

Populism in the Balkans

Populism and political parties POL 133

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- Hostility towards representative politics
- Heartland and the people
- Lack of core values, negativism
- Sense of extreme crisis
- Non-political nature of populist movements and charismatic leader
- Chameleonic nature

Populism

Main features of Slovenia and the Western/Eastern Balkan states



What is Balkan?
Western
Balkan,
southern,
eastern??

Dates: (395,
1054, end of
14, century,
1453)

Dissolution of
yugoslavia into
what??

Nations, ethnics,
religions,
language,
script, literacy,
life standard

Timeline

- 1991 Slovenia
- 1991-95 Croatia
- 1992-95 BiH
- 1997 Anarchy in Albania
- 1998-99 Kosovo
- 2000 Presevo valley
- 2001 Macedonia
- 2003 Belgrade agreement
- 2006 Montenegro
- 2008 Kosovo



- Slovenia: Slovenian National Party – nationalist, marginal
- Croatia: Croatian Democratic Union HDZ
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: parties based on ethnicity
- Serbia: Serbian Radical Party, Serbian Progressive Party strong nationalist bzw. populist parties
- Montenegro: one man show
- Macedonia: VMRO-DPMNE
- Kosovo: Vetevendosje
- Albania: polarisation of Democrats and Socialists
- Romania: PP-DD (nationalist PRM)
- Bulgaria: GERB, NDSV, RZS (nationalist: VMRO and Ataka)

Populism in the Balkans



- Democratic backsliding
- Illiberal democracies or authoritarian regimes

Populism in the Balkans

- Post-Yugoslavian states – nationalism tied with populism, not really good example of populism, extreme sense of crisis during the wars
- Romania, Bulgaria – social populism in Bulgarian GERB, NDSV, RZS and Romanian PP-DD, nationalist populism in the case of Bulgarian Ataka and VMRO and Romanian PRM

**In the name of the people or in the name
of the nation??**

- Enemy: USA, other nation, ethnic, globalism, NATO, ICTY, political representation
- Heartland
- Lack of core values – nationalism as the ideology
- Sense of extreme crisis – Balkan wars, simplicity, emotions, straightness
- Charismatic leader – Balkan parties as one man show
- Chameleonic nature

Post-Yugoslavian states





- Polarisation
- Nativist populism HDZ
- Veteran organisations, Church
- Za dom spremni, Chessboard, Kuna, Jasenovac, Street names, Homeland war, Victory Day, Thompson
- HSP
- Živi zid – squatting, lower taxes, monetary system not fair, legalisation of marihuana,



Populism in Croatia



- Serbia engaged in wars (Croatia, BiH, Kosovo)
- Enemies – Croats, Muslims, Albanians, USA, EU, NATO, „international community“, ICTY, globalism, internal dimension for/against SPS/“democrats“
- Heartland : Srbija do Tokija, Srbija is like a Nokia, its getting smaller and smaller
- In the name of the people = in the name of the nation
- Charismatic leader : parties as one man shows – Slobodan Milošević, Vojislav Šešelj, Vuk Drašković,
- Chameleonic nature – SRS with Social



Populism in Serbia

- Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska napredna stranka - SNS)
- Tomislav Nikolic/Alexandar Vucic
- nationalism, traditionalism, anti-modernism, anti-westernisation,
- Serbian Orthodox Church, traditional society, football hooligans
- Anniversaries of NATO „air campaign“, ICTY decisions, omnipotent Kosovo case



Current populism in Serbia - SNS



Populism in North Macedonia

- Greece, Bulgaria, Albanians, Serbian orthodox church
- VMRO-DPMNE
- Alexander the Great, airport, highway, Skopje
- Antiquisation
- Nationalism



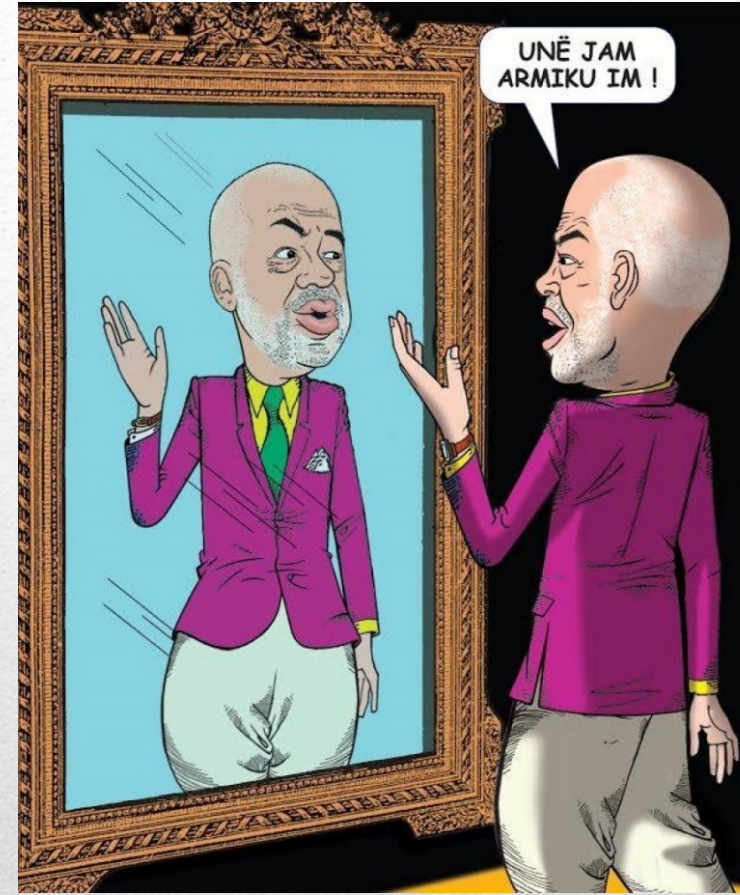
- Parties based on ethnicity
- Authoritarian régime in RS – Dodik
- In the name of the nation



Populism in BiH



- Democratic party vs. Socialist party
- Polarisation
- Illiberal practices



Populism in Albania ??

- Milo Djukanovic forever
- In the name of the nation
- Towards the EU and NATO
- Together with Russia??



Populism in Montenegro

???



- Vetevendosje
- Albin Kurti
- Self-determination – referendum
- Clan parties
- Against the established parties (PDK,AAK,LDK)

Populism in Kosovo



- NDSV – National Movement for Stability and Progress
- GERB
- Ataka
- RZS – Order, Law and Justice



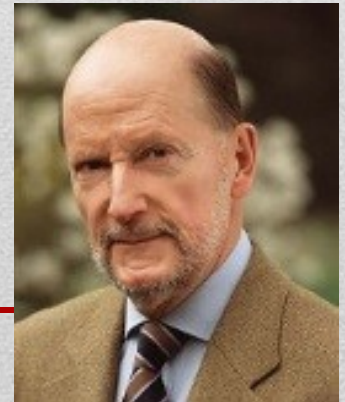
Populism in Bulgaria

- the crisis of traditional parties,
- the overall disappointment of the voters from the political and economic transition (the “losers” becoming the biggest part of the population),
- the personal charisma of the leader King Simeon II and his “European” background, compared to the traditional politicians
- King Simeon II announced that he would like to be the leader of “all Bulgarians”

Bulgaria: National Movement for Simeon the Second (stability and progress)

- NDSV defined itself as a movement rather than a party
- a chance should be given to everybody to show its capacities and chose the members of its party from the “ordinary people having some expertise”
- decisions were taken mainly by the leader himself, „authoritarian” style
- “emotional” then based on real political program
- Defending the “Bulgarian nation and people” and being against “all divisions“
- Newcomer on the political scene, an opponent of traditional parties

Bulgaria:NDSV



- heraldic sign or coat of arms in Bulgarian as acronym
- personal bodyguard of King Simeon II. Boyko Borissov.
- 2009 to date
- discourse against the ruling elite and the mafia
- an image of a person trying to solve everyday problems and going to many cities in Bulgaria
- “I proved I can satisfy people’s needs- while the others were talking, I was working and solving problems”.
- “us” versus “them”
- to finish once and for all with the mafia and the former agents of the communist secret services in Bulgaria
- always present in the media
- close to the people, “one of them”, always being present and “speaking their language”. His direct contact with people certainly distinguished him also from the “aristocratic” style of King Simeon II

Bulgaria: GERB – Citizens for European development of Bulgaria



- Volen Siderov
- Anti-establishment, anti-NATO and anti-EU discourse as well as his hostile attitude the Turkish and Roma minorities in Bulgaria.
- the world conspiracy theories and the anti-Bulgarian policies
- scored 8% on the national elections, thus becoming the fourth largest party in Bulgarian Parliament
- discourse of “Us” vs “Them” : “they are corrupt and will ruin the future of our country”, “they work with the mafia and steal our money”, “they are all enemies of Bulgaria”.
- It criticises the organization of the political system:
 - direct democracy, a “greater control on the politicians and judiciary monitoring of their actions”.
- also mobilized its supporters while going on the streets and organizing public meetings

Bulgaria: Ataka



- directed against Bulgarian political elite's corruption, the fight against the mafia and the politicians related with organized crime circles.
- Its leader Yane Yanev
- stayed marginal
- The discourse “the corrupt elite” vs. “the honest people”
- Protest party

Bulgaria: Order, Law and Justice -RZS



- its inspiration from the communist regime, i.e., the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu.
- the preservation of national values, traditions, the defence of the national interest, culture and religion.
- incorporation of Moldova and part of Ukraine into Romania at the beginning of the 1990s.
- anti-Semitic and xenophobic postures, targeting Jews, Hungarians and Romas,
- a fight against corruption, nepotism, discrimination and economic crime – and promotes a strong state

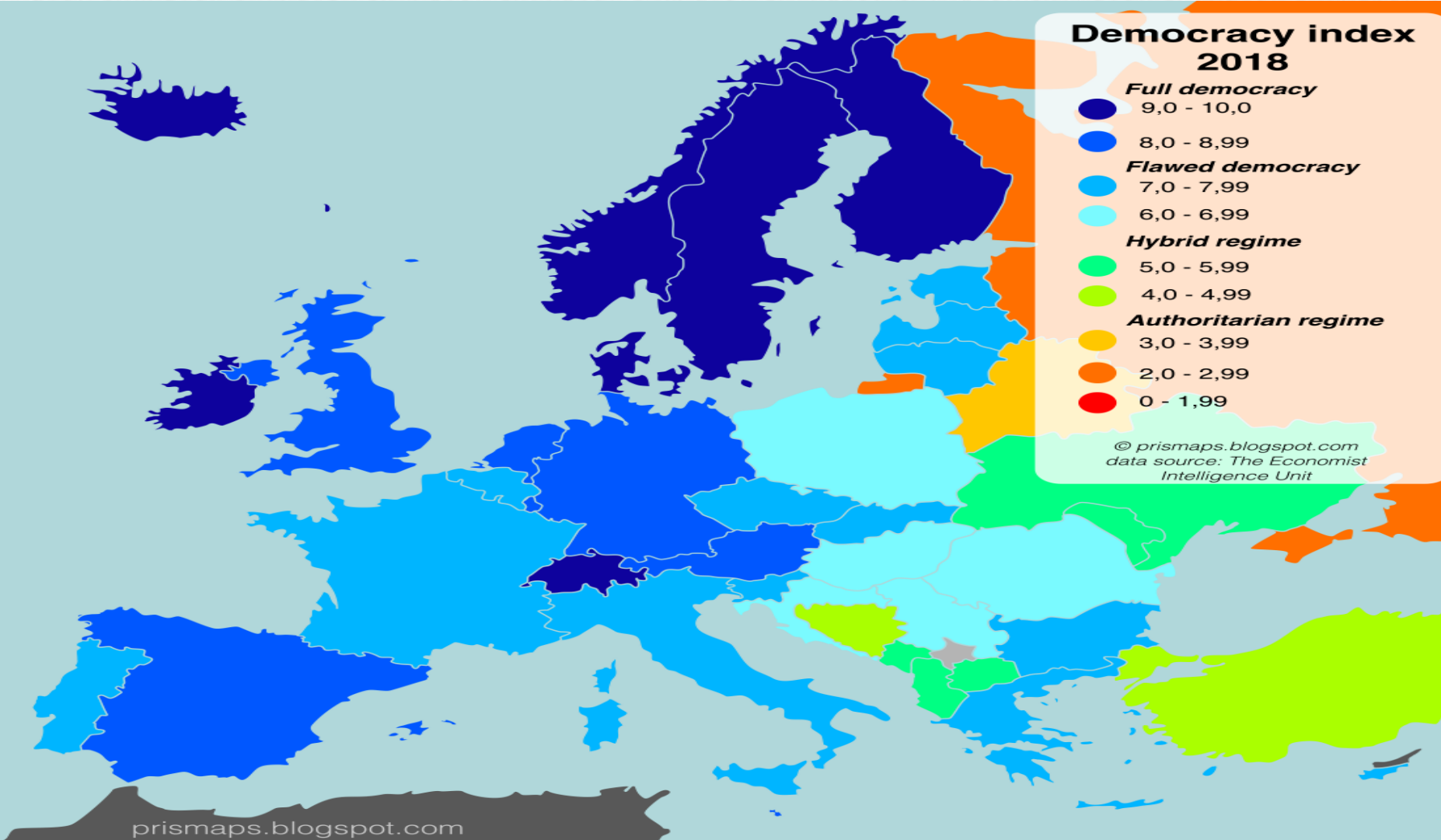
Romania: Greater Romania Party, PRM



- **The People's Party – Dan Diaconescu**
- **Television presenter**
- nationalist and socialist points of view.
- higher retirement pensions and salaries, and a lower VAT.
- collectivisation of agriculture
- the founding of a *People's Tribunal*, the foundation of state companies with directly elected leadership.

Romania: PP-DD







- inaccuracy of the voters' register (multiple voting, voting of dead and those who emigrated)
- politicised electoral commissions
- vote buying, party employment, intimidation of voters, job loss threats
- blurring of state and party activities, control of the media

Free and Fair elections

- media under direct influence of the ruling party or owned by the proxies of ruling elite leading to extensive coverage of ruling party and minimum coverage of oppositional parties
- direct verbal/physical attacks on journalist supported by politicians shaping so the public discourse that media are enemies
- arrests of investigative journalists
- regulatory bodies close to the ruling parties
- defamation, insult, incitement to hatred and other open ended concepts leading to self-censorship
- over-regulation leading to charges against n

Media freedom



- secret contracts
- non-transparent budgets
- economic subsidies to the loyal ones without proper oversight
- party patronage in public as well as private sec
- manipulated public tenders
- appointing only party loyalists to the top position in public companies

Privileged access to public resources and misuesese of power



- Ombudsman
- Civil society
- Other independent institutions with oversight function



Civil society and other independent institutions



Illiberal Democracy and Populism/Nationalism
