-Working Paper-

Populism and anti-populism in the semi-periphery: Lessons from Greece and Argentina

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Introduction

The global economic crisis and the imposition of harsh neoliberal policies in many countries of the world led to the resurgence of populism and reactivated the pre-existing populism/anti-populism division. On one side, left-wing and right-wing populist movements threaten the dominance of traditional parties and their neoliberal project. On the other side, liberal and social-democratic parties, as a response to the increasing dynamic of populist movements, express an aggressive anti-populist discourse that is mainly based on modernization theory and stereotypical ideas of the Cold war period. Neoliberal technocrats, intellectuals and media blame the anti-establishment movements, endorse the anti-populist view of mainstream parties and argue that populism is an “irrational” and “irresponsible” phenomenon, an “aberration” that threatens the quality of democracy. But is that true? What about anti-populism? Is this political discourse ‘innocent’?

In this paper, we examine the phenomena of populism and anti-populism in Greece and Argentina after the economic collapse (2008/9 and 2001, respectively) to highlight the great danger that derives from anti-populist discourse. As it is well-known, Greece and Argentina are two countries of the semi-periphery\(^1\) which, despite their great geographic distance from each other, present significant similarities in politics and culture. For example, populism has dominated the political history of modern Greece and Argentina, with emblematic figures like Andreas Papandreou and Juan Domingo Perón, and has led to a strong political, social and cultural confrontation between populists and anti-populists. According to Nikos Mouzelis, Greece and the northern Balkan countries have significant similarities with Latin American "developed" countries both in the political and economic field (Mouzelis, 1986). The main goal of this paper is to underline the main features of anti-populist discourse in Greece and Argentina of the 21\(^{st}\) century to prove that the stereotypical and monolithic (neoliberal) anti-populist ideas can be dangerous for politics and society.

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\(^1\) The semi-periphery countries are often located geographically and economically between core and peripheral regions.
Populism vs. anti-Populism: Theoretical insights of a diachronic battle

The various populist experiences over the years and the complexity of the issue create obstacles for researchers and academics in their attempt to produce a coherent definition of populism and identify the central core of the phenomenon. An important cause of this problem is the fact that the researchers have different perceptions on politics and utilize different kind of research methods and analyses. As a result, it is extremely difficult to have a consensus around a minimal definition and its principal features.

According to Ernesto Laclau, populism is a political logic/discourse which can be developed by any political movement and divides society into two opposing groups, the people and the elites. This schema takes place through the connection of different popular demands (logic of equivalence) and the formation of a collective identity (the recognition of a political enemy) (Laclau, 2005: 32-38). The signifier of the people is vital for populist discourse, as it works as a nodal point, namely a central reference. Laclau’s and Mouffe’s “discursive” approach is not identical with language or text. Discourse for them is a network of meaning articulating both linguistic (discourse) and non-linguistic elements (style, repertoire etc.) (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

Taggart mentions that “populism has an essential chameleonic quality that means it always takes on the hue of the environment in which it occurs” (Taggart, 2000: 4). Mudde and Kaltwasser enable us to understand the distinction between different articulations of populism, such as inclusionary and exclusionary. Their analysis shows that right-wing populists in Europe (e.g. FN and FPÖ) can be labeled as exclusionary, while left-wing populists in Latin America (e.g. PSUV and MAS) are mainly inclusionary (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012: 167). The exclusionary populist parties most of the times exclude people because of racist reasons and xenophobia, while the inclusionary populist parties include marginalized people in their social movement and try to expand the boundaries of democracy (Filc, 2015: 263-83).

It has been observed that populism usually occurs in times of crisis when the political establishment is unable to cope with crucial political, social or economic issues. Laclau states that: “The emergence of populism is historically linked to a crisis of the
dominant ideological discourse, which is in turn part of a more general social crisis’ (Laclau, 1977, p. 175). Economic crisis may not be the only and the necessary factor for the rise of populism (Barr, 2017: 60), but it has played a crucial role in the resurgence of populism in Europe and Latin America in recent years. The outbreak of the crisis along with the post-democratic conditions and the failure of traditional parties to confront the economic disaster transformed the political scene, bringing back to the fore the populist phenomenon.

The emergence of populism usually generates the aggressive reaction of the ruling parties through a strong anti-populist discourse. More often than not, the anti-populist forces in their effort to weaken their opponents utilize ideas and theories that are based mainly on stereotypical readings of populism. Specifically, in anti-populist discourse, populism is strongly correlated with demagogy, immorality and irresponsibility, while it is described as a “pathology” or “disease” of politics (Stavrakakis, 2014). For anti-populists, the populist politicians are demagogues who deceive the people of lower class through emotional rhetoric and lies. The citizens of lower class are presented as uneducated and fool persons who cannot distinguish the truth from the lie.\(^2\) The frustrated and angry people are considered as an irresponsible political subject, a mass that takes wrong decisions. As Philippe Marlière argues, when the people do not vote the way the political elites had expected, their choice is ‘null’ and ‘void’ (Marlière, 2013).

The anti-populist theories and the stigmatization of populism as a symptom of irrationalism is not a new phenomenon, as there were many liberal academics in the past (such as Daniel Bell, Edward Shils, Seymour Lipset etc.) that supported this view (Furedi, 2016). An important influence on anti-populist argumentation is the work of Richard Hofstadter, which changed the positive connotation that the term of populism was receiving until the middle of the 20th century. Hofstadter in his book "The Age of Reform" criticize the American populism of his age, as he condemns it as a highly regressive phenomenon and links it with provincialism, nativism, nationalism and anti-Semitism (Hofstadter, 1955: 60). It is notable in his work the existence of a binary political culture where, on the one hand, there is a traditional and provincial

\(^2\) The anti-populist criticism has recently been developed through the concepts of “fake news” and “post-truth”. For anti-populists, the only truth stems from the rational discourse and liberalism, while any opinion/view that does not agree with their own “truth” is fake.
camp, while on the other hand there is a modernizing and pragmatic camp that is able to consent for the good of the country (Hofstadter, 1955: 13). Populism belongs to the first category and is associated with nativism, traditionalism and ‘moral absolutism’. Hofstadter’s work influenced the academic debate and contributed substantially to the development of anti-populist arguments (Stavrakakis, 2017).

The above anti-populist dualist schema has been also relied on the liberal theory of "modernization”. Hofstadter’s ideas and the development of disciplines such as comparative politics and political culture (e.g. Almond) stigmatized any idea or theory that did not follow the rule of contemporary modern society of cosmopolitanism and modernization, as abnormal, equating it with "tradition”. According to Stavrakakis, the contemporary critical literature has highlighted the main drawbacks of modernization theory and specifically: 1) its monolithic reductionism and determinism, 2) its subordination of the social sciences to ideological uses in the Cold War context, 3) a dangerously hierarchical and one-dimensional dominating impulse and 4) its zealotist elitism (Stavrakakis, 2017: 6-8). However, it is important to emphasize that the stereotypical ideas that dichotomize the society in two camps (tradition-modernization, under development-development, stagnation-progress etc.) did not appear suddenly in the middle of the 20th century, but they turned up earlier in different types (e.g. civilization and barbarism in Argentina).

The aggressive discourse that has been developed by both sides formed a diachronic battle between populism and anti-populism. Ostiguy’s socio-cultural approach is a helpful tool to understand the strong conflict that takes place in many countries around the world and see the socio-cultural characteristics of each political space. According to Ostiguy’s performative approach, there is not just the left-right political dimension that places the parties according to their ideological views, but also the high-low dimension that crosscuts the left-right axis and has to do with ways of relating to people and the way of making decisions (two-dimensional political space) (Ostiguy, 2009 a). At the high side, people usually present a well-behaved and formal character, utilizing a rationalist and sophisticated reason, while they support institutionally mediated models of authority. At the low, people use language with slang expressions (popular language) and their body language is more passionate and colorful, while the political appeals emphasize powerful leadership (Ostiguy, 2017).
According to Ostiguy’s socio-cultural approach, the anti-populist parties are placed on the high dimension, while the populist forces belong to the low dimension.

Today in Greece, the conflict between populism and anti-populism is a strong battle between SYRIZA and the reformist camp of ND and PASOK. In Argentina, this socio-political conflict takes place between Peronists and anti-Peronists. It is noteworthy the fact that this kind of dispute is not a new phenomenon for these countries, as quite similar conflicts have already taken place in the 19th and 20th century (e.g. Greece: Trikoupis as a reformist and Diligiannis as a supporter of tradition).

**Greek anti-populism: The schema of “cultural dualism”**

In recent years in Greece, the economic collapse and the implementation of austerity policies led to the emergence of left-wing (SYRIZA) and right-wing (ANEL) populist parties which challenged the country's political establishment and transformed the political landscape. The anti-populist forces with the aim of protecting their political parties and programs criticized strongly the phenomenon of populism and characterized it as a decadent culture that is the main enemy of reformist agendas, democracy and Europe. Attempting to defend their political interests, anti-populists constructed a different interpretation of the crisis. According to their narrative, populism is the main responsible for the economic collapse as it didn’t allow the modernization of the country and affected negatively the morals and the mentality of the society (Sevastakis, 2012: 9-16).

The contemporary anti-populist perception relied considerably on the idea of "cultural dualism" developed by Nikiforos Diamantouros in the 1990’s, a theory which "discovers" a crucial Greek division between a rational Europe and an Eastern/Balkan immaturity. Diamantouros argues that cultural dualism is deeply rooted within Greek society and takes the form of a battle between an obsolete and a modern political

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3 Many academics and researchers supported this kind of argumentation. For example, Takis Pappas, in his book “Populism and Crisis in Greece”, asserts that populism is the main responsible factor for the political and economic problems of Greece (Pappas, 2015). However, this view does not take into account the responsibilities of political and economic liberalism for the crucial situation of the Greek economy.
culture. The obsolete culture is presented as pre-democratic and nationalist, while the modern culture is recognized as rational, democratic and inspired by the European Enlightenment (Diamandouros, 1994: 15-17). According to this view, populism is a basic component of the underdog culture (Diamandouros, 2013: 315) that creates obstacles in the economic development of the state (Diamandouros, 2013: 331).

The above theory has influenced the development of a socio-political discourse that has been extensively used by politicians, journalists and intellectuals in Greece before and especially after the crisis. At the end of the 20th century, the modernizing project of reformist prime minister Costas Simitis was based on the defeat of populism and the consolidation of European and liberal values in the country (battle with the Church for identity cards, euro, privatizations etc.), while it found many supporters in the liberal camp.

But what happened after the eruption of the economic crisis? Following the collapse of the crisis, many political figures and media utilized this anti-populist repertoire to legitimize the austerity policies that were indicated by IMF and EU. The parties of political establishment defended the neoliberal reforms of the state and underlined the importance of an urgent victory against populism. Thanasis Theoharopoulos (the president of social-democratic party “Democratic Left”) argues in one of his articles that the solution for the crisis is the progressive structural reforms and not populism that harmed the country (Theoharopoulos, 6/6/2016). The current president of ND characterizes populism as a threat for Europe and underlines that a reformist agenda is very important for ensuring that Greece will remain at the forefront of the European integration project (Naftemporiki, 29/05/2017). The president of PASOK, Fofi Gennimata, states that it is important to prevent the dissolution of Europe by populists and that socialists must promote all these initiatives and reforms to ensure that Europe will be united (Kathimerini, 28/06/2016). Theodoros Pagkalos, a prominent political figure of PASOK has accused populism and the Greek people many times. As he declared in 2015, “The Greek people are corrupt. The Greek people want “rousfetia” (clientelism), want appointments, want not to work. They want to steal taxes and not pay VAT” (Newsbomb, 2015). Moreover, when he was a vice President of the Greek government characterized the people who had participated in the “Movements of Indignant”/“Aganaktismenoi” (a populist movement) as fascists, communists and “assholes” (“malakes”) (Iefimerida: 2011).
Furthermore, the political discourse of pro-European parties found a great support in the discourse of anti-populist and pro-European intellectuals, artists and journalists (To Vima, 01/06/2011). For example, Stelios Ramfos, a famous Greek liberal thinker, who inspires the anti-populist camp, believes that populism is an obsolete culture. As he writes, “The greatest danger of today’s populism is the re-balkanization of our society” (Ramfos, 2016: 218).\(^4\) The professor of political history and politician, Thanos Veremis (a well-known supporter of “To Potami”), wrote in one of his articles, that “the populist culture keeps society in pathological immaturity” (Veremis, 20/09/2014).

Moreover, the efforts of Greek anti-populists to derogate populism carried out also through the equation of left-wing and right-wing populist parties. Many politicians, journalists and intellectuals utilized the concept of “national-populism” to prove that left-wing and right-wing populist parties or movements are two flip sides of the same “dangerous” coin.\(^5\) The above concept stems from the theory of “the two extremes”, a theory of the dominant ideological system which argue that socialism and fascism present similar features. As Aris Spiliotopoulos (ex Minister of ND) argues, in the past the threat to democracy was national-socialism, while today the danger is national-populism (Spiliotopoulos: 02/12/2016).

Finally, it is important to note that the contemporary anti-populist discourse is not the only type of anti-populism that has been appeared in Greece. The initial period of Metapolitefsi (the period after the fall of dictatorship), the so-called Renewing Left developed a specific type of anti-populism through the equation of kitsch (in popular culture and art) with populism and fascism. Through this argumentation, the Renewing Left tried to fight against the electoral success of PASOK of Andreas Papandreou, which had embraced this type of culture (Koutsikou, 1984: 14-16).\(^6\) Therefore, we understand that the dynamic invasion of populism into the Greek

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\(^4\) The concept of “re-balkanization” has a negative meaning. Balkan countries (e.g. Bulgaria, FYROM, Albania, etc.) are considered as “unprogressive” and “uncivilized”. It is not coincidence the fact that these countries had communist regimes in the past.

\(^5\) According to the concept of “national-populism”, the populist phenomenon presents common characteristics both in left-wing and right-wing parties or movements (Taguieff, 2012).

\(^6\) New Democracy decided also to go against the popular culture of the period, criticizing rebetiko, a kind of folk music that PASOK recognized as a constituent part of the Greek culture. The conservative camp and a big part of intellectuals considered that rebetiko undermined moral order because of its “primitive”, folk and oriental style (Sofos, 2000: 144-151). Specifically, they believed that this kind of popular music was contrary to the project of modernization that was promoted by the Greek governments.
political system received a significance response from its political enemy, mainly through cultural stigmatization.

**Argentine anti-populism: “Civilization and barbarism”**

In Argentina, the criticism of the populist camp by anti-populists is connected with the idea of ‘civilization and barbarism’. Let’s explain briefly what this idea is and how it has been developed in recent years. For the fathers of the argentine nation, the good behavior and manners, nice dressing, courtesy, republicanism and the respect for the institutions was the central core of the modernizing project of their country. Nevertheless, according to their view, it has been developed in the country a rough way of life (represented by gauchos)⁷ (Ostiguy, 2009 b: 10).

Sarmiento, who served as president of Argentina, relied on the above idea and presented in his book “Civilization and barbarism: The life of Juan Facundo Quiroga” the Argentine hinterland as barbarous, primitive and indomitable, which had to be replaced by a civilized society (an idealized version of Northern Europe) (Ostiguy, 2009 b). Sarmiento accused ‘primitivism’, isolation of local communities, purity and cultural "inferiority" as the major problem of the nation and cultural identity. The solution for Sarmiento was the connection and communication with Europe in order to cure the barbarity of the cultural identity (Balderston and Gonzalez, 2004: 143-44). As a politician, Sarmiento supported the mass immigration from northern European countries to "whiten the desert" and bring Argentina closer to "civilization". The first step to achieve this was the extermination of gauchos and their way of life or their absorption by the new cultural identity. This extermination is depicted in José Hernandez’s poem entitled “Martin Fierro” (which consisted of two parts published in 1872 and 1879 respectively). Moreover, an attempt to dramatize the conflict between the forces of civilization and barbarism was the novel “Doña Bárbara” (1928) by Rómulo Gallegos, in which the nature (represented by the heroine of the novel) was defeated by the powers of enlightenment (her opponent was called Santos Luzardo, because luz means "light"). (Smith, 1997: 382-86)

⁷ A gaucho is a country person who is experienced in traditional livestock farming.
In the beginning of the 20th century, the concept of “civilization and barbarism” detached from rural/urban and cultural differences and was associated with class differences (gaúcho was replaced by the worker). These workers were a large part of Peron’s supporters. Thus, after the rise of Peron to power, anti-Peronists utilized Sarmiento's dichotomy to equalize the workers and the populist Perón with barbarism and primitivism (Ostiguy, 2009 b). For example, the anti-Peronists used pejorative terms, such as “descamisados”/“shirtless”, to characterize Peron’s supporters, because they presented a “folk” behavior in the great demonstration for the release of Peron in 1945 (when the people took out their jackets and dipped their feet in the fountains) (Joel Horowitz, 1999: 32-33). The cultural stigmatization of Peron and his supporters was the beginning of a deep polarization within Argentine society, which eventually led to a bipolar political scene.

Let’s now examine the period after the economic collapse (2001) and the wave of protests in Argentina. How did the opposition react to the rise of Kirchers to power? Initially, the opposition forces (UCR, RECREAR and ARI) agreed to characterize the government as a continuation of Duhalism, namely as a populist project that continues its political program from the decade of ‘90s. Nonetheless, this opinion changed in 2005 when the Kirchner decided to split from Duhalism. From that moment, Kirchnerism was not considered as the successor of Duhalism but a kind of tyranny for the country (Schuttenberg, 2014: 62). In the decade of 2000s, Elisa Carrió played a central role in the opposition and formed an aggressive anti-populist repertoire. Specifically, the political discourse of the opposition has been focused in the battle against Peronism, recreating the antinomy of ‘civilization and barbarism’ (Schuttenberg, 2017: 287). For the opposition, Peronism was the opposite of the civilization, while the populist camp of Kirchnerism consisted of negative and authoritarian characteristics (Schuttenberg, 2014). As Gerardo Morales argued (ex-leader of UCR), ‘For me the opponent is Kirchner, his logic, his disguise into progressivism. A modern, democratic society cannot exist without dialogue between government and opposition. The plebiscitary democracy of Kirchner, with the exclusive communication with the people, is similar to Mussolini’s’ (Urgente24, 18/12/2006). In the same logic, Elisa Carrió declared about the government of Christina de Kirchner: "The government has many similarities to the Romanian
(regime) of two decades ago. Ceausescu ended isolated, while he was fighting with his own people" (La Nación, 20/04/2008).

A new political pole was created in 2007 in the right-wing political space after the victory of Mauricio Macri in the elections for the Governor of Buenos Aires. The new political party had many differences from other right-wing parties, as its principal goal was to express a broader majority through the de-ideologization of politics. Nonetheless, populism remained a significant enemy for the opposition. PRO constructed a political discourse that was based on the signifiers of the insecurity and populist policies, attempting to build an important border with its enemy (Schuttenberg, 2017: 288).

In 2015, the liberal and conservative forces (Mauricio Macri, Ernesto Sanz and Elisa Carrió) decided to cooperate and create a new political coalition, thus strengthening the anti-Peronist political space. The new coalition of “Cambiemos” (“Let’s change”) supported (before and after its rise to power) the opinion that the populist government of Cristina de Kirchner was corrupted and that it had authoritarian tendencies (Schuttenberg, 2014: 72). Gabriela Michetti, the vice President of Argentina, stated that populism produced a sick society in the past decade (Uno, 8/6/2017), while she argued that populism is the worst enemy that we have in democracy (Letrap, 12/05/2017). Mauricio Macri noted that it’s difficult to get out of populism from one day to another, as it’s a process of purification” (Europa press, 24/02/2017). Elisa Carrió, stated that the populist governments of the continent act as underground tyrannies with masks of democracy” (La Nación, 22/02/2014). It’s extremely characteristic the statement of Ernesto Sanz, the president of UCR. According to him, “What we are building is a battle against a retrograde and negative culture, which is the culture of decadent populism” (Infobae, 2015). As we can understand from the above examples, the anti-populist discourse is based on the idea of “civilization and barbarism”, where civilization is the neoliberal reforms, capitalist development and the markets, while barbarism is the obsolete culture of populism which prevents the great reformist future of the country.
What is the problem with anti-populism?

In anti-populist logic there are some specific characteristics which are often attributed to populism, such as demagogy, clientelism and authoritarianism. The most common accusation is that populist parties deceive the citizens and build clientelist networks that enable them to establish strong power. Moreover, the anti-populist forces blame very often the populist leaders for concentrating power, silencing the opposition parties and violating rights.

However, it would be a great mistake to equate populism with the above characteristics. First of all, demagogy can be found in any political party, irrespective of its ideology. According to Mudde, some populist politicians give many promises to citizens, but many do not. On the other side, there are many non-populists that also make big promises (Mudde, 2017:66). The same happens in the case of clientelism, a phenomenon that exceeds the left-right axis. As Mudde and Kaltwasser highlight, many Latin American populist leaders have employed clientelist linkages to maintain their power; however, they are not the only ones to do this (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017: 8).

The examination of the relationship between populism and democracy depends mainly on ideological perceptions. The people, who believe in liberal democracy, most of the times, see populism as pathology, while others who criticize liberal democracy and sympathize with the notion of radical democracy argue that populism can improve the quality of democratic politics (Kaltwasser, 2012). Despite all the differing and opposing views, populism seems to be a political discourse that has both positive and negative implications. There are many populist figures that gather power in their hands and try to control the political game (e.g. Fujimori, Shinawatra etc.), while there are some others who give the opportunity to marginalized citizens to participate in decision-making (Kirchner, Morales etc.).

One big problem of the liberal anti-populist discourse seems to be the stigmatization of the “people” and the ethical evaluation of populism. Specifically, liberal and social-democrats refrain from exercising self-criticism for the failure of their brutal project and characterize any political force who opposes neoliberal modernization as dangerous. The democratic subject of the people is stigmatized by anti-populists, with
the aim of developing the idea that the “uncontrolled masses” are the main enemy of democracy (this is called demophobia). (Katsambekis, 2014) Hence, it is not surprising that many neoliberal politicians dislike referendum processes and support a kind of technocratic governance. According to Furedi, “anti-populist ideas have been mostly hostile to democracy, not demagoguery. From Plato onwards, the social and cultural outlook of the political elites has been suspicious of and often hostile towards public opinion. Typically, they viewed the people as a ‘problem’ (Furedi, 2016).” As d’Eramo highlight, the negative perspective towards the people is found in oligarchic or aristocratic systems, in which the popular subject is considered barbaric and irrational (D’Eramo, 2013). Of course, the people are not always right in their decisions, but they are not paranoid, barbarous or primitive when they do not vote the way the political elites had expected. On the other hand, we should not characterize as “democrat” anyone who refers frequently to “the people” because there are many politicians who want to take advantage of this signifier with the aim of gaining the power.

The stereotypical dualist schemas that have been developed in Greece and Argentina (“cultural dualism” and “civilization and barbarism”) share a similar understanding of modernization and an extreme logic of moderation that leads ultimately to an essentialist fundamentalism and an undemocratic political thought. The acceptance of populism as an essential part of a decadent culture seems to degrade the popular subject, which is the cornerstone of democracy. According to Demertzis the idea of “cultural dualism” misses two crucial points: 1) The first is that there is not one single tradition, while modernization itself cannot exist outside a framework of some tradition, and 2) it views tradition and modernity as two pre-constituted exclusive rather than interrelated cultural entities (Demertzis, 1997: 118). As we understand, the liberal perspective on populism cannot achieve its democratic goals, but instead of that it leads to the undermining of democracy, equality, pluralism and social competition, while it accelerates de-democratization, leading to what Rancière described as ‘to govern without people’ or ‘to govern without politics’ (Stavrakakis 2014: 510). The rejection of the “demos” (namely the people) is by nature anti-democratic, turning politics into a closed procedure for few, “virtuous” and “rational” persons. Finally, today’s anti-populist discourse, as an internal part of liberal ideology, moves against the “political antagonism”, thus supporting rationality and
consensus. According to Chantal Mouffe, this kind of thinking is the core problem of today’s post-democratic politics. The liberal view of a “dialogic” or “partisan-free” democracy is part of a common anti-political vision which does not accept the antagonistic dimension of the political (Mouffe, 2005).

It is crucial to note here that there is not only one type of anti-populist discourse. For example, various harsh anti-populist arguments have been developed by communist parties, which analyze populism as a kind of demagogy that wants to deceive the working class and as a political movement of the petty bourgeois class that is not interested to implement a socialist society without inequalities. Their criticism, however, does not usually have the vulgar character of today's neoliberal anti-populism. The fundamental difference with the liberal view is that the people does not have a negative character in the political discourse of the communist parties and is not connected with barbarism or absurdity, but instead of that it receives positive characteristics. Communist ideas do not see the people as bad, naive or stupid, but mainly as a trapped subject within the dominant ideology.

However, there is a large part of socialist and Marxist parties that recognize the possibility of convergence between populism and socialism. Of course, this is not impossible. The Left, from its first appearance in the movement of Jacobinism, is born and developed as the political expression of the "people". Additionally, Blanquism, a socialist revolutionary conception of Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805–1881), presented strong populist characteristics (Olson, 2017). Furthermore, Marxism in Russia took place not against but within the populist movement and, despite Lenin’s criticism, the communist states provided the subject of “the people” with a great symbolic value. Certainly, Marxism was subsequently differentiated from populism mainly through Marx’s and Engel’s criticism and Lenin's polemic writings (e.g. his book “What the “Friends of the People” Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats”). Nonetheless, Marxists did not cease to be inspired by the struggle of populists against Tsarist Russia and for popular sovereignty. Moreover, the criticism of Marx and Engels in the opinion of Narodniks has never been as harsh as Lenin’s, due to the orientation of Narodniks towards Marxist theory. Indeed, in the Prologue of the second Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto that was written by Marx and Engels (1882), the Narodniks’ idea of moving from Asian communal ownership to the communal society of socialism is not directly rejected, but is considered feasible (if it
will emerge as a result of the global socialist revolution) (Milios, 1992). It is true that socialism is based on an economic analysis and, most of the times, erases the “political” (of populism) from the society. However, it would be very interesting to find if some of the Marxist ideas for a socialist society can convergence with populism and the political antagonism that generates within the society.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, we examined the anti-populist discourse that has been developed in Greece and Argentina after the collapse of economic crisis. We attempted to underline the principles anti-populist ideas in each country (“cultural dualism” and “civilization and barbarism”) to highlight the similarities and prove that these monolithic liberal perspectives on populism can be dangerous for politics and democracy. We emphasized the problematic ideas about the relationship between populism, demagogy and clientelism, but also the undemocratic rhetoric of cultural stigmatization of the people. Our conclusion is that the devaluation of the popular subject and the utilization of pejorative terms to characterize populism have negative effects in politics and society. Finally, we underlined the communist criticism on populism and the possibility of convergence between populism and socialism.

As we analyzed, the anti-populist parties in Greece and Argentina utilized anti-populist discourse that has been formed under the influence of modernization theory and other stereotypical ideas, with the aim of implementing their neoliberal project. In Greece, the political forces of ND and PASOK did not hold the power for a long time after the crisis, but SYRIZA's failure brought them back to the fore. In Argentina, the state capitalism of Kirchners has improved the country's overall situation, but it did not solve all the major politico economic issues and the neoliberal forces rose to power again. Anti-neoliberal populism seems to be powerful nowadays but the dominant ideology of neoliberalism, that has permeated almost all society, is too hard to die. As a result, many left-wing parties, which perhaps prefer a kind of state capitalism (social programs, conciliations with trade unions and controlled economy), follow the path of neoliberal models under the pressure of institutions, organizations and foreign powers. Hence, nowadays the boundaries between the radical left, social democracy and social liberalism are not clear in the field of policies. It is true that
within today’s politico economic context the tradition and the theories of radical and extreme left lose their essential value. Can left-wing populism keep its distance from its political opponents and the dominant ideology? Finally, the questions that arise from this research are: Can we find any other similarities between politics of Greece and Argentina? What about left-wing populism in power?

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