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Tatjana Lazić
FBiH Parliament
Sarajevo

CONTEMPORARY POPULIST POLITICAL CULTURE: FROM MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNIST POLITICAL TRENDS

The author analyses the degree of influence populism has on main political trends in Euro-Atlantic societies by examining problems surrounding the terminological conceptualization of populism and its historical manifestations in a specific national context. The interiorization of populism into the liberal-democratic political discourse has been made possible by the ambivalent nature of democratic political culture, which implies not only the autonomy of thought and the participation of citizens in the political system, but also certain loyalistic, subservient elements, cognitive-affective unity and the consent of subjects on fundamental values on which a political order is based. At times of major social crises, which problematize and reevaluate the overall value system, populism, through the programs of the far right and left, skillfully utilizes the indoctrinational potential of democracy offering a simplified explication of the reasons that caused crises and by influencing the retraditionalization of behavior imposes itself as the guardian of a national collective's values and tradition. Populism, by instrumentalizing mass media, interprets politics into a simple and easily understandable language thus reducing the need for an intellectual and critical potential.

Key words: *populism, political culture, political parties, democracy, media*

Defining Populism

Semantic differentiation of the word people, which is *demos* in Greek and *populus* in Latin, explicitly places us into a bipolar discourse

of politological-axiological concepts: democracy and populism. Demos as the fundamental constituent of democracy favors the voluntaristic, subjective-political and nation-building understanding of a politically organized people, a legitimately established political order in which the citizen is the central figure, manifesting its political sensibility and actively participating in ongoing political processes. Consequently, active civil components develop the discourse of democratic political culture as an expression of the internized value system formed under the influence of processes of political tradition and political socialization and in constant communication with representatives of the authorities who play their roles in the open political system. The consistency of a democracy is evaluated through the stability and firmness of its institutions and representatives of the authorities, especially at times of major social crises, which tend to stir up demands for the revalorization of the political legitimacy of the authorities. Namely, conventional definitions of legitimacy link this phenomenon to collectivistic faith, confidence, acceptance and rational justification that the existing institutions are adequate for the given system, i.e. the society as a whole. The concept of legitimacy also stands in a functional relationship with the concept of mass loyalty. According to Claus Offe, loyalty of the underprivileged exists “where thresholds of conflict between certain interest groups have not been permanently crossed and where a functionally desirable dose of apathetical willingness to follow given instances exists.”¹ Therefore, it is conceived in a democracy that the flipside of socialization processes carries, to a certain extent, traits of a specific political indoctrination which produces general consent with the wider axiological context with the aim of maintaining power and stability of the political order. However, the question that arises is will the political mind turn towards the rational resolution of a crisis, or will it, on the other hand, find refuge in irrational political options, such as populism, when a disruption in the perception of values within a group reality occurs and when the process of legitimizing authority experiences real obstacles which challenge its existence, i.e. when conflict potentials are no longer reduced to the measure of a socially desirable level of reproduction of social dynamics and social progress. Ralf Darendorf also

¹ Claus Offe, cited in Esad Zgodic: *Multiverzum vlasti: za nou kratologiju*, Faculty of Political Science, Sarajevo 2009, p. 49

stresses that democracy and populism are not mutually exclusive concepts: *one man's populism is another's democracy, and vice versa*. Development of the populist template in modern democracies is made possible by the fact that the political culture includes both participative and authoritarian potentials, which means that besides the participation of citizens in political processes, mechanisms of mass loyalty and support for the political system are also established at the same time. It is a characteristic of the European civil humanism and republicanism for the community to have advantage over the individual, i.e. for the individual-citizen to be constituted through the collective, first in the form of an ethnos and then of a nation. Populism, by resorting to the people and tradition, therefore often becomes a component of national political programs.

That this is not merely a simplified political phenomenon can be seen from the definitional elasticity which determines populism as a political orientation, a method of gaining power, a technique of government, a specific "ideology" which mimics, introjects and oscillates in the wide spectrum from far left to far right ideologies, possibly becoming their active component and one of the significant political values. In his work *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* Francisco Panizza highlights three things that subsume the basis of populism: Who are the people? Who speaks on behalf of the people? How does populist identification take place? In his search for answers the same author underlines three categories within which the raised issues are analyzed: a) empirical generalizations, b) historicist accounts and c) symptomatic readings – all alleged cases of populism.²

There is not definite, commonly accepted definition of the term populism in political glossaries. The Merriam-Webster dictionary provides two overlapping definitions a) a political movement claiming to represent the common people and b) belief in the rights, wisdom, or virtues of the common people. Basically, any action claiming to defend the interests of the common people can be described as populist, and since every political action is rationalized, made meaningful by the purpose of defending and protecting the interests of the people, or a part of the people, populist vocabulary becomes present, to a greater or lesser extent, in a host of political programs, with the sole intention of winning the support of the

² Panizza, Francisco, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, Verso, London, 2005., p. 1-2

electorate. According to A. Miloradovic, the description of populism in political-sociological discourse can be reduced to the search for its content in movements or policies which call upon the people and bear the following fundamental characteristics: resistance to modernization, anti-intellectualism, traditionalism, a collection of ideas and convictions that reflect political skepticism as opposed to parliamentary democracy; i.e. a movement conditioned by socio-political rifts between the traditional and modern, village and the city, collective and individual, religion and secularization.

A significant characteristic of populism is the nonexistence of immanent ideological consistency, instead it is structurally recognized in the political extremes of the right and left, and is manifested both as reactionary and revolutionary (Latin American dictatorships: Getulio Vargas (Brazil), J.D. Peron (Argentina), H. Chavez (Venezuela)), but also as democratic (Switzerland, Austria, France), and conservative (De-Gaullism). According to E. Canetti's sociological definition, populism represents a governing technique which rests on the syncretism between the leader and the crowd within which the leader's wish for power finds footing in the frustrations of the members of the crowd.³ Political Scientist D. Nohlan provides a similar definition of populism. He defines it as a mass movement with members of heterogeneous lower social strata at its core, a movement with a fragile organization and pronouncedly vertically established relations of the movement leadership and the crowd at the base on the principle of relations between the leader and the crowd.⁴ Post Marxist theory considers populism in terms of its potential to neutralize antagonistic political expressions, i.e. ways in which the dominant, homogenistic class absorbs the heterogeneity of ideas and (re)establishes and maintains its position in the society. Thus, populism becomes an ideology of the elite, which in their effort to gain power, address directly the masses (E. Laclau)⁵ flattering and urging them to back a priori made decisions.

The simplicity of theoretical desubstantialization of populist praxis is achieved at time of major social crisis which condition and accelerate changes in political reality, but also in the wider social context. Edgar

³ See more in Elias Canetti, *Masa i moć*, Grafički zavod, Zagreb, 1984.

⁴ Diether Nolan, *Politološki rječnik: država i politika*, Panliber, Osijek-Zagreb-Split, 2001.

⁵ See more in Ernesto Laclau, *On populist Reason*, Verso, New York/London, 2005.

Moren labeled the 20th century as the century of crises manifested not only as the “tearing of a continuum, as a disturbance of the, to that point, seemingly stable system, but also as an increase in coincidence, therefore uncertainty.”⁶

In the broadest possible sense a crisis represents a period when one model of development, organization and interpretation of the world is exhausted, and a new one has not emerged. A crisis is “a collapse of organization and represents a series of uncontrolled processes which aim to gain strength through their own forces or to severely conflict with other antagonistic process, which are also uncontrolled.”⁷ First condition for an explicit manifestation of populism is a crisis of thought as a “historic moment of danger or uncertainty during which decisions and changes of crucial importance are made that will determine the future development of the system, if it survives, and its new social, economic and political basis.”⁸

British sociologist Steward Hawk, who formed the “authoritarian populism” syntagm to characterize the policy of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and which would be used to describe numerous far right governments and politicians, defined four aspects of crisis of the modern world:

- a) economic aspect (process of deindustrialization)
- b) political aspect (absence of dialogue, parties become companies);
- c) ideological aspect (contemplation of the future ceases)
- d) cultural aspect (domination of subculture).⁹

Canadian publicist Naomi Klein subsumes this crisis parallelogram under the statement: “drop in the value of money, collapses on the market, the looming recession, put everything else on the back burner and give leaders free hands to do what they wish in the name of national salvation. Crises are, in a sense, “off shore” democracies, moments when normative rules of consensus are suspended”.¹⁰

⁶ Edgar Moren, *Kako izaći iz XX stoljeća*, Globus, Zagreb, 1983, str. 274.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 275.

⁸ Dragan Koković, *Naziranje umetnosti*, Futura publikacije, Novi Sad, 1998., p. 196.

⁹ *Postmoderna vremena (Fetišizam i kriza)* Časopis Biznis i finansije, [http://www.bifonline.rs/tekstovi.print122/postmoderna-vremena-4-feti%](http://www.bifonline.rs/tekstovi.print122/postmoderna-vremena-4-feti%20)

¹⁰ *Ibidem*

Populism in Modernism

Populist political culture is linked to the emergence and development of populist movements at decisive phases of European and world history in the 20th century and is characterized by the impoverishment of the intellectual and democratic potential of the society. Margaret Canovan Herzena considers two populist templates significant for the dominant characteristics of a society's political tradition: a) agrarian populism formed in the USA and Russia in the 19th century, i.e. peasant movements in central and east European countries (Germany, Bulgaria) and b) political populism, which we associate with strong, charismatic political leaders whose political rule left a trace on practically all generational groups, including the political culture of a society.

The US Constitution projected a specific political culture which "diverts from the 'intellectualism', i.e. wisdom and enlightenment, influenced by John Locke towards the Ruossavian (Jean Jacques Rousseau) 'egalitarian' sentiment and 'populist' unity".¹¹ Analyzing the political culture in America, D. Bell observed that it is no coincidence that many American presidents were heroes or generals, i.e. that presidents after the Second World War, such as Truman, Nixon, Carter and Regan, were "open populists" and opponents of the establishment.¹² Principal characteristics of American populism are anti-intellectualism and an anti-institutional, provincial-religious culture without a strong aristocratic, artistic, Catholic tradition.¹³

Political populism, in fact, leads us into the theoretical understanding of the method and reproduction of populist templates in democratic systems, i.e. it highlights how the existing democratic deficit in the wider political-social system is instrumentalized with the marginalization of parliamentary democracy institutions as its result.

Authoritarian populism represents a form of traditional political culture in which a charismatic leader gains political legitimization based on the dissatisfaction and acclamatory acceptance of the masses to be guided based

¹¹ Stjepan Šimić, *Teorija političke moderne*, Nipp, Zenica, 1999., p. 87-88.

¹² Daniel Bell in: Stjepan Šimić, *Teorija političke moderne*, cited on p. 88

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 88

on uncontrolled emotions. This relationship sets the basic differentiation of democratic movements from populist movements. Democratic movements respect the principle of rule by the people, while populist movements rely on the people, i.e. their emotions which they direct against democratic principles and institutions. The basic characteristics of populist political culture are: the people, leader, anti-individualism, anti-intellectualism, anti-parliamentarism, and anti-modernism.¹⁴ Instead of cultivating a sense of the polyphonic and minimizing sources for the reproduction of authoritarian habits and monocentric political culture¹⁵, populist political culture is inclined towards discrediting, suspecting, controlling, excommunicating and decapitating intellectuals who are seen as unruly, undisciplined, unreliable and abstract individuals. Furthermore, it also demonstrates a strong distrust in the processes of modernization and the work of parliamentary institutions, as a result of which populist movements are perceived as a kind of neo-romantic rebellion and revolt against the *spiritus movens* hinting major social changes. Exploring the edges of liberalism and of liberal-democratic political culture, B. Arditì concluded that contemporary democracies cannot escape the influence of populism: "Populism is a drunken guest at a polite party: He can disrupt table manners and tacit rules of sociability by speaking loudly, interrupting conversations of others, and perhaps flirting with them beyond what passes for acceptable cheekiness".¹⁶

Andelko Miloradović differentiates three populist movements based on the underlying concepts of nationalism, anti-individualism and anti-modernism which dominate them:

- a) Poujadism – an anti-modernist movement formed in France from the frustrations of the marginalized segments of the society excluded from the mainstream of modern society. This movement stands at the position that it is the people, not the parties, who should control the government

¹⁴ Andelko Milardović, Uvod u politologiju, Pan liber, Zagreb, 1996., p. 152.

¹⁵ Esad Zgodić, Realpolitika i njeni protivnici, Univerzitetska biblioteka Derviš Sušić, Tuzla, Centar za informisanje i kulturu, Tešanj, 2008., p. 125.

¹⁶ See more in Benjamin Arditì, Politics on the Edges of Liberalism: Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation, Edinburgh University Press, Scotland, UK, 2007., p. 78.

- b) McCarthyism – movement named after US Senator Joseph McCarthy¹⁷ at the beginning of the Cold War. This movement, based on mass pressure and harassment of individuals on unsubstantiated charges, represents a dark moment in American democracy.
- c) Peronism – the Latin American type of populist dictatorship (named after Argentine President Juan Domingo Peron) with prominent anti-capitalist and national features. Peronism was also characterized by anti-parliamentary populist content stressing that the party and its leader draw their power directly from the people.

S.M. Lipset's political study *Political Man* describes Charles de Gaulle's rule as French post-war populism. It is interesting to note the causal-temporal parallelism between the emergence of populism in the National Socialist Germany and the French V Republic. A look at the socio-economic situation and the undermined sense of value of the German and French nations after World War I, i.e. World War II, shows that the development of political practice was shaped on the principles of a charismatic leader and the emotional mobilization of the masses. However, a clear distinction is visible between the consequences of political production of uncontrolled emotions in the two systems.

A crisis of democracy in the Weimar Republic and the IV Republic caused socialization processes in the political culture to be based on prominent values of patriarchal-organicistic-primordial attachment between the community and the land, strong patriotism resulting from integrative cultural values, language, customs, and integral identity of the community which constantly defends itself from the aggressive "invading" external elements. Constitutions in both political systems made possible the total concentration of power in the hands of the political leader. However, unlike the totalitarian system established by Hitler in Germany,

¹⁷ Joseph MacCarthy, Republican from Wisconsin, gave a Lincoln Day speech on February 9 1950 to the Republicans Women's Club of Wheeling, West Virginia, in which he announced the list of 57 suspected Soviet spies and communist sympathizers working in the State Department. He was then presented as the savior of the nation by the media. McCarthyism, a movement which formed on an explicit anti-communist sentiment, prompted a wave of arrests of people suspected of propagating communist ideas without credible evidence ever being presented (cited from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_McCarthy).

de Gaulle based his power on strong presidentialism (republican monarchism) in order to overcome the political instability of the IV Republic, the failure in Indonesia and the unresolved Algerian issue, but also to avoid the fate of the Weimar Republic. French political scientist Yves Meny thus puts it: “The Regime of the V Republic is based on the principle of representation, but reconciles it with the direct populist-Bonapartist approach of referring to the people”.¹⁸ In 1964 de Gaulle proclaimed: “Indivisible authority of the State is wholly entrusted to the President by the people who elected him”, and “it is he who has the final say”.

De Gaullism, being presidentialism, represents strong personal authority with huge influence of the Republic President manifested in the policy of preservation/protection and promotion of French tradition, strengthening of the national and cultural (European) identity, i.e. improvement of the position of the French nation in Europe, all this without undermining civil liberties during that process. In foreign policy, however, the controversialism of French diplomacy is reflected in its Europhilic attitude which, from a populist position, calls for the removal of the influence of the Atlantic element on European culture. This culminated in the 1960s with the “empty chair crisis” and the withdrawal of France from NATO. De Gaullism, by rebuilding the authority of the state, in fact, merges the French Catholic “right” tradition and the tradition of the French socialistic left with the emphasis being placed on the axiology of citizenry principles. De Gaullism, as a form social populism, represents one of the most authentic marks of French political culture and it has also left a trace on the presidencies of de Gaulle’s successors. France, now as a member of NATO and the European Union, is still searching for a consensual political position regarding its attitude towards globalization, asylum seekers, the European Constitution, further expansion of the European Union etc.

Populism in Postmodern Politics

The globalization process today ranges from globalution, as a form of “external pressure” for the sociological-cultural polyphony of various

¹⁸ Yves Meny in: Anđelko Milardović, *Populizam i globalizacija*, Centar za politološka istraživanja, Zagreb, 2004., p. 35.

social nucleuses to be unified in the widest context, to glocalization, which translates the global to the local, more understandable language and protects the authenticity of the referent cultural community. The openness of European borders has allowed greater mobility of people from different countries and common participation in the European Union project. Migration waves have caused two kinds of problems: economic agility of a system to absorb a large number of immigrants from less developed, peripheral societies and their ability to culturally integrate into developed political systems. With the arrival of new population into economically more advanced societies, a review of democratic political orientations towards immigrants is taking place in Euro-Atlantic political systems. As a reaction to the “theft of jobs” phenomenon, the number of right-wing political is increasing in Europe. The threat of “foreignization” creates a wave of right-wing xenophobia. In that respect the “exit view of Hannah Arendt that stateless people, refugees and the disenfranchised would represent the decisive trait of the present day has turned out chillingly correct”.¹⁹ As a reaction to the postmodernist crisis, populist political parties are being formed in France (The National Front), Austria (The Freedom Party), Italy (The Northern League, the National Alliance), Belgium (the Flemish Bloc), Switzerland (The National Party). These parties bring to the open the problem of tensions between European citizenry and national identity, i.e. coexistence of diversity and pureness of the national element. In that respect S. Žižek observes that the word worker has disappeared from the political vocabulary and that it has been replaced or pushed aside by the word immigrant (Algerians in France, Turks in Germany, Mexicans in the US), which turns the class issue of worker exploitation into a multiculturalistic issue of intolerance towards Otherness.²⁰ Namely, populism skillfully uses the shortcomings of parliamentary democracy reducing the cunning of mind to simplified impressionist-communicative sequences in political demagoguery: those who are against populism are against the people. In practice, populism reduces the open political mind to cynicism towards political position discreditation of political pluralism. In the postmodern political culture

¹⁹ Slobodan Divjak, *Nacija, kultura, građanstvo*, Javno preduzeće Službeni list, Beograd, 2002, p. 42.

²⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *Prema politici istine: Povratak Lenjina*, internet

of neo-liberal democratic capitalism, populism finds its foundations in anti-capitalism, anti-modernization and anti-megalopolization movements. In essence, these are political entities that shape their political-ideological programs on conservative, traditional-customary axioms, including xenophobia, by emphasizing negative effects of globalization processes which culminate in a global economic crisis, drop in living standards, growing crime rate and existential insecurity in the society.

However, unlike relatively homogenous populist impulses in political cultures of central and southern European countries, which marginalize the work of parliamentary democracy institutions, political attributions of populism in the developed social-democratic north of Europe do not represent a negation of the social-democratic context, rather they become an exemplum of progressive socio-economic trends theologically focused on the elevation of the standard of living, ensuring a balance between the central and local authorities, i.e. the simultaneous development and strengthening of the state and local self-government units. Basically, the populist potential, on the internal political stage, is released and directed towards social development and efforts for providing social security. However, negative political views concerning immigration (in Sweden and Norway for example) show that not even the social-democratic north of Europe is immune from negative political attitudes towards potential socio-economic threats from uncontrollable migrations and cultural assimilations.

To summarize: even though the axiological wealth of European liberal-democratic political culture, from a theoretical point of view, reflects the development of the principles of freedom, tolerance, coexistence, multiculturalism in a rational-enlightenmentalist discourse, a partial transformation occurs, on the backdrop of negative dialectics, in the context of global social developments and changes, which introduces into political practice the issue of social migrations and internal structural changes to the socio-economical and cultural code as consequences of immigration policies. Populism thus gains its credibility as an element standing in the defense of traditional values, as well as an opportunity to actively participate in the co-shaping of political life. Negative effects of globalization, in fact, serve as arguments for populist political rhetoric aimed at discrediting the work of mainstream politics and legislative and executive institutions in parliamentary democracies. That populist

attributions lack a homogenous structure is visible from their polysemy in the social-democratic north of Europe. Despite the fact that even those populist parties are not immune from the negative populist connotations, evident in their positions towards asylum seekers and migrants (foreign policy discourse), they, unlike those in central and southern Europe, are trying in public discourse to achieve a balance of strong democratic central authorities and strong social security for the population at the local level (internal policy discourse).

The postmodernist context of populism in political culture is especially important in the interaction of the media and political rhetoric/demagogy. The influence of the media on political culture is reflected in the formation of political views, political orientations and values. The way we view society, i.e. the way the perception of the society has been formed by the media is much more important than its real structure and distribution of power and resources. According to A. Heywood “perception can not only be more important from reality, but it can practically be reality. Consequently, the key role of what we call political culture is being emphasized. The beliefs of people, symbols and values simultaneously shape their attitude towards the political process and, more importantly, towards the regime they live in – especially whether they consider the regime legitimate, i.e. illegitimate”.²¹ Representative of the Dependence Theory Keplinger thinks that “the media have a key role in political processes, because they not only comment on and criticize political decisions, but also prepare them through their reporting. The media define the framework in which those decisions are considered acceptable and capable of compromise, i.e. the media, the way they see it, have a significant influence on the legitimacy and implementation of political decisions”.²² Michael Kunzik thinks that the “necessity of capturing media attention has caused the mediatization of politics, the stigmatization of everything that is in a bad shape and moralization on that matter, all of which has resulted in the trivialization of politics”.²³

²¹ Andrew Heywood, *Politika*, Clio, Beograd, 2004., p. 379.

²² Michael Kunzik/Astrid Zipfel, *Uvod u znanost o medijima i komunikologiju*, Zaklada Friedrich Ebert, Zagreb, 2006, p. 59.

²³ *Ibidem.*, p. 64.

Berlusconism represents an explicit example in European politics. In the early 1990s Silvio Berlusconi enters politics as a successful businessman and owner of AC Milan football club building an image of a “man from the people for the people” and using simplified, yet extremely effective negative rhetoric towards the political establishment. The control of mass media and the introduction of the concept of telecracy in the form of videocracy achieves the effect of visualizing the public space in the private space, thus creating a sense of directness, closeness, of an emotional relationship between the political leader and the voters, and through that stronger social homogeneity of the electorate. According to E. Zgodic, marginalization of representative democracy institutions, i.e. the taking of sense out of parliamentary democracy itself, is one of the consequences of telecracy.²⁴ In his research of Berlusconism D. Grubisa highlights three basic characteristics:

1. radical populism and manipulation of the public through the use of mass media;
2. authoritarian rule with the leader having possession of the legal levers necessary for justifying his political actions, i.e. legalization of corruption through legislative practice;
3. personalization of politics, i.e. changes to the constitution which will strengthen the position of the Prime Minister in relation to the Republic President to such an extent that the Prime Minister will be able to dismiss the Government.²⁵

In such a case the state is viewed as a capital-profit company, i.e. the Prime Minister represents a successful political entrepreneur who manages a company. The Forza Italia political party was not formed according to conventional models of political parties with bureaucratic networks, instead key positions were given to individuals who would implement decisions of the party leader and show unconditional obedience. The process of privatizing public services is being implemented in the same way, which, in fact, condenses and disperses political power from one position giving it its personal-psychological profile.

²⁴ Esad Zgodić, *Multiverzum vladi: za novu kratologiju*, Fakultet političkih nauka, Sarajevo, 2009., p. 491.

²⁵ See more in Damir Grubeša, *Berluskonizam: talijanski politički dossier: 2001.-2006.*, Adamić, Rijeka, 2007.

According to Pierre Musso: Berlusconi builds an image of the future which the majority can immediately accept and then transforms into the leader of that collective dream. Berlusconi sets the reference value (dreamed and beloved Italy) and declares himself its living embodiment”.²⁶

The mediatization of democratic populism politics places public activity into the virtual sphere of images, beliefs and passions. The practice of emotionalization and intimization of political activities can be seen in populist political culture, i.e. the affective-conative elements which produce authoritarianism, loyalty and give political legitimacy to the authorities. Politics, as P. Bourdieu stresses, is read as a “popular science magazine or a high-class magazine, available and understandable to all”.²⁷

The karyokinesis of populism has been made possible by the use of politics in an entertaining, popular, sensationalistic way, which has made it easily understandable and accessible to all, transforming it, as Bourdieu put it, into a “rational demagogy” with the aim of making the field of politics even more closed, establishing a direct relationship with the voters, without mediation, which would leave individual and collective players (parties or unions) who have a mandate confirmed by society to draft and propose formal solutions out of the game.²⁸ Political information receive a label of marketing-propaganda and a personal signature of the politician of whom the populist mentality wishes to know more and enjoy in every piece of his or her privacy and personal life. Pierre Musso describes Berlusconi as an “industrial with a smile, inspired by the model of a neo-television host. . . The cult of the smile is one of the signs of television and managerial training of an ideal body, a young, athletic, happy, winning body. . .”²⁹ In a comparative discourse, the same elements of populist culture can be seen during the elections for the US President with the personality of the candidate being given central focus, while the program of the political party is marginalized.

In brief: we find the key for identifying populism in postmodern political culture (with the exception of the social democratic north of

²⁶ Pierre Musso, quoted in Nermina Šaćić : *Medijsko lišavanje smisla*“, „Zeničke sveske-časopis za fenomenologiju i kulturnu dijalogiku, broj: 06/07, decembar 2007, p. 183.

²⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Narcisovo ogledalo*, Clio, Beograd, 2000., p. 102.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 104-105.

²⁹ Pierre Musso cited in: Nermina Šaćić: *Medijsko lišavanje smisla*“, p. 183.

Europe!) in the combination of mass media and political charisma at times of prolonged crisis in the functioning of parliamentary democracy institutions and crisis of confidence in those institutions (European political systems), i.e. in the creation of mass euphoria and media spectacle on the Ancient Roman template of “bread and circuses” (American political system). According to David Paletz and Robert Entman the “general impact of the mass media is to socialize people into accepting the legitimacy of their country’s political system (...) direct their opinions in ways which do not undermine and often support the domestic and foreign objectives of elites (...) and deter them from active, meaningful participation in politics”. Populism built on the combination of the European and American populist template, which perverts democratic political culture into an ethno-populist model, can be seen in today’s Russia and countries in transition in central and eastern Europe.

Reevaluation of the Populist Potential in the Political Culture of EU Member States

In his research of the phenomenon of populism Klaus von Beyme concludes that it emerges in modern conditions as a response to the processes of globalization and Europeanization expressed in the populist slogan “Europe, Yes – EU, No”.³⁰

The postmodern discourse of modern politics in the EU especially highlights the following issues around which populist tendencies of right wing parties in the European Parliament gravitate and which hint what Euro-Atlantic foreign policy and multilateral relations between existing members states will focus on in the future:

- a) the issue of European citizenry and the adoption of the European Constitution;
- b) Turkish accession to the EU;
- c) accession of new members from East Europe and the Western Balkans.

According T. Ziljak, the opening of the discussion on the principles of European Citizenry, promoted by the treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam

³⁰ Klaus von Beyme, *Populism and Right Wing Extremism in Modern Democracies*, Populism in Central Europe, Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 2007., p. 28.

and Nice, indicates that besides positive there are also negative (critical) trends important for the political fluctuation of the populist mentality in the European Union. These include:

1. weakening of the internal agreement between political parties, i.e. the ability to draw together and maintain unity between citizenry and political parties;
2. weakening of intergenerational loyalty in political parties and weakening of national identification among those born in the post-war period in Western Europe and the US;
3. weakening of intergenerational social trust with consequences extended to social trust, national identification and voter involvement;
4. public cynicism and dissatisfaction with the government and policies;
5. conflicts between different cultures and a policy creating animosities between citizens and anger against the government;
6. legitimization problems and crises.³¹

The basic argument of populist rhetoric is that the European integration project is elitist in character, i.e. that it has been led by the elites.³²

The wide spectrum of conditions, commitments and ways of participation of national states in the European Union is embodied in the administrative documents passed by European institutions (centralization and bureaucratization of Europe), which indicates that the entire project is structured from “above”, without direct participation and influence of the European citizenry in the decision making process, except for the possibility to elect members of the European Parliament. The rejection of the European Constitution at referendums held in France and the Netherlands in 2005 showed that the process of transferring loyalties of European citizens from national to supranational institutional had still not matured politically.

In a broader context the tension between European citizenry and national identity in the populist discourse has intensified Euroscepticism,

³¹ Tihomir Žiljak, Načelo građanstva i obrazovanje odraslih, *Politička misao*, vol XXIX, br. 1, Zagreb, 2002., p. 110.

³² Ben Rosamond in: Grupa autora, *Uvod u politologiju, Politička kultura*, Zagreb, 2002., p. 95.

especially in “North European countries – Great Britain, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. Among non-member states, Euroscepticism is strong in Switzerland and Norway, which have refused to join the EU”.³³

According to Albena Azmanova four trends have shaped the political environment in Europe since the elections for the European Parliament in 1999: “The centre-right has become the dominant political formation on the continent, far-right populism has established its lasting presence, electoral support to the radical-left is diminishing, and support to the centre-left is faltering”.³⁴ Changes in voter preferences during elections for the European Parliament in 2004 and 2009 are shown in the table below:³⁵

<i>Political Group</i>	<i>Parties</i>	<i>Number of seats 2004: 2009</i>
	European People's Party– European Democrats	277 : 265
Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats	Party of European Socialists	218 : 184
Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party European Democratic Party 2 national parties	105 : 84
Alliance for the Europe of Nations	Alliance for the Europe of Nations EU Democrats (part) 3 national parties	44 : 54
Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	European Greens Party European Free Alliance 1 national party	42 : 55

³³ Zekerijah Smajić, *Evropska unija za svakoga*, Eurokontakt, Sarajevo, 2005., p. 100.

³⁴ Albena Azmanova cited in: Irena Gluhčić, *Fenomen euroskepticizma u Francuskoj*, *Politička misao*, Vol. XLV, br. 3-4., Zagreb, 2008., p. 191.

³⁵ Sources: for results of the election for the European Parliament in 2004 see: European Union-institutions, legal system and decision making, http://www.pravo.hr/_download/repository/i, and for the 2009 election see: Results of the 2009 European Election, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parlament/archive/elections_2009/en/index_en.html

<i>Political Group</i>	<i>Parties</i>	<i>Number of seats 2004: 2009</i>
Confederated Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left	European Left Party Nordic Green Left Alliance 5 national parties	41 : 35
Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group	Alliance of Independent Democrats in Europe EU Democrats (part) 3 national parties	23 : 32
Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty Group ³⁶	Euronat 5 national parties	21 : 0%
Non-attached		14 : 27
Total		785 : 736

In his analysis of results of the 2009 European Parliament elections A. Miloradovic stressed that besides the victory of the political right, the elections have also shown the emergence of a new group formed as the successor of the Democratic Alliance for the Europe of Nations under the name Europe of Freedom and Democracy. This group stands for radical Euroscepticism, regionalism, national conservatism and right populism, i.e. the protection of European borders, European tradition, culture and identity.³⁷

The dominant issue of the Eurosceptic view is the fear of losing national sovereignty as a result of market liberalization and increased freedom of movement (immigration). Youth right-wing extremism appears as a reaction to the crisis of capitalistic values and the crisis of identity, rising unemployment and a sense of physical insecurity following the September 11 terrorist attacks. Political rhetoric in Western democracies following September 11 elevates, through media attention, the problem of terrorism above the level of daily-political reactions of the public and, using fear as a basis, heightens social awareness on its presence in everyday life and thus influences the political behavior and attitudes of citizens towards persons, countries and, in a wider context, cultures out of which terrorism spreads. The message they implicitly send out is that

³⁶ Euronat was formed in 2005, but following the withdrawal of five Romanian representatives and the reduction of the number of Coalition members to 18 representatives, the Coalition fell apart in 2007 since it needed to have a minimum of 20 members from six different countries.

³⁷ Anđelko Milardović, Euroskeptici u parlamentu, <http://www.vjesnik.com/html/2009/07/10/clanak.asp>

the world which has a different faith, in which aggressive fundamentalism originates and from which terrorism spreads, is a world that is not free. This unjustifiably equates religion with fundamentalism, i.e. wipes out the basic meaning of both words, and produces negative emotional charges and fear of “Christian Europeans” from the “non-Christians” who often take the public stage in protests against the infidels by chanting slogans and humiliating symbols of the cultural-civilizational setting they belong to.

In Euro-Atlantic political cultures this affects the formation, differentiation and reduction of the political-social perception of the Western and Eastern cultures into binary systems of value: individual-collective, antifoundationalistic – foundationalistic; tolerant – intolerant; open – closed; freedom - lack of it; pacifism - aggressiveness/terrorism. Besides the oppositions mentioned above, populist parties, when discussing the inclusion of Turkey into the European Union, also raise the following arguments which serve as a basis for adopting a negative political attitude towards this issue:

- a) demographic factor: Due to the fact that Turkey has the fastest growing population in Europe it is realistic to expect that its accession to the European Union could have a massive affect on the shaping of multilateral relations, because votes in the Council of Ministers primarily depend on the size of the population of every individual country;
- b) European identity: even though Turkey is a secular country, the issue of cultural influences, interactions, contacts and consequences on the Judeo-Christian discourse of European civilization remains a contentious one, and this is something that can be easily instrumentalised for political purposes by populist parties advocating organic unity of the nation and traditionalism, thus supporting/maintaining fear from the loss of national identity and cultural cohesiveness of the European society, i.e. creating a sense of anxiety and insecurity posed by the infiltration of foreign elements.
- c) political borders: accession of Turkey to the European Union would move its borders to Iraq, Iran, Syria, Georgia and Armenia, which could have a more direct impact on Euro-Atlantic policy in terms of diplomatic and military involvement in conflicts in the Middle East, i.e. legitimate justification for direct political engagement

in these areas to prevent these conflicts from spilling over into the European Union;

- d) issue of structural and cohesive support: the majority of the workforce in Turkey is employed in the agricultural sector, and considering the fact that most funds from the European budget are directed towards the development of agriculture, rural development and structural funds, it is widely believed that the additional budget strains caused by the accession of Turkey would lead to the transformation of the character of European integration.³⁸

Furthermore, political arrogance can also be seen on the issue of accession of Western

Balkan states and it is supposedly caused by concern that the process of Balkanization could be transferred to organized European societies. As a long-term result of the incomplete integration of Balkan societies, the economic-social crisis in the European Union could continue to deepen if adequate models are not found for a balanced development of differential national economies and their positive contribution to the overall development of the European integration project.

In brief: further enlargement of the European Union, especially accession of Turkey, will clear more space for political reconsideration towards structural modification of the European integration process, but it will also raise the issue of necessity of institutional reengineering and the sufficiency of economic and democratic capacities for overcoming populist political oscillations in the European Parliament and the individual member states. Europe has a long tradition of openness, tolerance, multiculturalism and liberal democracy, its ideology has overcome periods of great political and social crises, and this has given the European-integration project, despite the undemocratic, authoritarian, populist political tendencies, a progressive developmental potential, which is vital in a rational-critical, humanistic-emancipationist discourse.

5. Conclusion

The emergence of populist political culture is visible at times of significant socio-economic and political changes in the context of institutional

³⁸ Približavanje Turske Evropskoj uniji, <http://www.imo.hr/europa/publics/euroscope>

insufficiency and irresponsiveness of mainstream politics. Populist pulses of Modernism and Postmodernism plausibly emphasize how easily democracy can slip towards authoritarian discourse, how public space can be banalized and how the rational-critical and the spirit of enlightenmentism can collapse at times of existential crisis, while deliverance is sought in the shape of charismatic national saviors. The populist discourse is simplified, straightforward, direct and emotionally stimulating with no quarters left to rational interpretations and revisions of the presented content and as a result it is antagonistic to all forms of intellectual and critical activities, which require mental effort and disqualification of irrational explanations of the problem at hand. Populist mechanisms do not offer realistic solutions, redeeming formulas for societies in serious socio-economic troubles, but rely on discrediting rhetoric and constant suspicion of those in power, i.e. those who participate in the decision making process (populism “from the ground up” – method of winning power of the political opposition), i.e. create political commotion and an artificial sense of discomfort and insecurity from the magnitude of change that would ensue in the event of the verification of certain hypothetic anticipations (negative consequences of some futuristic development of the European Union), or inspire hope and prolong the illusion of a relaxed, entertaining, successful and progressive political figure, the only one competent for achieving progressive social developments and a positive national image, for example in Italy and the US (populism “from the top” – the technique of staying in power). However, in both cases we are dealing with unliberal and undemocratic tendencies of marginalization of parliamentary democracy and political pluralism, and it is therefore necessary, in a humanistic – emancipationist discourse of liberal-democratic political culture, to persevere with even greater firmness in order to ensure that the populist mentality is transformed into an active, democratic, mature and responsible conscience towards the present state of affairs, changes and political-social crises which the future may hold in store.

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