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## **The Populist Bloc(k): A Study of Croatians, Slovenians, and Institutional Roadblocks to Populism**

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The party systems of Croatia and Slovenia have never been on more divergent paths. Having at one point in the early 2000s appeared seemingly on the same trajectory toward stable, multi-party, liberal democracy, the two today are moving in opposite directions - as Croatia solidifies its two-party model, Slovenia's party system has collapsed entirely.

With this paper, I strive to provide context and an understanding of how this occurred through the lens of populism and how it relates to institutional structures in each state. More specifically, whereas much of our modern literature on populism attributes its prevalence to evolving trends such as corruption or economic crises, I explore the constraints placed upon populism by institutional and electoral laws and reforms, factors which can then determine whether populist parties manifest or even take power. I do so by breaking my paper into two main parts, establishing first through prior scholarly work and survey data the degree to which populism prevails in both Croatia and Slovenia, then using election data, surveys, articles, and records for a comprehensive analysis on the role of institutional and electoral law reform.

Thus, by the end of this paper I am able to make a definitive argument as to the merits of a clear connection between the two. At present, there is limited readily available data on populism's relationship with institutional structures. What's presented here, however, is a compelling case for the topic to be revisited with more resources in the future, both in these two states in particular and in a broader sense as we work to better understand populism and its challenge to the established party system.