
POLITICAL POPULISM AND EXTREMISM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AS A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY, TRUST AND MUTUAL RESPECT¹

Original scientific article

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Abstract: Political populism and extremism pose a serious threat to the establishment of democracy, trust building and mutual respect between members of different ethnic and religious groups. Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to point out the specifics of political populism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, pointing to the presence of extremism in the narratives of political leaders in this area and the impact of political populism and extremism on establishing democracy, trust and mutual respect between different ethnic and religious groups living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In accordance with this goal, the author first points out the meaning of the terms populism and extremism, bringing these two terms together in terms of political discourses, that is narratives. After that, the author analyzes the populist narratives of the leaders of the leading political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, pointing out the common characteristics and segments of extremism that exist in these narratives. In the concluding part of the paper, the author presents his views on the issue of negative consequences that the existence of this type of political populism leaves on the Bosnian society in general.

Keywords: populism, extremism, democracies, building trust, respect, narratives, discourse.

Introduction

Before the analysis of political populism and extreme narratives that exist on the political scene of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is necessary to emphasize the very turbulent history of this country, which is primarily caused by the presence of great world powers in its territory, in the way in which the identities of all three constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina were formed, in the existence of irreconcilable and deeply ingrained animosities between different ethnic and religious groups that have lived in the Western Balkans for centuries, primarily due to frequent wars and fresh memories of past suffering. In fact, in relation to other territories of the Western Balkans, Bosnia and Herzegovina has probably suffered the deepest and most destructive influences of the great world powers. Therefore, it is rightly said that the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina is, in short, the history of peasant uprisings, wars and foreign occupations, interspersed with periods of social order (Goati, 2000: 66). In addition, the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina was at the crossroads of the influence of the great monotheistic religions (Catholicism and Orthodoxy from the 11th century, the Christian West and the Muslim East from the 15th century). Bosnia is also marked by permanent migrations, including the settlement of South Slavs in the 7th century, as well as various religious conversions (conversion to Christianity in the 9th century, conversion from Catholicism to Orthodoxy and vice versa from the 11th century, Bogomilism in the 13th and 14th centuries and Islamization between the 15th and 18th centuries (Bougarel,

2004: 45) The very complex history of Bosnia and Herzegovina has placed religion at the very center of the collective identities of Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. The national identities of the three largest ethnic groups in BiH are primarily based on religion, in which religion is not only a group of believers but also an important part of an individual's cultural identity (Vukočić, 2012: 6) and the difficult implementation of "civic values" that would eventually lead to the creation of some new civic identities, such as the Bosnian identity. The religious, and then the national division into Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Bosnian Muslims, led to the division of loyalty or the binding of the Orthodox population to Serbia and the Catholic population to Croatia, while only Muslims and Bosniaks remained completely loyal to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Civic identities in this case, therefore, even if they existed where they exist, are not based on the vision of the same state or on the same vision of its future. These different views of all three majority ethnic communities on their survival in the common state are the causes of the conflict that culminated in the 1990s in the form of armed conflict that ended with the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the so-called the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995. It should be emphasized here that the Dayton Agreement is not a conventional peace agreement, it differs from any modern peace agreement, not only because it was imposed by external forces, but also because broad powers in governing the state and society have been transferred to the international community. Most of the annexes do not refer to the end of hostilities, which is the traditional meaning of peace agreements, but to the political project of reconstruction of the state and society. Although more than twenty-five years have passed since the end of the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is difficult to say that this triadic conflict has been resolved, and that a stable and sustainable functioning of this social community has been established. If we look at the political scene, which is dominated by the national parties of the three majority nations, we can see that in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is no consensus on any key state and political issues among these ethnic groups. And if there is something that all three constituent peoples agree on, it is just a desire for independence in deciding on important national issues of their social group, and more importantly, preventing other social groups from deciding on these issues. From the first elections organized after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the present day, the political scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina is dominated by political parties established on a national basis. In a very polarized political environment, characterized by a specific connection between political affiliation and national/ethnic or religious identity, conflicting interests of the three constituent peoples on key state and political issues and insufficient development of civic identities, a fertile ground for political populism has been created containing elements of extremism, or extreme narratives that significantly hinder the establishment of democracy, building trust and mutual respect between members of different ethnic and religious groups. Before we point out the forms and specifics of political populism with elements of extreme narratives of the political scene of Bosnia and

Herzegovina, we will first point out the understanding of populism, as well as the understanding of extremism.

The Notion of Populism

Although there are many definitions of populism in the literature, there are three dominant perspectives for defining this term, which define populism as a style, populism as a strategy and populism as an ideology (Zaslove, Geurkink, Jacobs and Akkerman, 2020: 728).

Populism as a style implies the use of a characteristic set of elements, that is, the way of presenting messages that express populist ideologies. Viewed from this aspect, populism is understood as a specificity of political communication rather than a specificity of actors who send messages. Thus, in understanding populism as a style, the focus is on the unique contribution of communication processes to “constructing” populist ideas, as well as on communicative styles that systematically appear with them (de Vreese, Esser, Aalberg, Rainemann and Stanyer 2018: 425).

Finally, populism as an ideology is understood as an ideological approach or discourse that claims to defend the interests of the “pure people” from the “corrupt elite”. Accordingly, CasMudde defines populism as “an ideology that believes that society is ultimately divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the “pure people” versus the “corrupt elite”, and who argues that politics should be an expression of general will” (Mudde, 2004: 543). This concept defines three key characteristics of populism as an ideology: a) focus on the attitude of the “pure people” against the “corrupt elite”; b) sees the relationship between “pure people” and the “corrupt elite” as antagonistic (the relationship between good and evil); c) proclaiming the idea that politics should be an expression of the general will of the “pure people”.

In addition to the above-mentioned understandings, it should be pointed out that lately, populism has been increasingly seen as an attitude based on listening to the needs of the people. For example, in 2018, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte used to say in his first address to the Senate (upper house of parliament) that he was proud to call his government populist if it meant “a ruling class that listens to the needs of the people.”² Populists believe that decision-makers have moved away from what “ordinary people” consider important and this is taken as a major shortcoming, so the main goal of politicians should be to listen to the people and “translate” what they consider important into political decisions (Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2015: 2). In addition to this, the populists insist on the direct participation of the people in politics and direct forms of expressing their will, such as a referendum. The general will of the people, in this context, is taken as

² See more at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/new-italian-prime-minister-giuseppe-conte-is-proud-to-be-populist/>, available on 05.11.2021.

something that is transparent and currently available to anyone who is willing to listen to the needs of the people (Abts and Rummens, 2007: 408).

Although populism is mainly associated with right-wing ideologies and policies, it is also very compatible with left-wing ideologies, which is best seen in the current examples of South American countries (Ristić, 2017: 9). When it comes to left-wing populism, it is characteristic that it only formally advocates the strengthening of direct democracy through referendums, while its real goal is not to initiate and encourage the formation and articulation of the democratic will of citizens, but only to lead the people to confirm from the populist movement the pre-defined national will (Stanley 2008: 10). Right-wing populism is primarily characteristic of countries affected by deep economic and social crises, as well as the fear of opening up economic and/or political migrants. Characteristics of the radical right-wing populism are: a) homogenization due to internal and external threats that populist politicians constantly emphasize; b) reliance on one's own ethnos (through ethnos, nationalism is encouraged to its ultra-variants); c) isolationism (a policy to prevent any outside influence); d) insisting on the sovereignty of the state; d) strong hatred and fear of members of other ethnic groups, religions and denominations; f) spreading prejudices and stereotypes towards everyone else and different; and, e) non-acceptance of differences (Čupić and Joković, 2017: 36). Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell view populism as an ideology that opposes a homogeneous people with the virtues of a set of elites and dangerous "others" who are described as depriving sovereign people of their rights, values, progress, identity and voice (Albertazzi, McDonnell 2008: 3). Namely, from the aspect of populism, a special problem is the populists' effort to secure the so called "will of the people" by directing people's dissatisfaction towards individuals and social groups that have no rational connection with the causes of their dissatisfaction or who more or less share unfavorable conditions with social groups that are not satisfied. In theory, such groups are called "dangerous others" (Šalaj 2012: 58) and their main feature is that they threaten the homogeneity and unity of the common people because they are committed to achieving "special interests". Most often, these are other national/ethnic, religious groups, usually minorities, or immigrants who, in the opinion of the populists, with their culture, language, customs "endanger" the prevailing culture and take jobs, withdraw funds from social health funds and the like.

We can say that this understanding of dangerous others is primarily characteristic of Western European countries, while when it comes to the Western Balkans, which includes Bosnia and Herzegovina, "dangerous others" means primarily members of other national/ethnic and religious groups who traditionally live in this area. This is because populism needs an enemy, and in that sense, as a rule, the enemy is presented as someone who is convinced to harm a given nation, to take from it what rightfully belongs to it, and to endanger the life and way of life of a given nation (Brewer, 2016: 252). Political populism promotes the emergence of extreme ideologies, nationalism, ethnocentrism, secessionism, xenophobia and

fear of losing national identity, which brings us to the question of the relationship between populism and extremism. However, before we point out this relationship, we must first point out the meaning of the very term extremism.

The Notion of Extremism

Regarding to the term extremism, it originates from the Latin word *extremus*, which means the quality or state of being extreme on the very borders of sustainable, permissible and normal, something that is at the extreme top or bottom of the object, in any case some of its extreme limit (Simeunović, 2009: 146). Accordingly, sub-extremism generally means those perceptions or views of people, and those behaviors of people that significantly or drastically deviate from what is normal, what is common, and ultimately what is allowed (legal). Extremists strive to create a homogeneous society based on rigid, dogmatic ideological principles. Also, they strive to create a comfortable society by suppressing all oppositions and by subjugating minorities. In the context of democratic societies, extremist groups, movements and parties tend to have a political agenda that contains many of the following elements:

- anti-democratic, anti-pluralistic, authoritarian;
- fanatical, intolerant, uncompromising, unanimous;
- rejection of the rule of law on the pretext that the end justifies the means;
- striving to achieve goals in any way, including, when the opportunity arises, the use of force and mass political violence against adversaries.

Political extremists of both left and right orientations, on their way to realize their own political programs:

- use force/violence as opposed to persuasion;
- prefer uniformity over diversity;
- raise collective goals above individual freedoms;
- practice issuing orders versus dialogue (Ivanović and Soltvedt, 2020: 35).

The Relationship between Populism and Extremism

Based on the above, we can conclude that political extremism is characterized by a fanatical belief that one's own political option is the only correct one, and that they remain false, and that representatives and followers of other political options should be persuaded to accept a single, correct ideological truth, or to dehumanize and eradicate them under the pretext of a lofty goal (nation, religion, party). This understanding of political extremism brings us to the link between political populism and political extremism. In theory, there is a common belief that populism, xenophobic nationalism or extremism is inherently related. In reality, no ideology necessarily has to rely on another to exist as such. In fact, both populism and extremism as ideologies prioritize a certain social group over other social groups. Thus, populists try to prioritize "ordinary people", while xenophobic nationalists

or extremists try to prioritize those social groups based on their national/ethnic or religious affiliation. However, claims about the frustration of the general will of the people, its threat by “dangerous others”, the existence of an arrogant elite that has no empathy for the needs of the people, or the ability to respond to them adequately are arguments that certainly lead to animosity and hatred which feed both populism and extremism. In this context, there may be a connection between populism and extremism in the political life of a particular social community. Namely, this overlap, that is, the connection between populism and extremism, is especially pronounced in the former socialist countries, which include the countries that emerged in the former Yugoslavia. With the collapse of socialism as a means of achieving prosperity and self-realization of man as the highest essential values, there was a prioritization of instrumental values, in the form of national/ethnic, religious, or state interests. At the core of this concept is the political myth of the nation or ethnicity, which is chosen by politicians primarily for narratives in times of crisis because it is at the core of identity and as such is close to members of the community to which they address (Altagić, 2017: 120). Thus, the collapse of socialism with the systematic suppression and denial of cultural (national, ethnic, religious, etc.) differences resulted in the accumulation of tensions and conflicts on national and religious grounds, which culminated in the outbreak of civil war in the former Yugoslavia (Lukač, Ivanović, 2014: 1088). Myths about the nation, ethnicity and the need to protect the identity were used in the former Yugoslavia through populist strategies and extreme narratives to provoke tensions, which led to the outbreak of armed conflict. Namely, the nationalist leaders of the 1990s, with their populist approach that contains elements of extreme narratives, tried to convince “their” people that the Yugoslav elites had ignored the legitimate demands of that people for identity, sovereignty and security for too long so paying attention to those legitimate demands was presented as something that was welcome and that was the need of that people. Unfortunately, something similar in terms of political populism with elements of extreme narratives, when it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina, still exists today, and is a serious obstacle to establishing democracy, trust and mutual respect between different ethnic and religious groups living in this country. In this regard, in the next part of the paper we will try to identify and present the specifics of political populism that contains extreme narratives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through the analysis of speeches of some leaders of leading political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina at promotional rallies of their political parties. Three speeches by political leaders of the three leading national parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina were selected for analysis: the Party of Democratic Action (SDA – Stranka demokratske akcije), the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD – Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata) and the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ – Hrvatska demokratska zajednica). These are three selected speeches from the promotional rallies of these political parties that have been held in the last five years, and whose recordings are publicly available on the social network YouTube.

Analysis of Political Populism and Extreme Narratives of the Leading Parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Address delivered by Bakir Izatbegović, President of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), at the central pre-election rally held on October 2, 2018 in Tuzla:³ "... elections are coming, we will win. So, the people feel it, you know, the people have tried it. They lied to the people and promised everything, and BiH 100%, there is nothing they did not do. All one by one, that Radončić will build some highways with six lanes, so he didn't build a single meter. So, our people are wise, they feel that a difficult mandate is coming, that they have to rely on the party that has staff, with a lot of experience. Experienced people, who are not afraid, who will recognize bluffs or real dangers... It is a difficult mandate behind us people; it is a difficult mandate for you, too. You know what it looked like, you were pulling uphill in a car, and two were pulling a handbrake, and five were wrestling around that steering wheel. We have these five-member coalitions, and we have sounded.... He (Fadil Novalić, editor's note) and I visited a factory of purpose-built production. We are making the first Bosnian-Herzegovinian rifle there. The barrel is in the rifle, the heart of the system. So our barrel can withstand 20,000 rounds, without changing those characteristics. The best in the world! That factory produces 500,000 bullets for that rifle. So, the 92nd year will never happen to us again. Thank you for that, Fadil. As I said, we are going into a difficult mandate. These nationalisms are awakening. You can see Belgrade, you can see Zagreb, and you can see their players here in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As Hadžihafizbegović said, I often felt like I was pulling a rope, and there were seven on the other side. These people from Bosnia and Herzegovina from the presidency, born in Bosnia and Herzegovina, swore to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, receive a salary from the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and work for other countries. Thus, you can see that some openly call for divisions, connection with the solution in Kosovo, characterize war criminals. Our people feel that they must think well and strengthen the only party that truly defends Bosnia and Herzegovina and the SDA to the end. There are parties attacking Bosnia and Herzegovina, mostly Serbs. There are Croatians who would encircle it, part of its territory, institutions, create a new constituency, a special one. There are these Bosniak, patriotic, parties that bring intrigue into political life for personal reasons and there are political parties. They say that they produced 127 parties. We actually have 126 political parties, and one of the leaders, and the people know that. He knows when others say, this is not our war, when they freeze the activities of the party, on whom they will rely. Every war, every battle, every reform, every risk, every problem of this country is ours and we will be the only one to solve it. So, you watch and measure football teams by those players they have, so no one has anything incomparable with SDA players, they have gone through political, military, ideological struggles for this people and this country. Among us,

3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ih1rGVgiVjE>, available on 03.11.2021.

the closest to Alija Izatbegović, his first associate was Šefik Džaferović. The man who is too modest for Balkan politics and who is always on task. So, always first at work, always last to leave and never until the matter is resolved. My first collaborator, the man I always relied on the most, on which the SDA relied the most, on whom, after all, this country relied the most. So, he is our candidate for the presidency. A man, as they said a moment ago, who came from the working class, who looks like his people, the best in his people, who looks like his party, the best in that party; the man who made a career without the help of others. He was a poor student in Sarajevo, you know he didn't go on vacation; he worked in the summer, transshipped cement and was the best student at the University of Sarajevo. And then the best judge, and then the best parliamentarian, according to the assessment of the Civil Initiatives, and not mine. He won the largest number every time he went to the polls. So, Šefik Džaferović, SDA is the strength of the people. I have to say a few words about his rivals, so you know Bećirović here, man, here is what they have been saying for 20 years at the state manger and I wish them best, just don't try to really take that leading position, inexperienced people can't do that, soft or sensitive people, that can people who have experience in both the political and military defenses of Bosnia and Herzegovina. And I won't spend a lot of words on him. But I must also mention the latter. So, there is a connection between Dodik and Radončić. You see, by attacking Karadžić, Dodik made a political career, when he needed foreigners, when they were strong, when they were deciding, to sit in Karadžić's chair. He said that he was the greatest evil for the Serbian people until he sat in his chair. And then when Karadžić found himself in that tiny room in The Hague, then he gave him the decoration of the Republic of Srpska. With Radončić, the opposite is true; he said about Alija that he is the greatest son of these peoples, that he is the greatest person in 100 years. So, don't let him humiliate your intelligence. He has been humiliating Bosniaks for 20 years. He heard those jokes about Bosnians when he came to this country, and then he slowly turned things around, so he accused Alija Izatbegović and the Bosniak mafia of starting the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and receiving congratulations from Dodik and Krajina. Don't forget that. Don't forget him that he never went to Kovači. A Muslim who makes rakija (brandy), goes to Eid, buys a suit, then to the mosque once a year and Radončić never does that. He mentions a state Bosniak mafia, who about what, lies about honesty. He knows why he mentions the mafia, because God forbid such a man wins, then we would get to know what the state mafia is, the influence on the judiciary and so on."

With regard to political populism in Izatbegović's speech, we can see that this is a kind of populism as a discourse that claims that this party protects the interests of "ordinary", "pure" people, especially Bosniaks, from "the corrupt elite" from the same people, as well as from "dangerous others", alluding to the Serbian and Croatian national/ethnic community, that is, their political leaders. It should be emphasized here that almost to a somewhat greater extent, political populism in the analyzed address is focused on protection from the so-called "dangerous

others” than to protect against the “corrupt elite”. The pronounced populist discourse is based on listening to, that is, recognizing the needs of the Bosniak people for the protection of national identity, sovereignty and social security, from the so-called “dangerous others”, that is, the other two constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In his speech, he emphasizes the seriousness of the situation, in the sense of endangering these values, emphasizing his party as the true and only protector and savior of the Bosniak people and their vital values. In his speech, he emphasizes that this fact is recognized by the people. Furthermore, he presents his closest associate, a candidate in the elections, as the best example of that “ordinary”, “pure” Bosniak people, emphasizing his personal virtues, emphasizing his working background and diligence, linking them to the public virtues of the people he comes from and the party he comes from. After that, he puts these public virtues against the individual vices of political opponents from the Serb and Bosniak national corps in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He especially focuses on one opponent from the ranks of the Bosniak people, whose vices he emphasizes in order to mobilize the emotions of the Bosniak people, pointing out their disrespect for Bosniak victims of the war in Bosnia, as well as inadequate representation of the role of the Bosniak people in the war in Bosnia.

As to extreme narratives, we can conclude that in a very subtle way, talking about starting the production of high-performance Bosnian-Herzegovinian rifles with an indication of the amount of ammunition production, the same factory, he informs the people that he is ready to use force to protect stated values of the so-called “dangerous others.” The presence of extremism is also reflected in the fact that the address did not mention the option of dialogue, persuasion in order to solve the problem of endangering the vital values of the Bosniak people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, political and military struggle are mentioned on several occasions as two inherent forms of action. Also, the extreme narrative is reflected in the insistence on unanimity, uniformity in the sense of emphasizing one’s own political option as the only one that is a leader and capable of dealing with all problems, and that there is no other option.

Address delivered by Milorad Dodik, President of the SNSD (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats), at the pre-election rally held on August 22, 2021 in Kozara:⁴ “We are the ones who guard the republic (Republic of Srpska), who love the republic, who love every man, man and woman who lives here and who want to live, regardless of those who say that in some other places something is better... There are those among us, who say, people, maybe those who are coming are better. Let them go, don’t let them come back among us, and there are thugs among us who need to be cleared up. And in order for me to clear up and have them, we have to help you not in a whisper, but in a clear voice, of this SNSD, within the SNSD. No one can be appointed on behalf of the SNSD, to turn his head away from any man, from a member of the SNSD. You can’t be a director without calling them

4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmIxlKt_ts0, available on 05.11.2021.

around and helping them. You will not be a director! That's why you have to help me. Whoever does that must deserve it, and must stand in front of the members every six months, and members will say that they can or cannot stay on that position. I will carry out your will. I am the one who will carry out your will. You are more important than all foreigners lining up from east to west. What attracts and motivates me, and what I stay and survive is that this Republic of ours is soaked in the blood people of our people, who fought for freedom here. Milorad Dodik has no right to kneel down and tell a foreigner that he is welcome here, because our ancestors did not give it because of our 30,000 who died for the Republic of Srpska who must not be betrayed. Therefore, our policy is a policy of peace, we are people and a party that promotes peace, we need it, we are not for any wars, no riots, we do not want evil to any man regardless of nation, but do not touch the Republic of Srpska, it is prohibited. That is why we must respect those who gave their lives... And let Bakir Izatbegović try to attack the Republic of Srpska, and he will see how it will be carried out... And his revenge, which he talks about, I am in charge of, so don't worry about anything. The republic can only be stronger and not weaker. We must return what had been taken from us. We will do it persistently, for years if need be. I want to leave the generation behind me who will be patriotic, who will fight for this space, for this air, for this country, not to be ashamed of belonging to this people, this country, to be able to say clearly and loudly that they are patriots, Serbian patriots, and that it is not a bad thing and that it can only be good. When we do that, then we will easily do all our streets and all our roads, as we did and will do."

As for political populism in the analyzed address of Mr. Dodik, we note that this is a form of populism as a discourse that claims that this party protects the interests of "ordinary", "pure" people, and above all Serbian, from "dangerous others". We can conclude that under the so-called "dangerous others", he considers the other two peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina to be "dangerous to others", although he does not explicitly mention the Croatian people, as well as foreigners who come to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, in this category he includes "traitors", "apostates" of their people and their party, that is, those who do not agree with the prevailing views of this party. What is interesting is that when it comes to political populism in a specific address, it does not include the so-called "corrupt elite" as a threat to the "ordinary people" whose interests this party protects, but the focus is primarily on "dangerous others". Thus, the obvious populist discourse is based on listening to, that is, recognizing the needs of the Serbian people in the Republic of Srpska for the protection of national identity, sovereignty and security, from the so-called "dangerous others", i.e., the other two constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the foreign factor. In his speech, he first emphasizes the commitment of his political option to the protection of the Republic of Srpska, all those who cultivate positive emotions towards this area and all persons who live and have a desire to live in this area. And then, he points to the so-called "apostates", to those who believe that some other political options that operate in this area

are a better solution, especially emphasizing as a problem the existence of such in their own ranks, calling for “cleansing”. With skillful rhetoric, he presents his personal effort to purify his own ranks as the general will of the “pure people”, since when he seeks help in the realization of that task, and nominates himself for the realization of that task, repeatedly emphasizing that it is the will of the people. He also directs his rhetoric to mobilize the emotions of the Serbian people, pointing to his personal and moral obligation to persevere in protecting the vital values of the Serbian people in the Republic of Srpska, evoking memories of the number of victims in the fight for the Republic of Srpska and the shed blood of the Serbian people. Furthermore, he emphasizes the peacefulness of his policy, but only to the extent of not encroaching on the sovereignty of the Republic of Srpska. In the final part of the speech, he emphasizes the need for perseverance in the fight for the return of the seized (territory, competencies, editor’s note) Republic of Srpska, as its primary goal with the creation of new generations that will cultivate patriotic feelings and protect the dignity of the Serbian people. He concludes his speech by stating that when these goals are achieved, other issues such as road infrastructure will be easily resolved.

Extreme narratives are very pronounced in the analyzed address. Thus, in the introductory part of his speech, when he addresses the issue of “apostates” from the ranks of his own people and his own party, he makes it clear that they are not welcome in this area. With such rhetoric, he points to the presence of intolerance, non-compromise, unanimity and the pretense of uniformity, as opposed to pluralism in the politics of this party. In addressing the issue of “apostates”, he uses harsh rhetoric using words such as “clear”, “abort”, which can also be considered an extreme narrative, especially given the lack of offering any dialogue or persuasion by legitimate means. In the part where he mentions a possible attack and revenge by Bakir Izatbegović, in a subtle way he makes it known that he is ready to respond by force, which is also considered an extreme narrative. Finally, extreme narratives are reflected in not giving up on the return of the “what had been taken from us”, in a way that the address emphasizes the readiness to go to the extremes when it comes to fulfilling this goal. Finally, as the presence of an extreme narrative, we also find a xenophobic statement in the sense of not expressing welcome to foreigners.

Address delivered by Dragan Čović, President of the HDZ BiH (Croatian Democratic Community) to the central pre-election rally of the HDZ BiH and the coalition of parties of the Croatian National Assembly held on October 4, 2018 in Mostar:⁵“I convey the greetings of all to show how strong the unity is today when it comes to the Croatian people and Croatian national policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I would like to greet you on behalf of our veterans, on behalf of associations originating from the Homeland War, but also on behalf of all commanders, war commanders of the Croatian Defense Council of the City of Mostar. You gave

5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DjhW0ynP7s&t=1075s>, available on 10.11.2021.

everything to be here today... We have to carry a lot on our backs today, on the eve of this election. In the imperfection of the election legislation, we must compensate for this with this kind of unity. In the imperfection of relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the smallest people, we must lead everything that is good in Bosnia and Herzegovina, primarily in the name of the Croatian people, but believe me also in the name of all three constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we must be leaders of all that is good. And order and work and humanity and patriotism, constitutional patriotism in Bosnia and Herzegovina and therefore our story of equality, the story of constitutive peoples can never lose its value if we are in such a community as we are here tonight. I will dwell a little on our key message, the message of unity, because many have speculated about whom we are sending that message to. You see, we don't deal with anyone; competition is competition, all respect to each of them. Whatever they say about us, no matter how dark it may be, let it be attributed to them. Everyone has to talk about themselves. We have to look far, far ahead to catch up with everything that has been spent, and has not done in the past years. Our unity, primarily within the Croatian people, first of all our unity here in Mostar. All of you young people, you have filled this hall until the top, I invite you once again. We must show our strength here in Mostar. You are the youth of the Croatian Democratic Community and not only the Croatian Democratic Community. You are the representatives of the women's community, which has one special power and community within the Croatian Democratic Community of the Croatian people. Association of women HDZ in BiH "Queen Katarina Kosača" is the pride of the Croatian Democratic Community and I am sure that it will show it in a practical way not only in these pre-election activities, but just when we should start after October 8 to build legislative and executive power, to build good for ourselves in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the unity of all of us in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Together with our founders and I greet all the founders of the Croatian Democratic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina present here, you are the strength you are the wisdom that together with President Tuđman launched the whole project to preserve the Croatian people. So that in the most difficult times, the Croatian people can say where they belong and what and how they think. And you will always have a special place within the main party of the Croatian people, within the Croatian Democratic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dear friends, this unity is not only for Croats. This unity is also for our brothers, our Bosniak friends for our Serb friends, to hear well because this is broadcast exclusively through the internet television of the Croatian Democratic Community, because we do not have other televisions. We don't have channels in our language, but they will hear clearly enough. We invite them to one great community in which we can realize all the programs about which I will talk more about, later. This is a force that today can be made by the smallest people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the largest people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, not tucked away by numbers like the other two nations, that our programs are joint programs. Fellowship with the international community, which we have often mentioned at some of our previous gatherings in

a positive light... Dear Mr. Plenković, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, you said that you have been to Bosnia and Herzegovina 12 times in two years. It is a community that leaves no one and absolutely no one indifferent... In the strength of the community, we will send the message that no one can elect legitimate representatives of Croats, neither in the presidency, nor in the House of Peoples, nor in the federal assembly can't... We have a special task to relieve our businessmen fiscally, completely; I see a lot of them here. This will enable our salaries to go to 1100, 00 BAM and more on average. That's the way; you can't live here for 700, 00 or 800, 00 BAM. Because of that, the temptations in the next four years become more complex for all of us, but that is our obligation. And when some criticize us for not doing something good, I say that of course everything that worked well is HDZ and NHS, everything that is wrong is again the fault of HDZ and HNS, no hand washing, it is our responsibility, and we will become even stronger. Let us be called out even more, but we must be even more motivated... And that is why you young people have a message, get fully involved in the political life of both HDZ and the Croatian people, be part of our parliamentary majorities, be part of our executive power, because your strength and energy should recognize what you see today as a problem in life in our Mostar, and in Herzegovina and in Bosnia and Herzegovina in general... A mother who worked or did not work has to receive maternity allowance. That is the policy of the Croatian Democratic Community, which is the demographic policy. A Christian Democratic party such as the Croatian Democratic Community is based on the family on one populist people, so we must pact it to the end... I am called out to hug war criminals. I do not embrace any war criminal; I embrace the honorable leaders of the defense of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The values of the Homeland War are sacred. Protecting the dignity of our defenders is sacred... We must revive the mayor of Mostar, clean it, and turn on all the lights in this city to see every hole, asphalt everything. This was the most beautiful city in Bosnia and Herzegovina and will again be the most beautiful city in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And this is not your policy, this is not the policy of the city of Mostar, this will become the priority policy of the Croatian Democratic Community and the Croatian National Assembly at the county, entity and state level and Herzegovina..., complete equality for the Croatian people as a constituent people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a sovereign people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There will never, ever be a unitary, one-nation civic Bosnia and Herzegovina!"

Regarding Mr. Čović's political populism, in this address we can say that it is a form of populism as a discourse that claims that this party protects the interests of "ordinary", "pure" people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with special focus on Croatian, and "dangerous others". He points out the Bosniaks and Serbs as "dangerous others", who are portrayed as dangerous because they enjoy conformism due to their large numbers, to the detriment of the functioning and progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Euro-Atlantic integration, and to the detriment of the Croat people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Viewed from the aspect of the theoretical definition of political populism in a concrete address, there is no emphasis on the

“corrupt elite” as a threat to the “ordinary people” whose interests this party protects, but the focus is primarily on conformist “dangerous others”. This populist discourse is based on listening to, that is, recognizing the needs of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the preservation of national identity, sovereignty and security, from the so-called “dangerous others”, or the other two constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina who enjoy conformism due to their large numbers. In his welcome speech, he pays special greetings and gratitude to the participants in the civil war from the ranks of the Croatian people, as well as to the associations that emerged from that war, especially emphasizing the military commanders of the Croatian Defense Council of Mostar. In this way, he seeks to mobilize the emotions of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim of gaining support in advocating Croatian national policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, he points to the ungrateful position of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, emphasizing as key problems its small number, compared to the other two constituent peoples, as well as the inadequacy of the electoral legislation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because of this, he insists on unity, explaining what he means by that. From what has been said, it can be concluded that it is primarily a matter of unity within the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also unity with the Croatian people in Croatia and the state of Croatia. Also, in his speech, Mr. Čović openly offers the policy of unity to the Bosniak and Serb people in Bosnia and Herzegovina in one part of his speech. And then he emphasizes one contradictory statement, that on the basis of that unity, the message of this political option is that no one can elect representatives of Croats (except Croats, author’s note). In his speech, he promises to increase the standard of living in terms of reducing fiscal obligations to businessmen, increasing salaries and providing affirmative measures to mothers. In relation to possible provocations, accusations by the opposition, he emphasizes on two occasions in his speech that he will not address or respond to that. In the final part of his speech, he especially addresses young people, inviting them to get involved in the political life of this political option. He concludes his speech by pointing to the leading political goal of this option, which is the legal equality of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the other two, with the view that he will never allow the creation of a unitary, one-nation civic Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Extreme narratives are poorly expressed in the analyzed address. In fact, when it comes to this speech a very moderate and cautious tone in the absence of inflammatory rhetoric can be seen at first glance. However, certain extreme attitudes can be identified in this speech. First of all, in the part in which he distances himself from the accusations of alleged “hugging war criminals”, Mr. Čović points out that “the value of the Homeland War is sacred” and that “protection of the dignity of Croatian defenders” is sacred. So, on this issue, there is an obvious extreme attitude that we should not touch on this topic in any case. Finally, there is the extreme position on the issue of the explicit exclusivity of the option of creating a unitary, mono-ethnic civilian Bosnia and Herzegovina. It can be pointed out as extreme

that although this speech provided an open hand to the Bosniak and Serb people in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the sense of unity, it did not emphasize that this meant dialogue between these entities, but emphasized the policy of the Croatian national question as the only possible one.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of all three addresses of the leaders of the three largest national parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we can conclude that they are based on populist discourse based on listening to the needs of their own people to protect national identity. Thus, the protection of national identity is the most vital value of the people living in this area, which is generally considered a necessity of physical survival. Considering the very turbulent history, fresh memories of war events and numerous unresolved issues from the past, with a pronounced principle of exclusivity in the formation of national/ethnic and religious identities of the three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fear of threats to identity, national sovereignty and security the group is deeply offended. It is this fear that members of all three groups have a strong need to protect these values. This need has been recognized by all these political options, whose speeches of the leaders have been analyzed in this paper, and on that basis populist narratives have been tailored, which also contain elements of extreme attitudes. If we look at the narratives in these three addresses, we can conclude that when it comes to political populism in them is based on the discourse of protecting the vital values of “ordinary” own people from dangerous “others”, which means the other two peoples. In the populist narratives of the subject of this analysis, the concept of populism is underrepresented, based on the opposition of the interests of the “pure people” and the “corrupt elite”, which can be justified to some extent by the fact that these are political options in power, which actually represent the leading elites. Also, what is characteristic of all three populist narratives is the subordination of the satisfaction of some everyday needs, such as the need for infrastructure, employment, better health care, education, etc., the need to protect national identity, sovereignty and social security. In addition to this, all three populist narratives have a firm position on the issue of looking at the role of their people in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and they consider this issue a kind of sanctuary that must not be touched. In all three narratives, the cult of on-duty culprits and on-duty “dangerous others” is cultivated, with the fact that the citizens who belong to the so-called “dangerous others” struggle with the same problems and adversities, so the question can rightly be asked how much they really contributed to the bad situation of a given national/ethnic or religious community, or how much they really threaten its vital values. None of the three analyzed speeches offered solutions to numerous problems, not even for those addressed in these speeches, but all three options were presented as the only saviors of their people, the only saviors of the situation, without explaining how they will provide protection of vital values of

the “common people”. It should be emphasized here that in all three speeches, political leaders address primarily their people and that to the representatives of their people who are committed to that political option, that is, to pre-determined voters. In that address, with skillful rhetoric, they emphasize their ideas as the ideas of the people they are addressing, and their commitment to put them into practice by playing the card of mobilizing emotions. Elements of extreme narratives are present in all three addresses. Of course, we must admit that the speeches of Mr. Izatbegović and Mr. Dodik are much more filled with these narratives, as well as threats of the use of force, while the speech of Mr. Čović is much lower and in a much more moderate tone. When it comes to extreme narratives, that extremity in all three addresses is manifested in exclusivity, in the sense of recognizing the existence of only one adequate political ideology (one’s own). Then, in none of the three analyzed addresses was a dialogue option offered. In addition to this, the extremity of the narrative is reflected in the extreme inflexibility regarding the own national policy of each of the three constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In fact, as we pointed out at the beginning of this paper, which was confirmed through the analysis of the speeches of the leaders of the three largest national parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the lack of consensus on any key state and political issue between these political options is more than pronounced. The only thing that is unquestionable is that each of the three options advocates independence in deciding on important national issues of its social community. This state of affairs, in terms of the top of the political scene of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is reflected in the representation of political populism based on ethnicity and “dangerous others”, with extremes in not giving up their own views, which are irreconcilable and diametrically opposed, with unwillingness to dialogue and compromises, with the willingness to use force in resolving common state and political issues, the Bosnian-Herzegovinian society maintains in a vicious circle from which there is no way out in terms of establishing a democratic society, with a high level of mutual trust and respect between members of the three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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POLITIČKI POPULIZAM I EKSTREMIZAM U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI KAO PRIJETNJA USPOSTAVLJANJU DEMOKRATIJE, IZGRADNJI POVJERENJA I MEĐUSOBNOG POŠTOVANJA

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Rezime: Predmet ovog rada jeste analiza populističkih narativa lidera vodećih političkih partija u Bosni i Hercegovini uz ukazivanje na zajedničke karakteristike i identifikovanje segmenata ekstremizma u ovim narativima, te ocjeni uticaja koji ovakvi narativi mogu imati na uspostavljanje demokratije, međusobnog povjerenja i poštovanja različitih etničkih i vjerskih grupa koje žive na prostoru ove društvene zajednice. U uvodnom dijelu rada, autor daje kratak prikaz složene istorije bosanskohercegovačkog društva sa posebnim fokusom na način formiranja nacionalnih identiteta tri konstitutivna naroda u Bosni i Hercegovini. U ovom dijelu autor takođe ukazuje na činjenicu dominacije nacionalnih partija na političkoj sceni Bosne i Hercegovine i daje ocjenu aktuelnog odnosa vodećih političkih partija sva tri konstitutivna naroda u ovoj državi prema vitalnim državnim i političkim pitanjima. Nakon toga, autor se u radu bavi definisanjem populizma kroz tri najzastupljenija gledišta na ovu društvenu pojavu, tj. populizma kao stila, populizma kao strategije i populizma kao ideologije. Pored ovoga prikazano je i shvatanje populizma kao stava zasnovanog na osluškivanju potreba naroda. Autor je u radu ukazao na koji način se populizam ispoljava kod političkih opcija lijeve i desne orijentacije, ukazujući na osnovne karakteristike ljevičarskog i desničarskog političkog populizma. Pri definisanju formi ispoljavanja populističkih ideologija posebno je istaknuto da se u istom "čist", odnosno "običan narod" sa svojim vrlinama i vrijednostima suprotstavlja "korumpiranim elitama" i/ili "opasnim drugima". U tom kontekstu, autor daje objašnjenje da se, kada je u pitanju Zapadni Balkan, uključujući i prostor Bosne i Hercegovine, pod "opasnim drugima" u smislu političkog populizma uglavnom smatraju druge nacionalne/etničke i vjerske zajednice koje tradicionalno žive na ovim prostorima. U centralnom dijelu rada ukazano je na to da politički populizam koncipiran na "opasnim drugima" dovodi do pojave nacionalizma, straha od ugroženosti nacionalnog identiteta, ekstremnih ideologija i sličnih negativnih pojava, što autor smatra najznačajnijim za razumijevanje odnosa između populizma i ekstremizma. Kako bi detaljno predstavio prirodu tog odnosa, autor je u radu najprije prikazao razumijevanje samog pojma ekstremizam, uz ukazivanje na osnovne elemente političkih ideologija koje na ekstreman način pristupaju nekom političkom pitanju. U smislu prikazivanja ovog odnosa, istaknuto je da je tačka preklapanja populizma i ekstremizma prioritizovanje jedne društvene grupe ("običnog naroda" određene nacionalne/etničke ili vjerske pripadnosti) nad drugim društvenim grupama ("opasnim drugima"). U tom kontekstu, autor ističe da

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se i populizam i ekstremizam “napajaju” istim animozitetima prema “opasnim drugima” što je posebno karakteristično za zemlje bivše Jugoslavije, a samim tim i za bosanskohercegovačko društvo. Shodno navedenom, rad je imao za cilj da ukaže na specifičnosti političkog populizma u Bosni i Hercegovini uz ukazivanje na prisutnost ekstremizma u narativima političkih lidera na ovom prostoru i uticaja koji politički populizam i ekstremizam imaju na uspostavljanje demokratije, povjerenja i međusobnog poštovanja različitih etničkih i vjerskih grupa koje žive na prostoru Bosne i Hercegovine. U skladu sa ovim ciljem, autor je u centralnom dijelu rada prikazao određeni dio govora tri politička lidera vodećih nacionalnih partija u Bosni i Hercegovini, gospodina Bakira Izatbegovića, gospodina Milorada Dodika i gospodina Dragana Čovića. Radi se obraćanjima sa promotivnih skupova Stranke demokratske akcije (SDA), Saveza nezavisnih socijaldemokrata (SNSD) i Hrvatske demokratske zajednice (HDZ). Nakon toga, autor je izvršio analizu ovih obraćanja, sa aspekta zastupljenosti populističkih narativa uistim, ukazujući kako na zajedničke karakteristike ovih govora, tako i na prisutnost segmenata ekstremizma koji postoje u ovim narativima. U zaključnom dijelu rada, autor iznosi svoje stavove po pitanju negativnih konsekvenci koje egzistiranje ovakvog vida političkog populizma ostavlja na Bosanskohercegovačko društvo uopšte.

Ključne riječi: populizam, ekstremizam, demokratija, izgradnja povjerenja, poštovanje, narativi, diskurs...