

Populism in the Balkans. The Case of Serbia¹

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to comment on and test of applicability of Paul Taggart's features approach to the realities of Serbian politics. The text will focus on those political parties founded at the beginning of the 1990s which have maintained their position in the party system up to the present (Serbian Radical Party, Socialist Party of Serbia, Democratic Party of Serbia, Democratic Party and Serbian Renewal Movement). The authors conclude that the concept of populism remains blurred and can only be applied with difficulty.

Keywords: Democratic Party, Democratic Party of Serbia, Populism, Serbia, Serbian Radical Party, Serbian Renewal Movement, Socialist Party of Serbia

Introduction

Populism is a phenomenon which may be understood in many ways. It entails differing concepts and approaches, with different authors emphasizing various factors linked to populism. One might ask whether there is some common base on which these varied concepts of populism are founded. It should be noted that the term populism need not necessarily be perceived as usually suggested, and that the term populism may be used in order to describe the political situation in a neutral manner. Populism has been extensively investigated in the area of Western Europe, while Central and Eastern European research has focused primarily on Russia and Central Europe, neglecting the rest. The authors have thus decided to centre attention on populism in the Balkans, and to focus on one of the central players in the Balkans arena – Serbia.

As regards the Serbian political scene, most currently relevant political parties in Serbia were founded during the period from 1989–1992. The most important party during the 1990s was the Serbian Socialist Party (SPS), which led throughout the period from its founding in July

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1990³ by Slobodan Milošević. After his passing, Ivica Dačić was elected president of the party. The strongest political party currently, which sat in the government coalition during certain periods together with SPS, is the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). The party has been led since its inception in 1992 by Vojislav Šešelj; the party has been formally led by Tomislav Nikolić since the indictment of Šešelj by the International Crime Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). One of the chief political parties opposing the Milošević regime was the Democratic Party (DS), which has been led since 1994 by the pro-Western Zoran Djindjić. The difference of personal opinions about the future of Serbia caused the nationalist wing to split from DS in 1992 and create the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), led since that time by Vojislav Koštunica. Another important opposition party during the Milošević regime was the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) of Vuk Drašković. The party wishes to restore the monarchy, and frequently uses nationalist rhetoric. One faction of SPO, led by Velimir Ilić, split to create New Serbia (NS) in 1997. This party has been in coalition both with SPO and more recently with DSS. Another party which is quite new is G17+, created from an economic think-tank in 2002. Last but not least, one must note the minor political parties which succeeded in the 2007 and 2008 elections: Civil Union of Serbia (GSS)⁴, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Social Democratic Union (SDU) and League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV).

For purposes of this text, parties founded in the beginning of the 1990s which have retained their position in the party system until the present will be taken into account. The text will therefore focus on the programmes of these political parties: SPS, SRS, SPO, DSS and DS. The political programmes of the parties will be used as primary sources, accompanied by party publications, promotional leaflets and media interviews. The aim of this article is to present the populist concept of Paul Taggart (Taggart 2002) and examine it in the reality of Serbian party system. Political observers often label most Serbian political parties as “populist”. However may this really be said about all political parties in the spectrum or does it represent a simplification of the present world which makes things ambiguous? What means do Serbian political parties use in order to gain support? Is it possible to find an acceptable concept of populism? Is Taggart’s concept of populism applicable? In this article, we will try to find answers to these questions while focusing on Serbian political parties.

³ The Union of Serbian Communists and the Socialist Union of Serbian Workers came together to create SPS.

⁴ The party merged with LDP in April 2007.

1. Populism – main features and characteristics

Populism has become a trendy concept and, as such, it forms the core of a significant amount of research. This in spite of the fact that the concept as a whole has not yet been fully elaborated or, better to say, there is no common consensus about the concept. It remains blurred and vague. Basically, there are two main approaches to the conceptualisation of populism as summed up by De Raadt, Hollanders and Krouwel (2004). Under the first, populism is considered to be a political tactic or strategy; in the second, populism is understood as an ideology. De Raadt, Hollanders and Krouwel emphasize the second approach; they consider populism an ideology based upon “hostility” to representative democracy. Understanding populism as a political style or tactic means admitting that all political parties may “sometimes” behave in a populist manner (Mudde 2002 based on de Raadt et al. 1998).

The degree of populism may be analyzed by a suitable selection of “populist characteristics”. Canovan (1999) uses a minimalist definition to describe populism as a kind of revolt against established structures (elites) in the name of (the) people. The type of revolt depends upon its target. According to Canovan the revolt is led not only against those who are in power, but also against values of those elites. Populism is characterized by one authority, which is the people; it depends on a situation of populist rhetoric about “united people” or just “our people”. In describing a populism political style, Canovan speaks of a simple, direct style. Populists formulate problems and issues very simply and their solutions are also very simple and very understandable to “everyone”. Canovan then uses a very important term, the “populist mood”, whose contents include emotions, populist enthusiasm, populist efforts to include not only people interested in politics but those who are not involved in the politics of their countries as well, a revivalist accent and, of course, the importance of a charismatic leader. Populists personalise leadership very strongly, and the leader is the channel of communication with public.

Paul Taggart found other characteristics bundled to populism and created a concept based on six features. His first indicator of populism is **hostility towards representative politics**, against the established structures, elites and their values (Taggart 2004: 66). This feature is present in most conceptualisation of populism – e.g., Canovan includes media and academicians in the established structures (Canovan 1999). The second reason to be “against” is that populists draw a strong distinction between the “pure people” and the “corrupted elite” (established structures). This is the only “cleavage” populists see within society (Mudde 2002, 2004). Based on this hostility, populists call for forms of direct democracy: referendums, direct elections, consultations, etc. (de Raadt, Hollanders, Krouwel 2004).

The second indicator as presented by Paul Taggart is the **heartland and the people**, where “the heartland represents an idealised conception of the community they serve” (Taggart 2004: 67). This feature is repeatedly observed in the research of other political scientists – populists speak in the name of “the people”, they act in the name of “the people”, and they make decisions in the name of “the people”. “The people” is the highest authority to which reference is made by populists. “The people” is considered to be a homogenized mass of “ordinary man”. (de Raadt, Hollanders, Krouwel 2004)

As the third characteristic, Taggart isolates a **lack of core values** “which stems from the importance of the heartland, from where core values are derived”. Taggart argues that populism reacts against elites and institutions, and since the nature of these varies, the values advocated are derived from sources other than populism. (Taggart 2004: 68)

The fourth theme is reaction to a **sense of extreme crisis**. “Populism is not the politics of the stable, ordered polity but emerges as an accompaniment to change, crisis and challenge.” (Taggart 2004: 69) The greater the political upheaval, the greater populism which emerges.

The fifth theme is the **non-political nature of populist movements and the role of a charismatic leader**. The role of charismatic leader means that the formation (a party, or better a movement) is built around the charisma of this person. A charismatic leader is a person who articulates demands and communicates “directly” to “the people”. The strong leadership role implies serious problems with a change in the post of leader. The problem of successors signifies a factor due to which we may speak about, in the words of Taggart (2004), the “episodic nature” of populism, or the populist movement.

The final indicator is that of populism’s **chameleonic nature**, as populists change in dependence on the context and reality in which they exist. The contextual attributes of populism tend to spill over into the form taken by populism. This is not to say that they hide the “real” nature of populism, but that populism is *de facto* constrained by its context. (Taggart 2004: 71)

2. Populism in Serbian party manifestos

2.1 Hostility towards representative politics, revolt against the established structures

The revolt against the established structures in Serbia has two dimensions: an internal and an external. Until the end of Milošević era, the external dimension was far more important. The SPS leader and former president of Serbia and former president of Yugoslavia was using populist means against the international established structures – EU, NATO, OSCE, which were presented as enemies of the Serbian nation: *“The international organisations are interfering in internal*

affairs. The new world order has an imperialistic character, and its principle is the dominance of West over South and East. The main argument is power and Yugoslavia is one of the first victims of this New World Order.” (Socialistička partija Srbije 1992: art. 9.2) The internal dimension was actualized during the Milošević era from time to time by the SRS – depending upon whether the Šešelj party was part of the SPS government or in the opposition, and of course by the *democratic opposition*.

The situation after 2000 is very similar; **the external dimension** is the relation of Serbia towards the outside world or to be precise with NATO and ICTY while the internal dimension is the revolt against the new internal structures. Relations towards the outside world are not only employed in a populous manner, but it may be said, create a cleavage in Serbian society: FOR and AGAINST cooperation with the international community.⁵

The **Serbian Radical Party** does not mention the ICTY in its programme; however its stance towards the ICTY is quite clear. One of the latest publications of the party is called “Either Carla’s Witness or Death” (*Ili Karlin svedok ili smrt*) and basically the publication tries to convince the reader that the people indicted by the ICTY are tortured in prison so they tell “the truth”. The cover of the book has a photo of the former chief prosecutor of the ICTY, Carla del Ponte, depicted as a vampire. Another motto usually used in this relation is “Everything that has some value is sitting in The Hague” (*Sve šta vredi u Hagu sedi*).

The **Socialist Party of Serbia** sees the ICTY as a “political and not independent institution formed with the aim to punish and satanize the Serbian nation. Cooperation with the ICTY is a big burden and we must take care of state and national dignity. The crimes must be individualized and it must be secured that the nation and state will not be labelled through manipulation and falsification as protagonists of genocide. The trial of Slobodan Milošević shows inequality, selective truth and infringement of international laws, so the credibility of this institution is called into question.” (Socialistička partija Srbije 2006: 11-12) The programme declaration from the 4th SPS congress attacks the European leftist parties who supported “*genocidal NATO aggression. The KFOR and UNMIK missions are mere instruments to accomplish the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo of Serbs, Montenegrins and other non-Albanian inhabitants.*” (Socialistička partija Srbije 2000: art. 15)

⁵ The SPS and SRS are against cooperation with ICTY. SPO, NS and DSS are somewhere in the middle, talking on the one hand about ICTY as a political institution, and on the other hand about the need to cooperate. The moderate group (DS, G17+, LDP, LDV and SDU) talks about national reconciliation, the need to look at and deal with the past and about the need to cooperate with the ICTY. The most pro-ICTY is the LDP, which openly talks about the genocide committed by the Serbs.

The **Serbian Renewal Movement** strives for the future of Serbia and not for digging into the past, because there is a risk that *“we would make again the mistakes of the previous regime, which would cause conflicts and leave Serbia in the narrowest borders on the periphery of Europe and the Balkans”* (Srpski pokret obnove 2001: 7).

The **Democratic Party of Serbia** is quite critical towards the ICTY and states that *“even though the ICTY is more of a political rather than a legal institution and it is easy to transform it into the instrument of the political powers, cooperation with the Tribunal presents an obligation we can not dispose of”*. However, DSS states that cooperation with Hague has to be legally regulated and should be done with national dignity. (Demokratska stranka Srbije 2005b: 6)

The **Democratic Party** wants to fully cooperate with the ICTY and is ready to deal with the crimes of the past. The programme deals mainly with integration into the EU, however it mentions Euro Atlantic structures as a whole and the need for compromise in the Kosovo issue.

The internal dimension is obviously actualized by the opposition parties. In its program, the **Socialist Party of Serbia** attacks the post-Milošević regime, claiming that the regime represents a confluence of politics with the mafia. *“We kept an eye on the Serbian transition for ten years and those who came after us only succeeded in six years to create great social differences in the society, unemployment and poverty...The army of poor and unemployed lives in fear and without hope.”* (Socialistička partija Srbije 2006: 3) **The Serbian Radical Party** does not really attack the current regime in its programme. However, the monthly journal of the party *Velika Srbija* (Great Serbia) regularly attacks the current government and portrays its members as traitors collaborating with external enemies, selling Serbian dignity, Serbian lands and listening to external insinuations.

As may be seen, the feature of hostility towards the representative and against the established structures is very specific in the case of Serbia. The internal dimension of Serbian populism is not applicable till the end of Milošević era, so till the upheaval in 2000. Since then, the opposition parties have been using anti-elite logic in order to attract voters. The external dimension is prevalent in the parties' documents. The question arises to as to whether this may really be labelled populism in the specific case of Serbia, or whether it is a result of the wartime conflicts of the 1990s and the loss of territory. With the same situation not be apparent in any other post-conflict country which had lost all its wars?⁶ Therefore, the only relevant dimension seems to be the internal dimension. Nevertheless, the only parties which show some degree of

⁶ The parties who do not stand against the internationally established structures (e.g. Civic Union of Serbia GSS which merged into the Liberal Democratic Party LDP) are present in the system, though are not making a majority.

hostility towards the representative structures are those in opposition. Does that imply that the opposition parties tend to use populist means?

2.2 The heartland and the people

For the **Socialist Party of Serbia**, the people means not only Serbs or Serbs and their allies, but mainly everyday people – workers and peasants. SPS has not bothered to adapt to the new post-cold war situation and has not changed its lexicon at all. Therefore proletariat, bourgeoisie, the heroism of inhabitants and newly, of course, the protection of the nation against the new mafia regime are all in its programme: “*We are the party of people who work in order to live, we are the party of people who love their country, we are the antiglobalist party, we are the antifascist party, and we are Socialist party of Serbia!*” (Socialistička partija Srbije 2006: 9) Unlike in other cases, people are not explicitly tied to a nation but rather to a level of social strata.

The synonym for the people in the programme of **Serbian Radical Party** could be the Serbian nation. SRS strives for the unification of all Serbian territories and protection of all Serbs, therefore the unification of Serbia, Republika Srpska⁷, Republika Srpska Krajina⁸, Montenegro (SRS does not talk about a Montenegrin nation), of course Kosovo, and if Macedonia wished it could be part as well. (The Macedonian nation was recognized by the Serbian side only after WWII; before that time, Macedonians were perceived by the Serbian side as Serbs.) One of the newest books of SRS is called “Roman-catholic Serbs so called Croats” (*Srbi rimokatolici takozvani Hrvati*) where the existence of the Croatian nation is denied. It would therefore be no wonder if the SRS once wanted unification with the whole of Croatia.⁹ Some radicals go even further and claim that once Serbs lived in the territory of Romania, therefore Greater Serbia should encompass Romania as well.¹⁰ A very nice example (out of thousands) may be found in Šešelj’s book: Hunting the Heretic (*Hajka na Jeretika*) where Šešelj says that Slovenes have no right to secede due to the fact that there is no precedent for a sovereign independent Slovenian state in

⁷ Republika Srpska is, along with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁸ Republika Srpska Krajina was a self-declared state, recognized by no other state, in the territory of Croatia during the war at the beginning of the 1990s.

⁹ The blame is usually put on the Roman-Catholic church as seen from the title of another Vojislav Šešelj book: The Roman-Catholic Criminal Project of the Skilful Croatian Nation (*Rimokatolički zločinački projekat veštačke hrvatske nacije*).

¹⁰ Conversation with the representative of government of Republika Srpska Krajina, Slobodan Jarčević, 3. 5. 2007, Belgrade. One of the latest books of Mr. Jarčević: Ex-Serbs, Roman-Catholics, Muslims, Romanians, Montenegrins (*Bivši Srbi. Rimokatolici, Muslimani, Rumuni, Crnogorci*) gives the historical reasons for Greater Serbia and explains that Croats, Bosniaks, Romanians and Montenegrins used to be Serbs in charge of ancient Illyria.

the history, blames them for having war with the Serbs and follows with: *“Well, let the Slovenes go – it will be better for them, better for us. And for us Serbs, it means a million and half fewer outraged enemies within the national borders.”* (Šešelj 2000: 917)

The rhetoric of the **Serbian Renewal Movement** is no longer as radical as it used to be in the last decade of the 20th century. The only thing which could be found in the programme is the statement that SPO is *“national party, which believes in the Serbian tradition and faith which has protected Serbian nation when it has been threatened in history”* (Srpski pokret obnove 2001: 3). The nationalistic feeling can be seen from the status of SPO when the symbol of SPO is defined as a hand with three fingers and the emblem of the SPO includes three words on the Serbian flag: S symbolizing tinder (*ocil or, ognjila*) on the national coat of arms, P symbolizing *šajkača* (a typical chetnicks hat) and O symbolizing heart and tears. Vuk Drašković also demands the rehabilitation of Dražo Mihajlovič, the WWII chetnik leader. The protection of the heartland could be depicted in a special part of the programme devoted to the territorial integrity linked with the Kosovo issue. (Srpski pokret obnove 1998: 1)

The programme of **Democratic Party of Serbia** makes reference to the sovereignty and integrity of the territory of Serbia: *“No single part of the state territory may be excerpted out of the whole, nor may it be swapped with any other country without consent of the inhabitants of the entire territory of Serbia.”* (Demokratska stranka Srbije 2005b) A beautiful example of the populism of the Democratic Party of Serbia may be found in an interview with Vojislav Koštunica from August 2000, in answer to a question about the look of his election campaign: *“Part of the campaign will be a so-called “Walking campaign” (pešačka kampanja) – direct meetings, conversations with the ordinary world... After ten years we have to show that the people who listen to the common world and come to see ordinary people do exist.”* (Vreme 2000)

The only thing to be found in the programme of the **Democratic Party** dealing with the people was the claim that after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it was not possible to create a democratic multi-ethnic state and *“that’s why the Balkan were the most tragic European region throughout the 20th century and the Serbian nation one of the most tragic of European nations”* (Demokratska Stranka 2001: 6). Otherwise the programmes talk more about the need for change in Serbian society and there is no *us and them* and not even a word about Kosovo or state integrity (cf. Demokratska stranka 2007).

As we have seen, the only pure populist party would likely be the Socialist Party of Serbia. But may we depict their arguments as populist or are their stances only those typical of socialism? Or are socialist stances by their very nature populist by definition? Another problem arises in

looking at other parties in which the feature of the heartland and the people overlap with nationalism. Is this then nationalism or populism? Is nationalism by its nature populist?

2.3 Lack of core values and negativism

In looking at the Serbian political scene, one must conclude that most political parties do have core values and that the parties do distinguish themselves according to their ideology. The **Socialist Party of Serbia** strives openly for what it calls democratic socialism, extensive social and labour policies. The core values, though, are accompanied by strong negativism. The current rhetoric of the Socialist Party of Serbia is aimed at the ICTY, accuses current government and its fight against people close to the socialist party, stands against globalization, against the dominance of international law which has not been not approved in Parliament, against fascism, against NATO aggression and against all who are humiliating the Serbian nation. (Socialistička partija Srbije 2006)

The core ideology of the **Serbian Radical Party** is represented by strong nationalism and a striving for the unification of Serbian territories. With the economy, the SRS would like to have an extensive social program which would secure the poorest and find them work. (Srpska radikalna stranka) Strong negativism is part of the nationalism and chauvinism of the party, attacking Albanians who are committing genocide against the Serbian nation, the international community which is helping them and which wants to destroy the Serbian nation, the current government – quislings cooperating with the international community, etc.

The **Democratic Party of Serbia** has very extensively elaborated a program dealing with economic as well as other issues (Demokratska stranka Srbije 2005b). The negativism is aimed against Kosovo politicians, US politics or the politicisation of the ICTY. The core of the **Serbian Renewal Movement** ideology is the installation of a parliamentary monarchy, strong traditional and conservative values. As the party is on the decline, negativism is not visible at present. One of the aims of **Democratic Party** is the integration of Serbia into the European Union, the successful transformation of the economy, etc. No negativism could be found in the programme of the party.

As we have seen, all political parties do have core values; the only problematic party is the SRS, whose core values are made up mostly of nationalism. May we then say that nationalism equals populism? The next problem arises with the Socialist Party of Serbia, which ties socialist democracy and anti-elitism directly to people against the elite. Does socialism then equal populism, as well?

2.4 Sense of extreme crisis – the Balkan wars and the emotions, simplicity, straightness

A sense of extreme crisis accompanied by emotions, simplicity and straightness were typical for the whole period of the Milošević regime. The **Socialist Party of Serbia** did not eliminate these features and its declarations remain very emotional, simple and straight. An example may be seen in the most recent programme declaration: *“Kosmet became the most ethnically clean territory in Europe after the constant terror and persecution in which Serbs, Montenegrins and other non-Albanian inhabitants remained and the return of refugees and IDPs was hindered... SPS supports the highest autonomy for Kosovo within the Serbian borders as a possible solution...”* The programme goes further and attacks: *“SPS strongly opposes the dissemination of defeatism and the creation of the image that the final solution for Kosovo has already been found, that the only option is independence and that Kosovo was lost in 1999, etc. Kosovo was defended from the aggression of Albanian terrorists and NATO and all who in Serbia support surrendering of Kosovo to the Albanian separatists support high treason as well.”* (Socialistička partija Srbije 2006: 11-12) A great opportunity for arousing emotions was the death and funeral of Slobodan Milošević. The speakers talked about their deceased leader as a national hero and labelled the representatives of western countries and the government as criminals and traitors, while the guard of honour was controversially composed of children (up to the age of 13) wearing Serbian uniforms. Simple solutions can be seen in the politics of the SPS towards high unemployment – the politics of full employment. (Socialistička partija Srbije 1992: art. 5.1)

The **Serbian Radical Party** uses the sense of extreme crisis and emotion very often. A typical example would be the broadcast of the film *The Truth (Istina)*¹¹ in Sava Centre and inviting the families of the murdered victims of the war into the session and applauding them while looking at the tears in their eyes. Simple solutions for problems may be seen in the demand for the abolition of the autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija (Srpska radikalna stranka, article 7). The Serbian Radical Party is probably the most straightforward party regarding its stance towards anything. Typical examples may be seen in the ICTY records of the Šešelj trial. The emotional and straightforward style of statement may be found in the programme of the **Serbian Renewal Movement** regarding the return of Serbian troops and the Serbian nation into Kosovo: *“The expelled Serbs will return after the army.”* (Srpski pokret obnove 2001: 6)

The simple solution of the **Democratic Party of Serbia** regarding the Kosovo issue is again the demand for the full implementation of UN Resolution UN SC 1244. *“Kosovo and Metohija, which is currently under the UN’s unwelcome protectorate forms an indivisible and integral part of our*

¹¹ The film is supposed to give the “truth” about crimes in the Balkan wars.

country... *We demand from the SC that instead of declarations it requests UNMIK and KFOR to pursue concrete steps to stop the Albanian terror.*" (Demokratska stranka Srbije 2005b: 3) Vojislav Koštunica can be straightforward as well: *"The USA has the right to support states and nations as part of its national interest but does not have the right to give something as a present which is not its property. America has to find a different way to show its support and love for the Albanians than to give them Serbian territory."* (Demokratska stranka Srbije 2007) Emotions in the **Democratic Party** could be found only in the context of the assassination of Zoran Djindjić but the party does not really use emotions when talking about the Serbian past and does not use the criminal-victim metaphor.

In looking at Serbia after 2000, one might conclude the country has been in permanent crisis – the never ending Kosovo story, Milošević and his indictment, the indicted Mladić allegedly staying in Serbia, the Djindjić assassination, etc. Emotions are usually used in the programmes when talking about the past wars and the Serbs are depicted as victims who suffered, martyrs who were killed, murdered, tortured while the other nations were committing genocide against the Serbian nation. Simplicity is usually linked to the solution of unsolvable problems such as Kosovo while straightforwardness is heard in speeches aimed at the international community or at the current political establishment. Would this never-ending sense of extreme crisis imply then that all political parties are populist (as the extreme crisis is felt against the international community and not against the internal government from the opposition)?

2.5 Non-political character and the charismatic leader

The phenomenon of **Slobodan Milošević** is quite well known and need not be described in detail. Having a communist background,¹² Milošević was elected as a President of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) in 1990 and remained in that post until his death in 2001¹³. From 1989 he was served in the posts of President of Socialist Republic of Serbia, President of the Republic of Serbia and President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, respectively. Following his defeat in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's presidential election of September 2000, Milošević relinquished his position on 6 October 2000 and half-year later, on 28 June 2001, was sent to The Hague. The current leader of the SPS, Iвица Dačić, is behind the success of the Socialist Party in the 2008 elections. The SPS won the electoral race and may choose with which side (nationalist

¹² In 1959, Milošević joined the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, in 1986 was elected Chairman of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia and re-elected in 1988.

¹³ Except during the period 24 May 1991 – 24 October 1992.

or pro European) it wishes to ally. Dačić became known for his statements that Milošević did not die but was killed in prison in The Hague.

There is no doubt about the charisma of the SRS leader, **Vojislav Šešelj**. Symptomatic is that the people around him keep collecting and publishing everything he says in public in his name, therefore the CV of Vojislav Šešelj includes an enormous number of publications. Similar to Milošević, Šešelj has a law background and has been leading his party from its foundation until the present. Since his departure for The Hague, the party has elected a second leader to replace Šešelj while he is there – Tomislav Nikolić. The charisma of the SRS leader is clearly seen when looking at the ICTY records from the trial.

Vojislav Koštunica, the leader of Democratic Party of Serbia, again with a legal background has also been in the leadership of the DSS again since its inception. In 2000 Koštunica was elected President of the Republic of Serbia and since 2003 has been prime minister of the country. He is probably the strongest person in the governmental coalition and can obtain anything he wants. Since the assassination of Zoran Djindjić¹⁴ he has no real strong charismatic and relevant opponent on the democratic side to criticize him.

The leader of the Serbian Renewal Movement **Vuk Drašković** is a lawyer, writer and once again has been in the leadership of the party since its beginning. During the Milošević era, Drašković and his charismatic wife were many times imprisoned and a couple of times he became the object of an assassination attempt¹⁵, as well. The nationalism of Drašković is no longer as strong as it was in the final decade of the last century. SPO was initially founded not only by Drašković but by one of his best friends Šešelj, as well. However, because two strong personalities cannot lead a single party, Šešelj left and founded SRS one year later. Their friendship was preserved, as we may glean from the fact that Drašković is sometimes asked to review Šešelj's books¹⁶.

When talking about charismatic leaders related to the Democratic Party, one must not forget the most exceptional person in the leadership since 1994. **Zoran Djindjić** had a very strong personality and fought his entire life for a modern Serbia reintegrated into Europe.¹⁷ He

¹⁴ Djindjić (leader of the DS) pushed through handing over Milošević to The Hague, while Koštunica was against.

¹⁵ In the 1990s, Drašković was called the *King of the Streets*.

¹⁶ Among others, the book *Hunting the Heretic* (Hajka na jeretika) was reviewed by Drašković.

¹⁷ Something amazing is that the Serbian nationalist Dobrica Ćosić, one of the authors of the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Science, praises Djindjić on the cover of a book consisting of Djindjić writings. See Djindjić 2007.

was assassinated in 2003 after serving as prime minister for two years.¹⁸ His successor, Boris Tadić, swapped places with Vojislav Koštunica and was elected President of Serbia, while Koštunica became the prime minister. As already mentioned above, Boris Tadić is a strong personality within his own party, however his compromising character does not enable him to compete with Koštunica's policy.

In terms of non-political character and a charismatic leader, all the parties indicated are political entities which do not define themselves outside of the political arena. All are relevant players in the party scene and do not stress their apolitical nature. All parties depicted very strong personal is in and the significance of the leader for the party. Nevertheless, is a charismatic leader not necessary in the present world for the success of the party? Does this feature not rather imply the centralization of parties, personalism and the importance of the image of the party chairman?

2.6 Chameleonic nature

Since the **Socialist Party of Serbia** has been in opposition since 2000, there have not been many instances of chameleonic nature. After the 2008 elections, the party may choose whether to form a coalition with the pro-European democratic coalition or with the nationalist SRS. The chameleonic nature of the **Serbian Radical Party** could be seen only partially in its moving during the reign of Milošević from an (in)formal coalition with SPS into the opposition.¹⁹ This manoeuvring created space for the party so it could criticise the decisions and acts of Slobodan Milošević and not to become responsible for them. However, seen from the larger perspective, the party has not changed its discourse since its inception. The programme remains much more the same – it is anti-programme against all who harm the Serbian nation. During 1992–1995, the enemies were the Croats, Muslims and the international community, while in 1998–1999 the antagonism was aimed at Albanians and NATO.

One other party seems to have a rather chameleonic nature – the **Serbian Renewal Movement**. Throughout the 1990s, Drašković portrayed himself as a martyr and victim of the Milošević regime until suddenly, in January of 1999, he accepted the post of minister in the

¹⁸ Basically there are two versions of the assassination. The first version claims that Djindjić was assassinated because he handed Milošević over to The Hague and because he was too modern, too pro-European, too much in favour of cooperation with the ICTY and too much against organized crime. The second talks about his connection to organized crime and settling the accounts between two mafia groups. However, when talking to the Serbian people, most of them utter with a sigh: *"If Djindjić was alive, everything would be different"*.

¹⁹ 1992 SRS in informal coalition with SPS; 1993 SRS in formal opposition; 1998 coalition of SRS and SPS; 1999 SRS left the coalition.

Milošević government – a superb trick by Milošević to show the international community the democratic features of the regime. However, on the 29th of April 1999 he was expelled from the government. Even though a great nationalist during the 1990s, since holding the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new democratic government, he began to support cooperation with the ICTY and bow and scrape to the international community.

There is nothing which could really be called chameleonic nature in the politics of the **Democratic Party** and **Democratic Party of Serbia**. Both parties are quite consistent in their programmes; the first clearly progressive and pro-western, the second traditional and slightly nationalistic. Nevertheless the politics is usually very much different than the written programme, which poses another question. Is chameleonic nature not the nature of all politicians in current world?

Populism in Serbia – concluding remarks

In this article we have worked with six characteristics of populism elaborated by Paul Taggart and investigated their presence in Serbian party manifestos. We focused on references to hostility towards representative politics, the heartland and the people, lack of core values and negativism, a sense of extreme crisis, non-political character and a charismatic leader and the chameleonic nature of those parties. We have investigated parties founded in the beginning of the 1990s which have retained their position in the party system until the present. Those parties were the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), Serbian Radical Party (SRS), Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and Democratic Party (DS).

The first feature – hostility towards the representative and established structures is very specific in the Serbian case, as the international dimension is closely tied to the engagement of Serbia in the Balkan wars. The internal dimension reflects the logic governing parties vs. the opposition which would imply that the opposition parties (in the Serbian case, Radicals and probably only up to 2008, Socialists) tend to be populist. The heartland and the people is a factor for SRS, SPO and DSS, tied to the Serbian nation, while in case of the Socialist party “the people” equals the lower social strata. The documents of the Democratic Party do not reflect this feature. When looking at the core values, the parties distinguish themselves in their ideological positions. While SPO stands for traditional, conservative values and promotes restoration of the monarchy, the SPS strives for democratic socialism, a welfare state and strong engagement of the state in the economy. The core of the Serbian Radical Party programme is nationalism and a strong state. The Democratic Party supports liberal values and one of its main aims is the

integration of Serbia into the European Union, while the Democratic Party of Serbia is somewhere in the centre on the left-right continuum. As there seems to be continuous *extreme crisis* in Serbia, the parties keep accenting it. The parties which most often stress some issues are SPS, SRS, SPO and DSS, while for DS, this likely applies only to the time the party spent in opposition. Regarding the non-political character, the parties analyzed are all relevant players in the political arena and do not present themselves as apolitical. All party leaders are said to be charismatic, though this is a highly subjective matter. The Serbian political scene shows strong personalism, with party centralization the strongest with the SRS and SPS.

The concept of Paul Taggart which we have applied have left us with some unanswered questions. The feature of hostility towards representative politics and revolt against the established structures were depicted across two dimensions, the external and the internal. The external dimension is closely tied to the fact that the country has gone through armed conflicts and was basically at war with NATO. The internal dimension would leave us only with the opposition parties, which lead us to the question of whether only opposition parties tend towards populism. The second feature, the heartland and the people, is closely tied to nationalism as well as socialism. This leads us to the question – do nationalism and socialism equal populism? When looking at the core values of the parties, we have seen all of them do have core values, though the core ideology of SRS is nationalism. Is nationalism core value of populism or more precisely is nationalism populist from its nature? A sense of extreme crisis has been a constant in Serbia, not only since 2000. Would that imply that all parties in Serbia necessarily tend towards populism? All political parties in Serbia are full players in the political arena and do not demarcate themselves vis-à-vis the others, all of them having charismatic leaders. Does that not rather imply strong personalism and significance of the leader for the party rather than populism? Can a party without a charismatic leader be successful in the world at present? The same could be said about the final feature – is chameleonic nature symptomatic for politicians?

Even though developed in detail, the Taggart concept has left us with many unanswered questions. It seems the key features overlap mainly with nationalism (heartland) and socialism (people). Does this imply that nationalism and socialism under the Taggart approach are by their nature populist? Or is the populist concept not redundant and should we not rather call these parties nationalist and socialist as we used to do? Is it possible to create anything like a precise definition of populism?

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