts after the regime change (H4a). Another indicator of communist portfolio allocation is the type of portfolio to which the minister is appointed during the post-communist period. Following Hough (1973, pp. 142–143), I used three variables to describe the portfolios that were particularly specialized during the communist regime: portfolios of foreign affairs/defense, portfolio of finance/economy, and portfolio of social affairs/education. Because of the small number of ministers in some of these portfolios, I combined the respective portfolios in these categories. I expect that these portfolios will be occupied by both technocrats and politically experienced experts rather than by party politicians (H4b).

The socio-demographic characteristics of the minister were not used in the analysis because the age of the ministers does not show any strong variation and the proportion of female ministers is extremely low in some of our sample countries. Using these variables, empirical models failed to converge (full details are not reported here).

4.2. Data

This analysis was based on biographical information about 2,382 ministers from 106 cabinets. The data set encompasses the years 1991 to 2012. It includes information from all 11 post-communist new EU member states: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Romania. All of these countries have experienced at least three consecutive lower-chamber elections since the collapse of communism, during which the country's Polity score was six or higher. Thus, I excluded authoritarian regimes. The exception to this rule is Croatia from 1990 until 2000, when its Polity IV score was below six. Because I aimed to analyze the entire population of new EU democracies, this country was included in the analyses.

4.3. Method

Two considerations guided the selection of the method. First, because the dependent variables are binary, it is necessary to use a binary logistic regression. Second, I assumed some country-specific heterogeneity not cap-

tured by the political and individual variables used in this analysis. Therefore, I use fixed effects at the level of countries and calculate robust standard errors adjusted by country.

4.4. Results

Descriptively, from the early 1990s until 2012, approximately 44% of all ministers in post-communist new democracies were experts in the portfolio to which they were appointed. There was, however, considerable variation across countries. For example, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia, and Croatia comprise the group of countries that are less favorable toward experts in cabinets than other post-communist countries (Figure 1). Bulgarian and Lithuanian cabinets, by contrast, have been most favorable toward experts in cabinets. Moreover, while in Bulgaria and Lithuania, technocrats comprise the largest proportion of expert ministers, politically experienced experts have been more common in Czech and Estonian cabinets.

The results of a binary logistic regression for each dependent variable (i.e., *technocrats* and *politically experienced experts*) are reported in Table 1 as odds ratios (exp(*B*)). The coefficient above 1 means that the determinant increases the probability of appointing the respective group of expert ministers compared to party politicians without expertise, while the coefficient below 1 means that this probability decreases.

Model 1 (Table 1) shows that neither a popularly elected president nor a minority cabinet was a significant determinant of technocratic appointments. In contrast, high cabinet fractionalization decreased the probability of technocratic appointments. A marginal analysis has shown that in single-party governments, the predicted proportion of technocrats was approximately 34%, in coalitions with six or more partners; this proportion was expected to be below 10% (full results are not presented here). The likelihood of technocratic appointments was higher if the presidents had extensive non-legislative powers (i.e., discretional cabinet dismissal); in these systems, the predicted proportion of technocrats was 24%. In systems in which the presidents lacked the cabinet dismissal power, this proportion was expected to be 18% (full results are not presented here).

Neither inflation nor the time since transition nor the electoral democracy index was a significant explanatory factor of technocratic appointments. However, technocrats tend to be often appointed to cabinets in countries experiencing a massive economic crisis and become less widespread in times of economic growth (Figure 2).

The communist legacy determinants, by contrast, provided the most substantial explanation of the appointment of technocratic ministers. If the portfolio was subject to expert appointments during communism, it was three times more likely to be occupied by a technocrat during the post-communist period (Model 1; see also Figure 3). Patterns of specialization used in the communist period appear to survive the regime change, except for appointments to portfolios of foreign affairs and defense. The likelihood of a technocrat to be appointed to the portfolios of finance/economy as well as of the portfolios of social affairs/education was 1.4 times higher than appointments to the other types of portfolios.

Regarding the appointments of politically experienced experts (Table 1, Model 2), the strongest determinants for the appointment of experts with political experience were communist legacies. If the respective portfolio was occupied by an expert during communism, the chances were approximately 2.5 times higher that this

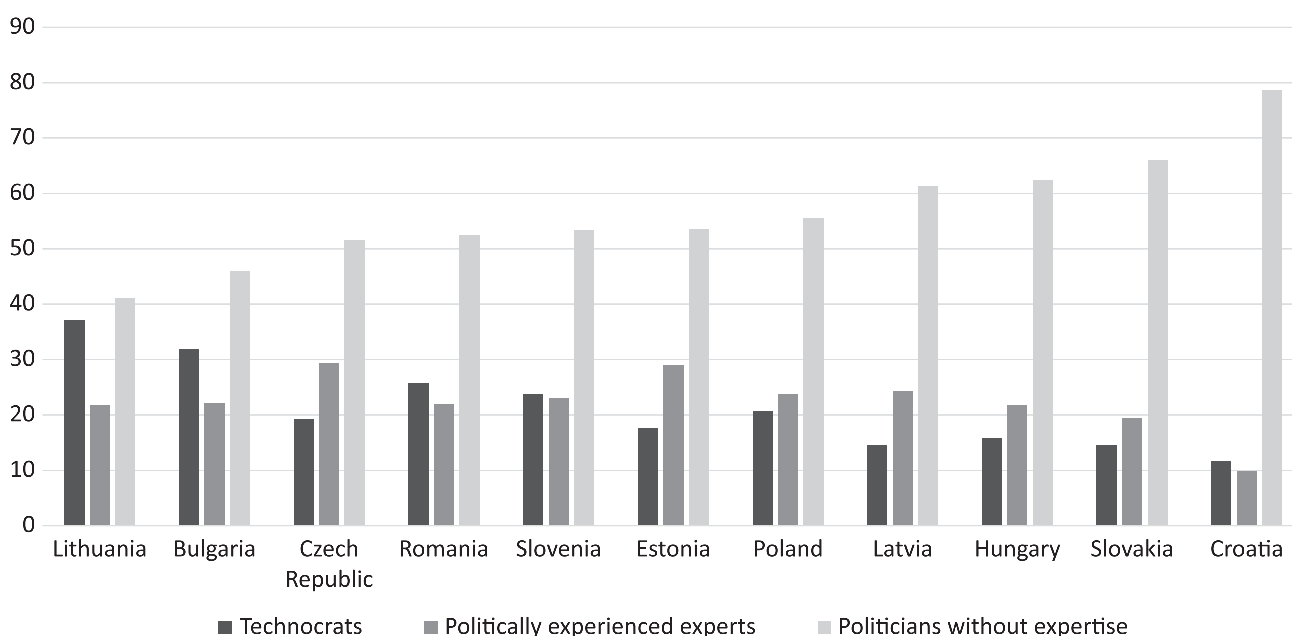

Figure 1. The proportion of technocrats and politically experienced experts in post-communist cabinets (in %).

Table 1. The determinants of the appointments of expert ministers to post-communist cabinets (as odds ratios).

	Technocrats (Model 1)	Politically experienced experts (Model 2)
Minority cabinet	0.97	0.99
	(0.20)	(0.12)
Cabinet fractionalization	0.77**	1.03
	(0.06)	(0.05)
Popularly elected president	1.31	0.84
	(0.38)	(0.14)
Discretional dismissal of cabinets	1.39***	1.23
	(0.12)	(0.25)
Inflation	1.00*	1.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Economic growth	0.95***	1.02
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Electoral Democracy Index	2.90	1.97
	(2.61)	(1.20)
Time since the communist transition	1.02	0.99
	(0.02)	(0.01)
Portfolio allocation to an expert during communism	3.01***	2.51***
	(0.34)	(0.44)
Portfolio of foreign affairs/defense	1.33	1.35
	(0.37)	(0.28)
Portfolio of finance/economy	1.37**	1.43**
	(0.86)	(0.18)
Portfolio of social affairs/education	1.39***	1.20
	(0.11)	(0.17)
Log psydolikelihood	−965.80	−1054.52
N countries	11	11
N	2047	2047
Linktest hat2	−0.07	−0.43
	p = (0.13)	p = (0.11)
Akaike's information criterion	1951.60	2129.04
Bayesian information criterion	2007.84	2185.28

Notes: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$; fixed effects at the country level; robust standard errors adjusted by country are in parentheses.

portfolio would be headed by a politically experienced expert than by a politician (Figure 3). Finally, such ministers had a 1.4 times higher chance to be appointed to the portfolio associated with finance and economy.

5. Survival of Expert Ministers in New Democracies

Once expert ministers are appointed, questions arise about how long they stay. Each of the discussed approaches expects that ministers without political experience (i.e., technocrats) and politically experienced ministers will have different chances of surviving in cabinet. Delegation theory stresses the minister's political loyalty as the major credential for a cabinet position. Accordingly, ministers with political experience (whether experts or not) should remain in their positions longer than ministers without political experience (i.e., technocrats). Various studies on ministerial careers in parliamentary systems have confirmed this assumption (e.g., Berlinski, Dewan, & Dowding, 2010; Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2008; Indridason & Kam, 2008). Politically inexperienced ministers present different issue. PMs can easily dismiss them. Appointment of these ministers during crises allows the PM to shift the blame for electorally unpopular decisions, the cabinet's poor performance, or even scandals (Semenova, 2018; Yong & Hazell, 2011).

Technocratic populism studies have yet to deal with the issue of ministerial survival. However, researchers argue that populist parties with technocratic appeal are highly personalized (Pop-Eleches, 2010). Therefore, once in government, populist party leaders would assume the prime ministerial position and be the most powerful actors to affect the cabinet survival of technocrats. I expect that provided the continuity of party leadership and party in government, technocrats appointed by populists will remain in their positions longer than ministers with political experience.

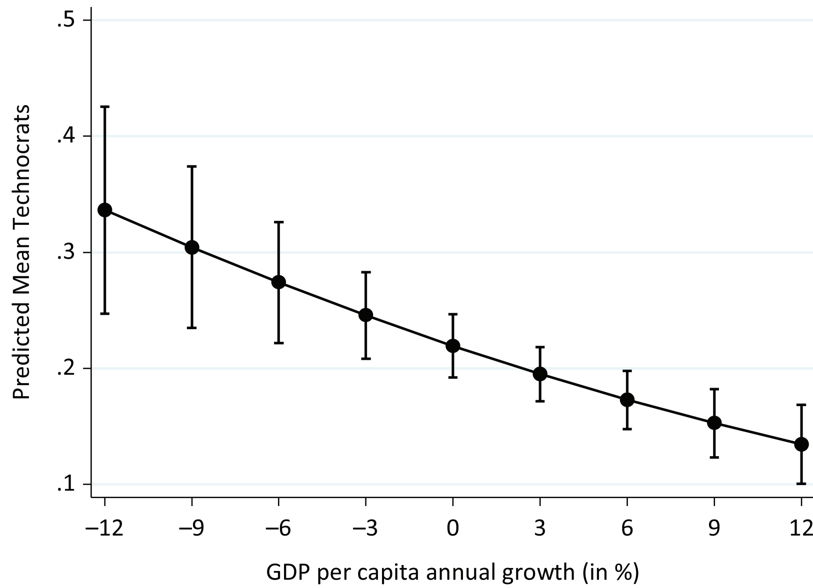

Figure 2. Adjusted predictions for the effect of economic growth on the appointments of technocrats (with 95% CIs). Note: Based on Model 1, all covariates are set at means.

Semi-presidentialism predicts that more politically inexperienced (even non-partisan) ministers to be recruited in these systems. Single-country and comparative studies on ministerial terminations in European semi-presidential countries have revealed that, in these systems, ministers have often been reappointed to subsequent cabinets once the initial cabinet ends (Huber & Martinez-Gallardo, 2004, p. 39; Semenova & Dowding, 2019). Researchers assume that in semi-presidential systems, PMs and presidents will try to minimize the probability of intra-executive conflicts. For PMs, a popularly elected president will restrict her discretion to fire ministers to a similar degree as coalitions—in particular, if the minister envisaged for dismissal is a presidential appointee (Semenova & Dowding, 2019). For presidents, the best strategy to minimize intra-executive conflict is to promote a non-partisan technocrat, who would be able to work with PMs from different parties.

Finally, following the communist legacy argument, one may expect that the appointments of experts to policy areas, which were dominated by experts during the communism, are rationally motivated by the increased demand for expert knowledge for performing in this portfolio. The source for this demand could be the PM, the president, public opinion, or external circumstances (like economic crisis). Therefore, technocrats will

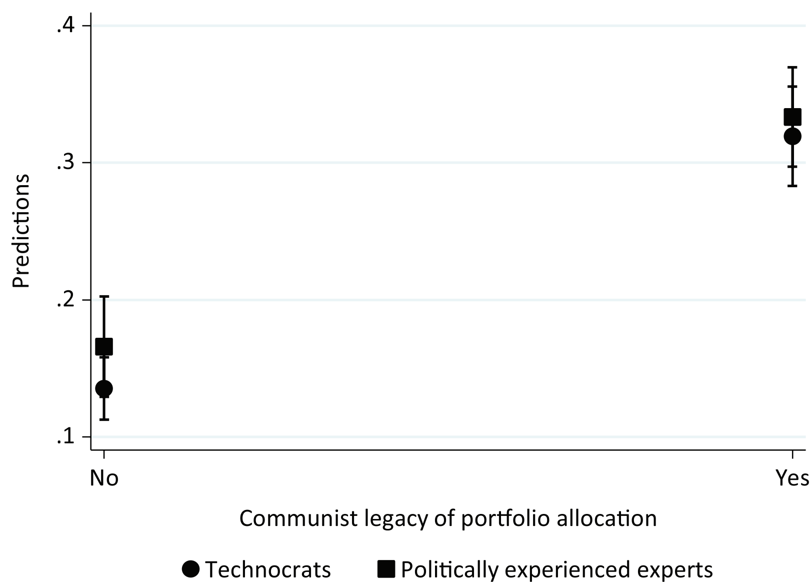

Figure 3. Adjusted predictions for the effect of communist portfolio allocation on the predicted proportion of experts (with 95% CIs). Note: Based on Models 1 and 2, all covariates are set at means.

remain in their positions longer than party politicians without expertise.

5.1. Hypotheses and Indicators

Based on delegation theory, the PM's characteristics are an important factor in the probability of ministerial survival (see the Supplementary File). The first characteristic is whether the PM is partisan. Delegation theory takes for granted that the PM is partisan because she is selected from among members of the ruling coalition. However, post-communist countries have seen non-partisan PMs head a caretaker cabinet or be appointed to a coalition because the coalition partners could not find a candidate acceptable to all. For a partisan PM, a politically experienced minister is the best choice from the delegation perspective. I assume that the opposite holds true for non-partisan PMs who will prefer to work with technocrats instead of politically experienced ministers (H5a). The second factor is the change in the PM (i.e., when the previous cabinet ended, and a new PM is in charge). In this case, the new PM will not be keen to take over politically experienced ministers of her predecessor, except for technocrats (H5b). The third factor is the party continuity in government. I assume that if the same party is leading the subsequent cabinet, there will be a high probability that the PM will replace the ministers, in particular politically experienced ones, to introduce new policies or signal change (H5c).

Based on semi-presidentialism studies, the most important factor of ministerial survival is the existence of a popularly elected president. If popularly elected presidents prefer to nominate politically inexperienced ministers, these ministers should be able to survive the change of cabinet and work with different PMs. Therefore, in semi-presidential systems, technocrats are expected to be more durable than their politically experienced colleagues (H6a).

Following technocratic populism studies, the change of PM and party in government will be the most critical factors affecting ministerial durability. Because technopopulist parties prefer to appoint technocrats to cabinets, I expect that if the same party forms the subsequent cabinet, there is a high probability that technocrats will be re-appointed (H7a). Technocrats will also have lower risks of being dismissed if there is any change in the PM's candidacy because they were appointed because of their expertise and should be able to work with different PMs (H7b). Studies have shown that populists appoint more technocrats during economic crises (e.g., Buštíková & Guasti, 2019). Therefore, improvement of the economic situation will be considered an outcome of technocratic appointments, and technocrats will remain in their positions longer (H7c).

Finally, communist legacies studies suggest that the administration of some policy areas requires more professional expertise than others. Therefore, technocrats will survive in the portfolios traditionally dominated by experts (including finance/economy and foreign affairs/defense) longer than their politically experienced counterparts without expertise (H8a).

I also use a set of control variables derived from ministerial career studies (e.g., Berlinski et al., 2010). Specifically, ministers have higher risks of being dismissed if the cabinet is a minority compared to majority cabinets and if this cabinet is highly fractionalized. Both politically experienced ministers and technocrats will have higher risks of being dismissed if they experienced a gap between appointments because their survival of the PM would be of less importance. Finally, I assume that with the consolidation of democratic regimes in the region, ministerial durability will also be higher because parties will get more control over ministerial appointments (e.g., Semenova, 2018).

5.2. Method

Because I am interested in time-to-event, I conducted a survival analysis. The dependent variable is the *time of a ministerial appointment in days*. A number of considerations guide the selection of the method. First, because I am interested in the effects of the changes in PMs and party continuity in government, the ministerial career has to be understood from a holistic perspective. Each minister may experience a number of failures (i.e., dismissals) over his career. Second, these failures have a natural order (i.e., a minister cannot experience the second dismissal before he has experienced the first one). Therefore, I used the conditional risk set Cox regression model proposed by Prentice, Williams, and Peterson (1981), which takes both considerations into account. In this model, the robust standard errors are stratified by the number of failures. Because the variable Political experience of the minister does not fulfill the proportionality assumptions of the Cox regression (Cox, 1972), I conducted models on sub-samples of ministers stratified by their political experience.

5.3. Results

Descriptively, approximately 64% of all post-communist ministers had been reappointed at least once. The results are presented in Table 2 as hazard ratios. A coefficient above 1 means that the minister has a higher risk of being dismissed; a coefficient below 1—has a lower risk of being dismissed.

The first result was that in new democracies, ministers under popularly elected presidents remained in their positions longer than under indirectly elected presidents, although this effect is marginal for politically experienced ministers. Technocrats (Table 2, Model 1) have higher chances of remaining in cabinet if there is a cabinet under a new PM. Moreover, their re-nomination to a new cabinet was not related to the continuity of the PM's party. For politically experienced ministers (Table 2, Model 2), the risk of being dismissed by a non-partisan PM was

Table 2. Stratified conditional risk set Cox regression of ministerial survival in post-communist countries (in exp(*B*)).

	Minister with no political experience (Model 1)	Politically experienced ministers (Model 2)
Non-partisan PM	0.66	1.85**
	(0.20)	(0.42)
The change of the PM	0.61***	1.02†
	(0.14)	(0.13)
The PM's party remained in the government	1.19	1.21
	(0.31)	(0.17)
Popularly elected president	0.61***	0.65*
	(0.07)	(0.05)
Economic growth	0.97*	0.99
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Inflation	1.00	1.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Communist portfolio allocation	1.10	0.97
	(0.11)	(0.08)
Portfolio of foreign affairs/defense	0.98	1.12
	(0.18)	(0.12)
Portfolio of finance/economy	1.10	1.24†
	(0.17)	(0.14)
Control variables		
Cabinet fractionalization	1.04	1.07
	(0.05)	(0.04)
Minority cabinet	1.14	1.21*
	(0.15)	(0.11)
Gap in the ministerial career	1.08	0.97
	(0.28)	(0.14)
Years since the transition	1.03*	1.02*
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Log pseudolikelihood	−1944.08	−3505.61
N of ministers	633	832
N of failures	395	707
N of observations	12485	21842
PH global test	8.00 (13 df)	
	p = (.84)	
Linktest hat2	0.10	
	p = (.58)	

Notes: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, † $p < 0.1$; robust standard errors stratified by the number of failures.

almost two times higher than by a partisan PM. These ministers had a higher risk of being dismissed if there was a change in the PM and if they headed the portfolio of finance and economy, although in both cases, the effect is marginally significant.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

6.1. Discussion of Empirical Results

Among the four theoretical approaches discussed in this article, delegation theory and technocratic populism provide better explanations for the appointments of expert ministers and their survival in the cabinet. Confirming expectations derived from delegation theory, the determinants for the appointments of politically experienced experts do not significantly differ from those explaining appointments of party politicians without expertise. Political loyalty appears to be the most important credential for the appointment of both groups of ministers. Furthermore, technocratic appointments are often indeed a sign of a government's dysfunctional development because these ministers have high chances of being appointed during an economic downturn. Regarding the determinants of ministerial durability in new democracies, politically experienced ministers have higher risks of being dismissed by non-partisan PMs and in the case of prime ministerial change.

Delegation theory, however, cannot explain the survival of technocrats (expert ministers without political experience). Technocrats have higher chances of remaining in their positions if there was a change in the PM's

candidacy. Moreover, they have long careers independently of the continuity of the PM's party in government and the PM's partisan status. However, this durability exists as long as technocrats remain politically unaffiliated—otherwise, their careers will be affected by the determinants applied to politically experienced ministers (see Table 2). These findings support expectations based on the technocratic populism literature.

Communist legacies are the only determinant that explains the appointments of technocrats and politically experienced experts compared to party politicians without expertise. Specifically, the patterns of communist portfolio specialization (e.g., finance and economy) remained in place after the regime change. The policy area of social affairs and education are more often occupied by technocrats than party politicians. I assume that this arrangement is both the result of communist legacies and a recruitment strategy of PMs to shift the blame for any unpopular decisions in these highly politicized policy areas. However, holding these specific portfolios does not protect the minister from dismissal, as our survival analysis has shown. Politically experienced ministers even have a slightly higher risk of being dismissed if they hold finance or economy portfolios.

Finally, against the expectations of semi-presidentialism studies, technocratic appointments are not higher in systems with popularly elected presidents. They are higher in systems that granted their presidents substantial cabinet-dismissal powers. Confirming semi-presidentialism studies, technocrats under popularly elected presidents enjoy higher durability than under indirectly elected presidents.

6.2. Theoretical Implications

Populists consider themselves proponents of 'ordinary people' who have been betrayed by the political establishment. Corrupt elites have robbed the people of their sovereignty, manipulated them using mediated politics, and failed to discover the common good for the entire society (Caramani, 2017). A newly emerged type of populist parties, technocratic populists, argue that they will use apolitical expertise as the best strategy to provide effective and universal solutions to societal problems. In the cases of party system deconsolidation, democratic decline, and the implosion of the left-right political divide (e.g., Buštíková & Guasti, 2019; Pop-Eleches, 2010), technocratic appeal and the absence of clear ideological orientation are key elements of the electoral success of such parties in new democracies.

In this article, I have analyzed the technocratic aspect of ministerial appointments and survival in new democracies. What implications can be made from this analysis? First, new democracies provide fruitful ground for techno-populist parties. Because of communist legacies, there is a congruence between technocratic appointments to certain portfolios and public expectations for expertise in government. Public positive attitudes toward technocracy and technocrats in government support populists in their strategy to use technocratic appeal.

Second, by cultivating their image of challengers to mainstream parties, populists politicize technocracy. Techno-populist parties do not just promise to bring in more experts to government, which may already be the case in governments formed by mainstream parties. Populists vow to bring in more technocrats; in other words, they promise to bring in outsiders, just like these parties define themselves. Through the politicization of expertise, populists introduce qualitative differences among experts (i.e., being a mainstream versus outsider expert), thereby undermining technocracy's very basis as apolitical governance by expertise and knowledge.

Third, in their technocratic appeal, techno-populist parties are undemocratic and, ironically, elitist at the same time. They are undemocratic because they dismiss the input and processual legitimacy essential in democratic systems and stress the output legitimacy (in the form of policy results). These parties are also elitist because they believe that experts, not voters, can make political decisions and that only they, technocratic populists, can define whom these experts are.

Fourth, technocratic governance exposes the importance of democratic accountability. My results have shown that in new democracies, technocrats survive political changes (e.g., a change of the PM or the PM's party in government). Using the communist legacies argument, I have underlined the positive aspects of technocracy (e.g., policy continuity and skilled decision-making taken by a technocrat). From a democratic perspective, these findings suggest that technocracy may also have negative aspects. As studies on techno-populist parties have shown (e.g., Buštíková & Guasti, 2019), once elected, these parties have often tried to reduce the opportunities for political participation and representation and increase their chances to consolidate power. Technocracy is democratically unaccountable. Technocrats who help populists weaken the institutes of mediated politics and undermine procedural legitimacy by applying their expert knowledge are an underrated threat to democracy.

6.3. Further Research

The presented results show the ramifications of ministerial appointments, party politics, populism, and technocracy in former communist countries. Extant studies on ministerial appointment and survival have ignored the importance of the minister's expertise in new democracies (e.g., Neto & Strøm, 2006). This aspect has to be taken into account in further comparative studies. Moreover, none of the studies on ministerial careers in former communist countries (e.g., Schleiter & Morgan-Jones, 2009) has dealt with the effects of communist legacies. This issue warrants greater study in order to identify the mechanisms behind this persistence.

Further studies are required to explain the variation in the country-specific preferences for technocrats or politically experienced experts in the region. Whether it is institutions, political culture, public opinion, or other factors that determine who is appointed needs to be examined in a more detailed way. Finally, this research opens new avenues for studying the effect of technocracy on policy-making, public perception of governments, and democratic stability. For example, the use of technocracy by populist parties while in government presents a topic that warrants further research.

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Conflict of Interests

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Conflict of Interests

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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About the Author

Elena Semenova is Assistant Professor at the Free University of Berlin and Adjunct Professor of Political Science at the University of Jena, Germany. She previously held academic appointments at the Moscow State University and Humboldt University of Berlin. She has published comparative studies on parliamentary recruitment and ministerial careers in post-communist countries, party switching, and political psychology of leadership.

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