

FACES OF POPULISM

**IN CENTRAL
AND SOUTH-EASTERN
EUROPE**

**EDITED BY
HARIS DAJČ
NATASZA STYCZYŃSKA**

JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Cover design
Marta Jaszczuk



Funded by the Horizon 2020
Framework Programme of the
European Union

The book is the result of the project of the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 822682. It reflects only the authors' views and the Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

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First edition, Kraków 2023
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ISBN 978-83-233-5262-4 (print)
ISBN 978-83-233-7466-4 (PDF)
ISBN 978-83-233-7467-1 (mobi)
<https://doi.org/10.4467/K7466.155/22.23.17542>



JAGIELLONIAN
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Jagiellonian University Press
Editorial Offices: Michałowskiego 9/2, 31-126 Kraków
Phone: +48 12 663 23 80
Distribution: Phone: +48 12 631 01 97
Cell Phone: +48 506 006 674, e-mail: sprzedaz@wuj.pl
Bank: PEKAO SA, IBAN PL 80 1240 4722 1111 0000 4856 3325

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work on this book would not have been possible without the support of our colleagues and institutions – the Institute of European Studies of Jagiellonian University and the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade.

We also benefited from the support of the CEEPUS network ‘Europe from the Visegrad and Balkan perspective’ that allowed for our mobility beyond the POPREBEL project.

The research and ideas for the chapters were discussed at several academic conferences in recent years – annual ECPR, CES, UACES conferences; POPREBEL conferences in Belgrade; and smaller workshops organised within the consortium and by our partners and colleagues. We would like to thank the organiser and attendees for stimulating discussions and for their valuable remarks on earlier versions of the chapters. We hope that this volume will serve as an invitation to a wider debate about the phenomenon of populism in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

Haris Dajč and Natasza Styczyńska
Kraków

December 2022

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INTRODUCTION

The book *Faces of Populism in Central and South-Eastern Europe* is the result of research cooperation within the project Populist rebellion against modernity in 21st-century Eastern Europe: neo-traditionalism and neo-feudalism (POPREBEL) and the conference that was held in Belgrade in April 2022, within the scope of the project. POPREBEL is a Horizon 2020-funded research project that analyses the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe and is run by a consortium of six universities: University College London, Jagiellonian University, Charles University, University of Tartu, Corvinus University of Budapest, University of Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy and, think tank, Edgeryders.

The 21st century brought significant crises (economic and refugee crises and the COVID-19 pandemic) that generated fertile ground not only for populist rhetoric but also policies. With the recent Russian aggression in Ukraine, one could notice a new wave of populist slogans often merged with nationalist and conspiracy arguments. The war in Ukraine generated dissonance among populists in the region and brought further proof that populism is very context-dependent. As Russia is a close neighbour to

the region and fuels populist movements in Europe, especially in the former Yugoslavia, our book focus on different faces of populism that developed in Central and South-Eastern Europe during the recent period.

“A[t] last everyone understands that populism matters” is the opening statement of the handbook on populism published by Cambridge University Press (Kaltwasser et al. 2017: 1). On the other hand, there is much less agreement regarding the definition of the phenomena.

Populism is one of the most frequently-used terms in contemporary political debates and the media. This elusive and difficult-to-measure concept became also highly politicised. The number of populist governments in Europe has increased in recent years, and the victory of Donald Trump in the US falsified the theory that the rule of populists concerns only young democracies (Kyle and Gultchin 2018). Interestingly, in Central and South-Eastern Europe, populist actors are part of the political mainstream and parties in power (Poland, Hungary). Although the dichotomy between ‘pure people’ and ‘the corrupted elite’ characterises all populist movements and actors, we wondered if there were particular features that connect these types of actors in the post-communist countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe.

The volume collects chapters primarily based on empirical research undertaken within the POPREBEL research project framework, however, it also includes chapters by external researchers with whom we had the pleasure to cooperate during the time of the project.

In the first chapter of the book, Alexander Mesarovich addresses the conditions under which the confluence of populism and Euroscepticism impacted the accession processes in Croatia and Serbia. The author uses a social network analysis to identify the structure of relations within the parliaments of Croatia and Serbia during their accession processes, along with interviews with politicians from both countries. In the end, he demonstrates some potential challenges faced by those attempting to confront the ongoing populist phenomenon that are relevant in the case studies of these two countries.

Milan Vukomanović’s chapter on populism and religion in the Western Balkans focuses on Serbia, Montenegro and Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina). He explores how nationalist religious discourse and the advancement of an ethnocentric political theology have also been utilised as a populist mechanism in the hands of the current political elite in those

case studies. A special focus is given to the Serbian Orthodox Church and its “protection of culture” and how it started to participate with local political elites in reshaping the classical modernisation concept by accommodating it to local, national and particular moulds.

The chapter of Paulina Lenik examines the attributes of voters favouring populist parties in Czechia and Poland, using European Social Survey data for 2012–2016. By illustrating the amorphous nature of populism using Czechia and Poland as case studies, she proved that populism has country-specific features, complementing the previous region-wide assumptions on the general attributes of populist voters. Her findings exemplify that populism varies across political contexts and has a slightly different nature from what had been established on the regional level.

The fourth chapter, written by Ognjen Radonjić, addresses the Russian conquest of Serbia’s oil and natural gas sector from 2008 to the present day, as well as the Russian war on Ukraine. The author explains how Russia uses energy as a soft power instrument of foreign policy. In Serbia, this Russian soft power strategy has materialised through the Energy Treaty signed in 2008. Radonjić explains how the neo-traditionalist narrative referred to Serbia’s historical, cultural and religious ties with Russia and the neo-feudalist narrative to the traditionally close friendship of the Russian and Serbian authorities, as well as private relations between certain Russian and Serbian politicians. This led to a highly probable event of total energy instability and complete dependence on Russia in Serbia.

Joanna Orzechowska-Wałaszewska and Agnieszka Sadecka, in the fifth chapter, focus on ‘othering’ Europe in Poland’s right-wing media post-2015. Their chapter examines specifically the strategies of othering of Europe and the EU used by national populists in Poland in the name of promoting (and defending) Polish national traditional values, which have been portrayed as endangered by the liberal, supranational values professed by the EU. The empirical part of the study is based on the analysis of magazine covers of two opinionated right-wing weeklies: *Gazeta Polska* and *Do Rzeczy* during 7 years (2015–2021). They traced that, in the post-2015 period, there has been a significantly different perspective on the EU compared to the enthusiastic tone adopted – sometimes by the very same journalists – at the time of Poland’s accession to the EU in 2004. The authors successfully explore and analyse the ways in which the national ‘self’ is contrasted with the European ‘other’.

Natasza Styczyńska and Jan Meijer, in their chapter on populist Euro-scepticism in Poland, analyse the state of play in the field of populist Euro-scepticism in Poland and the rest of Europe, and, based on existing research, they suggest the most useful approach to define and study populist Euro-scepticism observed in Poland. The authors suggest adopting an ideational approach to researching populism, which applies a specific focus on the ideas of populist parties and movements, as it considers these to be the key features of populism and the distinguishing feature of the parties and movements in question. When it comes to Euro-scepticism, they stress the importance of a detailed look at the correlation between populism and Euro-scepticism, which are often assumed to be ‘distinct but intersecting phenomena.’ The authors argue that differentiating between ‘Europe-level populism’ and ‘populist Euro-scepticism’ is essential because it allows for the untangling of populist and Euro-sceptic messages.

In the seventh chapter, Mladen Radulović and Haris Dajč examine the connection between nationalism and egalitarianism in populist narratives and value orientations in Serbia in the 21st century. Using a triangulation of different methods, the authors manage to detect how nationalism and egalitarianism, both as messages (from above) and as value orientations (from below), have shaped the modern political life of Serbia. They analyse nationalism and egalitarianism in the political messages of the two parties that won the most votes in parliamentary elections since 2000 and use data gathered during the past 20 years in the World Values Survey and European Values Study. The authors successfully explain the *longue durée* of nationalism and egalitarianism in Serbian society since the 19th century.

The final chapter, by Maja Vasiljević and Ljiljana Dobrović examine the encounter of nationalism – more precisely, right-wing populism – in the political life of Croatia in the 21st century. The authors re-examine and fulfil previous analyses of this topic with a historical insight into the political narratives that deal with nationalism. Special attention is given to the Homeland Movement and the initiative ‘On the Behalf of the Family.’ Vasiljević and Dobrović strongly explain the consequences of the rise of right-wing populism in Croatia, in weakening democratic institutions in Croatia.

In the postface, *New Russia’s Imperialism and Populist Deluge from the Current Perspective of Russia’s Aggression against Ukraine*, Nikola

Samardžić summarises how the emergence of populist politicians in 21st century – who were and still are allies of Russia – fuelled the deepest and most dangerous crisis in European relations since 1945. The author explains how dissatisfactions among developed European societies and in the geographical peripheries that were included in the process of EU enlargement helped the rise of populism, while also shining a light on the role of the Kremlin in that process.

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THE NEXUS OF NATIONALISM AND EGALITARIANISM IN POPULIST NARRATIVES AND VALUE ORIENTATIONS IN SERBIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY¹

ABSTRACT

Populism as a ‘thin ideology’ implies that populist rhetoric is easily combined with different ideological orientations and narratives. In our chapter, we examine the nexus between right-wing messages and ideology (nationalism), and left-wing egalitarian populist narratives in Serbia (an ex-socialist country) after the consolidation of electoral democracy in the 21st century. We do not consider populism as an ideology that is exclusively ‘imposed’ from above, but we accept

¹ The chapter is the result of the authors’ work on the project of the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 822682. It reflects only the authors’ views and the Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

the theoretical position that pleads that it is a reversible process of placing populist messages, but also supporting and accepting such messages due to the wide representation of certain values. Using a triangulation of different methods, we tried to detect how nationalism and egalitarianism, both as messages (from above) and as value orientations (from below), have shaped the modern political life of Serbia. Bearing in mind the possible interconnection between the narratives of politicians and value orientations of the people, we wanted to simultaneously analyse these two. We analysed nationalism and egalitarianism in the political messages (slogans, commercials, party election programs) of the two parties (or coalitions) that won the most votes in parliamentary elections since 2000. To measure respondents' nationalism and egalitarianism, we used data gathered during past 20 years in the World Values Survey and European Values Study. Value changes and changes in political messages are analysed separately and, after that, the relationship between these two is discussed.

KEYWORDS: Serbia, Serbian Radical Party, Serbian Socialist Party, Serbian Progressive Party, Democratic Party, nationalism, egalitarianism, populism

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we decided to focus on nationalism and egalitarianism, since they played an important role in populist narratives in Serbia's recent past, especially during the 1990s (Dajč et al. 2022). We understand populism as a thin ideology and a discursive strategy that creates an image of a society radically divided into two categories: 'the common people' versus 'the corrupt elites' (Dajč et al. 2022: 3). From this viewpoint there are only friends and foes, therefore political, ethical or ideological 'others' are, in a way, representations of evil (Mudde 2004: 544). Since populism is a thin ideology, it can be easily combined with other ideologies, such as nationalism and egalitarianism. Namely, in their efforts to present themselves as part of 'authentic' exponents of the 'common people' populists often use some elements of nationalism and egalitarianism.

If nationalism is defined as “an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (‘the nation’) and that non-native / non-national elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state,” it is obvious how nationalism and populism can easily intertwine (Mudde 2007: 19). In populist narratives, belonging to one national group often becomes a criterion for differentiation between the ‘common people’ and the ‘other,’ i.e. evil. Bearing this in mind, as well as the fact that nationalism was heavily used in the 1990s, it is anticipated that nationalism is a crucial part of populist narratives in contemporary Serbia. Mudde’s hypothesis is especially important for the context analysed in this text, as together with egalitarianism (in economic terms), nationalism supported the development of populist narratives in Serbia.

One of the strongest ideas from the beginning of the breakup of Yugoslavia until today remains that the nation is exclusively an ethnically homogenous group, and hence the only political framework in which individuals can act (Dajč et al. 2022: 5).

Leaders should be nationalistically oriented and insist on a rhetoric aimed at preserving national consciousness, national values, internal coherence, etc. The foundation of such values and policies was perfectly conducive to the development of authoritarianism and the rise of populist leaders who would make discursive distinctions between ‘us’ (Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks) and ‘them’ (those who are not ‘our nation’) (Dajč et al. 2022: 5).

Another important element of populism is egalitarianism since it is convenient for creating division between the ‘common people’ and ‘corrupt elites.’ This is especially true in the case of Serbia, which inherited a socialist legacy from Yugoslavia. Even before the Second World War egalitarianism was among the most important topics within the People’s Radical Party that dominated Serbian politics in the late 19th and early 20th century. Additionally, socialism in Yugoslavia had a specific format – it retained a kind of quasi-market, while there was also a system of self-government that influenced the development of ideals of egalitarianism among Yugoslav citizens (Dajč et al. 2022: 6).

Scepticism about liberal economic reforms and distrust towards capitalism continued in the period after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which is clearly seen in confusion regarding economic liberalism as a value orientation among

the population (Pešić 2017: 53). To be able to understand well-rooted egalitarianism we should take into consideration that the People's Radical Party managed to keep the fundamental idea of creating an egalitarian 'people's state,' close to the interests of Serbia's peasant society, as one of the most important elements of its programme and that was also very appealing to Serbian society, as it was largely a peasant society in the 19th century (Perović 2019: 350). In the interwar Yugoslav state, the 'agrarian question' was one of the most important issues that helped the Radical Party to mobilise its electorate through its egalitarian narrative.

The foundations for populism in Serbia were laid in the 19th century by one of the most prominent Serbian political leaders, Nikola Pašić, and the party he founded – Narodna radikalna stranka (National Radical Party). This party developed under the very strong influence of the Russian Narodniks and the egalitarian traditions of Svetozar Marković's socialist doctrine (Perović 2019). The party can be considered a catch-all party, which combined both left-wing and right-wing populist ideas: a model of a state economy that would provide egalitarianism, crucial for its rural supporters, was combined with nationalism and the need for a strong leader (Dajč and Ajzenhamer Jovanović 2022: 123).

This was additionally important as an egalitarian 'people's state' was opposed to the much-reviled capitalist development of the Western world. This was connected to the 19th-century Serbian *love hypnosis* with Russia (Đorđević 1906: 5–9) that continued after the creation of Socialist Yugoslavia in 1945. It can be claimed that the very strong egalitarian narrative that the People's Radical Party developed in Serbia before 1945 paved the way for the very rapid and successful sovietisation of Yugoslavia which broke only after the split between Tito and Stalin in 1948. Therefore, the importance of egalitarianism as a significant constitutive element of populist discourse in Serbia must be emphasised.

Another important catalyst for the growth of nationalism and egalitarianism in Serbian society was the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the wars that marked most of the 1990s. The period between 1986 and 1999 can be defined as one of intense ideological preparation and homogenisation of the national-populist matrix in Serbia (Bešlin and Žarković 2022: 86). Two dominant

parties were the Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socijalistička partija Srbije*) and Serbian Radical Party (*Srpska radikalna stranka*). The former kept its main narratives of nationalism and egalitarianism from the 19th century, while the former, as the rebranded Communist Party of Serbia kept advocating egalitarianism and used nationalism for mobilising not only the electorate but also as the main driver for its war aims during wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. These two parties and their epigones (Serbian Progressive Party [*Srpska napredna stranka*] after 2010) have dominated Serbian politics to this day.

Some authors even suggest that Milošević stayed in power as long as he did mainly because he successfully used nationalism and destroyed its alternatives (Gordy 2010), because he focused on the production of enemies in SFRY and later Serbia (Milosavljević 1996: 399), or because the centralism through his leadership, under the guise of thinly-veiled Serbian nationalism, successfully grew (Mujanović 2018: 74–75). The use of nationalistic motives remained strong after the Milošević era and, in Serbia, it was usually perceived as inseparable from traditionalism and conservatism (Stojiljković 2011: 115). Nonetheless, the Serbian Progressive Party which has been dominant on the Serbian political scene during the past 10 years, has managed to present itself as a pro-European party and has “avoid[ed] identity questions as a baseline of their recognition ... without renouncing nationalist politics” (Stojiljković and Spasojević 2018: 123). Additionally, recent studies show the growth of nationalism among political elites during the second decade of the 21st century (Petrović and Radoman 2016: 168). Egalitarianism in the political sphere is seldom analysed in contemporary Serbia, although there are some papers showing its importance for populist narratives (Dajč et al. 2022: 27). Additionally, studies show that values that are expected in a liberal market economy are not “accepted as undoubtedly dominant” among Serbian political elites (Lazić 2011: 138). Economic liberalism (as the opposite of egalitarianism) is in some instances less accepted among political elites than among the general population. As such, the acceptance of private property as the preferred type of property is less apparent among political elites than among the general population (Pešić and Svilanović 2016: 128).

Even though egalitarianism and nationalism are undoubtedly part of the narratives of politicians and they present solid voter bait in Serbia,

to understand the dynamics of populism, it is necessary to pay attention not just to the narratives of politicians but also to the value orientations of the people. In other words, the relationship between ‘supply’ (populist discourse placed from above) and ‘demand’ (value orientations of wider social strata that receive/accept populist narratives) should also be considered to fully understand the role that nationalism and egalitarianism play in populism in Serbia. Serbia’s political evolution was marked in the first three years after the fall of Milošević in October 2000 by the very optimistic forecast during the premiership of Zoran Đinđić. But after his assassination in March 2003 and the first government of Vojislav Koštunica in early 2004, each Serbian government maintained European accession as one of its priorities while relations with Russia strengthened – mirroring the growth of nationalistic narratives (Samardžić 2022: 97). This conflicting practice eventually led to the majority of people in Serbia being against EU accession in April 2022 with 44% of the population being opposed to EU accession with 35% being in favour (Baković 2022). Having this schizophrenic situation in mind, which has been marked by an official pro-EU policy of each Serbian Government since the democratic change in 2000, along with a narrative that is dominated by nationalism and egalitarianism, as well as a foreign policy that has deviated from EU foreign and security policy increasingly since 2008 (Samardžić 2022: 112); we came to the conclusion that further research on nationalism and egalitarianism in populist narratives was much needed.

RESEARCH GOAL AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter our aim is to analyse to what extent nationalism and egalitarianism were part of the populist narratives of politicians in Serbia during the first two decades of the 21st century. Bearing in mind the possible interconnection between the narratives of politicians and value orientations of the people, we simultaneously analyse these two and answer the following questions: (1) how nationalism and egalitarianism were used in messages

of political parties in the past 20 years; (2) how did nationalism and egalitarianism as value orientations change among the people during the first two decades of the 21st century. Additionally, we aimed to better understand the relationship between value orientations and political messages, i.e., to analyse if the changes in value orientations could be manifested in different political messages, or, on the other hand, could political messages lead to different value orientations.

In order to analyse political narratives, political messages during parliamentary election campaigns were analysed. We analysed nationalism and egalitarianism in the political messages of the two parties (or coalitions) that won the most votes in each parliamentary election (2000, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2016). The elections that were held in 2020 were not analysed since most of the opposition boycotted these elections, therefore they were hardly comparable with other elections. The elections of 2014 were not analysed either, as they set a new trend of the ruling coalition organising a snap election despite having full control of parliament – the same happened in 2022 when the ruling coalition held parliamentary elections despite having full control of the legislature. More precisely, in this chapter, we rely on analyses of slogans (14 slogans were analysed – at least one for each party), party election programmes if they existed in written form (eight programmes were included in the analysis) and videos of commercials which were especially useful for more recent elections (11).

To measure respondents' nationalism and egalitarianism, we used data gathered in World Values Surveys (the fourth, fifth and seventh waves of the survey) and the European Values Study (the fourth and fifth waves of the survey). Since questions relevant for measuring nationalism and egalitarianism are identical in both studies (European and World Values Survey, see more in: Inglehart et al. 2018a; Inglehart et al. 2018b; Haerpfer et al. 2020; EVS 2022; EVS/WVS 2022) we were able to group data (N = 6477) across different periods: Period 1 – the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century (2001); Period 2 – the second half of the first decade of the 21st century (2006, 2008); Period 3 – the second half of the second decade of the 21st century (2017, 2018) (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Sample size and structure

Study	Period 1 (WVS4 – 2001)	Period 2 (WVS5 – 2006, EVS4 – 2008)	Period 3 (WVS7 – 2017, EVS5 – 2018)	Total
EVS	0	1512	1499	3011
WVS	1200	1220	1046	3466
Total	1200	2732	2545	6477

Source: own elaboration based on World Values Survey and European Values Study

In order to measure respondents' nationalism, we used answers to the following two questions: "How proud are you to be a member of your national group?" (Answers being: Not at all proud, not very proud, quite proud, very proud) and "Would you be willing to fight for your country?" (Answers being: yes and no).

Concerning the acceptance of egalitarianism, we analysed respondents' answers to the following questions, which are otherwise used to measure economic liberalism: "How would you place your views on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means that incomes should be made more equal and 10 that we need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort?" and "How would you place your views on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means that competition is harmful because it brings out the worst in people and 10 means that competition is good because it stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas?". While a larger score on these two questions meant an acceptance of economic liberalism, a lower score was interpreted as economic egalitarianism. In order to test if there were differences between periods, we used the chi-square test for questions regarding nationalism and an analysis of variance (Bonferroni's post-hoc test) for questions regarding egalitarianism.

To sum up, as presented in Figure 1, this chapter is based on an analysis of political messages during six elections (from 2000 to 2016), while value orientation surveys conducted across three periods (2001 to 2018) were also analysed (Figure 1).

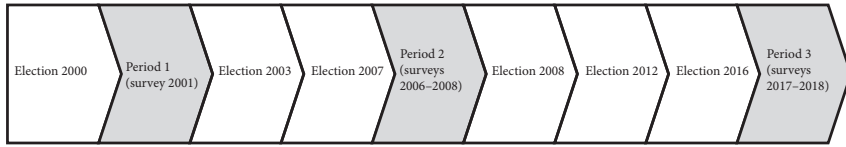


FIGURE 1. Timeline

Source: own elaboration.

RESULTS: POLITICAL MESSAGES DURING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

Parliamentary elections held in December 2000 were the first after the fall of the Milošević regime and the atmosphere was mainly dictated by the success of the opposition at the presidential election that were held in September (Styczyńska and Dajč 2022: 148). According to public opinion research, the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) were favourites before these elections and indeed they won the most votes (over 64%). Second place was taken by Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) which gained less than 14% of votes (Zavod za statistiku 2001). The DOS campaign drew strength from its previous successes during the Yugoslavian presidential elections. In that vein, some of their slogans included: "Let's ride to the finish" (*Da isteramo do kraja*) and "DOS, normally." While the DOS wanted to build on its victory with another, the SPS asked voters to rethink decisions they made in the previous election with slogans such as: "Think well" and "Reason – it's not too late." As there are no references to people, ethnic groups, or social topics, it could be argued that nationalism and egalitarianism were not the most important topics during these elections. However, despite topics related to nationalism not being the centre of attention, it should be mentioned that the SPS campaign emphasised the successes of their government in organising life after the NATO bombing and celebrated their 'honest war' against NATO. Additionally, Milošević said that only his party was "a factor of true protection of national and state interests" and that his was the only party that could fight against the "disassembling of country, economy

and people” (Stevanović 2000). On the other hand, “the plan for the first 100 days” that the DOS offered did not contain nationalistic topics and dealt with structural changes that they proposed (in the economy, justice system, foreign policy, etc.). When it comes to egalitarianism, even though there was a section on social security and the health of citizens, the most dominant topics in the DOS’s plan were privatisation and the liberalisation of markets.

The next elections were held three years later (December 2003), just nine months after the assassination of Prime Minister Đinđić. Though it was expected that Đinđić’s social-democratic Democratic Party (DS) would win most of the votes, these elections were marked by the success of the right-oriented Serbian Radical Party (SRS – 28% of votes) and the centre-right Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), which managed to form a government with 18% of the votes (Zavod za statistiku 2003). Though both parties had a strong nationalistic sentiment, in this campaign they tried to draw strength mostly from the popularity of their leaders and from social issues (Slavujević 2007: 145). The SRS lauded their leader (Vojislav Šešelj) for voluntarily going to The International Criminal Court in The Hague and focused on solutions for economic and social issues. The Radical Party continued to espouse egalitarianism along with nationalism as its main narrative. As such, one can understand their slogan: “Radically better.” The election programme of the SRS consisted of 20 points in which they promised to recover the economy and society by creating a frugal government that would start up industry, decrease unemployment through investments in public works (such as the building of infrastructure) and offer a better social programme: free healthcare, education for everyone, cheap housing for young couples, an increase of living standards for pensioners (Srpska radikalna stranka 2003: 5). They were explicitly against the liberalisation of the economy and promised to reassess privatisations that already took place. Though it could be argued that egalitarianism overshadowed nationalism, the latter was still apparent, as the SRS was advocating for the creation of a “comprehensive and unitary Serbian ethnic state, economic and cultural space” (Srpska radikalna stranka 2003: 4).

Though the main themes in the DSS campaign were social issues (Slavujević 2007: 146), they used nationalism in a specific manner. Since their nationalism was less belligerent than the SRS’s and it could be argued that they were perceived as less nationalistic than the SRS, it is interesting to notice that,

unlike the SRS, they mentioned the people in their slogan: “As the people say – Koštunica.” Unlike the SRS they didn’t advocate for uniting all Serbs in one country and it seems that the main goal for using nation-related motives was simply to differentiate themselves from the rest of the parties that were members of the DOS. Though they were part of the DOS until August 2001, they based their campaign on criticising the DOS and presented themselves as true protectors of Serbian democratic tradition and a party that would truly respect the will of the people (Slavujević 2007: 146).

Elections that were held in January 2007 were notably affected by the atmosphere of the constitutional referendum that was held earlier in 2006 (Slavujević 2007: 149). Once again, the Serbian Radical Party won the most votes (29%) while the Democratic Party (DS) came second (23%) (Zavod za statistiku 2007). Just like four years earlier, the SRS couldn’t form a government and Vojislav Koštunica (DSS) remained Prime Minister – while the DS had a majority of ministers in the government. In their campaign, the SRS promoted their role in ensuring that Serbia was defined as a country of ‘ethnic Serbs’ (in Serbian it is literally “Serbian people and others”) in the new Constitution and that, in the preamble, Kosovo and Metohija was explicitly defined as part of the Republic of Serbia. When it comes to their nationalistic narrative, they also advocated for support to “our people in Republika Srpska and occupied Republic of Serbian Krajina” (Srpska radikalna stranka 2007: 2). On the other hand, the Democratic Party didn’t have any strong nationalistic elements in their campaign and, despite nationalistic elements in the SRS campaign, it could be argued that both the SRS and DS mainly focused on economic and social issues, which paved the road for some egalitarian rhetoric. In that vein, the SRS, whose slogan was “To get better today,” promised in their election programme that they would fight corruption and, in that way provide funds for improving the living standard of all people by: “creating new workplaces, building kindergartens, creating developmental pension funds” and by ensuring that key economic sectors were state-owned (Srpska radikalna stranka 2007: 2). Under the slogan “Because life can’t wait,” the DS more clearly advocated a liberal economy, promising further privatisation, but they also focused on social justice. Therefore, in their election programme, they promised to simultaneously develop a market economy and the state’s social responsibility (Demokratska stranka 2006: 15). In the similar manner, they used many

popular terms, such as ‘sustainable economy, monetary stability, tax justice, education and healthcare for all, support for families, children and seniors’, etc. (Demokratska stranka 2006: 15). The Democrats used egalitarianism as one of their main narratives and tried to combine it with a pro-European narrative in order to portray themselves as both the ‘people’s party’ and a modern European party at the same time.

The next elections were held just over a year later (May 2008) and this time the most votes were won by the Democratic Party. More precisely, the coalition “For a European Serbia” (Za evropsku Srbiju – ZES) that was led by the Democratic Party and their leader Boris Tadić won over 38% of votes, while the Radicals took second place with 30% (Zavod za statistiku 2008). Once again topics related to social issues dominated this campaign. On the one hand, the Democratic Party used the fact that Serbia signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union just two weeks before the elections to focus on the benefits of joining the EU. As such, they managed to channel pro-European rhetoric into egalitarian narratives, promising that joining the EU would solve the problems of all people and lead to a “better life for our children, more opportunities for all, new workplaces” (Boris Tadić in a ZES commercial). They tried to present the aforementioned agreement as a huge success and future EU membership as unquestionable and as a magic wand that would help everyone to “wake up as a proud man” (Boris Tadić at the final convention of ZES). On the other hand, the Radicals practised egalitarian rhetoric by focusing on fighting corruption and criminality (one of their slogans was “full steam ahead against corruption and criminal”). They tried to present the corruption of elites as a key enemy and that, if Serbia would fight against corruption, it could achieve the goals that they stressed in their programme, such as: recovering the economy, focusing on agriculture and halving poverty (Srpska radikalna stranka 2008). Though nationalism wasn’t the dominant topic during these elections, it could be argued that it was actually more present than in previous elections. Namely, while nationalistic topics weren’t the focus of this election, some national symbols were used more than before. For the first time during the analysed period, both parties mentioned the name of the country/people in their slogans. “For European Serbia” was both the name of the coalition and their main slogan, while the Radicals used “Go, Serbia” as their slogan. Though the Radicals

advocated in their programme for a “return to national values,” it could be argued that manifestations of nationalism in this election programme decreased compared to previous ones (Srpska radikalna stranka 2008: 50). Unlike the Radicals, the DS slightly increased the number of nationalistic elements in their campaign (which were almost non-existent in previous elections). In addition to mentioning Serbia in their slogan, their visual identity changed: blue and yellow (party colours from the 1990s) were more and more accompanied by red, blue and white (the colours of Serbia’s flag). Additionally, even their main topic (joining the EU) was occasionally presented in a slightly nationalistic way. For example, during the final convention of ZES, Tadić stated that “the day Serbia joins the EU will be the day that Serbia is able to fight stronger for Kosovo.” It could be argued that the Radicals (that were known as nationalists) didn’t have to focus on nationalistic elements – at least not more than usual – while the DS, for the first time, tried to form a real catch-all coalition, thus offering a wide range of populist narratives (both egalitarian and nationalistic).

Parliamentary elections held in 2012, together with the presidential election that was held at the same time, were among the most important since the fall of Milošević. After these elections, power relations changed and many of the politicians that were in government during the Milošević period came back to power. The majority of votes at these elections was won by the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) (24%) which was formed just three years earlier by former prominent members of the Serbian Radical Party, while a coalition led by DS won 22% (Zavod za statistiku 2012). It can be argued that the two parties had similar programmes and that both could be labelled as catch-all parties. Once again topics related to social issues were dominant. The Progressive Party focused on the economy under the slogan “Honest and successful Serbia – it is possible.” Though they promised to “respect the principles of a market economy,” to fully cooperate with international economic and financial institutions and to attract foreign investments (Srpska napredna stranka 2011: 2) and said in their commercial that “only a healthy economy can save workplaces,” it’s fair to say that the narratives they used were quite often more egalitarian than liberal. Their campaign focused on social justice, fighting corruption, and they advocated for special strategies for improving the status of the youth and seniors. When it comes to nationalistic elements in SNS’s campaign, they were drastically

reduced compared to the period when the same politicians were members of the SRS. For instance, in their programme, they promised that they would never recognise Kosovo as an independent state but the language they used was much more reconcilable than the Radicals, saying that they wouldn't accept any 'proposal' that didn't "take into account the minimum national interests of Serbia" and that Kosovo is "Serbian, at least as much as Albanian" (Srpska napredna stranka 2011: 37). Foreign investments, which were an element of the SNS campaign, were key elements of the DS campaign, too. They tried to present some foreign investments as their doing and suggested that everyone could benefit from them. In that vein, their slogan was: "Jobs, investments, security – that is our only choice for a better life." Foreign investments were not presented just as something that would increase living standard for all people (in a way, an egalitarian manner), but as something that would help protect the national interest (in a nationalistic manner). For example, the president of the DS and Serbia said that, only if Serbia attracted investment and became economically strong, could it defend its national interests and not "cross the red line" (recognise Kosovo) (Boris Tadić at the DS convention at Novi Sad which was streamed on TV as a political ad). When it comes to the nationalistic ethos in their campaign, they continued to substitute party colours with the colours of the Serbian flag and began their conventions with an intonation of the anthem. Nonetheless, they didn't have a nationalistic programme and were perceived as a civic party that was trying to obtain some votes based on nationalistic sentiment. The Serbian Progressive Party proved to be more successful as they appealed to former voters of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) by successfully combining nationalism and egalitarianism with a declarative pro-European stance that made them the most successful catch-all party in Serbia.

The last elections to be analysed in this chapter were held in April 2016 and they were marked by a comfortable victory for the SNS (over 48% of the votes) and their allies in the previous period, the SPS (11% of votes) (Zavod za statistiku 2016). Once again, both winning parties focused on the economy which paved the road for an egalitarian rhetoric. So, the SNS promised in their campaign that they would fight for "a decent life for everyone," that "everyone must have the chance of a good job," and that they would provide "better healthcare for everyone" and "better education for our children" (SNS commercial 2016). At the same time, they portrayed

tycoons as evil elites that are opposed to the people who should have equal chances, and promised that these elites “will never again rule Serbia” (SNS commercial 2016). Similar egalitarian elements were apparent in the SPS campaign, since they promised free education and healthcare and cheap housing, and argued that they “never gave up on social justice” (Ivica Dačić at SPS convention – used in SPS commercial, 2016). Slogans of both parties mentioned the people or name of the nation. The slogan of the SNS was “Serbia wins” and in their commercials, they said that “we are a people of winners.” On the other hand, the SPS’s slogan was “We serve the people,” which had a military overtone. Additionally, during speeches at conventions, politicians stated that they (ergo, the party) “bled for the country” (probably referring to the 1990s wars and the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999). Though it seems that nationalistic elements during these elections were more apparent than in previous ones, it should be stressed that social issues and egalitarian rhetoric were key segments of the campaign, while nationalism was a secondary topic and it seemed as though politicians used these themes rather as folklore than as strong political messages.

VALUE ORIENTATIONS: NATIONALISM AND EGALITARIANISM

Data from the European and World Values Survey show that nationalism has been in decline since the beginning of the 2000s. More precisely, when it comes to willingness to fight for one’s country as an indicator of nationalism, almost three-quarters of people were willing to fight at the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century (Period 1), about three-fifths during the second half of the first decade of the 21st century (Period 2) and just a little bit more than a half of respondents in the most recent study (Period 3 – Table 2). Based on this data, it can be claimed that willingness to fight for one’s country was significantly lower in Period 2 compared to Period 1 ($\chi^2(1) = 25.21, p < 0.01$), and significantly lower in Period 3 compared to Period 2 ($\chi^2(1) = 14.65, p < 0.01$).

TABLE 2. Nationalism in Serbia

Time period	Would you be willing to fight for your country?		How proud are you to be a member of your national group?	
Period 1 – 2001	Yes	72.1	Not at all proud	6.6
			Not very proud	18.6
	No	27.9	Quite proud	32.9
			Very proud	42
Period 2 – 2006–2008	Yes	61.2	Not at all proud	2.5
			Not very proud	11.8
	No	38.8	Quite proud	40.6
			Very proud	45.1
Period 3 – 2017–2018	Yes	53.8	Not at all proud	2.5
			Not very proud	13.5
	No	46.2	Quite proud	47.4
			Very proud	36.6

Source: own elaboration based on World Values Survey and European Values Study.

When it comes to pride in the nation as a second indicator of nationalism, the results are a bit more ambiguous. Almost three-quarters of respondents were proud of their country (quite proud or very proud) at the beginning of the 2000s. The share of people proud of their country rose to 85% in Period 2 and only slightly declined (to 84%) during Period 3. Additionally, when comparing the 2nd and 3rd periods, it is apparent that more people were very proud of their nation during the second half of the first decade of the 21st century (45% compared to 36% in the 3rd period). Based on this data it is noticeable that pride in the country was significantly higher in the 2nd period than in the 1st period ($\chi^2(3) = 71.79, p < 0.01$), and significantly lower in Period 3 than in Period 2 ($\chi^2(3) = 37.1, p < 0.01$).

When it comes to egalitarianism, the data shows that this value orientation is relatively stable in all three periods. As presented in Figure 2, there are no big oscillations regarding the acceptance of competition. More precisely, there are no significant differences between the three periods

($F(2,6474) = 0,9, p > .05$) and in all periods respondents were slightly more pro-competition (i.e., more liberal than egalitarian). On the other hand, there are significant differences between the three periods ($F(2,6266) = 12,97, p < .01$) regarding attitudes towards income equality. Post-hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test showed that acceptance of inequalities was lower in Period 2 (-0.53 (95% CI, -0.78 to -0.27), $p < .001$) and Period 3 (-0.44 (95% CI, -0.69 to -0.18), $p < .01$) compared to Period 1, while there are no significant differences between Periods 2 and 3 (-0.09 (95% CI, -0.29 to 0.11), $p > .05$). This means that, when it comes to accepting economic equality, people have been more egalitarian in the past 15 years than they were at the beginning of the 2000s.

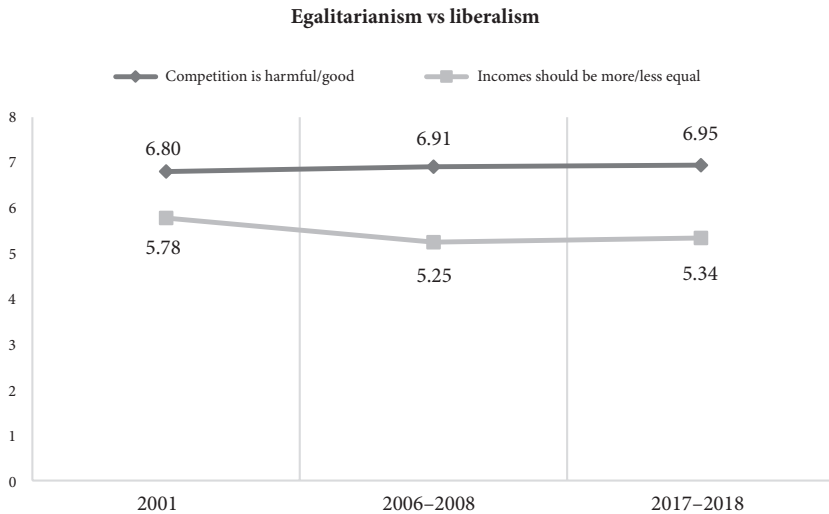


FIGURE 2. Egalitarianism in Serbia

Source: own elaboration based on World Values Survey and European Values Study.

CONCLUSION

If we accept that egalitarianism and nationalism in Serbia have been perfect ideological and discursive voter bait, we can complete the nexus of the political and social context for the development of main populist narratives in Serbia (Dajč et al. 2022: 6). Taking into consideration the historical context and strong People's Radical Party and Communist Party legacy in Serbian society since the second half of the 19th century, it is easy to understand why nationalism and egalitarianism have remained dominant narratives in Serbia into the 21st century. Even Socialist Yugoslavia did not manage to restrain the nationalisms of the different Yugoslav nations but accepted it and cherished it until the country's collapse. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia post-1945 found fertile ground for its economic and social egalitarianism that was the result of the strong Radical Party influence in Serbia. The breakup of Yugoslavia and the wars of the 1990s cemented the need in Serbia's social context for a dominant leader who would combine populist strategies with nationalist narratives and conflict with all those who are not 'us,' along with ideas of egalitarianism which imply that populists come 'from the true people' so that they can defend Serbian society from 'rich, corrupt elites' that are often seen as agents of the West (Dajč et al. 2022: 6).

Dominant political parties in Serbia since 2000 haven't abandoned the main narratives that helped them mobilise their electorate in each of the elections that were analysed in this chapter. Only in the first election after the fall of Milošević was the nationalistic narrative not prevailing, while clear pro-market economy attitudes were advocated (at least in the narratives of the winning party – the DOS). In all other elections, nationalism was present and egalitarianism became more and more dominant. During the same period, the willingness to fight for the country as an indicator of nationalism among people decreased. Even though a feeling of pride in the country was more ambiguous, it didn't decrease during this period. Therefore, it could be argued that nationalism didn't fade but that it just took on a more peaceful form. When it comes to egalitarianism, the data shows that this value orientation is relatively stable and there is even a slight increase towards this orientation when it comes to non-acceptance of unequal

incomes, which is probably a consequence of people's disappointment in the privatisation process and liberal reforms (or unrealistic expectations in the first place).

Though our research design doesn't allow us to determine whether narratives affect value orientations or value orientations affect narratives, it seems that both are, in a way, two sides of the same coin. And in order to fully understand the political dynamics, both need to be taken into consideration. Nonetheless, after 2000 with the development of political marketing in Serbia, politicians started to pay more attention to the value orientations of people in formulating their narratives – which is in line with the viewpoint of political scientists who suggest that political parties in Serbia use “total marketing” more and more and are prone to the “idolatry of marketing” (Slavujević 2011: 285). It can be understood that disappointment in liberal reforms and a slight increase in egalitarian values among people affected the abandonment of clear pro-market economy attitudes and the growth of egalitarian narratives among politicians. Additionally, the two most successful parties/coalitions transformed into catch-all populist parties even more significantly since the 2012 elections and kept nationalism and egalitarianism as their main narratives. Serbian society has remained prone to nationalist and egalitarianism narratives even after democratic changes in the 21st century and the main political parties have continued to use them successfully. This leads us to the hypothesis that most voters still happily accept narratives that haven't changed much in the last few decades.

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Populism is one of the most frequently used terms in contemporary political debates and the media. This elusive and difficult-to-measure phenomenon became also highly politicised both in Europe and around the world. The dichotomy between 'pure people' and 'the corrupted elite' characterises all populist movements and actors, and so this book focuses on particular features that connect populist actors in the post-communist countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe. The volume gathers chapters analysing the phenomenon of populism in Central and South-Eastern Europe from multidisciplinary perspectives. The aim is to map and understand the peculiarities of populism in the region seen from the perspective of political science, economy, history, and cultural studies.

The book is a result of cooperation between researchers working on a project entitled Populist Rebellion against Modernity in 21st-century Eastern Europe: Neo-Traditionalism and Neo-Feudalism (POPREBEL). The project is funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 scheme and aims to analyse the rise of populism in Central and Eastern Europe. POPREBEL is run by a consortium of six European universities: University College London, Jagiellonian University, Charles University, University of Tartu, Corvinus University of Budapest, University of Belgrade, and the think tank Edgeryders.

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