



**Call for Papers "Geopolitics & Values: what is the real power of the EU?"**

**IDEOLOGICAL CLASH  
BETWEEN EUROPE'S HYBRID REGIMES AND THE EU**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In the last decade, hybrid regimes established themselves within the European Union (EU) and its sphere of influence, ultimately undermining its soft power. Hybrid regimes do not conform to the traditional molds of democracy or autocracy, and this intentional ambiguity is most visible when analyzing the level playing field around the elections. The countries chosen for the analysis are Poland and Serbia, the former being a member state and the latter a candidate. Actors chosen for study are their respective ruling parties, *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* or PiS and *Srpska Napredna Stranka* or SNS. The article will provide a short overview of democratic backsliding and the events around elections during the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic. In a crisis, such as a pandemic, authorities have the opportunity to expand their powers. This opening is a double-edged sword as the EU could reassert its soft power, or its home-grown hybrid regimes could reshape the Union.

## **Short bio**

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## INTRODUCTION

How did pandemics shape our world before? The Black Death is perhaps the most notable example as it led to the creation of health care as we know it and the concept of quarantine. In the past, pandemics shaped the way we think and socialize. But until a few months ago, they did not rank high on the concerns list. This changed in February 2020 when COVID-19, a virus with global precautions, made its way from China to Europe. Scholars, such as Frank M. Snowden and Michel Foucault, have noted that pandemics can dramatically expand governing bodies' powers. This happens because citizens accept restrictions on personal freedoms in the name of common security. (Snowden, 2019) (Foucault, 1975). When such an opportunity arises, what happens in countries where authorities display authoritarian tendencies?

The virus struck Europe when the European Union (hereinafter: EU) had already been engaged in talks of reform and restructuring. First, there was the constitutional crisis in 2005, then there was the 2008 global economic crisis followed by the Eurozone crisis, and finally the migration crisis. All of these crises made it apparent that the bloc has room for improvement. During this time, around the 2010s, most member states became self-absorbed, and the EU experienced a severe case of enlargement fatigue. In the absence of external constraints and incentives, several hybrid regimes established themselves within the EU's sphere of influence. With their existence, they challenged the EU's normative and soft power. This paper will analyze the events in two hybrid regimes within the EU's sphere, Poland and Serbia, during the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic. After, the paper will offer recommendations for the future of the EU's soft power.

### **OVERVIEW: FROM REFORMERS TO AUTOCRATS**

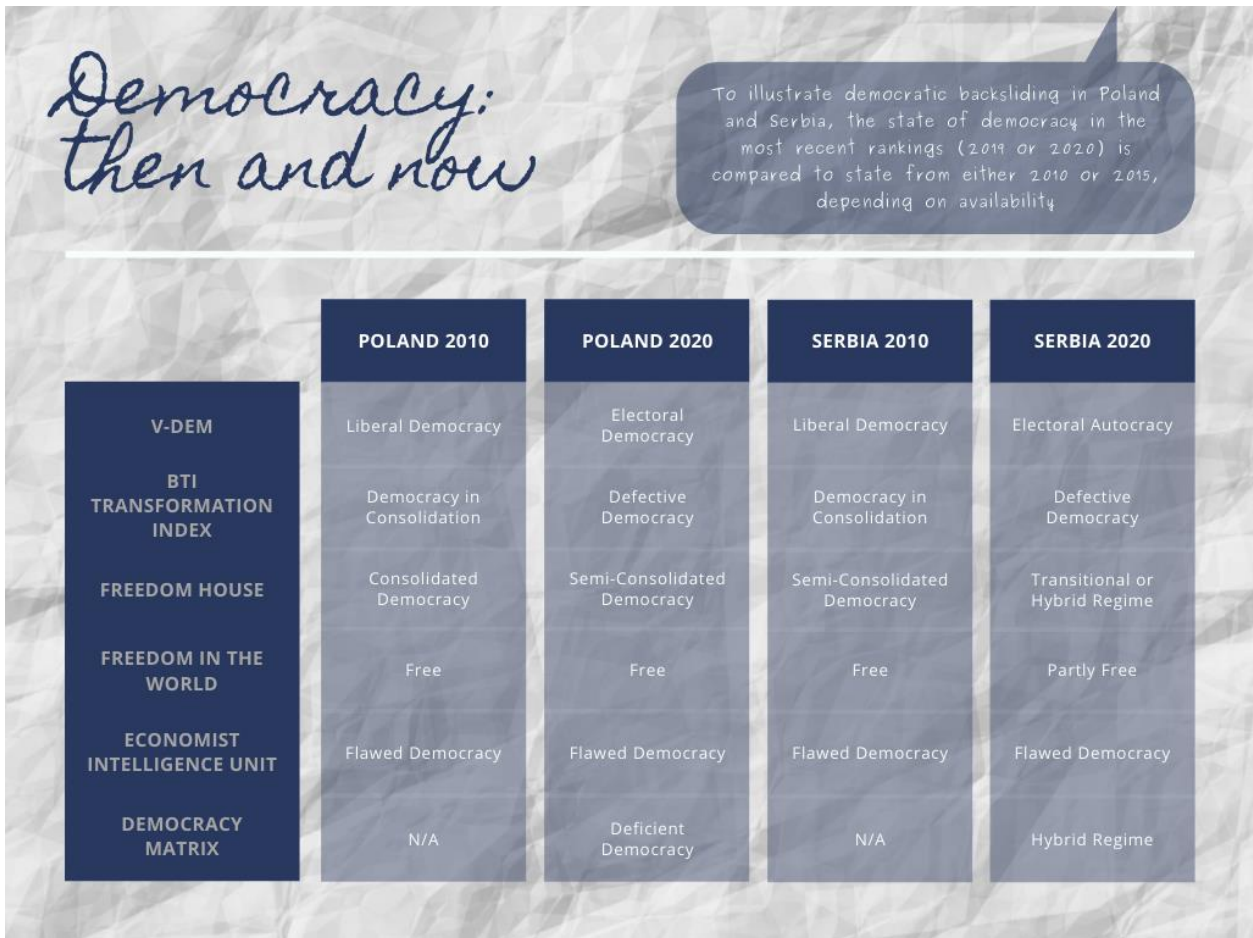
This part will provide a short overview of democracy in both countries before the pandemic and offer a theoretical overview. Hybrid regimes are regimes that bear the marks of democracy and dictatorship but do not conform to either of the molds. Until the 2010s, it was assumed that these regimes are transitioning. Either, a fragile transitioning democracy will consolidate, or a figure or a party will appear and capture the state. In a way, hybrid was synonymous with transitioning.



The regimes discussed in this paper were born out of different circumstances. In Poland and Serbia, democracy was either consolidated or considered to be close to consolidation. In this paper, the operational definition of democracy will be that of Fareed Zakaria. Zakaria says that for a democracy to be liberal, it has to be marked by (1) free and fair elections but also by (2) the rule of law, (3) a separation of powers, (4) and the protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion and property. (Zakaria, 1997) He points out that liberal and democratic are not necessarily synonymous. Still, from the Copenhagen criteria set in 1993, we can see that the EU's definition of democracy is closest to the one of liberal democracy.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way add one more criterion: the existence of a reasonable level playing field between incumbents and opposition. (Steven Levitsky, 2010) The two cases were chosen because they held the elections as soon as the first lockdowns ended. Hybrid regimes fall short on two or more defining traits of a democracy, but their democratic backsliding is most visible when analyzing the playing field around elections. Scholars cannot agree yet on how to call these regimes as there is such a variety in terms of geography and historical context that enabled it. Often, various adjectives are added to democracy or authoritarianism to demonstrate the particular "hybridness" of a regime. Henry E. Hale illustrated this debate with the acronym SCEAOMIDD (semi-/competitive/electoral authoritarianism or managed/illiberal/delegative democracy) (Honoreta Mazepus, 2016). In a way, hybrid regimes illustrate that democracy and autocracy can be viewed as a spectrum rather than the end goal to achieve one or the other.

The parties in Poland and Serbia did not come to power as hybrid regimes but as pragmatic reformers and disrupters of the status quo. Once in power, the parties slowly reversed previously made democratic institutions. Significantly, the institutions providing checks and balances such as communication regulation agencies or courts. These reversals were often met with blossoming civic society protests, after which the incumbents showed some willingness to cooperate. However, the demonstrations seemed insufficient to prevent the offenses from happening. Each time, the institutions designed in the transition period to keep the checks and balances were less non-partisan and more incumbent-friendly. Eventually, the opposition was left with little to no way to contest the incumbent's authority. It is noteworthy that the transition to democracy and the current hybrid state happened non-violently through elections in both states.



**Table 1: Democracy then and now**

In 2010, a shift happened in Poland - the Smolensk plane crash. Around 100 members of the Polish political elite died, along with the incumbent president. Since then, Law and Justice or *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (hereinafter: PiS) worked to polarize the political landscape. By 2015, several parties disintegrated and formed breakaway parties, and the center and left side of the political spectrum was fragmented. PiS, on the other hand, contained candidates from two more parties, *Polska Razem* (PR) and *Solidarna Polska* (SP). For the first time, a single-party government was formed without having to negotiate with coalition partners.

At the time, Poland was on its way to becoming the first post-socialist country to gain the status of a first-world economy. Poland managed to get out of the 2008-2010 financial crisis unscathed, but citizens' perceptions were not matching. Radoslaw Markowski writes citizens expressed "a preoccupation with alleged threats to Poland and the Polish way of life emanating from wider global forces" (Markowski, 2016). PiS candidate Andrzej Duda consequently won the



presidential elections in 2015, targeting the disenfranchised by globalization. The party promised to restore a decent portion of welfare policies, and according to AP news, the party kept its promise to an extent. The policies "reduced income inequality, creating reservoirs of admiration, especially in rural areas." (Scislowska, n.d.)

In the election campaign, the EU was depicted as a hegemon forcing invaders through Polish borders, determined to wipe out the Polish population. (Narkowicz, 2018) Migrants, most of which were Muslims, were presented as an ontological threat to Polish identity. Similar discourse was pushed by Victor Orban in neighboring Hungary, adding more fuel to Polish claims. Other than migrants, PiS sees sexual minorities and women's access to reproductive health care as an ontological threat as well. On this platform, the party paralyzed the Constitutional Court, oversaw the dismissal of several civil servants, captured the state media, and installed regime-friendly reporters.

In the South, the Serbian Progressive Party or *Srpska Napredna Stranka* (hereinafter: SNS) was formed as a pro-EU reformist party after breaking away from the far-right Serbian Radical Party and with the burden of the past of being a part of Milošević cabinet. Aleksandar Vučić, initially Prime Minister, now President, presented himself as a pragmatic reformer. (Bieber, 2020) With this platform, SNS gained domestic and international support in 2012.

In another life, Vučić was the Minister of Information in the Milošević cabinet. According to the Freedom House reports, only one year had a worse score for media freedom than 2018, and this was 1999, while he was the Minister. Building on these connections made in the late 1990s, the party still keeps tight control over the media. In 2015, the state began to privatize media. However, the process is not finished as the Parliamentary Assembly still finances two state broadcasters, RTS and RTV. The other top four broadcasters, reaching almost 62-3% of the viewers, are sympathetic to the regime. By April 2017, for the Presidential elections, Vučić had ten times more airtime on national broadcasters than all other candidates combined. TVN1, a CNN affiliate, is seen as the only national broadcaster with a more balanced approach, but the channel is only available on cable and reaches around 10% of the households. As of January 2020, two





channels critical of the regime, Nova S and N1, were out of the Telekom Srbija, the state cable package.<sup>1</sup>

The party expanded its arsenal from the original capture of broadcasters to modern platforms. At the end of last year, Twitter removed 8558 accounts for inauthentic coordinated activity (Twitter, n.d.). Reportedly, the accounts were working to promote Serbia's ruling party and its leader. A recent Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) investigation uncovered how hundreds of people log in daily to the so-called [Castle](#) to promote SNS propaganda and disparage opponents. These people are specifically instructed to use their own words to by-pass inauthentic behavior policies. The domain ownership is not visible due to privacy, but the IP address is the same as the party's Belgrade headquarters. (BIRN, 2020)

While in power, the party had to deal with one corruption scandal after the other, but because of the captured media institutions, SNS managed to spin each scandal as lies of the state's opposition and enemies. It is noteworthy that the ontological security in Serbia is framed differently than in Hungary and Poland. A threat to SNS, and Vučić, is an act against Serbia. Religious identity is prominent but not as important as national identity or party belonging. Recent reports show that on an annual level, around 30 000 to 50 000 citizens will be labeled as either traitors, foreign mercenaries, thieves, fascists, or derogatory nationalist terms such as Ustasha or Shiptar. (Dubravka Valić Nedeljković, 2020)

## COVID-19

The paper will analyze the following categorical variables to compare the responses to COVID-19: (1) Opposition boycott; (2) Data breaches with government implications; (3) Anti-government protests during lockdown; (4) Government counter-protests during lockdown; (5) Anti-EU rhetoric; (6) Seeking and affirming external partnerships; (7) EU threats of punitive measures; (8) Post-lockdown major protests; (9) Preserving traditional family values; (10) Unfair election coverage. These variables will illustrate that because of the dense ties to the EU, European hybrid regimes, be it member states or candidates, share more similarities than differences.

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<sup>1</sup> See: (Pavlović, D., 2019. The political economy behind the gradual demise of democratic institutions in Serbia. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 20(1), pp.19-39.), (Media Ownership Monitor. 2020. *Serbia*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.mom-rsf.org/en/countries/serbia/>> [Accessed 5 December 2020]), (N1 Srbija. 2020. *Supernova Ne Emituje Kanale N1, Sportklub, Vavoom, Cinemania I Grand*. [online] Available at: <<https://rs.n1info.com/Vesti/a561674/Supernova-od-danas-ne-emituje-kanale-N1-Sportklub-Vavoom-Cinemania-i-Grand.html>> [Accessed 5 December 2020].)



### **(1) Opposition boycott**

Both countries' elections were set to be held in the first part of 2020. The pandemic derailed these plans, but this did not stop the elections from eventually taking place. In Poland, the presidential elections were scheduled in May. First lockdown measures were introduced in late March, and much like everywhere else, mass gatherings were banned. In Serbia, the parliamentary elections were set to be held in April but were postponed. The lockdown started on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, and it was one of the harshest in Europe. There was a series of lockdown measures more or less comparable to those in the rest of Europe: restricted movement of senior citizens and non-essential movement of those under 65. However, one notable exception was that nobody could leave their house from Friday to Monday, save those who could walk their dog for 2 hours and essential personnel. (BiEPAG, 2020)

The lockdown meant that the incumbents in both countries would profit from a sort of prolonged election campaign and, because of that, were reluctant to postpone the elections. Eventually, they complied with the external and internal pressures. In Serbia, even before the pandemic, most of the opposition decided to boycott the elections to de-legitimize them. (European Western Balkans, 2020) In Poland, doubts were raised about the possibility of arranging a short-notice postal ballot for around 30 million voters without fraud. (Shotter, n.d.) Moreover, the European Parliament passed a resolution about EU coordinated action to combat the pandemic singling out Polish Presidential elections in the middle of the pandemic as irresponsible and "undermining the concept of free, equal, direct and secret elections as enshrined in the Polish Constitution" (European Parliament, 2020). Around the same time, nine former Polish prime ministers and presidents, including significant figures like Donald Tusk and Lech Walesa, called for a boycott of the elections. (Reuters, 2020) (Aljazeera, 29)

### **(2) Data-breaches with government implications**

In Poland, fears of election tampering materialized on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April when a massive data breach happened. At 2am several officials received an email from an entity presenting itself as Polish Postal Service (*Poczta Polska*) asking the officials to provide them with data of their constituents, including phone numbers, addresses, marital status, maiden names, and national



identification numbers.<sup>2</sup> *Poczta Polska* warned the officials not to answer the email. (*Związek Miast Polskich*, n.d.) The officials stated their intention to file a lawsuit. Eventually, because of this scandal and several others, which will be discussed later in the paper, the elections were rescheduled from the 10<sup>th</sup> of May to the 28<sup>th</sup> of June.

In Serbia, every citizen of age was offered Coronavirus welfare relief of 100 EUR. Some warned of data breaches early on. (N1, 2020) Pensioners, as the biggest SNS voting bloc, could get the money automatically. Shortly after the lockdown was lifted, pensioners received a reminder in the mail of all the things the party did to protect them during the crisis, encouraging them to vote for the rescheduled elections on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June. Various anonymous sources confirmed senior citizens they know received the same letter. It remains to be seen if the government will use other citizens' data as it already used the data to locate senior citizens physically. (See ANNEX 1 – Election tampering)

### **(3) Anti-government protests during the lockdown;**

In Poland, two controversial bills were set to be voted on in April – the Stop Abortion and Stop Pedophilia bill. Under the then-law, “abortion is only legal to safeguard the life or health of women, in situations of severe or fatal fetal anomaly, or if a pregnancy results from rape or another criminal act such as incest.” However, due to the “conscience clause” access to abortion is often limited in practice. The clause permits medical workers to refuse the service based on their personal or religious beliefs. The “Stop Abortion” bill would amend the criminal code eliminating access to abortion even in cases of a severe or fatal anomaly. The second bill would amend the criminal code to sanction anyone who “promotes or approves the undertaking by a minor of sexual intercourse or other sexual activity.” While this may seem harmless, teachers, authors, and healthcare personnel fear providing information and sexual education would earn them a sentence of up to three years of prison for doing their jobs.

Before the pandemic, both bills were stalled since their introduction in 2018. (Human Rights Watch, 2020) Discussing the law during the state of emergency was condemned by

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<sup>2</sup> See: (Twitter.com. 2020. *Aleksandra Duliewicz*. [online] Available at: <[https://twitter.com/Dulkiewicz\\_A/status/1253285540625100800](https://twitter.com/Dulkiewicz_A/status/1253285540625100800)> [Accessed 6 December 2020].), (Twitter.com. 2020. *Arkadiusz Chęciński*. [online] Available at: <<https://twitter.com/ChecinskiPrez/status/1253281702266449920>> [Accessed 6 December 2020].)



Amnesty International Poland and the Human Rights Watch. As two analysts for Foreign Policy note, usually, women would be able to book a flight to a more lenient EU country and obtain abortion services, but this outbreak made things more difficult for Polish women. Krystyna Kacpura, the Federation for Women and Family Planning executive director, known as Federa, estimates that around 150,000 Polish women find other ways to access abortion each year. (Jessica Bateman, 2020) An initiative, Abortion Without Borders, reported to have helped more than 1400 women from Poland and have received 2,234 calls and 458 emails in the first six months of 2020 alone. (Abortion Support Network, 2020) At the moment, several organizations with missions to provide sexual education and quality care are operating. Under the new bills, the workers of these organizations could face imprisonment. (Walker, 2020)

With movement restrictions, the protestors got creative. Slogans were placed on cars, and the half-empty streets of Warsaw were blocked. People stood in supermarket queues carrying slogans, such as “fight the virus, not women.” The opposition accused the government of using the bills to shift the attention away from their inadequate management of the crisis. (Sieradzka, 2020) On the 16th of April, the government decided to postpone the final decision on the bills.

The end of April was turbulent in Serbia as well. Tensions boiled over when an organization called *Ne Davimo Beograd* called for citizens to go out on their balconies on Friday and, after the usual applause for the first responders at 8pm, to start banging pans in dissatisfaction five minutes later. (N1, 2020) Citizens from Belgrade, Leskovac, Niš, and Novi Sad participated in the protests. The protests were called *#BukomProtivDiktature* (Noise Against Dictatorship).

#### **(4) Government counter-protests during lockdown;**

An hour later, the authorities in Serbia showed the all-weekend lockdown does not apply to SNS supporters. Coordinated counter-protests were organized, which the media called “the Pan War.” Blatantly defying the lockdown, unknown men entered buildings carrying torches and speakers and occupied rooftops in four cities. Once on the rooftops, they lit the torches and blasted the same slogans in every city. Many residents complained, reporting that these men do not live in their buildings. The party denied involvement in the counter-protests claiming these were spontaneous reactions of citizens. For this spontaneous outburst of support for the government to take place, the local authorities needed to issue an essential personnel pass. Numerous



housekeepers around the country needed to be aware of their presence.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, some sort of a communication channel on which they agreed they would have the same torches and chant the same slogans in four major cities was necessary. The organization allegedly behind protests does not seem like it has the capacity for such coordination however, the ruling party does.<sup>4</sup> Media sympathetic to the state, such as Pink and RTS, called the citizens protesting from their homes' unpatriotic activists of the opposition and the counter-protesters patriots defending true values. At the same time, a contradictory confession from a high ranking SNS official was posted online. Vladimir Djukanovic went live on his official Facebook page and proudly admitted on SNS is behind counter-protests.<sup>5</sup>

**(5) Anti-EU rhetoric; (6) Seeking and affirming external partnerships;**

PiS and SNS both contested the EU's power but varied in their tactics. SNS did so by seeking and affirming external partnerships while PiS is working on reshaping the EU in their image. The first public tender for procurement by the EU was announced on the 28th of February, and according to various sources, Poland was late for the call. By the 26th of March, several political figures used this to proclaim that the EU solidarity is false and that the EU abandoned Poland in difficult times. (European Commission, 2020) (Zosia Wanat, 2020) (Pankowska, 2020)

Earlier in March, President Vučić proclaimed that Serbia now turns to China. (Simić, 2020) He launched a tirade against European leaders and appealed to China for support. In his attack, he contrasted Europe's weak democratic states, unable to defend themselves from the virus to China, who was presented as the only partner that could protect Serbia. This is a little different than the Polish case as it shows a different trajectory of non-member states, which is to seek external partnerships. Especially those partners who do not demand democratic reforms.

**(7) EU threats of punitive measures; (8) Post-lockdown major protests; (9) Preserving traditional family values;**

<sup>3</sup> Paragraf.rs. 2020. *Odluka O Opštim Pravilima Kućnog Reda U Stambenim I Stambeno-Poslovnim Zgradama Na Teritoriji Grada Beograda*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/odluka-o-opstim-pravilima-kucnog-reda-u-stambenim-i-stambeno-poslovnim-zgradama-na-teritoriji-grada-beograda.html>> [Accessed 5 December 2020].

<sup>4</sup> Instagram.com. 2020. *Udruženje Za Zaštitu Mladih*. [online] Available at: <[https://www.instagram.com/asocijacija\\_mladih/](https://www.instagram.com/asocijacija_mladih/)> [Accessed 5 December 2020].

<sup>5</sup> Facebook.com. 2020. *Vladimir Djukanovic Facebook Live*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/101909194766563/videos/523487684988227/>> [Accessed 5 December 2020].



Because of the boycott and the prolonged campaign, SNS won the parliamentary majority unseen since Milošević times. It's worth mentioning how the 2020 campaign marked a change in tone. From the 2014 slogan "With all force into reforms," the SNS slogan for this Assembly campaign was "[Aleksandar Vučić for our children](#)" although the President was not the candidate. The party aired a pre-election video with the President and a child conversing about the country's brain drain problem. The Regulatory Body for Electronic Media (REM) banned it, citing children's exploitation for campaign purposes. (NUNS, 2020) REM controversy ensued just days later, with many analysts calling the ban on the video a political move used to disguise partisanship because of the report on media representation.<sup>6</sup>

Much like PiS, since 2016, SNS has had trouble with anti-government protests. The election results often triggered protests, and this time was no different. On the 8th of July, Vučić announced the possibility of another all-weekend lockdown due to the second wave of the virus. Citizens took their grievances to the streets as many believed the government rushed to hold the elections without opposition. Around 2am violent clashes with the police started.<sup>7</sup>

In late June, EU funding was withheld from six Polish towns that are self-proclaimed LGBT-free zones. The applications were rejected based on not guaranteeing "equal access and non-discrimination". The EU Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli, said: "the EU values and fundamental rights must be respected by member states and authorities." (Dalli, 2020) Poland's Minister of Justice, Zbigniew Ziobro, has condemned the EU's decision, saying his country will defend the rule of law. (Euronews with AFP, 2020) At the same time, on the 28th of June, the incumbent Andrzej Duda finally won the Presidential Election, notably taking more votes in the rural areas. The Polish Commissioner for Human Rights, Adam Bodnar, and the NGO Article 19 expressed deep concern because of the campaign's one-sided coverage. (Notes from Poland, 2020) (Article 19, 2020). By the accounts of Article 19, 87% of the coverage of the opposition candidate, Rafal Trzaskowski, was negative, while 97% of the information relating to the incumbent was

<sup>6</sup> See: (Kostić, V. and Tomić, J., 2020. *Izveštaj REM-A Stvorio Pogrešnu Sliku O Medijskom Prisustvu SNS-A I Opozicije U Izornoj Kampanji*. [online] Centar za istraživačko novinarstvo Srbije. Available at: <<https://www.cins.rs/izvestaj-rem-a-stvorio-pogresnu-sliku-o-medijskom-prisustvu-sns-a-i-opozicije-u-izornoj-kampanji/>> [Accessed 5 December 2020].), (N1 Srbija. 2020. *Novi Presek REM-A: SNS Zastupljeniji Od Szs, Na RTS-U Manje Od Četiri Minuta*. [online] Available at: <<https://rs.n1info.com/Izbori-2020/a607167/REM-izvestaj-o-zastupljenosti-u-medijima-SNS-vodi.html>> [Accessed 5 December 2020].)

<sup>7</sup> CRTA. 2020. *Zaborav U Službi Neodgovornosti*. [online] Available at: <<https://crtars/zaborav-u-sluzbi-neodgovornosti>> [Accessed 5 December 2020].



positive. The tensions between the government and civil society boiled once again in early August when the Polish Police detained 48 LGBT activists on vandalism charges. (Ciobanu, 2020)

### Summary

*Elections after the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic*

Hybrid regimes within the EU's sphere of influence share more similarities than differences

VARIABLES	POLAND	SERBIA
Opposition boycott	✓	✓
Data-breaches	✓	✓
Lockdown protests	✓	✓
Counter-protests	✗	✓
Anti-EU rhetoric	✓	✓
External partnerships	✗	✓
EU punitive measures	✓	✗
Post-lockdown protests	✓	✓
Traditional family values	✓	✓
Bias election coverage	✓	✓

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**Table 2: Comparative analysis of the variables**

By analyzing categorical variables, we can see there are more similarities than differences between the two cases. Out of the ten variables proposed, only three differ. Variable ten was put in to illustrate everything around the elections was in service of skewing the level playing field even before casting the ballot. During the lockdown, protests were provoked by different events, but both defied and questioned the incumbents' measures and policies. Authorities in Serbia resorted to counter-protests, while in Poland, they temporarily postponed the controversial bills. The Stop Abortion Bill was eventually amended, and abortion in case of fetal anomalies was banned in October 2020, leading to more social unrest. During the first wave, the EU threatened its member state Poland with punitive measures while no such warnings were issued for Serbia, as



it is a candidate state. Serbia contrasted the EU to rivaling China and continued to seek external partnerships with the prospect of full EU membership becoming less likely in the short term. On the other hand, Poland acknowledges its interdependence and wishes to reshape the Union in its image along with Hungary. Both strong ruling parties claimed to be the protectors of traditional family values to different extents. SNS through their election slogan and PiS through affirming their war on everything they perceive as an ontological threat, women's access to reproductive health and LGBT.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

If the EU wants to remain a soft and normative power, it needs to make cost-benefit analysis work in its favor. The strong ruling party will push for liberal reversal and illiberal policies as long as the benefits are high, and the cost is low. If the price of authoritarian tendencies becomes too high and the benefits low, they will revert to being pragmatic reformers or accept short-term power loss. In European hybrid regimes, the voices of pro-European citizens have been dimmed and need external affirmation to be amplified. As Andrzej Mendel-Nykorowycz notes, "the crisis could recalibrate Polish views on Europe, but only if the EU acts decisively." He contrasts data from April where 60% of Poles said they do not trust their government in a poll conducted by ECRC while 46% of Polish voters expect the EU institutions to be Poland's primary source of support in the recovery phase to back up his claim. (Mendel-Nykorowycz, 2020)

Similarly, Politico writes that trust in governments has decreased, and trust in the EU has increased, especially in Poland. (Sugue, 2020) On the other side, the new methodology can be seen as paving the way to a more transparent accession. However, as Srdjan Majstorović puts it, "no methodology can compensate for the general lack of political will" (Majstorovic, 2020). SNS upholds official commitments to EU integration while being on the constant lookout for external partners. It is tempting to analyze Serbia's current ruling elite as the world turning Eastwards. Still, SNS has shown time and time again that their policies are closer to those of PiS and Hungary's Fidesz rather than Vladimir Putin's Russia or Xi Jinping's China. What SNS appreciates in external partnerships is non-conditionality, but does not see itself within Russia's or China's orbit as the primary goal. The main goal is being in the EU, but with eroded conditionality. If the Polish and Hungarian political elites manage to reshape the Union in their image, it will give wind to further democratic backsliding in Serbia.





Just as reversals took years, so too will rebuilding democracy. Democracy has been long assumed as common sense, but common sense today needs to be defended and fought for. Democracy needs nurturing, it may not be easy or perfect, but it is the only system that ensures the most plurality and growth. The EU cannot afford any longer to keep fragile peace with its hybrid regimes. What COVID-19 shows is that the bloc needs to reset to factory settings and demand respect for its founding values – liberal democracy and the rule of law. Members and potential members who do not hold these values to be their own should not profit from the generous recovery fund. There can be no negotiation on the basic concepts such as democracy and the rule of law.

For the EU conditionality to work, it needs to be accompanied by favorable domestic conditions and normative consistency. (Schimmelfennig, 2011) In this case, normative consistency would mean that the EU needs to implement punitive measures on domestic hybrid regimes to reaffirm its goals. Or in other words, the EU would have to do more to restrain rather than sustain its home-grown hybrid regimes. This pandemic is a perfect opportunity for the EU to assert its soft power and use its economic levers to promote its founding goals. Within the historic recovery package, the Rule of Law conditionality is included. Insisting on this conditionality will send a message to members and candidates on norms, thereby asserting the EU's soft power.

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[pay/?fbclid=IwAR0PcCPBEIC9XSj23eSLTZ2F6fEx87N4atJG8vJQ65GKPRir9REd-qf3IzM](https://balkaninsight.com/2020/06/18/the-castle-how-serbias-rulers-manipulate-minds-and-the-people-pay/?fbclid=IwAR0PcCPBEIC9XSj23eSLTZ2F6fEx87N4atJG8vJQ65GKPRir9REd-qf3IzM)

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## ANNEX 1 – ELECTION TAMPERING

### POLAND

From: Wybory 2020 [mailto:wybory2020@poczta-polska.pl]  
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2020 2:26 AM  
Subject: Wybory 2020 - wniosek o przekazanie danych

Do Wójtów, Burmistrzów i Prezydentów Miast

#### Wniosek

Na podstawie art. 99 ustawy z dnia 16 kwietnia 2020 r. o szczególnych instrumentach wsparcia w związku z rozprzestrzenieniem się wirusa SARS-CoV-2 (Dz. U. z 2020 r. poz. 695), w związku z decyzją Prezesa Rady Ministrów z dnia 16 kwietnia 2020 r. (BPRM.4820.2.3.2020) dotyczącą podjęcia przez Poczta Polska S.A. czynności niezbędnych do przygotowania przeprowadzenia wyborów powszechnych na Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej zarządzonych w 2020 r., Poczta Polska S.A. zwraca się z wnioskiem o przekazanie danych ze spisu wyborców, o którym mowa w art. 26 § 4 ustawy z dnia 5 stycznia 2011 r. Kodeks wyborczy (Dz. U. z 2019 r., poz. 684 z późn. zm.) sporządzanego i aktualizowanego przez gminę, jako zadanie zlecone, na podstawie rejestru wyborców, w terminie nie dłuższym niż dwa dni robocze licząc od dnia otrzymania wniosku.

Dane te są niezbędne do realizacji zadań związanych z organizacją wyborów powszechnych na Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej zarządzonych w 2020 roku.

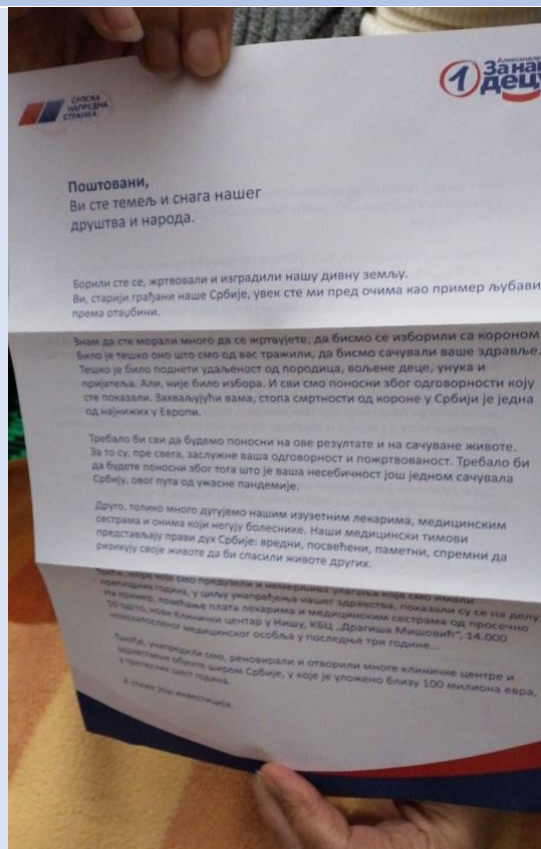
Dane, o których mowa powyżej powinny zostać przekazane w formie dokumentu (plik tekstowy o rozszerzeniu txt lub csv, kodowanego w formacie UTF-8), opatrzonego kwalifikowanym podpisem elektronicznym, podpisem osobistym albo podpisem zaufanym, za pośrednictwem platformy ePLAP, zawierającego następujące dane wyborców znajdujących się w części A spisu wyborców, o którym mowa w art. 26 § 6 pkt 1 ustawy z dnia 5 stycznia 2011 r. – Kodeks wyborczy (Dz. U. z 2019 r. poz. 684, z późn. zm.):

1. PESEL (11 znaków wyłącznie cyfry) – dana obowiązkowa,
2. Kod pocztowy (format: XX-XXX np. 65-001) – dana obowiązkowa,
3. Miejscowość – dana obowiązkowa,
4. Dzielnica (jeżeli brak dzielnicy pole pozostaje puste) – dana obowiązkowa,
5. Ulica (jeżeli brak należy wpisać miejscowość),
6. Numer domu – dana obowiązkowa,
7. Numer mieszkania (jeżeli brak pustą wartość),
8. Imię – dana obowiązkowa,
9. Drugie imię (jeżeli brak pustą wartość),
10. Nazwisko – dana obowiązkowa,
11. Drugie nazwisko (jeżeli brak pustą wartość),
12. Województwo – dana obowiązkowa,
13. Powiat – dana obowiązkowa,
14. Gmina – dana obowiązkowa,
15. Identyfikator miejscowości (SIMC) – dana nieobowiązkowa,
16. Identyfikator ulicy (ULIC) – dana nieobowiązkowa,
17. Identyfikator gminy (TERC) – dana nieobowiązkowa.

Nazwy miejscowości, dzielnicy i ulicy powinny być zgodne z nazewnictwem stosowanym w bazie TERYT.

1

### SERBIA





Source: (Słowik, n.d.)

Source: A pensioner holding a letter from SNS signed by the President, anonymous source