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**Democracy, Pluralism and Extremism**

*Summary*

The difference between the right-wing and the left-wing populism is that the former is a class populism while the latter nationalistic. However, there are some similarities between the two when it comes to means and sometimes to final objectives. In the situations with sharpened ideological competition and, especially, territorial disputes between states the rightist populism has a bigger power of mobilization and, therefore, better chances to win the struggle for power. Although both are authoritarian, it is much harder to democratize the rightist one. They both should be distinguished from totalitarianism although they often lead towards it. Some form of institutionalization of international relations is imperative for curbing the spread of populism. As illustrative examples this paper focuses on the cases of Yugoslavia and Serbia.

*Introduction*

Democracies are not unconditionally stabile. Whether or not they will be depends on three circumstances at least. One of them is pluralism of interests. The other are lasting, stable value system. And the third is security: physical, legal and social. How are democracies being destabilized? And what role does populism play in this?

*Pluralism of interests*

Theoretically, three mutually competitive outcomes in three domains of public policy have been harmonized. In the first, political domain distribution of power is crucial and the power is manifest in the level of support given to it no matter how this support has been mobilized (Gligorov, 1985). The second domain is ideological and hence implies value systems endorsed by individuals or groups. The third is economic in the largest sense of the term, but here focused on just and equal or unequal distribution.

These three dimensions have different structures or, to put it other way, their competition – political, ideological and economic – leads to different distributions in each. For instance, in politics they compete for amassing popular support since having the majority of any sort ensures stronger influence on, say, governmental decision-making and, therefore, usually does not give an upper hand to peripheral or minority interests. Unlike political ideological competition is after strengthening authentic, original, true or consequent stances and, therefore, may favor minority but in certain sense true and moral value systems. Finally, inequality incites disputes between, say, the middle class and the poor, let along between these two and the wealthy.

So we have three competitive dimensions of decision-making: one in which people with similar interests join hands in order to become more politically powerful, the other that confronts consequent with, say, pragmatic stands, and the third which is redistributive on, say, class basis (Acemoglu, Egorov, Sonin 2012).

For instance, democratic decision-making, decisions that are being made by the majority, confronts the majority and the minority; ideological disputes bring about the split between orthodox and revisionists; economic competition results in separation of those who are poorer and those richer. If interests, for instance, are diverse enough, the majority set of interests, majority coalition of interests, which should also stand for governmental program in democratic decision-making, is usually concentrated around the center of political arena. However, since ideological stands aspire to propriety and credibility, aim at being reliable, ethic and true to themselves, it is only logical that they are far apart; it is quite possible, therefore, that the minority defends certain stands, and that’s why those genuinely committed to an ideology are more likely to be the advocates of extreme than moderate values vis-à-vis, say, supporters of predominant political interests. On the other hand, distribution of benefits should usually favor more those who are richer, and the interests and values advocated by the majority, although not to the extremes the ideological division may reach.

More precisely, we can see how the distribution of values in those three dimensions functions in some of stable democracies. Interests should not be polarized but pluralistic and relatively equally distributed in a political space; therefore those interests that are somewhere in the center should be the interests the majority would vote for in elections (Aristotle’s idea of a middle class or, later on, a civil class).

However, ideological values have to maintain some distance between each other (what is it that makes us different from them); that is why they will be, say, more to the left or more to the right of those suited to the political majority.

On the other hand, the distribution of benefits would reflect some inequality: there would be more those who are poorer than those well to do, so that an averagely rich person would be wealthier than someone representing a democratic majority (this is the sum and substance of the so-called theory about a middle, average voter that leads to the conclusion that democracies do not exactly tend towards favoring the poorer).

Should we divide the space of those three dimensions into a left and a right segment, ideologically confronted people with more extreme stands would be to the left and to the right of a political center, while a middle voter would be in the majority, the same one both sides need to win over to ensure majority support, while an averagely rich person would be, say, to the right from that middle voter.

The majority obviously depends on whether, let’s call it in general, public space is stable or not. Shifting it to the left or to the right is one of the ways of changing its relations. If interests are, say, relatively stable due to overall social and economic stability and, hence, the level of inequality also relatively stable, the space can be shifted to the left or the right through ideological competition. Since ideologues are almost professionally more consequent or dogmatic than most of their followers, in the case political and economic interests are subordinated to ideological because, say, it is taken that political and economic decisions have to be more clearly and consequently justified, the entire space could shift to one side or the other.

And so the possibility for political extremism is to be found in the very nature of ideological competition.

Moreover, because of the possibility to have a political space shifted through ideological competition, the latter could be played on for this very purpose. Therefore, besides advocating proper interpretation of a political teaching, ideologies could also stand for rationalization of certain political or economic interests. And indeed, the term ideology is used in both senses: as an authentic interpretation of certain values and as promotion of political or economic values to the level of true values. We could call them either inherent or instrumental. In both cases they aspire towards proper interpretation, opposite to a wrong, dogmatic or revisionist one, which is why they want to be more extreme or less prone to compromise than, say, political or economic interests. Their goal is to separate commitment to values from commitment to interest realization or from a concern that endorsing an ideology may cost one giving up one’s existing or attainable benefits.

The public space will shift to the extent of a success of an ideological competition; so, for instance, it will be more adjusted to the interests of those better to do or those who are poorer. This requires having the influence of pluralism of interests reduced or at least polarized in accordance with ideological division.

*Desirable and attainable*

Division into an ideological and political competition sources from the very nature of public activism that has to determine how desirable and attainable a goal is and take into account that social contribution could be differently distributed. Each of those three elements of public assessment and activity can be a matter of independent choice; a choice of a goal need not be made by its attainability, while the attainability itself may depend on readiness and not only on capability for reaching it, on strong will and not only on available resources. For instance, a goal can be binding even if unattainable at the moment but will be in the future, while hesitating to start realizing an attainable goal as it implies, say, unequal distribution of responsibility could make the very goal undesirable.

Let’s take, for instance, Rawls’ realistic utopia (1971): a set of goals and means to realize them, which is conceivable and attainable only if distribution of rights and duties changes in a major way. That would be an ideological offer extreme vis-à-vis a political or any other system and, therefore, utopian; but not necessarily unattainable should an ideological space shift enough to this side and ensure mobilization of political support.

So, this is a way for ensuring legitimacy to alternative political project though ideological competition.

It is assumed here that this is about a desirable goal that is attainable if the necessary readiness to invest necessary resource in its realization is ensured. At least one form of populism can be determined when compared with a real utopia. It relates to a set of desirable goals that are unattainable and not only because of the absence of the needed readiness or, to put it otherwise, political support.

Now it probably makes sense to digress to the sphere of economic understanding of populism. Researches of political developments in Latin America in the 1970s and 80s are probably most thorough (Dornbush and Edwards, 1991). In them, populism referred to economic policy for redistributing income from those better to do to those who are poorer. These researches were after analyzing attainability of such redistribution either by usual measures of economic policy or systemic changes. They resulted in criticism of populism as an unattainable economic policy.

The simplest example of this – not to bother ourselves with detailed analysis of this theory of populism – is probably the so-called original sin. A government, for instance, decides to finance public expenditure with inflationary policies or, to put it simply, by money printing. This will lead towards replacement of domestic currency by foreign (which is the “original sin”) and reduction of the amount of taxable income, which stands – so to speak – for total sum of domestic currency; and to ensure a desirable fiscal result this will necessitate a speedier and speedier inflation.

For instance, this is how Serbia’s wars financed in the early 1990s. Finally, a hyperinflation testified of impossibility of such monetary and economic policy. Here we have the original sin since replacement of domestic currency by foreign turns into a permanent tool of restricting the use of inflationary taxes. This original sin is being “inherited” as it results – as it did in the case of Serbia – in long-term use of foreign currency – first the German mark, and Euro now – in changed circumstances, which remains the same even when inflationary taxing is given up. This is how monetary policy becomes unavailable, which, in turn, restricts fiscal and hence practically every other redistribution policy to the advantage of the poorer and puts a brake on the leftist populism making it unfeasible.

It could be said here that a reason behind the said unfeasibility is the fact that foreign currency is available at all. A strict control of cross-border financial transactions would simply make it impossible for domestic currency to flee into foreign. More generally speaking, protectionist measures of one sort of other would make populist goals attainable. This is in the basis of teaching – like that of Dani Rodrik – that economic nationalism, or democratic in his case, ensures economic progress while reducing inequalities in distribution of wealth and income. In Serbia’s case – to be discussed more in the paragraphs below – we had the argument against signing the Stabilization and Accession Agreement with the European Union.

It should be noted, without further analysis of economic sustainability of economic populism, that we are faced here with two different types of populism, which are somewhat mutually connected if connected around the idea of protectionism or shunning competition with foreign states or foreigners in general. One of the two, so to speak, is leftist or class populism that aims at reducing the gap between the poorer and richer, while the other, also in a way, rightist or national meant to increase “our” wellbeing rather than “theirs” or, as they usually say over here, to pursue the economic policy that is in the service of national or public interests. Ideologues of both populisms aspire at blending class and national interests, which in itself questions not only desirability but also feasibility of so “blended” populism.

Generally speaking, economic studies of populism, primarily in Latin America, in the second half of the past century mostly indicated the incompatibility of political goals and available resources, while concluding that populism, leftist in this particular case, rather paves the way to regression than to economic and social progress. This is still a predominant analysis of economic populism despite the fact that some findings and conclusions have been corrected in the meantime (Rodrik, 2017).

*Two populisms*

As stated above, most economic studies of populism have been focused on Latin America. One of the reasons why is that Latin America’s experience resulted in the so-called Washington consensus (Williamson, 1990), notably criticized by leftist economists and commentators although not them only. However, the experience of the 1930s when advocates of the leftist, class populism and those of the rightist, national came into real conflict is probably more relevant. Such conflict is nonexistent in the studies of Latin American populism in the 1960s and 70s because the advocates of autocracy or dictatorship who were not directly connected with the rightist, nationalistic populism were on the right.

The main difference between the leftist and rightist populism is in the policy for redistribution of property and income – in other words, whom it is desirable to take from and whom to give. The leftist, class populism takes the rich are those to be taken from and the poor to be given to. The rightist, nationalistic populism argues, “Take away from them and give to us.” In the 1930s – under considerable influence of Russia’s October Revolution but also of the ideology of revolutionary changes – the right-wing did not perceive democracy as an efficient tool for reducing the class gap. It was argued that class conflicts could not be settled in elections but in the streets only.

On the other hand, the rightist populism advocated ethnic cleansings and international conflicts aimed at changing ethnic fabric and state borders. The rightist populism simply needs enemies on racial, ethnic, cultural or territorial basis. Therefore, what matters the most in the competition of the rightist and leftist populism is a conflict to be given the upper hand and whether “national” is stronger than “class,” so to speak. \*\*\*

For instance, the 1930s testify that the rightist nationalism – in mobilization, ideological and, after all, economic sense – is more attractive than class nationalism, especially when argued, as it was, that national and class are one and the same, i.e. that nationalism is actually concerned with the poor and discriminated against; and that is stands for a concern for national territories or territories in general that would ensure better living to those humiliated and insulted.

The main reason why the rightist populism has more political potential than leftist is that its mobilization power is bigger. It’s only logical that there are more of us, members of a national, than us as members of a class, which is why it is, say, easier for us to ensure directly, by democratic means such as referendum, support to national than to class interests; and the more so – and most importantly – since the means for meeting those interests – ideological, political and economic means – are mostly the same.

But what is by far most important is a difference in expectations: the rightist populism is seen as attainable while the leftist is not.

The rise and success of the Serbian nationalism in the 1980s exemplifies the rightist populism victory over leftist. While criticism of the regime - at least by dissident circles and especially after 1968 – was hued by the leftist populism that mostly insisted on the growing inequality, in the mid-1980s it turned nationalistic as it became obvious that the rightist populism was not a proper answer to the persistent economic and political crisis of the era. So it happened that the advocacy for better living conditions for the poor and criticism of “a new class” was replaced by the advocacy for national, not only economic but mostly political, and territorial interests. It turned out that unlike consequent socialism nationalism has a bigger mobilization power. Besides and characteristic to every populism, this mobilization goes hand in hand with authoritarianism and can be used to change the establishment and justify discrimination against minorities on various grounds.

*What is not populism?*

In the 1930s Stalinism and Nazism (as well as fascism) were invoking masses or a nation (people) while spreading propaganda against foreign and domestic enemies. For Stalinists the enemies were private proprietors, especially kulaks, but also the new class of the privileged alienated for the people. This also included “unreliable” nations; the latter, however, played by far more important roles in Nazi ideologies and regimes. About the same could be said for subsequent fascist regimes in Spain and Portugal. But these were not populist regimes in literal sense but most of all were ideological, political and economic foundations of totalitarian and autocratic regimes that used nationalism and the masses to justify dictatorship and warring goals. The rightist populism is resembles very much these regimes but is not, in principle, totalitarian.

Besides, in the period after they abandoned the worst forms of Stalinism the so-called people’s democracies were not populist though this was how they referred to themselves. They just formally legitimized their alternative systems of allegedly direct democracy, which was autocratic and dictatorial by usual criteria for liberal democracies. To those regimes the people were means rather than goals. The people were there just to demonstrate their massive support to political and economic goals of the ideological avant-garde either at manifestations or in elections. Regimes as such could be labeled plebiscitary one-party dictatorships.

This is why totalitarian regimes, no matter how soft or softened, should be mixed with populist either with rightist or even less – leftist.

The argument that populism can end up not only in authoritarianism but also in totalitarianism is a different story. Indeed, there are nuances of populism-totalitarianism kinship that have to be taken into account. And once again, the difference between leftist and rightist populism should also be noted given that, in the nature of things, it is harder to establish totalitarianism on class basis than on national: the former involves a conflict within a state while the latter between two states. Consequently, there are – at least in principle – ways to settle conflict of interests in the first case by, say, democratic means, while in the second case it is always about this type of hostility or another, which may involve violent methods for settlement, especially if the two countries are in dispute over territories.

*Democracy in crisis*

Although totalitarian regimes in the 1930s were not the same as those populist, the crisis of democracy helps both to emerge. This is why when considering the crisis of representative democracy in the period between two world wars it is rather important to understand the problems democratic countries of today are faced with. This is the point of one of Schmitt’s most influential books (1923). His theory of the crisis of representative democracy seems to be most modern even to this very day. Namely, according to him, debates in representative bodies – as their key means – do not result in political decisions and, actually, a paralysis of representative bodies is to be realistically expected but not necessarily their polarization. Therefore, investing power into one person or a group or a party through democratic procedures or in the streets could be the consequence of disagreement within representative bodies or their decision-making incapacity.

Hence, the paralysis of representative bodies – Schmitt sees as an inevitable trait of representative democracy – may strengthen the roles of authoritarian leaders enjoying peoples’ direct support.

Therefore, it is also inevitable that populist regimes grow into totalitarian given that the latter requires certain ideological and accompanying economic footing. These preconditions were fulfilled in the 1930s with the ebb of ideological liberalism and deep economic crisis liberal and democratic institutions and policies were blamed for. Besides, territorial disputes between states were not settled despite the outcome of the WWI. Finally, the paralysis was also caused by polarized, extremely rightist and leftist ideologies and not only in representative bodies but most of all - in the street.

So, all preconditions for the rise of populism were there: mass unemployment resulted in endorsement of nationalistic ideology and protectionist and interventionist measures, all of which not only encouraged authoritarianism but also the use of such power for mobilizing the society and homogenizing national goals.

This last step is not imperative and probably not that easy to make in the absence of an external enemy. When it comes to totalitarian regimes between the two world wars, they grew out from ideological and economic populism as their goals were either ideological or economic nature. An external enemy is needed not only for national homogenization but also as a major support to a totalitarian regime once people stop trusting it. A war – be it cold or real – is one of the ways for abandoning democratic decision-making as was the case in the 1930s.

The case of Serbia clearly illustrates political paralysis and ideological radicalization of nationalism, along with warring goals, resulting in populist and authoritarian rule. As usually the case, Serbia’s fate depended on the outcome of war. And while defeats left political and territorial goals unattainable, the predominant nationalistic ideology survived and remained as such in public life; along with accompanying proneness to authoritarianism.

*Different goals, similar means*

In order to come to power populists need a change in public sphere. In principle, democracy enables individualization of interests as everyone has one vote so that those individual votes, summed up in elections, are sufficient for taking over the power; and they also encourage pluralism in political sphere into the majority and minority. Besides, neither individual nor collective consistency are necessary – at least as times goes by – as democracy is a system in which the people and the government may change their minds (for instance, once in four years). The latter is important as it ensures the needed flexibility in changed circumstances. And when circumstances change – and when democracies function properly – pluralism of interests and partisan competition based on it stabilize regimes and strengthen their legitimacy.

And the other way round: to ensure support in democratic systems populism necessitates a coalition between those sharing same goals but are actually ideologically very distanced one from another: say, some belong to the left and others to the right wing. This populist, leftist-rightist coalition may result from mutual consent not so much about goals as about means. Namely, both leftist and rightist populisms tend towards protectionism and privileges for some strata of the society vs. those considered anti-people elements on this grounds or other.

For instance, populism of the right and left wings in both the US and Europe is a response to globalization. Protective measures are more or less the same when it comes to trade and cross-border investments. Guest workers and immigrants in general play a most important role in all this. Regardless of differences in motives and justifications, let alone in goals, both leftist and rightist populisms advocate bans on jobs for foreigners or their immigration.

Though such attitude towards foreigners and their rights may seem logical as they are not citizens of one’s state, the same attitude towards strengthening of rights within own nation actually unites leftist and rightist populists; for, in practice and independently from goals aspired to, protection from more rights for some strata or categories of population is identical to that from foreigners: equalized rights encourage competition in limited resources, be they jobs that are of special interest to the left-wing or, say, cultural heritage rightist populist may be notably concerned with.

Therefore, protective measures against foreigners – either when it comes to imports or investments, or to inflow of immigrants – are basically so much the same when directed against equal rights to one or another group of citizens of one’s own state, members of the same nation – that populism is not all-encompassing; in other words, there are always some segments of people that do not belong to it, this way or another. Denial of rights to foreigners or certain members of one’s own nation is common to rightist and leftist populisms, regardless of the fact that their goals may be quite the opposite.

Populisms of no matter what kind need not only foreign nations but also “foreigners” within one’s own nation – alienated elites or unassimilated minorities, or minorities having the same rights and the nation itself.

*Fear of an open society*

Naturally, this fear is evident in two cases; first specifically characteristic for rightist populism targeting, above all, the so-called establishment; the other marks leftist populists who implicitly see social homogeneity as contrary to the devastating effects of an open society, to put it so.

Criticizing the alienated social strata as much too cosmopolitan or auto-chauvinist, or both, probably best illustrates nationalistic populism, at least in Serbia. These allegations in a small and underdeveloped country such as Serbia associate auto-colonialism and this or that type of intellectual corruption allegedly because of their sense of inferiority but more frequently due to actual, overt or covert corruption. Usually they are all unspecified and opposed to true interests of the people – of the real, right-minded or orthodox, authentic and patriotic people. Persistent criticism of Radomir Konstantinović’s *Filosofija palanke* (*Provincial Philosophy*) may best testify of this. Here the author dissects the fear of an open society, exemplified, above all, by Serbian poetry. His critics, on the other hand, either directly or indirectly advocate a closed society of this sort or other, while emphasizing the necessity of permanent dedication to national and state interests in cultural policy, let alone domestic and foreign.

Unlike its rightist counterpart, the leftist populism rests on the assumption about a homogeneous society that disintegrates when capitalism infiltrates it, at home and abroad alike. Karl Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation* is probably most influential in its criticism of liberalism and market economy (Dani Rodrik is the author’s today’s follower). According to the two of them, what keep up societies are territories and their specific social relations that disintegrate once countries’ markets – markets of capital and labor markets – open. While barter is something natural, trade in fictive goods such as labor, capital and land are not. The trade in the latter brings about social differentiation and destroys traditional and homogeneous human relationship. Often quoted in the context of Serbia, for instance, are social relations in the system of self-government, the adoption of market and capitalist economy have destroyed.

While leftist and rightist populisms use the same means regardless of their different goals, leftist and rightist populist are much closer in goals then in means when it comes to their attitude towards an open society. Both populists stand for their specific political and social homogeneity, they just differ one from another in means for its realization. One of their similarities is in the way they see the alienated elites: either as cosmopolitan or selfish, and as responsible for adverse cultural or social developments. Both of them aspire to achieve national or social homogeneity and advocate policies to be used; although they have different means in mind, those means are, generally taken, protectionist, since meant to protect a nation or society from foreign influences of this kind or other.

*Embarrassing similarity*

Many advocates of leftist populism are embarrassed with similarities – either in means or in goals – with their rightist counterparts. In this, the position of the left-wing is worse than that of the right: both ideologically and politically.

This is especially evident in trade policy. Given the significance of this sphere it makes sense to elaborate a bit the point. Namely, it is important for a small economy to be open to international trade since there is no doubt that great global market provides better opportunity for more production and sales than a domestic. However, an open market implies specialization: one cannot compete in everything, especially with limited resources a small market has at its disposal. The said specialization also keeps changing according to developments at the global market; some countries can strengthen their competitive edge exactly in the areas one’s own economy has specialized in. Under such circumstances more developed small economies, especially in Europe, need insurance programs against such structural shifts, to put it so. This, above all, refers to protection of business and income of those who have not been in the position to predict the said shifts. So, if someone has invested in certain qualification that is no more competitive, this risk needs to be insured against with public means for adjustments through, say, re-skilling one’s labor force or in some other way that ensures adequate employment.

Public authorities in bigger countries need not offer such forms of insurance since possible effects of structural changes – ergo, potential loss of competitiveness in some sector of production – are relatively negligible when compared with overall production. Besides, as a rule, bigger economies are less open, which means that exports and imports have a smaller share in total production. Authorities may be pressed to protect domestic production against foreign competitors if and inasmuch as these forms of insurance against risk – unpredictable, at least from the standpoint of employees - are inadequate. And protectionism may win considerable political points if structural changes produce negative effects on some region or industrial towns; and such support is the more so important if it can be used for mobilization on class or national basis.

The above illustrates differences between mobilization powers of the right and the left. In cross-border competition the right-wing populism can rely on patriotism by claiming that interests of “our people” are opposite to those of foreigners. Besides, along with corrupted businessmen and cosmopolitan elites, other cosmopolitans and auto-chauvinist may be pressed to face up their patriotic duties. On the other hand, the left-wing populism would probably rather advocate strengthening of social state, ergo, stronger rights and forms of insurance against structural changes at the global market, but mobilization power of such demands would be weaker when the number of persons affected is smaller. No wonder, therefore, if voters affected by foreign competitiveness vote to the right-wing populists. This, in turn, influences their program as they practically adopt populist means – closer economies – of the right-wing populists.

Though a small economy that hardly benefits from economic policy of isolationism, Serbia exemplifies what happens in such political developments. However, for a longer period of time – and certainly ever since provisions on foreign trade of the SAA with the EU have been in force – the right-wing populists have been mostly influential; they have spoken of workers’ and social rights though they have had in mind national interests when calling the SAA harmful to economic activity and especially to state budget because of income lost on tariffs. But such criticism ended when it turned out as time went by that Serbia’s economic activity has been kept alive only thanks to free access to Europe’s markets. Such effects on bigger economies are smaller, hence enabling more persistence on such populist mobilization.

This is evidenced by findings of the research of the effects of globalization – in other words, the effects of more liberal trade and cross-border movement of finances and capital both in the US and Europe (the author et al. 2016; Algan et al. 2017). This probably the most referential study - actually a collection of studies - on the effects of China’s membership of WTO on American market of labor and goods found that this impact was unexpectedly big in some regions and manufacturing sectors and relatively small from the standpoint of economy as a whole. According to the findings, the effects on European economies were about the same or, to put it precisely, even smaller. On the other hand, political consequences were bigger since the affected voters were mostly supporters of right-wing populists and, as such, had even more distanced right-wing populist agendas from traditional leftist political programs. Hence, the support to closed markets grew stronger, and demands for better social and property protection less influential.

Those from the left-wing who had advocated protectionism seem to be embarrassed by the fact that the right-wing populism is now promoting the same. Those who have studied populism on the South American case were after detecting industrial policy as a developmental alternative that would be easier to implement should there be market protection. This assumption was valid in most South American countries given that bigger countries in this region had not been much exposed to foreign trade, while having probably the highest degree of inequality in the world; therefore the leftist populism prevailed over the rightist (besides, territorial disputes between these countries are rare).

Everything is different when stronger protection from foreign competition is placed on the agenda in traditionally more open countries. Justification of such measures goes hand in hand with populist mobilization and the line drawn between “us” and “them,” which plays into the hands of rightist populism. And so it happened that leftist populist had to argue for measures of economic protectionism they had advocated themselves at the time right-wing populists had already taken over such economic program; like, say, in America and Britain.

The fact that the left-wing has democracy as its major ally since there has always been more those who were poor or working for salaries than the right living on their wealth or properties was a reason for extra embarrassment. However, populisms, as a rule, lead towards authoritarian regimes, at least temporarily. Therefore, it is hard to stand up to, say, Roderick’s democratic nationalism when the national economic program is mostly in the hands of rightist, autocratic populists.

So it is a most complex task facing the advocates of leftist populism and economic protectionism to distance themselves from the prevalent rightist populism; and especially now when leftist populism is not even influential in South America. In the of Serbia populist and protectionist economic policy – i.e. protectionism against the European Union – has gradually died out due to the benefits from exports to EU markets and the time of the country’s economic and fiscal crisis. However, this is somewhat to the advantage of rightist populists to whom ideological, cultural and national protectionism is by far more important than trading protectionism especially if it is oligarchic or, as they like to put it, in national and state interest.

*Attraction of extremes*

Why populisms lead towards or support authoritarian regimes? The above-mentioned paralysis of representative bodies can be one of the reasons why. The use of resources that can barely ensure support in pluralistic conditions may be another. The third may be in the very nature of ideological competition that is somewhat to advantage of extreme stands.

An analysis of ideological competition should distinguish different forms of rationalization of interests – the initial Marxist understanding of ideology – and comprehensive interpretations of political goals and means inherent to them as, say, in the case of ideologies based on religion. The latter lead towards extremism or can be used, as least, to justify extreme stands.

This is nothing new. Actually, this is the bedrock of understating of European history, especially if expanded to all the parts of the world that have been under Europe’s influence and that have been either Westernized or have opposed to it in the meantime. Referring to multiculturalism or secularism on the one hand and Serbia’s political integration into Europe on the other makes sense here. It goes without saying that referring to the case of Yugoslavia, its emergence and reasons behind its disintegration, also makes sense in this context.

It is well-known that religious conflicts had been among the problems plaguing Europe’s stability and security. This is why as the time went by European policy has been secularized. About the same refers to nationalistic conflicts that influenced the idea about creating some sort of European political union. Finally, ideological conflicts between extreme right-wing on the one hand and Stalinism on the other influenced, no doubt, better understanding of the significance of democratic decision-making.

It is also known in Europe’s history and politics that ideological competition incites extremism, which is the reason why we need the context of public debates and decision-making to undermine its influence if it cannot be rationalized. The said context is secular and pluralistic.

Ongoing developments in Europe somewhat resemble political developments on the eve of Yugoslavia’s disintegration. Here, one should also take into consideration similarities of economic circumstances since Yugoslav economy has stagnated in its the last decade while considerable parts of the EU are now faced with similar economic challenges. The difference is, to put it straight, that there have been no territorial disputes in Europe so far while territorial disputes were crucial in the case of Yugoslavia’s disintegration (Gligorov, 1994).

Nevertheless, revival of ideological disputes in Europe – either nationalistic or religious by nature – incites extreme stands. However, the latter are more influential at the right-wing than on the left. The leftist populism would move to the territory of its rightist counterpart should it resort to religious or national extremism, which would be contrary to political interests of the left-wing as such cases testify of. Generally speaking, in the case of Europe at least, the left-wing populism has contributed to the growth of the rightist while the other way round has not been the case – at least not up to now.

And yet, Yugoslavia and the states emerging from it provide a good example or good examples. Although the left-wing usually blames liberals or neo-liberals for more or less everything, unwillingness to draw a clear ideological line between leftist and rightist nationalistic populism is basically the reason why the political space trends towards the right in all the states, and why the right prevailed on the eve of Yugoslavia’s disintegration.

Therefore, ideological competition not meant to mobilize voters’ support but believers of this sort or another usually tends towards extremism, especially when it invokes collective goals – national, religious, cultural – and thus usually provides an upper hand to rightist and authoritarian populism.

*Conclusion*

Populisms resemble one another as they trend towards protectionism, although the left, class populism differs from the right one by its goals or attainable goals at least. The goals of the rightist, nationalistic populism are usually territorial, which is why it is often hostile to neighbors. But, generally speaking, populisms are undemocratic either because their representative bodies are paralyzed or because they emerged against the backdrop of ideological polarization. The latter results from ideological competition aimed at erasing pluralism and, therefore, trends towards inciting extremism. In addition, mobilization, ideological and political power of nationalism is bigger than any the power of any version of the leftist populism. This is especially so in economic crises and, even more, in the situation of long stagnations. Serbia is a good example of the rise of the rightist populism and its ideological survival of defeats suffered even in a war. It is easier to democratize the leftist populism than the rightist since the former is pluralistic, at least when it comes to social classes, while the latter is not being based on homogenization enabled by an ideology, which is, as a rule, extremist by its national, statehood, cultural and historical goals.

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