

THE SOURCES OF POPULISM IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE¹

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Abstract. *Populism revels itself in both rich and poor countries. By focusing on the cases of Poland, Romania and Ukraine, Authors test the political theory of populism proposed by Acemoglu, Sonin and Egorov (2011). The theory links the emergence of populism to the weakness of democratic institutions. The theory holds true in at least three selected cases. This study shows that the rapid economic liberalization in Poland and Romania raised the social discontent in significant part of population. The most vulnerable groups relied on the support from the state, on the one hand, but on the other hand sought for rapid improvement. Paternalistic and patriotically colored expectations contributed to the emergence of the right-wing populism, which is more conservative in Poland, but more nationalist in Romania. In Ukraine, by contrast, the lack of*

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reform has led to the emergence of social populism, which, however, is masked in both right and left political projects. Finally, we note a negative relationship between populism and the state of democracy in the countries surveyed. Based on Freedom House democratization index we found that the populist governments are not contributing to the strength of democracy. This thesis, however, requires testing it on larger number of cases.

Keywords: *the weakness of democratic institutions, paternalistic expectations, conservative populism, nationalist populism, social populism, democratization, Poland, Romania, Ukraine.*

The entire text of this article is available in Ukrainian.