

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

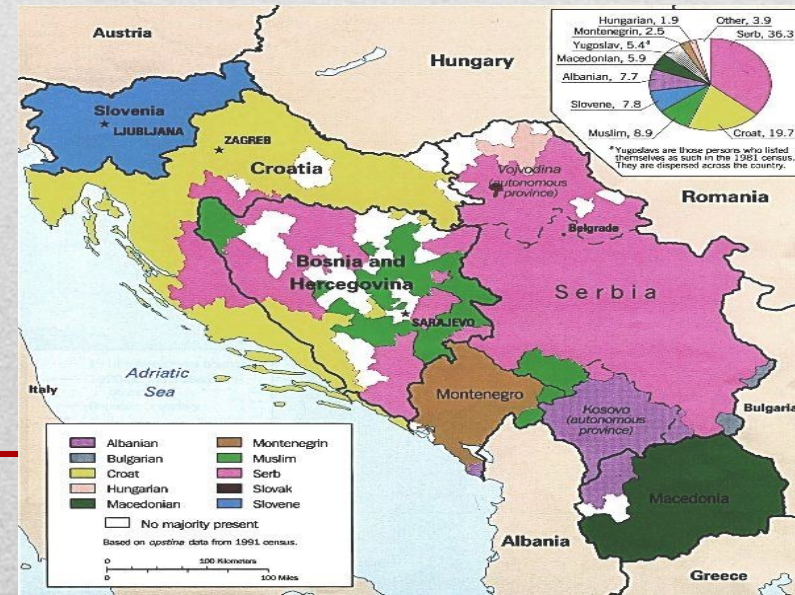
Timeline

- 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
- 2009 Albania, Croatia NATO
- 2013 Croatia EU
- 2017 Montenegro NATO
- 2020 N. Macedonia NATO



- Croatia: Croatian Democratic Union HDZ
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: parties based on ethnicity
- Serbia: Serbian Radical Party, Serbian Progressive Party strong nationalist /populist parties
- Montenegro: one man show
- Macedonia: VMRO-DPMNE
- Kosovo: Vetevendosje
- Romania: PP-DD (nationalist PRM)
- Bulgaria: GERB, NDSV, RZS (nationalist: VMRO and Ataka)

Populism in the Balkans



- Post-Yugoslavian states – nationalism tied with populism, right wing 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 – Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic
- 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



- Minister of information 1998-2000
- In opposition – frequent guest of popular TV shows
- Minister of defence 2012-13
- PM 2013-2017
- President 2017- Ceremonial power???
- Illiberal régime
- Stabilitocracy
- "Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past" (1948).
- "National media in Serbia has become a face of Vucic. Nothing less. Nothing more" (Savcic 2020).
- National martyr - State is me
- "Wherever you go, you encounter the companies that I opened, whichever road you take, I built it, whichever railway you see, I made it. The airport is modernizing now, that's also all me. I raised pensions and salaries, and I will keep raising them. What can they say about that?" (Vucic 2020)
- Portrait – man of the people - FB and Instagram full of pics with the PEOPLE
- The PEOPLE vs. the ENEMIES of the NATION (the FAKE elite)

Aleksandar Vučić



- National populism
- VMRO-DPMNE
- Alexander the Great, airport, highway, Skopje
- Antiquisation
- Nationalism
- Zoran Zaev – Greece, Bulgaria, EU???

Populism in North Macedonia



Another low effort meme [OC]

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



Populism in BiH



- Milo Djukanovic forever
- Montenegrin forever
- Towards the EU and NATO
- Together with Russia??
- Populist style

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

- 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

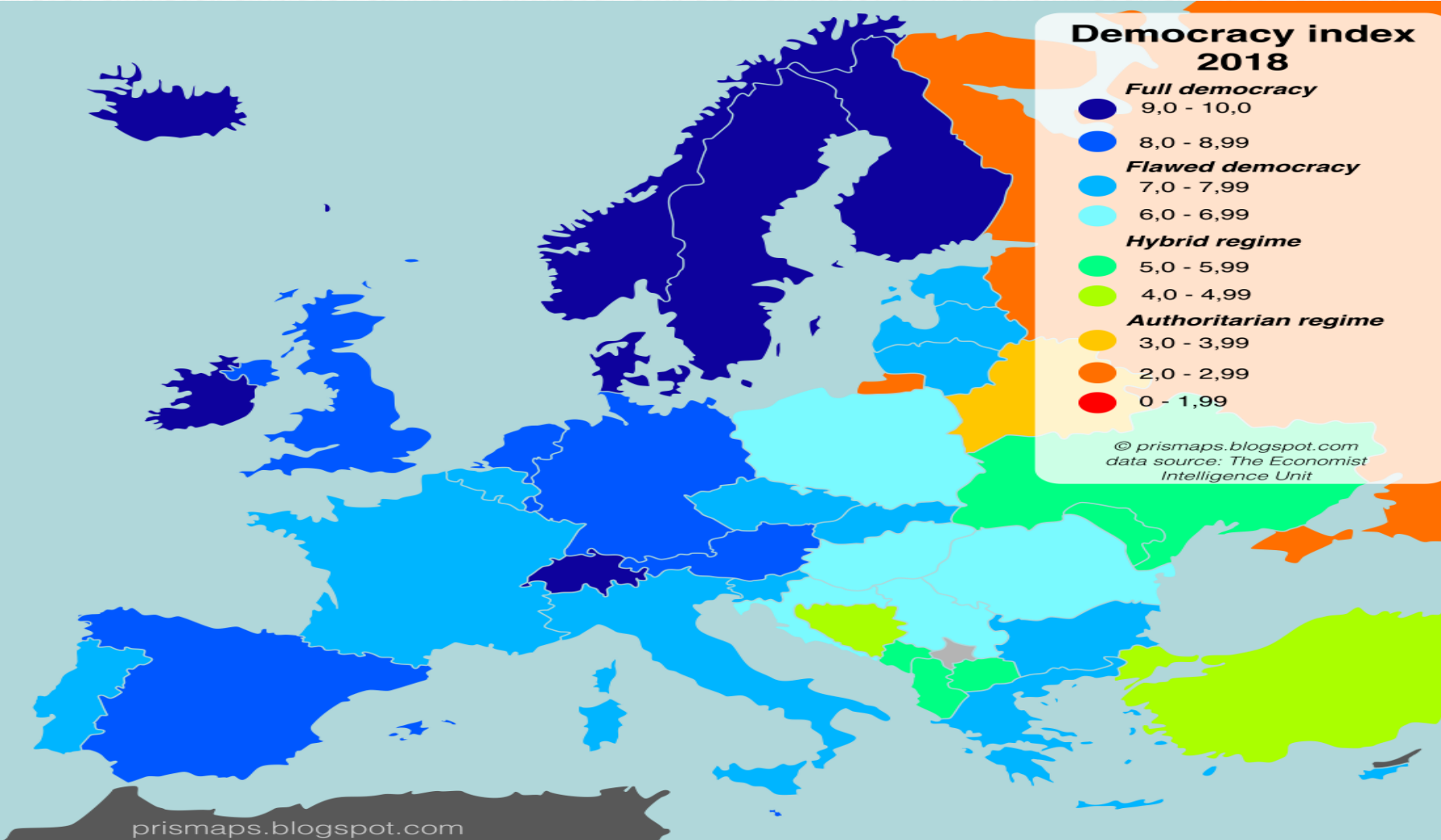
Bulgaria: Order, Law and Justice -RZS



- 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





Democracy index 2018

- 9,0 - 10,0
- 8,0 - 8,99
- 7,0 - 7,99
- 6,0 - 6,99
- 5,0 - 5,99
- 4,0 - 4,99
- 3,0 - 3,99
- 2,0 - 2,99
- 0 - 1,99

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data source: The Economist
Intelligence Unit



- 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 miswese of power



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



Civil society and other independent institutions



Illiberal Democracy and Populism/Nationalism
