

Abstract

The presented paper deals with a theoretical concept of populism and analysis of political style and politics of one of the most important but also most controversial figures of Italian politics over the past few decades, Silvio Berlusconi.

The main objective of this paper is to verify the initial hypothesis that Silvio Berlusconi is a pragmatic contemporary politician whose politics and the political style includes identifiable elements of populism and to answer the question whether Silvio Berlusconi, due to the theories outlined on populism, could be considered as a representative of populism and whether his case meets the definition criteria set out in the theoretical part. A secondary objective is to provide a clear overview of the conceptual aspects of populism and its causes and identify these on the case of Italy.

The work is divided into three parts. After introduction in a second chapter the theoretical and methodological framework will be defined. With a general focus on the concept of populism we will map the contemporary theoretical knowledge concerning this issue. The paper briefly summarizes the historical development of the populist movement in contemporary Western democracies, clearly and comprehensively summarizes the defining features of the theoretical concept of populism and presents various comprehensive definition of populism, with the emphasis on work and interpretation of the most important authors. The theoretical part also includes identification of ideological, political and socio-economic conditions that allow or facilitate the emergence of populism. Examined is also the question, what is the relationship of populism and democracy.

On this theoretical basis the concept of populism is then applied to the case of Italy, in order to verify whether any of the features in the definition of the concept of populism could be found in the Italian political system and specific policies and political style of Silvio Berlusconi. The third part of the paper offers brief summary of the history of contemporary Italy, the main aspects of the political system and the conditions that may facilitate the emergence and development of populism. The work deals with the personality of the media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi, with his role, politics and the development of his political party Forza Italia, where we try to identify the specific features of populism. The conclusion summarizes the results of analysis and partially confirms the initial hypothesis and the claim that Silvio Berlusconi according to the concept of populism cannot be considered as a

populist, however, his political style and especially rhetoric contains significant features of populism.