**On behalf of the ‘person in the street’ or On the spectre of populism circling over Serbia and Croatia**

Although populism has been one of terms most frequently used in the last half century in social discourse understood in the wide sense, scholars are still debating its definition. They differ both in respect of the appraisal of the phenomena conducive to the emergence of populism and the interpretation of its relations with democracy. The article aims, on the one hand, at outlining these disputes in some detail and, on the other, at briefly describing the history and significance of populism in Serbia and Croatia over the past century.

The point of departure for these considerations is the turn of nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when agrarian movements, later classified as populist, mostly by foreign scholars, emerged in the states in question. I then point to elements of the populist strategy resorted to at the end of the nineteen eighties by Slobodan Milošević in his, so-called, anti-bureaucratic revolution, whereby he intended to enhance his power. In the final part of deliberations, which deal with the early twenty tens, I focus on the new populist turn, visible in both states, this time founding its base in the political parties.

The analysis thus carried out leads to the conclusion that, apart from the period the of strong agrarian movements, resorting to populist strategies performs a much more important role in Serbia. It seems that the reason for this state of affairs should be sought primarily in the legacy of a patriarchal past that still lingers powerfully in that state, promoting collectivism and ‘equality in poverty’, which are opposed to modernisation and the values of liberal democracy.

**Tags:** populism, agrarianism, populist parties, Serbia, Croatia