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SS1: Divided Societies and Ethnic Voting

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Ethnopolitical Resilience and Opposition Dynamics in Bosnia and Herzegovina

This paper investigates the formation and engagement of political opposition in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through the instruments of multi-level power-sharing, the Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995 transformed inter-ethnic armed conflict into inter-ethnic electoral competition, fostering ethnopolitical parties while aiming to regulate the political representation of ethnic groups. Consequently, despite the high degree of pluralism, with numerous parties and coalitions participating in elections, ethnicity remains a key determinant of political dynamics within the consociational framework. Previous research indicates that it results in closed electoral subsystems creating mutually exclusive electoral constituencies within which parties of the same ethnic background compete for votes within their own ethnic groups. Yet, little attention has been given to understanding how opposition operates within these dynamics. This paper identifies two levels of opposition activities: classical political opposition towards the government and intra-group opposition within ethnically polarised electoral bodies. Specifically, the paper will seek to identify where in the social space the opposition is rooted and how it may challenge the dominant ethnopolitical matrix that entrenches ethnic differences and bases political allegiances on the electorate rather than political ideology. The analysis also examines nominally multi-ethnic parties and explores cross-ethnic voting tendencies, concluding that overcoming ethnic political realities is essential for democratisation, although it also requires transformative approaches within the ethnically defined electoral sub-systems.

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Segmented Electoral Competition in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A Cautionary Tale on the Limits of Ethnic Vote Pooling

This paper examines electoral competition and vote pooling in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia has a complex political system established through the Dayton Peace Agreement that incorporates power-sharing elements like proportional representation and ethnic quotas to manage tensions between the country's Bosniak, Serb, and Croat populations. However, this system has also led to the development of an ethnically segmented party system with little incentive for cross-ethnic cooperation. Electoral data from national parliamentary elections from 1996 to 2018 demonstrates the stability of ethnically divided party blocks over time. The proportional electoral system rewards small, regional parties and does not incentivize inter-ethnic appeals or vote pooling. A few instances where some form of cross-ethnic voting has occurred are examined, however, these cases generally involve uni-directional voting rather than genuine moderation or cooperation across ethnic divides. Overall, the paper argues that Bosnia's political institutions and social cleavages make inter-ethnic vote pooling extremely unlikely without significant changes to the electoral system or the development of moderate cross-community parties that can represent all ethnic groups.

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The Impact of Personalisation of the Electoral System on Personalisation of Political Parties: Experience from Kosovo* and Bosnia and Herzegovina

In this paper, we examine the effects of electoral system personalization on interparty democracy through a comparative analysis of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*. Using a 'most similar system design,' we examine two post-conflict countries where recent developments and international involvement have independently shaped electoral systems, allowing us to control for party interests. Drawing on data from the Comparative Candidate Study (CSS) and party statutes analysis, we explore how personalisation of electoral systems influences political party personalization and democratization within these post conflict societies. Our findings highlight the varying impact of preferential voting and candidate selection procedures on party personalization. While a robust preferential electoral system strengthens MPs' role in intra-party decision-making, its effectiveness is constrained by party leadership's control over candidate selection processes. This analysis contributes to our understanding of the relationship between electoral system design and party dynamics.

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What is a Multi-Ethnic Party and Why You Need to Know How to Spot a Phony One

Multi-ethnic parties have been variously defined: as those which do not champion the interests of, or mobilize against, any specific ethnic group; as those with a recognisably cross-communal leadership or membership; and as those which acquire a distribution of support across groups. This paper outlines the difficulties encountered by those who prefer the programmatic approaches and makes the case that mono- or cross-community support provides the best method of differentiating ethnic from multi-ethnic parties. It draws on a new 132-country dataset that uses surveys which allow cross-tabulation of party affiliation with ethnicity so as to identify both the world's most deeply divided polities and the larger multi-ethnic ethnic parties that subsist within those starkly polarized countries. We focus particularly on Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Latvia, and Sierra Leone, but also the better known cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Northern Ireland. In highly ethnicized party systems, one frequently encounters one group that is able to champion its communal interests through a liberal and universalist agenda that either promotes 'minority rights' or the importance of 'majority rule' through ostensibly 'multi-ethnic' parties. Commentators from outside these countries, including both diplomats and scholars, are often highly critical of overtly ethnic parties but may be more easily deceived by these pseudo multi-ethnic parties. They thereby risk being drawn into taking sides in partisan communal conflicts.

SS2: Personalisation, Populism and Media in South-East Europe and Beyond

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Speaking Power to the People: Serbian and Brazilian Media Systems in Populist Times

A decline in journalistic standards and increased media control are well recognized hallmarks of increased autocratization and democratic backsliding. This paper investigates the impact of populism on media landscapes in Serbia and Brazil, two countries with divergent structural factors (wealth, EU relationship, democratic history, political system) yet similar declines in media quality and quality of democracy. Employing a Most Different Systems Design (MDS), we use Serbia as a 'standard' case of populist control and Brazil as a 'surprising case', drawing on qualitative semi-structured interviews with Brazilian journalists. Results reveal the ways in which populist aspiring autocrats in both countries effectively exploited media system vulnerabilities, such as concentrated power and regulatory weaknesses, to co-opt key media players, particularly during election campaigns. In Serbia, state intervention directly influenced media, while in Brazil, a limited number of media elites were co-opted through economic incentives and narratives, leading to subtle but systemic control. From these cases, we argue that populist political actors will use both 'hard' legal mechanisms as well as 'softer' methods of influence to control media organizations, shape news outputs and undermine democratic norms over time. The findings underscore the importance of investigating media structures to comprehend democratic backsliding and autocratization processes. The contributions in this paper underscore that both robust legal frameworks and genuinely independent media ecosystems are crucial to safeguarding democratic integrity against populist encroachments. Further research should expand to other media systems to refine these findings and develop comprehensive strategies to protect media freedom globally.

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National Themes in Local Elections: Centralizing Personalization of Local Elections in Serbia

The local elections in the Republic of Serbia, held in June 2024, are characterized by a campaign in which national themes predominantly occupied a center place, while the questions and issues relevant to specific local communities were marginalized. This paper explores various determinants that shape national-oriented campaigns and their impact on voting behaviour, with the emphasis on persuasive techniques used in media and mobilization of public resources by ruling party. The study aims to comprehend the roots of the nationalization process of local elections and the crucial implications on democratic process, despite the fact they were held separated from national elections. Using content analysis methods of media coverage (electronic media with national coverage, mainstream printed media and digital editions, as well as prominent local media), we offer comprehensive insights in the campaign strategies and their effectiveness.

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Party Characteristics and Leader Effects in Central and Eastern European Democracies

If we accept that political leaders and candidates have a solid impact on election results in both old and new democracies, a further question arises quite naturally: are there some particular conditions that stimulate or inhibit the personalization of electoral politics? This paper aims to explore the extent to which the characteristics of political parties do influence the magnitude of leader effects for new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, it investigates variations in the magnitude of leader effects in relation to party size, party age, incumbency, organizational structure, and ideology. For this purpose, it employs data from the modules 1, 3, 4, and 5 of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) for 144 political parties competing in 36 legislative elections in Central and Eastern Europe across 25 years of post-communism.

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Constructing Subjective Well-Being and Voting for Ruling Parties in Serbia

This study examines the thesis that subjective well-being is a significant predictor of voting behavior for ruling parties in Serbia. It posits that the ruling parties, led by the President, effectively 'construct' a positive perception of reality, influencing voters' evaluations of quality of life and government performance. The President of Serbia is argued to have the capacity to 'frame' reality, thereby leveraging his authority to shape affirmative perceptions among the electorate. To test this hypothesis, we introduced a composite score of subjective well-being, comprising variables such as satisfaction with quality of life, satisfaction with the political system, satisfaction with democracy, and satisfaction with government performance. Using regression analysis on data from a representative sample of 1 500 citizens/voters, the findings demonstrate that subjective well-being significantly predicts voting for the ruling parties, highlighting the influential role of perceived reality in electoral outcomes. This quantitative approach contributes to understanding the mechanisms through which political leadership and media framing impact voter behavior.

GS3: Navigating Post-Conflict Dynamics: Ethnic Identity, Migration, and Mixedness in the Balkans

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The Cost of Dissent from War Crimes Denial: Can Family and Neighbours Help Individuals Address In-group Responsibility for Mass Atrocity?

To move towards reconciliation, all sides in a conflict need to engage with former opponents and acknowledge war crimes by in-group members. However, acknowledgement of in-group wrongdoing is costly in divided post-conflict societies. Those who speak out about their own group's criminal responsibility are stigmatised as traitors. This punishment sustains the cultures of denial. How can people be encouraged to address in-group's culpability in commission of human rights violations in a dialogue with out-group members? Drawing on inter-group contact hypothesis, we test whether support from family and neighbours can challenge the silencing effect of dissenters' stigmatisation. We conduct a survey experiment on nationally-representative samples in three post-conflict countries (Serbia, Kosovo* and Bosnia and Herzegovina), where a dominant social norm proscribes acknowledgment of in-group's war crimes in inter-group interactions. We demonstrate varied effects of family's and neighbours' support on increasing willingness to acknowledge in-group wrongdoing, and examine the mediating effects of in-group bias, victimisation and respondents' source of norms. The paper advances little understood determinants of willingness to have inter-ethnic contact in post-conflict contexts and to address in-group's wrongdoing needed for societies' recovery from conflict.

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Evolution of Balkan Social Dynamics Due to Russian and Ukrainian Migration

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has driven both Russian emigrants and Ukrainian refugees to the Balkans, leading to significant changes in the region's social dynamics. This research aims to investigate the reasons behind their migration, their perceptions of the local community, and how these perceptions influence their social integration. The study seeks to uncover potential sources of conflict, assessing whether tensions might arise in the long term or if they already exist beneath the surface. Additionally, it aims to derive general insights into inter-nation dynamics in migration scenarios. This study is based on qualitative research, utilizing interviews to gather in-depth data on the experiences and perceptions of Russian emigrants and Ukrainian refugees. It involved participants from both migrant groups residing in Belgrade, alongside feedback from local residents and other expatriates in the city. The findings reveal the impact of these migrant groups on Balkan social dynamics, highlighting the varied attitudes of locals and expatriates towards them. The study identifies both existing and potential sources of tension, providing insights into how conflicts might be mitigated in the future.

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Mixedness in Conflict: The impact of Yugoslav wars on intermarriages in the Western Balkans

This paper examines the phenomenon of intermarriages in the Western Balkans, shedding light on their intricate relationship with the region's tumultuous history, ethnic diversity, and socio-political dynamics. Through a comprehensive exploration of interethnic unions across different areas, the study delves into how these marriages have historically served as symbols of coexistence and integration, particularly during the mid-20th century, when they were encouraged by the newly-formed states to unite the different nations living in them. However, the rise of ethno-nationalism and the Yugoslav Wars significantly impacted these marital patterns, underscoring the complex interplay between politics, culture, and traditional norms. The paper highlights the decline in mixed marriages post-war, persistent ethnic tensions, and varying dynamics in different locales, suggesting that comprehensive approaches are needed for sustainable peace and unity in the Western Balkans. Through this lens, intermarriages emerge not just as personal unions but as potent symbols and potential catalysts for broader societal transformations, albeit within a context of considerable challenges and the need for nuanced, multifaceted approaches to fostering lasting interethnic harmony.

GS4: Izbori za Evropski parlament

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Uticaj evropskih izbora na pravce razvoja zajedničke spoljne i bezbednosne politike Evropske unije

Deseti izbori za Evropski parlament su održani između 6. i 9. juna 2024. godine. S obzirom na složene geopolitičke okolnosti i unutrašnje ekonomske izazove, evropski izbori su izazvali značajniju pažnju u odnosu na ranije cikluse, kada su označavani kao izbori drugorazrednog karaktera. Evropske partijske porodice su se fokusirale u zajedničkim izbornim platformama i na teme iz domena spoljne, bezbednosne i odbrambene politike, čineći ih istaknutim elementima programa. U radu se, uz oslonac na komparativnu i metodu analize sadržaja, razmatraju predloženi pravci daljeg razvoja spoljne politike EU i analiziraju usklađenost i domet novih inicijativa, uz osnovnu tezu da nakon evropskih izbora postoji široki konsenzus o elementima osnaživanja ZSBP, sa posebnim fokusom na evropsku odbrambenu saradnju, ali da će opstati rezervisanost u pogledu formalnog produbljivanja integracije na ovom polju.

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Strateški narativi o politici proširenja u predizbornoj kampanji za Evropski parlament 2024

Evropska unija je od svog nastanka formirala relativno koherentan ali i promenljiv strateški narativ o politici proširenja. Pre dve decenije, zvanični narativ zasnovan na ideji „ujedinjeni u različitosti“, promovisao je veću stabilnost i prosperitet širom Evrope, i imao je za cilj izgradnju podrške evropskih javnosti za dublju integraciju i političko jedinstvo EU. Ovaj narativ se potom „pomerao“ kako je upravljanje krizama pojačavalo razlike među nacionalnim i EU elitama, kao i političke podele unutar EU. O politici proširenja konstruisani su čak i suprotstavljeni narativi, a poslednjih godina zvanični narativ Evropske komisije o evrointegracijama je „evoluirao“ u matrici „podeljeni u jedinstvu“. Stoga su naša istraživačka pitanja: (1) da li je EU izgubila viziju jedinstvenog strateškog narativa o proširenju? i (2) kako narativi političkih aktera u nacionalnim arenama korespondiraju sa zvaničnim narativom Evropske komisije o proširenju? Kako bismo razumeli dijalektiku nacionalno/nadnacionalno u aktuelnom razvoju politike proširenja, naš fokus je na javnom komuniciranju proširenja od strane političkih aktera koji se bore za glasove u svojim arenama. Stoga ovaj rad opisuje kako su evropske političke stranke i parlamentarne grupe projektovale narative o proširenju EU na poslednjim izborima za Evropski parlament održanim 6–9. juna 2024. Cilj istraživanja je da identifikuje ove narative, i da ih diskutuje u kontekstu kontinuiteta i promene strateškog EU narativa. Istraživački uzorak čine izborni manifesti i medijska saopštenja stranaka, govori stranačkih lidera i intervjui sa kandidatima u kampanji, a korišćena je narativna analiza zasnovana na modelu Vilijama Labova i Džoše Valeckog.

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Evropski izbori, kriza i preispitavanje na levlci

U uvodnom delu rada bavimo se „ savršenom olujom “ (Brubaker) „ mega pretnji“ (Rubini) koje oblikuju evropski i planetarni politički prostor : migracije i demografske promene, klimatske promene i energetska tranzicija, “ fragegracija i balkanizacija” ekonomije, biopolitički režimi nadzora koji se uspostavljaju nakon pandemija i terorističkih akata. Ili pak izazovi koje nose automatizacija i masovna upotreba veštačke inteligencije, odnosno ulazak u digitalni kapitalizam. Specifikum ovog, u odnosu na dva ranija ciklusa izbora za Evropski parlamet (EP) je, međutim, ranije nezamislivi ,već višegodišnji rat na prostoru Evrope, u Ukrajini. On direktno uključuje jednu nuklearnu supersilu Rusiju a indirektno na strani Ukrajine NATO. Dilema o slanju sopstvenih trupa nosi rizik prelaska linije kojom se iz drugog hladnog prelazi u treći svetski rat. Istovremeno, svest o ambivalenciji i značaju odnosa sa Kinom govori o planetarnoj polarizaciji kolektivnog Političkog Zapada sa novim despotijama i ostatkom sveta labavo grupisanom oko proširenog BRIKSA. Upravo održani izbori za EP, kojima se bavimo u centralnom delu rada, pokazuju da je ova agenda rezultirala daljim, umerenim rastom krajnje desnice. Završni deo rada bavi se pitanjem zašto efekte kriza politički ne naplaćuje levica, posebno njen zeleno levi deo koji se, za razliku od socijalista, ne može optužiti za robovanje interesima plutokratskog kapitalizma. U tom okviru testiramo tezu da je uspon demokratske levice vezan pre za vremena postikriznog rasta nada i očekivanja, odnosno da levica ne može konkurisati desnici na terenu ekkluzivnog pozivanja na suverenizam.

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Rekonfiguracija partijske kompeticije: centrifugalne tendencije partijskog sistema Evropske unije

Izbori za Evropski parlament 2024. godine doneli su sa sobom važne strukturalne izmene unutar političkih sistema država članica, ali i Unije same. Rad se bavi dokazivanjem promene načina kompeticije unutar partijskog sistema Evropske unije nakon parlamentarnih izbora 2024. godine. Autor putem analize sadržaja dva sastava Evropskog parlamenta i analize narativa u samoj predizbornoj kampanji nastoji da dokaže promenu u smeru takmičenja sa već ustaljene centripetalne kompeticije ka centrifugalnoj kompeticiji, zasnovanoj na uspehu partija koje odudaraju od tipičnih centrističkih pozicija. Rezultat glavne centrističke snage u vidu Renew grupe nam može poslužiti kao analitički primer neuspeha sužavanja prostora ka centru i ograničenog pluralizma unutar sistema. Rad na prvom mestu daje okvir dosadašnjeg partijskog sistema Unije sa glavnim fokusom na smerovima kompeticije sve do 2024. godine, te nakon toga analizira rezultate izbora i daje argumente koji objašnjavaju latentnu promenu smera takmičenja. Osnovni argument rada jeste taj da je dosadašnji centristički sistem postao neresponzivan, činjenicu koju su stranke desnice (ECR) i krajnje desnice (ID) uspešno prepoznale. Upravo to dovodi do oštrijih političkih rascepa i samim time kulminira promenom ideje o konsenzusu zasnovanom na centrističkim silama.

SS5: Affective Polarisation, VAA, and Ideologies

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Voter-party Congruence and Propensity to Vote in Croatia

One of the important aspects when evaluating the health of a democracy is the quality of its political representation. Regardless of other socio-political factors, the level of similarity of political issue positions between members of a parliament and citizens is one of the fundamental aspects of representational democracy. This begs the question can citizens choose representatives that are in line with their issue positions? Can they cast a congruent, or a correct, vote? Previous studies have analysed this issue in various experiments and national contexts. However, no such field study was done in Croatia. In this presentation we will present the results from the largest social science database of Croatian citizens (N=80.000), which was collected with the voting advice application “Izborni kompas” before the 2024 parliamentary elections. We will present the levels of voter-party congruence of users, with a specific focus on socio-demographic differences. Also, we will present the data on the relationship between congruence and propensity to vote for major Croatian political parties, thereby offering a first glimpse into this aspect of the quality of representation in Croatia.

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Strategic Choices: How Tailored Information Influences Election Dynamics

Political scientists have long been puzzled by why some voters choose parties they acknowledge as not being the closest to their views. This research aims to understand how personal and systemic characteristics shape the impact of personalized political information on tactical voting. In the context of Spain's general election on July 23, 2023, we explored this question using a Voter Advice Application (VAA) with over 100,000 participants, combined with a survey experiment embedded in the recommender system. We analysed the results of presenting users with their levels of political congruence with the four main national parties, both before and after assessing their voting probabilities (PTV). Our empirical evidence shows that the treatment condition—displaying a participant's level of political congruence before the PTV—increases the likelihood of supporting their preferred party. Conversely, showing the level of political congruence for another party decreases the PTV for that party, particularly when it belongs to the opposing ideological bloc. Additional evidence indicates that the impact of the treatment condition is especially strong among moderate voters (center and center-right or center-left, depending on the party). However, undecided individuals seem unaffected by the treatment, and the permissiveness of the electoral system (district magnitude) does not moderate the reinforcement or repulsion effect.

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Reducing Affective Polarization with Voting Advice Applications: A Pan-European Experiment

Over the last decades, online voting advice applications (VAAs) have emerged as popular tools to help reduce the complexities of the party system for the voters. Despite their prominence in many (multi)party systems, we are not aware of any attempts to use VAAs with an aim of mitigating partisan animosity. In this paper, we will address this gap and try to answer the following research question: Does using VAAs reduce affective polarization among their users? On the one hand, affective polarization research has demonstrated that it largely stems from citizens' misperceptions of policy disagreements with out-parties. If partisans are informed that the other side is not that negative towards their political in-group and its policies, they tend to feel less hostile towards the out-party supporters (Lees & Cikara 2020; Moore-Berg et al. 2020). Affective polarization decreases also when partisans learn that other parties and their supporters are ideologically not as extreme as they perceived them to be (Druckman et al. 2022; Voelkel et al. 2023). On the other hand, VAA research has demonstrated that, by matching voters' policy preferences with political parties, these tools can contribute to more accurate perceptions of parties' policy stances. Therefore, we hypothesize that VAA usage can contribute to reducing levels of affective polarization. We test our hypothesis with a pan-European experiment embedded in the "euandi" VAA, which has been simultaneously launched in all 27 EU countries one month prior to the European Parliament elections of June 2024.

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How Illiberals Oppose Liberal Democracy Measuring Illiberalism through Policy and Discourse

Parties that challenge fundamental aspects of liberal democracy are increasingly popular in Europe. Most of them are considered part of the populist radical right, but this denomination tells us little about their ideological content and policy positions. The goal of the paper is to measure whether the 'usual suspects' are indeed opposed to liberal democracy and if yes, which variety of illiberalism do they represent. We will investigate parties in six EU countries (France, Italy, Hungary, Czechia, Poland and Austria) and in United Kingdom. We rely on the analysis of speeches, programs, expert studies and policies to arrive at an accurate typology of illiberal parties. The discursive practices of illiberal parties will be evaluated using quantitative text analysis techniques using an original measurement tool coined the AUTHLIB Index that captures the salience of illiberal frames and their context in textual data. Furthermore, we will use expert evaluations to score parties along their policy initiatives and legislative actions across a broad range of policy areas including education, culture, foreign policy, gender, social policy, and immigration policy. The scoring will make use of an original expert survey that rates policy outcomes along a range of conceptual dimensions that are comparable across policy fields (e.g. inclusiveness, universalism, centralization). The paper will contribute to ongoing theoretical discussions regarding the categorization of illiberal actors, and develop new analytical tools for the measurement of their discourse and policies.

SS6: Ethnopolitical Mobilization in an Increasingly Strained Triadic Nexus. The Hungarians of Romania in the Super-election Year of 2024

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Constructing a Conservative Christian minority. Mapping Changes in the Electoral Campaign Discourse of DAHR in Romania

In the post-socialist period Hungarians in Romania have always voted on ethnic grounds, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) managing to gather the votes of most of the community. However, in the past decade a growing influence of the Orbán-regime can be observed, central topics of the Hungarian propaganda (on migration, the EU, the Russian war in Ukraine, and so on) penetrating the Transylvanian Hungarian public sphere, changing even the attitudinal constructions of Hungarians in Romania. Also, these developments had changed the relation between DAHR and the Hungarian government, many authors and analysts arguing that the Hungarian ethnic party is trapped in the latter's net. The focus of this paper is to map how the topics promoted by the Hungarian government and FIDESZ appeared in the political campaigns of DAHR, and how the "special relationship" with Hungary's governing party changed the communicational strategies of the Transylvanian Hungarian ethnic party. By analyzing the social media posts of DAHR politicians quantitatively and qualitatively, the paper argues that because DAHR resorted to the topics constructed by the Hungarian government instrumentally, partly because it lost its capacity to set the agenda and control political discourse among Transylvanian Hungarians. While the results of this strategy are rather spectacular from the point of view of mobilization (as shown in another paper in this panel, by István Gergő Székely), I argue that it reshapes and reconstructs discursively the borders of the Hungarian political community in Romanian, drawing and reifying not only ethnic boundaries, but ideological ones.

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Maximizing the Gains from Both Sides in the Triadic Nexus. Some Implications of the Electoral Results of Romania's Hungarian Ethnic Parties at the 2024 local and European Elections

The merger of 2024 elections of such different nature posed a an extraordinary challenge to the Democratic Alliance of the Hungarians in Romania (DAHR), the main Hungarian ethnic party in Romania, but also provided new opportunities, such as the possibility of deploying a dual campaign message, focused on local accomplishments mainly of the pork barrel type, combined with a strong identity campaign constructed on the Fidesz recipe, highlighting the threat of the rise of the Romanian radical right, along with several other topics "borrowed" from Hungary (which signals a strong connection on one side of Brubaker's triadic nexus, with the most important political actor of the kin-state). While another paper in this panel (by Tibor Toró) will be dedicated to DAHR's campaign, the main goal of this paper is to analyze the electoral results of the Hungarian parties at the simultaneous elections, paying special attention to and trying to explain the differences between the results for the local/county level and for the European Parliament. After a brief presentation of the political context and the main developments since the last European elections I will discuss some interesting patterns in the electoral results of the DAHR, such as the high number of votes obtained for the European Parliament in areas without Hungarian population (which brings us to the other side of the triadic nexus, as it still confirms the DAHR's strong embeddedness into the Romanian party system), the voting patterns in ethnically mixed municipalities with ethnic Hungarian, respectively Romanian mayors, and some important differences compared to the previous local elections. Examining the latter aspects also offers an opportunity to assess how successful the strong identity/threat campaign was depending on local ethnic demography.

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The Multi-dimensional Strategies of Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania and the Political Values of Transylvanian Hungarians

The vast majority of Transylvanian Hungarians have supported a dominant ethnic party in every parliamentary, local, EP, and even presidential election in the past three and a half decades. Most works on the electoral behavior of Transylvanian Hungarians tried to explain the reasons for ethnic block voting focusing on identity politics and the ethnic cleavage. Voter motivations are complex, but it is obvious that ethnic bloc voting is reinforced by the polarization and the political visibility of identity politics alternatives. Nevertheless, political competition for the votes of Transylvanian Hungarians is not unidimensional. In this analysis, we rely on the new developments in the literature, according to which political competition is (can be) multidimensional even in party systems dominated by ethnic cleavages. Ethnic parties can use several strategies in terms of the secondary dimensions of political competition. The first of these is the strategy of blurring, which is often used by minority parties in cases where they are faced a political agenda dominated by socially divisive topics, while they themselves aim to keep the entire minority constituency together. In such situations, their issue-positions will not be clear, they will use ambivalent discourse and their utterings can be understood 'either way'. The second strategy is that of framing, when the ethnic party reframes the secondary dimension and makes it part of the primary dimension. Finally, it is also possible to actually develop a multi-dimensional strategy, when the ethnic party develops a strong position along the secondary dimensions as well, without, however, clearly defining the secondary dimension as the interest of the ethnic group. In the case of the strategies followed by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR), it is interesting that the party is increasingly forced to relate to cleavages in both Romania and Hungary simultaneously. In our analysis, we contrast the strategies followed by the DAHR with the political attitude-positions of the Transylvanian Hungarians, and we map the latter on the axes of economic redistribution and cultural recognition, relying on European Values Study data from 2019 (the study was also carried out on a sample representative for Transylvanian Hungarians).

GS7: Protests, Campaigns and Elections in the Western Balkans

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Croatian activists' relationship towards election processes in 2024: Totally different from the rest

Civic participation can be generally divided into formal and informal participation. Formal political participation includes voting and party politics, while informal participation includes various normative and non-normative (including violent) forms of participation, such as activities through civil initiatives, associations, petitions, boycotts, legal or illegal protests; informal participation is based on the work of volunteers, who are exceptionally different from the majority of passive citizens. In Western democracies, roughly 40% of the population has had at least one activist experience (Norris, 2007); in Croatia, this amounts to 9% (Franc and Šakić, 2006). According to the recent European Values Study (2017), 48% of citizens signed a petition as the most common form of participation, while 4.8% noted that they were members of organisations for environmental protection, ecology, and animal rights. Within the framework of the Motivations for and Barriers to Collective Action project, financed by the Croatian Science Foundation, we carried out semi-structured interviews with 25 activists (NGO members) with experience in organising and implementing various kinds of collective action. The goals were to attest their understanding of various forms of civil/social participation, including formal political participation such as voting at elections and membership in political parties. This paper focuses on their expectations from democracy and their relationship towards politics and society, voting at elections, and the consequences of election outcomes to their collective action. Individual semi-structured interviews were carried out from May to July 2024. After transcription and anonymisation, the data was analysed using eNvivo software.

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Election Campaign Strategies In The Shadow Of Polarization

The election campaign that lasted from the announcement of elections in December 2023 (and effectively much longer) to the Belgrade city and local elections in early June was the least concerned with policy proposals. Given that those of us who followed it intensively can hardly remember any specific message, we can wonder how it is for 'ordinary' voters. What did remain as an impression is the total polarization, both between the government and opposition and within the opposition itself, especially regarding the boycott of the June elections. Also, some political actors stressed that it is 'pointless' to talk about the campaign strategy and the message box in a situation when we have media polarization and increasingly blatant electoral rule abuses. Given that campaign strategy involves considering external conditions, one's own capacities, setting goals and target groups, and devising an action plan, the question arises how polarization affected party's strategic approach, whether such an approach existed in mentioned period or if campaign mostly devolved into improvisation in the shadow of polarization. In sense of this questions, and given the starting point where research often focuses on the use of marketing tools while neglecting the 'strategic framework of electoral campaigns' (Atlagić, 2020), we will analyze the campaign strategies of political actors during the mentioned period. For the purposes of this research, discourse analysis and content analysis will be utilized, along with conclusions from in-depth interviews conducted for Jelena Vujanovic's doctoral thesis with representatives of relevant political parties and marketing and campaign experts, conducted precisely from September 2023 to June 2024.

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Learning to Stand on Its Own: Policy Learning in EU Civilian and Military Missions

As the European Union (EU) grows beyond its origins as a civilian actor it has faced a mixture of unique challenges due to the EU's unique design and more prosaic challenges such as staffing, procurement, and identification of mission objectives. This paper addresses the question of under what conditions has the EU learned from twenty years of its civilian and military deployments? Is the limited evidence of improving structure, coordination, and effectiveness of EU operations representative of learning, i.e. of updating beliefs and structures, or are contextual factors more important to explain variation in the planning, structure, and results of EU missions? To do so, this paper conducts a comparative analysis of EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mali, and Ukraine. In doing so, it highlights types of learning which may be applicable within each mission, over the long timeframe of some missions, as well as identifies limited yet important lessons learning processes taking place across missions. Overall, it finds that the EU has updated its beliefs about security through contact with experts and local partners but has been generally hampered by its organisational structure.

GS8: Američki izbori 2024. godine

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Povratak Republikanaca u Belu kuću i potraga za spoljnopolitičkim konsenzusom

Sredinom 2024. godine postaje sve izvesnije da će januara 2025. godine novi stanovnik Bele kuće doći iz redova Republikanske partije. Donald Tramp (Donald J. Trump), prema svim relevantnim istraživanjima javnog mnjenja, ubedljivo vodi u predizbornom nadmetanju, i u gotovo svim kolebljivim državama ostavlja iza sebe protivkandidata, Džozefa Bajdena (Joseph Biden, Jr.). Imajući na umu istorijsku činjenicu da spoljnopolitičke teme retko odlučuju ishod predsedničkih izbora i krajnje opredeljenje glasača, pa im se shodno tome u hijerarhiji komunikacionih strategija prema biračima ne dodeljuje adekvatna pažnja, istraživači se relativno retko odlučuju da spoljnu politiku smeste u središte svojih istraživanja američkih predizbornih kampanja. Autor ovog rada se, u nameri da dopuni takav istraživački jaz, opredeljuje za centralno istraživačko pitanje: mogu li republikanci postići unutarpartijski spoljnopolitički konsenzus u vezi sa osnovnim konturama buduće spoljne politike SAD? Učiniće se to istraživanjem spoljnopolitičkih tema koje oblikuju diskurs u kampanji republikanaca sa krajnjom namerom da se ponude obrisi spoljne politike SAD nakon izbora i potencijalne pobeđe republikanskog kandidata. Do rezultata će se doći diskurzivnom analizom na nekoliko nivoa. Prvo, istražuju se unutarpartijske debate Trampovih protivkandidata od početka stranačkih izbora, pa sve do proglašavanja Trampa za izvesnog kandidata (presumptive nominee). Drugo, analiziraće se savremeni spoljnopolitički stavovi republikanaca u Kongresu, sa naročitim osvrtom na dve teme: Rat u Ukrajini i Rat u Gazi. Kompatibilnost dobijenih rezultata će, na kraju, biti ispitana u odnosu na sadržaj Trampove izborne kampanje.

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In Search of the Axioms of American Politics: Why Economy is no longer Winning Presidential Elections in the U.S.?

In recent years, the United States has undergone significant societal upheavals and culture wars that have challenged its foundational principles. Those turbulences are exemplified by removing statues honoring founding fathers and renaming university positions named after former presidents. Moreover, unprecedented events such as a major party's presidential candidate disputing election results and a former president facing criminal convictions have intensified feelings of uncertainty and polarization. For decades, the state of the economy has been a pivotal factor in American presidential elections. The 'the economy wins the election' axiom suggests that low unemployment, stable inflation, and strong GDP growth typically favor the incumbent party's candidate. However, starting around 2016, this principle has shown signs of weakening. Although economic performance remains a critical consideration for voters, it no longer guarantees electoral success for the incumbent or the candidate of the party whose member occupies the White House in the election year. The 2024 presidential election is a compelling example of the shifting dynamics in American politics regarding economic indicators and voter preferences. Despite positive economic metrics such as low unemployment rates, stable inflation, and solid GDP growth during President Biden's tenure, polls indicate that he trails behind former President Trump at the national level and in key battleground states. In this paper, we endeavor to analyze the evolving socio-political landscape of the United States to explore why traditional economic indicators are losing their decisive influence in voters' presidential choices. By examining key shifts in U.S. politics and society, we aim to uncover the reasons behind the declining prominence of economic factors in determining voter preferences during presidential elections.

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The Foreign Policy Discourse of Candidates in 2024 Presidential Election Campaign

American Exceptionalism is considered to be one of the important elements of the US identity, even though its content remains debatable and contested. Since 1980s this concept became an important phrase for a political action and campaigns, frequently used in the US presidential election campaigns. Even candidates initially skeptical towards this concept (Barrack Obama or Donald Trump) ended up with a very vocal positive referring to this concept. Therefore, it is puzzling that there was almost a complete absence of the use of this phrase in the phase of campaigns of presumptive nominees Donald Trump and Joseph Biden, at least until party conventions. Drawing on the poststructuralist models in foreign policy analysis, this paper claims that the main ideas of the American Exceptionalism are still present in foreign policy discourse of candidates, but that they are rearticulated to phrases which are more “catchy” for their concrete audience. The reason why American Exceptionalism is not utilized directly as earlier lies in the relative “spoiling” of the attractiveness of this concept among the important groups of voters. After the brief overviews of the genealogy of the concept, discourse analysis of the main foreign policy speeches of two candidates is conducted to demonstrate that American Exceptionalism ideas are present, but undercover. The paper also draws on the public opinion polls and existing analyses of public discourse/narrative, to put a spotlight on the “spoiled” substance of this concept in public opinion as the cause of this puzzling outcome.

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Amerika pre svega” vs “Spoljna politika za srednju klasu”: koncepti američkog ekonomskog nacionalizma u 21. Veku

Ekonomski nacionalizam u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama, dominantno vezan za njihovu spoljnotrgovinsku politiku, najčešće je shvaćen kao savremena verzija osamnaestovekovnog merkantilizma i podrazumeva upotrebu svih raspoloživih spoljnotrgovinskih instrumenata s ciljem ograničavanja sopstvenog uvoza ali i promocije domaćeg izvoza. Dolaskom na vlast Donalda Trampa, 2017. godine, nasuprot multilateralizmu koji je proglašen neefikasnim i neadekvatnim načinom za zadovoljavanje ekonomskih interesa, predstavnici američke administracije ističu bilateralni pristup i unilateralno delovanje kao najbolji način za regulisanje trgovinskih odnosa. S druge strane, administracija Džozefa Bajdena nastoji da promoviše novi pristup strateškoj spoljnotrgovinskoj politici vezujući ga za domaću industrijsku politiku, nazivajući ga suštinskom promenom paradigme i ključnim elementom zvanično proklamovane „spoljne politike za srednju klasu“. Ovaj pristup, iako podstiče unilateralno delovanje SAD, po rečima američkih zvaničnika, ne podrazumeva napuštanje njihovog multilateralnog angažovanja ili bilateralnih trgovinskih pregovora sa mogućim partnerima već svoj fokus stavlja na savremene oblike ekonomske saradnje kao što su Indo-Pacifički ekonomski okvir za prosperitet (IPEF) ili Trgovinski i tehnološki savet SAD i EU. Ovaj tekst će se baciti ekonomskim nacionalizmom u SAD, analizirajući spoljnoekonomske politike administracija Donalda Trampa i Džozefa Bajdena kao vodećih ličnosti Republikanske i Demokratske stranke na predsedničkim izborima 2024. Ključna namera teksta je da pokaže da suprotstavljene strane na ovim izborima zagovaraju dva koncepta ekonomskog nacionalizma u SAD bez obzira na brojne sličnosti koje, bar na prvi pogled, postoje između njih.

SS9: US Elections and Religious Polarization

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Christian Nationalism and American Elections: Re-Assessing the Concept and Measurement of Christian Nationalism within American Politics

Ever since the election of Donald Trump in 2016, a burgeoning strand of scholarly and journalistic literature has emerged that emphasizes the role of Christian nationalism within contemporary American politics. Unfortunately, this scholarly literature has mushroomed so quickly that relatively little attention has been given to its conceptual underpinnings or its various measurement issues. This paper outlines different conceptualizations of Christian nationalism that have been advanced, assesses its presence within American politics, examines how different coding schemes of its present measurement yields different assessments of its presence within American politics, and analyzes how race and religion may shape the ways in which Christian nationalism affects American political opinion and electoral choices. Using data drawn from the Public Religion Research Institutes 2022 study on Christian nationalism (N=6022), this paper advances a particular definitional quality of Christian nationalism, assesses the extent to which race (e.g., white Christian nationalism) should be a definitional facet of Christian nationalism, and whether what may be captured by its measures are better understood as religious, as opposed to Christian, nationalism.

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How do non-Christians Vote? An Analysis of Non-Christian Communities' Influence on the US Politics

This study examines the impact of non-Christian communities, including Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others, on American politics. Non-Christian voters prioritize issues such as religious freedom, immigration reform, civil rights, and foreign policy, thereby shaping the platforms and policies of political candidates and parties. Generally, Jewish and Muslim communities tend to vote predominantly for Democratic candidates due to the party's stances on social justice, minority rights, and immigration reform, with a minor voting pattern for the Republicans. Hindu and Buddhist communities also lean towards the Democratic Party, influenced by similar issues and a focus on secular governance. Community organizations engage in voter registration drives, education campaigns, and advocacy to enhance political participation among their members, while lobbying efforts focus on legislation protecting their interests and promoting social justice. The increasing election of non-Christian candidates to local, state, and federal offices, along with appointments to key government positions, has enriched the diversity of political representation. Non-Christian communities also build interfaith and multicultural alliances, advocating for shared interests and fostering inclusive policies. Despite challenges such as discrimination and marginalization, efforts to combat Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and other forms of religious discrimination are crucial for ensuring full and equal participation. Empowerment initiatives, including leadership training and civic education, further enhance their political engagement and representation. This study underscores their growing influence that reflects a dynamic and evolving political landscape, emphasizing the importance of diversity and coalition-building in contemporary U.S. elections.

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Non-Christian Christian Nationalists in Contemporary U.S. Politics

Much has been made in recent years of the rise of Christian nationalism in the United States, especially among its white citizens. Christian nationalism is a set of beliefs about God and country emphasizing the idea that the U.S. was founded as, and should be, explicitly Christian. Many adherents of Christian nationalism perceive themselves as increasingly marginalized as the U.S. becomes more secular and ethnically diverse. Christian nationalists have maintained a deep connection with Donald Trump since he burst onto the political scene in 2015. Most of these individuals are, quite naturally, Christian (particularly Protestant). There are, however, also small shares of the U.S.'s non-Christian and religiously unaffiliated citizens who identify with Christian nationalism. Who are these people, and what are their political inclinations? To answer these questions, I analyze survey data from Wave 114 of the Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel, which was fielded in September 2022 (N=10,588).

SS10: Who drives social change, regime change and secession: elections or the streets?

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Protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1996: An Alternative to Electoral Participation in a Consociational System

The paper examines protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1996 onward as a non-electoral form of political activity. Despite the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina as a consociationalist system of government should maintain a balance of harmony between constituent elements in society and preclude the need for political action such as protests, anecdotal evidence suggests that this isn't the case – with the most well-known examples including the 2014 Plenums and the 2018-onward protests related to the deaths of David Dragičević and Dženan Memić. An original, comprehensive, and systematic dataset of all protests, their topical focus or demands, target group, duration, and popularity, based on media reporting and direct quotes from protestor leaders, is first developed. This is then leveraged to classify these protests into several competing models of civil action to ultimately categorize them into a typology. Finally, protests are matched to policy outcomes, which are further sorted as material or symbolic and which serves to assess the efficacy of protesting. Overall, most of the protests are viewed as anti-system ones in topic and dominantly represent the stances of those who view themselves as being wronged or otherwise excluded by the system, thereby demonstrating that Bosnia and Herzegovina's consociationalist system of government does not in all instances ensure the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders and, therefore, a wide political consensus. Therefore, protests have been largely an alternative to electoral participation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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The Secessionist voter? A Retrospective on the Unique Super election year in Former Yugoslavia, the Former Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia, 1990

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia, accompanied by ethnic wars, and the first competitive elections of 1990 play a unique role in several literatures. They are the most important cases of reference for literatures in political science and in international relations on democratisation and conflict, and for the literature on the (supposed) instability of ethnofederal regimes. In the literature on secessions, cases from said region constitute the vast majority of positive outcomes. In all of these literatures, the consequences of the introduction of political competition at the subnational level (as it was the case in Yugoslavia and in the Soviet Union, in particular) are key to the theoretical argument. However, despite the importance attributed to these empirical cases, there are few, if any, assessments at the level of the 23 segment-states of the former federal-authoritarian regimes of the role of the transitional elections in bringing secessionist movements to power. The segment-states are the relevant unit of analysis, as they were the subjects that eventually declared secession. In this article, I reassess the role of the first transitional elections of 1990 in the three formerly federal-authoritarian regimes, and how this shaped the path for subsequent dissolution. The results show that the theorised path constitutes a rare exception.

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To Resist or to be Resilient: Navigating through the main concepts of the “opposition turn” in autocratization studies via the case studies of Bulgaria and North Macedonia

The concepts of democratic resilience and resistance against autocratization (R&R) have been central to the ‘opposition turn’ in autocratization studies, stirring contributions on the prerequisites for preventing autocratization and the actors and strategies that could reverse it. However, conceptions of R&R often extend beyond autocratization, are used synonymously, and entail an ambiguous relation to democratization, undermining the rigour of analyses and the credibility of empirical findings, whose relevance transcends academia. This article forwards three suggestions to strengthen qualitative analyses mobilizing R&R. Firstly, the article argues that R&R should be modelled as relational concepts to episodes of autocratization. Secondly, the ‘thin’ boundary between R&R should be observed through the identification of focal events and study of constellations of resisters and autocratizers and the strategies they employ. Thirdly, forward-looking conceptions of democratic resilience as democratic continuity and analyses of resistance transcending the removal of incumbent autocratizers should instead mobilize democratization concepts. To demonstrate how refined conceptions of R&R could be employed throughout analyses, the paper selects Bulgaria and North Macedonia as illustrative case studies. After the removal of Nikola Gruevski (2006-2016), North Macedonia concluded a campaign of resistance against autocratization that was followed by a democratic transition. On the other hand, during the last two decades, Bulgaria has been fending off autocratizing pressures, avoiding democratic breakdown whilst continuously exhibiting instability. Besides enabling a discussion on the boundaries within and between concepts of opposition to autocratization and democratization, the case study selection entails an empirical contribution demonstrating how the bilateral dispute between Bulgaria and North Macedonia has been continuously mobilized by actors amid transformations toward democracy and autocracy.

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“The street as the only institution in the country that works?” On emergence and institutionalization of protests movements in Serbia

This paper will analyze bottom up protests and grassroots initiatives and their troublesome connections with institutional power in Serbia in the period since the global financial crisis until the last local elections in 2024. I will analyze protests emerging in this period against the constellation consisting of the return of the ancien régime, austerity measures, investor urbanism, environmental degradation and growing authoritarianism. Dissociation from politics has been a norm in many of these protests - labor movement, environmental and even to a certain extent some pro-democracy protests which created a vicious circle: protesters wanted to dissociate themselves from the politicians who were not welcomed (and these were mostly opposition politicians as they were the only ones who could have joined protests) but also the government regularly accused protests “to be political” which would intensify the protesters’ justification that what they are doing is non-political. I will compare protests effectiveness in terms of both achieving demands and goals but also shaping the new spaces of the political - development of new political organizations that participated in elections, transforming the party system and changing the overall political environment. The concept of constituent power will be used to analyze how systemic or anti-systemic, how defensive or constitutive these protests have turned out to be.

GS11: Party Competition in Europe

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Varieties of Political Party Mobilization Strategies in the Western Balkans

How do political parties mobilize voters and supporters, and which factors shape their overall mobilization portfolios? This paper explores how political parties combine different mobilization strategies, focusing on the Western Balkans region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia). Drawing on expert survey data from the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project, second wave (2022-2024, N=105 experts, conducted in fall 2023 in the region), the analysis offers aggregated expert scores of political parties (N=37 across the six party systems). It finds that political parties, on average, direct most effort to clientelist and charismatic mobilization strategies at both regional and country levels. Issue-based politics (programmatism), populism, and ethno-centric mobilization are also utilized and show strong effort in specific party systems or among certain parties. The paper also suggests that clientelism is more characteristic of parties that have frequently held government positions in the past and, where applicable (and often overlapping), ethno-exclusivist parties. In contrast, programmatic politics is more common among challengers or parties that are recent entrants into government. Parties typically practice a combination of strategies, with findings revealing significant variation in how this is done. This study contributes to the understanding of political party mobilization in a region generally considered to be at mid-levels in both political (liberal-democratic) and economic terms.

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Tug of War: a Tool for Analysing the Political Competition

In this paper, we propose an original approach to the analysis of political competition in modern democracies. We offer here a graphical way of presenting political competition that we call tug-of-war. It allows us to include many aspects of political rivalry within a single picture. This way of presenting the results allows for a reasonably comprehensive picture of the party system. The proposed analytical perspective allows drawing various types of conclusions about the functioning of political systems and party systems. In particular, our proposed analytical approach enables formulation predictions regarding the stability and change of party systems. It allows us to determine what types of parties are likely to emerge and play a significant role in the political system and under what conditions radical parties may emerge. It is also possible to determine whether the party system is legitimised or whether there are opportunities for antisystem parties within it. Our proposal is universal, can be used to analyse party systems in a variety of democratic countries, and moreover allows for comparative analyses in which different countries are compared with each other, as well as for comparisons across time.

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Change of the Political Setup: Will the New Political Actors Push Forward or Set Back the EU Integration of North Macedonia?

North Macedonia's process of EU integration has proven to be long, difficult, and extremely complex. There have been many setbacks along the way, some of which are still ongoing. The process itself is currently without a certain outcome, mainly affected by political considerations rather than its substance. Different government structures have made the process closer to or further from the EU, although all political agendas have supported the country's EU integration. Despite the strict conditionality and fulfilling conditions not closely related to the process itself, EU integration has reached a stalemate for reasons that can, among others, be traced to EU functions and capacities. The only winning card of the previous government was getting closer to the EU, but the previous steps undertaken without general public approval caused its tremendous failure and increased EU skepticism. Currently, the right-wing and nationalistic government has its stake, promising to keep the EU future in sight but not at the expense of national identity. Previous experiences point to EU inconsistency, unclear stances, and a lack of coherent policies toward the country, which have raised nationalistic sentiments, caused a slide back in democracy, affected the impartial functioning of institutions, and led to a deterioration of human rights. Whether the new government will be capable of establishing a reasonable compromise with external factors, securing its multiethnic coalition in power, reversing what has been done, and securing a more credible EU integration process is a significant promise, the results of which remain to be seen in the coming years.

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Populism and Political (Un)Trust: Skepticism and Cynicism as a Reflection of Different Types of Populism

In this paper I deal with the current phenomena of populism and political (dis)trust and their relationship. For the latter, there are open questions such as whether it is in decline or just fluctuating, whether a minimum degree of trust is necessary for democracy, and whether citizens today are less trusting as a reflection of their greater criticism or disillusionment with democracy, the political system and elites? Then, how does populism affect all this? The paper will use generalized mistrust in the political system. Then, the concepts of trust and distrust, as well as cynicism and skepticism, will be conceptually separated: with the first, we have distrustful but critical citizens, while with the second, we have citizens who no longer believe in the system, democracy, and are distant from the political process and actors. The approach to populism is discursive-theoretical with emphasis on the importance of discourse and its constitutive role. The relationship between these two phenomena will be analyzed through the example of the 2016 US election on the cases of Sanders and Trump. The paper will examine how the discourse of left and right populism affects mistrust and how it reflects on democracy.

SS12: Mixed Electoral Systems

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Legacy of the Past: Pre-reform Party Competition and Contamination of Single-Member Districts in Mixed-Member Systems

Three decades after the rise of mixed electoral systems (MES), initial expectations of their benefits are mostly hampered. A key explanation for unintended consequences is the contamination of electoral competition in single member districts (SMDs), as parties run non-viable candidates. Strategic incentives to run everywhere vary between subtypes of MES, highest in one-vote MES and lowest in seat-linkage MES. However, as electoral systems do not emerge in a vacuum, pre-reform party competition can also decisively influence post-reform strategic considerations of parties, candidates, and voters. Paper explores the enduring impact of party system legacies on contamination of SMDs competition in MES. I'm expecting relative stability of previous patterns of party competition (in multiparty, two-party, and dominant-party systems), except after critical junctures (one-party systems breakdowns). Empirical analysis covers 26,000+ SMDs across 141 elections in 25 countries spanning seven decades, examining key dependent variables like effective number of candidates, the second-to-first loser (SF) and the third-and-lower-to-first loser (TF) ratios, and vote share of third-and-lower placed candidates. I also assess various electoral, institutional, and contextual factors.

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“Hacking” of a Mixed Electoral System – A case Study from Hungary

This paper conducts an in-depth analysis of the applied electoral systems (Act XXXIV of 1989 and Act CCIII of 2011), including both the description of the strange outcomes and consequences and their impact on political parties, the party system and the parliament. Beside the numerous differences, the two systems have essential features in common: both of them are mixed electoral systems and they originated and were introduced in special political circumstances: the first one was approved in 1989, before the democratic transition, the second one was elaborated after the famous revolution in the polling booths, at the beginning of the so-called Orbán regime. While the actual electoral system, causing widespread and lengthy debates both in international public and in political science and constitutional literature, maintained its original type, it remarkably shifted the new electoral law towards a more majoritarian system, leading to a more disproportionate outcome. The main goal of the two mixed electoral systems was to create government stability and efficiency, and this goal has undoubtedly been realised, as Hungary is the only country in the region where not a single early election was held in the past 30 years.

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Majoritarian, but not Quite. Strategic Coordination in the 2018 and 2022 Italian General Elections Under the New Electoral System

The existing Italian electoral system represents a distinctive experiment within the diverse landscape of mixed electoral systems. Consequently, there is value in exploring both the theoretical and empirical implications of its effects. In this article, we commence by delineating the features of the electoral system, which underwent modifications in its functionality following a reduction in the number of parliamentary members between 2018 and 2022. Subsequently, we systematically analyze the impacts it has exerted on political parties and voters during the Italian general elections of 2018 and 2022, as well as its influence on the translation of votes into seats. In particular, our examination delves into both the strategic decisions made by political parties in terms of electoral competition and into the voting preferences of individuals in light of potentially conflicting incentives arising from the competition between single-member districts' candidates and that among party lists. This allows us to elucidate the effects the current Italian electoral system has had on the overarching party system. Empirical evidence collected on these facets enables us to discern whether, for both parties and voters, a logic of plurality-oriented competition and voting has predominated, or whether a proportional paradigm has taken precedence. Furthermore, we explore the extent to which a contamination between these two logics has manifested. In conclusion, drawing on the presented data, we offer a comprehensive evaluation of the new electoral law after two iterations. This assessment takes into account the political and normative constraints to which the system had to adhere, juxtaposed with the comparison between actual outcomes and initial expectations. In summary, our analysis reveals that the majoritarian influence emanating from the single-member districts, though modest in scale, has engendered outcomes that partly align with conventional majoritarian electoral systems. Notably, these effects encompass (a partial) strategic coordination among political parties in shaping their electoral offerings, as well as over- and under-representation of electoral alignments during the translation of votes into seats. Nevertheless, we advocate labeling this system as a 'majoritarian, but not', not only due to the presence of a significant amount of seats allocated under a PR formula, but also given that the active contribution of voters to the majoritarian effects, by means of strategic voting, has been notably minimal.

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Balancing Change and Continuity – A Mixed Electoral System for Poland

The paper presents the dilemmas that needed to be resolved during the work on the design of a mixed electoral system for Poland. The project in question was prepared as part of the work of a special parliamentary team. These dilemmas are the result of 25 years of discussion on changing the Polish electoral system. In the course of this discussion, various postulates and various objections were raised. The experience of countries where the introduction of a mixed electoral system did not bring the intended results or even led to serious political crises was also a source of concern. The study of such experiences, as well as the specifics of previous behavioural patterns in Polish politics, led to the proposal of a proportional-local system as a way out of such dilemmas. The dilemmas discussed concern the balance of power between larger and smaller parties, the importance of territorial representation, the possibility for individual candidates to run, and the prevention of potential fraud. The latter includes the running of fictitious independent candidates, whose appearance can disrupt the proportionality of elections and be perceived as an injustice. The analysis presented here is an example of an approach to the electoral system combining different perspectives of its evaluation - that of the parties, that of the candidates and, last but not least, that of the voters.

SS13: Money, Media, and Oppositions

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Just give me money and let me be. Roots of EU support among Montenegrin citizens

Support for EU membership in Montenegro has been steadily very high over the years, most recently reaching almost 80%. At the same time, majority of Montenegrin citizens say they are against sanctions for Russia, they like Putin more over Western leaders, and they want closer ties with Serbia, negating Kosovo's independence, and Montenegro's NATO membership. So, how come EU support is so high, if Montenegrin citizens do not want to live in line with the EU values? Existing theories, trying to explain support for EU membership, stressed that support mainly comes from three reasons: utilitarian expectations, political values, and domestic politics. Relying on survey data, spanning from 2013 to 2023, we argue that EU support among Montenegrin citizens is mainly transactional, and that citizens dominantly want only economic benefits from the Union. Preliminary analysis shows that this sentiment shifted more towards utilitarian expectations in recent years. Additionally, those who are highly enthusiastic about EU integration tend to appreciate the EU's values more deeply, indicative of a normative alignment with the EU's ideals. In contrast, those with less enthusiasm are influenced more by the tangible economic benefits, viewing accession in transactional terms. These findings not only contribute to the understanding of EU enlargement policy and its reception in candidate countries but also highlight the complex interplay between economic and normative considerations in shaping public attitudes towards the EU.

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Electoral Resistance against Autocratization: Insights from Southeast Europe

Southeast Europe (SEE) stands as a one of the world's regions most significantly impacted by autocratization. Nevertheless, SEE has also emerged as a vanguard in resisting the tide of autocratization, culminating in electoral transfers of power and notable turnovers. This paper examines SEE countries that have recently undergone or are currently experiencing autocratization episodes: Bulgaria (2001-2008), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013-2022), Croatia (2013-2022), Moldova (1998-2005, 2012-17), Montenegro (2013-17), North Macedonia (2000, 2005-2012), Romania (2021-22), Serbia (2010-2022), Slovenia (2011-21), Turkey (2005-17) and Kosovo* (2017). It adopts a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) in a medium-N set of cases, taking national elections (~54) during and after autocratization episodes as the unit of analysis. The aim of this study is to investigate the crucial (combinations of) conditions which can explain the electoral loss of an autocratizing incumbent. Our conditions will be based on information and actions of electoral resistance: electoral system (proportional or majoritarian); pre-electoral coalitions among the opposition parties; opposition's relative strength (number and size of opposition parties); electoral regularity (regular or snap elections); concurrent societal mobilization (protests during the electoral campaign); and electoral record (victory in previous elections in a different tier). The analysis will be corroborated with a series of robustness tests and diagnostics, and short narratives from representative cases. This paper makes contributions to several strands of the literature: it represents a comprehensive, region-wide analysis of SEE through QCA; also, it enriches the emergent literature on autocratization and resistance against it, with a focus on electoral resistance and incumbent electoral loss.

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Public Spending and Electoral Outcomes: Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1996-2021

This study leverages an original dataset of public spending in Bosnia and Herzegovina covering 25 years from 1996 to 2021 across all 14 units of government – ten cantons, two entities, one district, and one state – to identify the relationship between inflation-adjusted spending changes, significant in of itself and a proxy for policy change, and both preceding and subsequent electoral outcomes. It is theorized that changes in public spending influences subsequent electoral outcomes, but are also influenced by preceding electoral outcomes. A set of competing models are then developed to quantify and demonstrate this relationship, all of which are subject to fictitious prediction tests in order to develop a measure of their internal reliability.

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Opposition Strategies in Hybrid Regimes: A Comparative Perspective on Hungary and Serbia

The decline in democratic governance quality has severely impacted Central and Eastern Europe. Many countries in the region are experiencing a new wave of autocratization. These regimes are often identified as competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way, 2002) and classified as electoral autocracies (V-Dem) or hybrid regimes (Freedom House). Regardless of terminology, their mechanisms are similar: maintaining a democratic facade while concentrating power and manipulating institutions to secure electoral victories, making power transfer unlikely (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Hungary and Serbia exemplify these trends. Viktor Orbán's Fidesz and Aleksandar Vučić's SNS have been in power for 14 and 12 years, respectively, dominating fragmented political landscapes. They secure median voter support, leaving the opposition divided on both ends of the spectrum. Opposition parties have tried various strategies, struggling in both the elections and the broader arena where the rules of the game itself are contested (Schedler, 2002), but to no avail. While it is not impossible to overcome the dominant party through electoral contests, it requires mobilization, unity, skills, and heroism from opposition (Diamond, 2002). The literature also highlights the importance of coalition-building, the creativity and innovative nature of the opposition's campaigns, and the role of elections in the democratization process (Bunce & Wolchik, 2011). This paper aims to analyze the opposition strategies in such regimes, focusing on protests, boycotts, electoral tactics, and coalition-building, and how these vary across different elections: local, parliamentary, presidential (Serbia), and European (Hungary). Authors seek to identify variations depending on electoral rules, government types, and contextual settings.

GS14: Elections and Representation in Diverse Societies

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Deliberation in an Anti-deliberative Environment: Attitudinal Evidence from Deliberative Mini-publics in Serbia

This study analyzes participant attitudes from five deliberative mini-publics held in Serbia between 2020 and 2024. Serbia has witnessed a steady decline in the overall quality of democracy, including its deliberative aspect, over the past decade. The institutional and media landscapes have become saturated with anti-deliberative sentiments. While decision-makers have introduced certain participatory and deliberative mechanisms in recent years, these measures have primarily bolstered authorities during political crises, characterizing the environment as a 'façade deliberation.' Through standardized evaluation questionnaires administered to over 200 participants who participated in five deliberative mini-publics, we examine attitudes toward the deliberative process and the actors involved in mini-publics within this context. Our findings reveal a tension between positive attitudes towards deliberative qualities of the process and negative perceptions of political actors. We contextualize this insight within the broader framework of distrust in political institutions in Serbia and the wider region, raising questions about the overall political ramifications and the potential for institutionalizing deliberative mini-publics in anti-deliberative environments. As established liberal democracies progress in the institutionalization of deliberative forums, there is a significant risk of isomorphic mimicry in autocratizing countries within the region. The creation of superficially functional deliberative institutions to conceal authoritarian functions could negatively influence attitudes toward deliberation and undermine the ideals of deliberative democracy.

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Deliberative Democracy to Intergroup Harmony: Testing Contact Hypotheses in Deliberative Mini-publics

Over the past decades, one symptom of the crisis of liberal democracy has been increasing societal parochialism along ethnic, religious, and national lines. Deliberative democracy offers potential deparochialisation by emphasizing inclusiveness through continuous public debates and decision-making processes. This paper critically reviews empirical evidence on the effectiveness of deliberative mini-publics, lasting from half a day to three days, in improving intergroup relations. The contact hypothesis, which suggests that intergroup contact reduces prejudice, served as the analytical framework for only four available case studies: one in Australia with 15% Australians of Aboriginal descent, one in Bulgaria with 15% Roma participants, and two in Belgium with balanced numbers of Dutch and French speakers. Our scrutiny revealed that while authors of these case studies concluded that structured intergroup interactions within these forums can lead to reduced prejudices, the outcomes are very modest. The measures for intergroup contact and prejudice reduction were plain. First, the social interaction during deliberative mini-publics is treated as a black box, with prejudice reduction measured only through pre- and post-interaction questionnaires. Second, the psychological relatedness of participants to members of other groups was not thoroughly discussed beyond the concept of prejudice, which is simply a negative evaluation of a person based on group membership. Consequently, the conclusions drawn were context-blind in almost every case study. Furthermore, the claim that intergroup prejudices are drivers of parochialisation is also tenuous.

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Deliberative policy (sub)system: institutionalizing deliberative mini-publics within a policy process

As part of the crisis of representative democracy, the policy process proved inadequate and suffered from many illnesses. Namely, decision-makers and bureaucracy often rely upon prepacked solutions, stick to rigid hierarchy, suffer from lack of information and over-optimism when crafting policies and are sceptical of power-sharing with the citizens. Because of this, some called for joint bottom-up decision-making to solve most of the challenges. As one form of the solution, deliberative democracy is presented. Coming from the angle of the deliberative system approach, where we go beyond a deliberative mini-public and look at how it interacts and affects a wider system, we intend to articulate four conditions in this paper which can lead deliberative mini-publics to become an inclusive and effective member of the policy subsystem, a zone in which dominant and relevant actors interact in crafting policy solutions in all phases of the policy process.

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Democratic Innovations: A Realist Synthesis

This review synthesizes current research and practitioner perspectives on democratic innovations, funded by the European Commission since 2000, and examines their impact and effectiveness. The review employs Realist Synthesis (RS) to evaluate how these innovations enhanced inclusivity and influenced policy-making. The RS, suitable for assessing diverse contexts and combining qualitative and quantitative data, focuses on the mechanisms, contexts, and outcomes of democratic innovations. Following several rounds of manual coding of projects and documents, a final dataset was made detailing 70 documented cases. The review identified three main types of democratic innovations: consultative, deliberative, and electoral. Findings reveal that consultative innovations, such as public consultations and e-participation mechanisms, often fail to engage marginalized groups and do not significantly influence decision-making. Co-creation innovations and living labs promise to empower citizens and develop innovative solutions, but they face challenges in changing entrenched hierarchical structures. Deliberative forums and participatory budgeting enhance citizen engagement and policy legitimacy but require structured recruitment to avoid social biases. Representative deliberative mini-publics address the issue of representativeness but are resource-intensive. Finally, e-voting in elections does not increase turnout and raises concerns about security and privacy. While democratic innovations offer the potential for more inclusive policy-making, their success depends on context-specific mechanisms and addressing inherent biases in participation and power dynamics. The review suggests an important role of deliberation and suggests further research on expanding citizen engagement and refining participatory approaches to enhance democratic processes.

GS15: Balkan Political Science Association round table

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Desnica u Sloveniji

Slovenian party politics reflects the issues of party democracy in the European Union and the "democratic" world in general; however, it also demonstrates certain peculiarities that are the result of national political culture and recent political history. The right-wing in Slovenia is already actively preparing for the parliamentary elections to be held in two years by assisting the formation of "satellite" conservative parties for the needs of the future conservative coalition. Also, it has begun »taking over« the decision-making power in key institutions of civil society, such as the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia. The conference paper deals with the current specifics of the conservative pole of Slovenian party politics, with a special emphasis on populist approaches, pragmatism, the demonization of political rivals and the usurpation of daily political topics in the context of post-truth political communication and the overall crisis of neoliberalism. The author analyzes and problematizes the "extremism" of the dominant right-wing party SDS in internal and external politics, and addresses among other issues the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on the right-wing ideology in Slovenia.

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Režimi moći u post-jugoslovenskom prostoru

Rad je organizovan u tri koraka. U prvom se izlažu opšte karakteristike Jugoslavije u procesu disolucije (zakašnjela tranzicije (1989/1992); nedovršen proces rutinizacije harizmateske vlasti; nasilna disolucija. U drugom koraku analizuju se uticaji tri snažne negativne političke sile koje su determinisale proces političke transformacije posjugoslovenih društava: rat (postjugoslovenska društva su post-ratna društva); diktatura (proces politike tranzicije se odvija u ozračju post-diktatorske memorije; nacionalizam. U trećem koraku analizuju se tri osnovna modela režima moći u postjugoslovenskom prostoru (stabilokratija, novi despotizam, nedovršene države).

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Vojvodina u post jugoslovenskoj zbilji

U našem tekstu bavićemo se političkim, pravnim i ekonomskim položajem Vojvodine nakon sloma jugoslovenske ideje i države. Namera nam je da ukažemo na činioce destrukcije vojvođanske autonomističke opcije, te, na povremene (ne)uspešne pokušaje stavljanja ovoga pitanja na političku agendu Srbije, odnosno, državnih sklopova u kojima je Srbija egzistirala nakon kraha Jugoslavije. Pokušaćemo da odgovorimo na tri krucijalna pitanja: 1. Koliko je danas realno da se ostvari značajna politička platforma, koja u sebi sadrži značajniji stepen autonomije Vojvodine? 2. Koliko je u srpskoj politici uopšte moguće da se ukoreni shvatanje o potrebi decentralizacije i regionalizacije Srbije? i, 3. Da li treba da se poništi ovako (ustavno) zasnovana i ostvarena autonomija Vojvodine?

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Uloga Sociološkog centra Crne Gore u izgradnji istraživačke kulture u Crnoj Gori

Sociološki centar Crne Gore - SOCEN je jedan od najsnažnijih istraživačkih nukleusa u Crnoj Gori, već 20 godina. Tokom svog postojanja, obavio je veliki broj istraživanja koja su se odnosila na fundamentalna pitanja Crne Gore, socijalnu strukturu, politički sistem, prava manjina, promociju multikulturalizma. U okviru SOCEN-a djeluje klub mladih istraživača, čiji članovi su imali priliku da kroz realizaciju projekata sazrijevaju i učestvuju u podizanju svijesti o važnosti pitanja koja su obrađivali. U najskorije vrijeme, SOCEN je sproveo više projekata koji se tiču promocije i njegovanja multikulturalizma, aktivizma mladih, unapređenja participacije mladih u procesu odlučivanja, rodne ravnopravnosti i drugih važnih pitanja.

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Valtazar Bogišić i Mihailo Konstantinović - čuvari južnoslovenske pravne kulture

Bogišićev metodološki pristup pri kodifikovanju imovinskog prava u Crnoj Gori, kao prvi takve vrste (do danas i jedini) na našim prostorima, poslužio je kao model još jednom velikom zakonodavcu, profesoru Mihailu Konstantinoviću. Taj model podrazumijevao je obavezu zakonodavca da u kodifikovanju dotad važećih običaja treba kombinovati posljednja evropska naučna dostignuća u oblasti prava sa stvarnim ponašanjem i potrebama zajednice. Konstantinović je upozoravao da bi usvajanje Austrijskog građanskog zakonika, umjesto Bogišićeve kodifikacije, za osnovu „Jugoslovenskog građanskog zakonika“ predstavljalo grešku u nacionalno-političkom smislu. U današnjem vremenu, kada je proces usklađivanja domaćih pravnih sistema sa sistemom prava Evropske unije nikad prisutniji, mora se voditi više računa o običajima i potrebama zajednice čije se pravo kodifikuje. Građanski zakonici su jedno od podesnijih sredstva za primjenu viših političkih i filozofskih ideja, a mi bismo morali voditi računa o trajnom gubitku pravnih i političkih posebnosti koje smo imali obavezu održati u životu. Tradicija u pravu treba biti podložna promjenama, ali ne na taj način da stvaramo pravni sistem koji će biti ograničenog trajanja.

SS16: Municipal Councilors in Europe: Institutional Context, Profile, Politics, and Government

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Councillors in Post-Conflict Societies

This paper aims to analyse the attitudes and perceptions of municipal councillors in post-conflict countries compared to other states involved in our research that have not experienced wartime in last more than 35 years. Within the 29 countries involved in the research, four were identified as having experienced a war conflict after 1989. These are Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and North Macedonia. From the perspective of the attitudes of municipal councillors in post-conflict societies and their comparison with the rest of the observed countries, focus will be on the issues of trust (general trust in people; trust in the upper levels of government), tolerance (protection of traditional values; support for tolerance and diversity in the social sphere; efforts against marginalization and poverty), representation (representation of the interests of ethnic minorities; representation of the interests of religious groups/churches), and the status of women (opinions and interests of women at the local level; policies and programs for gender equality; representation of women).

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Mapping Trust and Democratic Values Among Municipal Councillors

In democratic societies, the significance of trust has garnered extensive scholarly attention. While numerous studies have explored citizens' trust in politicians, there remains a gap in research investigating the reciprocal trust held by politicians themselves. It stands to reason that councils wherein councillors exhibit trust in one another, the mayor, and pertinent stakeholders are more likely to be efficacious in fulfilling their responsibilities. Additionally, there's a logical conjecture that councilors with heightened trust levels are also predisposed to placing greater trust in citizens, consequently fostering an inclination to advocate for initiatives promoting citizen involvement. The initial part of this analysis delves into the origins of individual-level trust and contextual factors elucidating variations in trust among councillors within diverse European local democracies and different local democratic systems. Three dimensions of trust are analysed, comprising interpersonal or generalized trust, institutional trust, and trust in local political dynamics. Subsequently, the analysis scrutinizes trust as an anticipatory factor influencing councillors' attitudes toward policy outcomes. Notably, emphasis is placed on their stances regarding participatory democracy, inclusivity, and their perceptions of the councillor's role. The primary objective centers on ascertaining whether trust correlates with divergent councillor attitudes and perceptions.

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Local Democracy in Hybrid Regimes: The Effect of Opposition Boycott on Serbian Local Assemblies

The local elections in Serbia in 2020 took place in a unique political climate. Specifically, local, provincial, and parliamentary elections held on the same day were boycotted by the majority of opposition parties, who cited violations of democratic and media standards as the primary reasons for their withdrawal from the electoral process. In this context, the majority of local assemblies were filled by councillors from the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and its minor partners, who gained power in almost all local governments. This paper utilizes data from the Councillors Survey, a study of the profiles and attitudes of local councillors conducted concurrently in 27 European countries. The authors carried out a survey for Serbia in September and October 2023, involving 870 participants—members of city and municipal assemblies across the country. Based on the survey results, it is possible to present the political, social, and demographic profiles of councillors in local parliaments. The authors' analysis will also explore how these personal characteristics of elected individuals, as well as the length of their tenure, party affiliation, and political ambitions, influence their understanding of oversight functions, connections with citizens, community outreach and engagement, and focus of representation, especially the divided loyalty between the citizens who elected them and their political party – all this occurring within a flawed democratic context further complicated by the boycott of mainstream opposition parties.

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The Whom and How of Local Political Representation in Europe: Preliminary Results from a Survey on Councillors

The current body of research on political representation expands upon the traditional concepts of representational style and focus as essential components of elected officials' role orientations (Eulau et al., 1959; Wahlke et al., 1962; Eulau and Karps, 1977; Searing, 1991). The representational style and associated representative typologies received more emphasis (Wahlke et al., 1962; Saalfeld and Müller, 1997; Andeweg and Thomassen, 2005; Andeweg, 2014). In recent years, the literature has reopened the seemingly settled debate on representational role orientations. It looks at topics such as whether parties are still relevant (Budge, 2020; Close, Legein, and Little, 2022) and how the Internet affects representation (Karlsson and Åström, 2016). From this starting point, the paper will address several interrelated questions about the style and focus of local elected officials' representation: What has changed since the last survey of European first-tier councillors in terms of representational focus and style? In this respect, do the councillors from the various regions of the continent differ from one another—that is, from the more recent democracies in the East to the more established democracies in the South and West? What factors shape the representational style and focus choices of councillors? In this regard, our goal is to go beyond the institutional, party-related, and individual-level factors that have previously been examined in the literature. In particular, we are interested in investigating the effects of localism, trust, horizontal power relations (using a finer measure), and Internet use in politics. We aim to provide answers to these questions by quantitatively analysing data from two surveys of councillors at the first tier of European local government—the ROC data from 2023–2024 and the MAELG data from 2007–2009.

SS17: Shapes and Degrees of Electoral Polarization in the Balkans

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Domestic Allies of Europeanization in the Western Balkans: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

This work explores domestic party constellations in Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia in recent years, with regards to EU integration. All of the above have formally aspired to EU membership, although the pace of political reforms in the Western Balkans has been slower than hoped for, and the region has experienced a resurgence of authoritarian characteristics (e.g. Bieber 2020; Cianetti, Dawson & Hanley 2018). The scholarly debates have recently been heavily focused on EU's supposed lax approach to the state of democratization in the Western Balkans, which was referred to as the stabilitocracy (e.g. Džankić, Keil & Kmezić 2019; Bieber 2018). However, my work examines domestic party scenes and readiness of the domestic actors – including parties in office and those who would replace them – to carry the process of Europeanization. I argue that the domestic scenes leave a lot to be desired by proponents of Europeanization and democratization. Although Serbia has slipped towards the hybrid regime type, there has also been an upsurge of radical rightist parties among the opposition, and even the moderates showed mistrust towards the EU's role and intentions. In Montenegro, the former president Đukanović has promoted NATO and EU membership, while building patronage networks and semi-authoritarianism. Conversely, the opposition has promoted closer ties with Russia and opposed Western integrations. The politics in Kosovo levitated between 'war politicians' and nationalists who opposed normalization. The scholarly community should rethink the self-enforcing, path dependent understanding of the Europeanization process and the strategies to spur democratization in the resilient cases.

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Polarization in reader comments on news about European and parliamentary elections in Croatia

The impact of digital forums on democracy has garnered increasing academic attention following two pivotal political events in 2016: the British referendum vote to leave the European Union and the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States. The theoretical foundation of this concern centers on the notion that internet forums, reader comments, and social media interactions often serve as 'echo chambers' where individuals of similar viewpoints gather, reinforced by self-selection and algorithm-driven content distribution. This phenomenon contributes to ideological polarisation, characterized by deepening divisions between political groups. This paper aims to investigate the presence of ideological polarisation within reader comments on Croatia's most widely read news websites, specifically focusing on articles related to the European and Croatian parliamentary elections. The objective is to discern whether echo chambers exist within the participatory space of media content governed by these organizations. Using both manual and machine sentiment analysis, as well as content analysis, this study will examine reader comments from Croatian news websites spanning from the start of the parliamentary election campaign on March 14, 2024, to the conclusion of the European Parliament elections on June 10, 2024. The research seeks to reveal citizen's sentiments toward political options, election-related topics, and interactions with dissenting opinions. By exploring these dynamics, this study endeavors to empirically assess the presence of echo chambers within the Croatian media ecosystem. It anticipates uncovering evidence of political polarisation in public opinions expressed on news portals during this critical electoral period.

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Reciprocal Radicalisation in the Western Balkans: From Nationalism to Civilisationism

The paper examines the specific dynamics of radicalisation in contemporary Serbia, focusing primarily on the interdependence of Serbian and Bosniak nationalist discourses. Although relevant scholarship poses Islamist extremism and right-wing extremism as usual counterparts in reciprocal radicalisation, this paper argues that religious extremism is marginal in Serbia (mainly imported from the outside). Radicalisation in the whole of Western Balkans is embedded more in the experience of violence and ethnic cleansing of the 1990s wars than in any other factor that would be typical for Western Europe. Therefore, both Serbian and Bosniak nationalist discourses employ self-victimisation as a mobilisation and resistance strategy. Their advocates identify themselves with meta-historical narratives of victimhood and an 'underdog' position, offering future greatness in contrast to the current humiliation. Competitive self-victimisation represents the core of reciprocal radicalisation in Serbia. However, both nationalisms are deeply embedded in similar civilisational discourses, giving religion a central position in their social imagination, counterposing the Western secular world. They are both essentially postcolonial, sharing the same anti-colonial rhetoric to legitimise their positions and mobilise subaltern identities in a Western-dominated world. Therefore, this paper argues that both nationalisms share similar illiberal qualities and could be categorised as civilisationism.

GS18: Democracy and Democratization

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Postkonsenzusna demokracija i (ne)'jedinstvo svijeta'

Autori drže da (liberalna) demokracija nije više politički oblik koji teži globalnoj prevlasti. Posljedično pojam demokracije doživljava promjenu. Autori pretpostavljaju da je ona već na djelu i da se suočavamo s postkonsenzusnom demokracijom. Postavlja se pitanje kakve je odlike imao oblik demokracije koji se napušta? Kako bismo to pokazali prvo ćemo iznijeti Rancièreovo shvaćanje tzv. konsenzusne demokracije (koja se naziva i postdemokracija) i zasnivala se na borbi protiv polarizacija. U Rancièreovom shvaćanju spomenuta vrsta demokracije srušila je učenja o tzv. realnoj demokraciji, njenu rousseauvsku, ali i marksističku inačicu. Rancière tvrdi kako se, međutim, urušila i moć same 'formalne' demokracije u korist stručnih 'instancija bez odgovornosti'. Ovaj filozof ukazuje kako je spomenuti oblik demokracije usklađen s „načinom bivanja nekog društva“, u ovom slučaju s tržištem što je izvitoperena inačica marksizma. Takva demokracija biva zasnovana na stranama koje su „već zadane“ što znači kraj pojavnog. Međutim, još je rana kritika takvih razvića (John Gray) upozorila na kratkovidnost Fukuyamine teze da su „liberalne institucije neupitno nužne za ostvarenje pravde i ljudskog dobra“. I da sve upućuje 'da se vraćamo u razdoblje koje je klasično povijesno'. Kako je ruskog-ukrajinski rat pokazao ta kritika nije bila bez osnove. Držimo da promjene u globalnom statusu demokracije mogu biti interpretirane tekstovima Carla Schmitta, Veleprostor protiv univerzalizma odnosno Jedinstvo svijeta. Schmitt tvrdi da se liberalna demokracija u situaciji slabljenja vlastite hegemonije suočava s dva politička načela. Prvo je načelo vele-prostora u „kojem izvanjske sile ne bi mogle imati utjecaj“ budući da bi to bila zona utjecaja udomaćene regionalne sile. Drugo je „univerzalističko svjetsko načelo koji obuhvaća planetu i čitavo čovječanstvo“. Kako potonji princip nije više aktualan nadaje se da se može govoriti o „demokraciji u jednoj zemlji“. Kako je takva demokracija, postkonsenzusna i okrenuta sebi samoj ostaje za vidjeti koliko će nastupajuća polarizacija u njoj biti „politička subjektivacija“ na tragu Rancièrea.

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How Do Hybrid Regimes Transition to Democracy? Lessons from Southeast Europe After 1990

This paper examines the complex dynamics of transitioning hybrid regimes, focusing specifically on post-communist Southeast Europe, including the former Yugoslav countries and Albania. Its central aim is to evaluate the mechanisms driving their transformation to weak democracies. We find that public protest and opposition organization are essential for regime change. Additionally, we argue that when hybrid regimes do undergo change, the extent of change is minimal, making them prone to reverting to the hybrid arrangement. They exhibit an oscillating stability in transitioning between hybrid regimes and weak democracies. We employ an economic model of hybrid regimes and introduce a formal model that assesses the likelihood of regime transition based on elections (E), organized opposition (O), and public outcry (PO). The research highlights the critical interaction between elections, the organization of the opposition, and public protest, demonstrating that these factors primarily affect the change and the regimes' relative stability.

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New Parties, Populism and Post-Democracy: The Case of 2024 Elections in Bulgaria and SEEU

The paper aims to explore the emergence of new parties and their relationship with populism and post-democracy and their manifestations in the parliamentary and European elections in 2024. It brings together three conceptual frameworks: 1) *populism* and the multiplication of crises, 2) *new parties* and the new party subsystem; and 3) *post-democracy* : a state in which democratic institutions still exist but are becoming empty shells as we witness fundamental changes and pendulum shifts from policies to politics, from crisis management to crisis creation, from institutions to leadership, from ad hoc crisis to permanent crisis. The paper first maps out the prevalence of new parties and populism in the EU-27 against the quality of democracy. We use reliable secondary sources and a combination of indexes (V-democracy party index; CHES-Europe survey, the Party Manifesto Project, Timbro's Authoritarian Populism Index, Freedom House) to assess party institutionalization, the importance of new parties and of populist parties, and democracy indexes (V-democracy and Freedom House) to assesses the quality of democracy. Second, the paper examines Bulgaria as a case study and analyses the emergence and rise of new far-right populist parties and their performance in the parliamentary and European elections in 2024. The third part is comparative and examines the new parties and their impact on post/democracy in SEEU.

SS19: Attitudes, Voters and Parties

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Meeting the Demands: The Electoral Consequences of Party Shifts

The optimal strategies and positions of political parties have attracted the attention and curiosity of both political scientists and the public. Before elections, parties face a dilemma. They can moderate their position to attract the “median voter” or move away from the center to distinguish themselves from other parties and avert losing voters to their (more) extreme competitors. Those shifts are either a success, leading to electoral gains, or a failure that only benefits their opponents. In this paper, I do not aim to understand why parties move, but rather the electoral consequences of their shifts. This is driven by an interest in understanding the costs and benefits of parties’ position moderation. Using the Manifesto project data covering political parties from both Eastern and Western Europe, the paper argues that the electoral consequences of shifts are not always the same, and that they can differ depending on the party family in addition to the voters’ and parties’ position distribution in the election. The paper focuses on the distribution of the voters of the party using aggregated data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems CSES project, in addition to the structure of the party system to explain why in some cases political parties benefit from moderation, while in others they benefit from extremism.

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The Social Foundations of Illiberalism in Serbia – Understanding the Nexus of Clientelism, Attitudes, and Illiberal Party Support

Electoral competition is central to the democratic process, but not all competitive practices are fair or legal (Stankov 2023). The parliamentary elections in Serbia in December 2023 were marred by widespread allegations of electoral fraud, positioning Serbia as a typical case for studying the social foundations of illiberalism due to the prevalence of such practices and the deterioration of democratic standards since 2012. Utilizing data from a novel survey conducted in April-May 2024, this paper explores the link between attitudes towards clientelism and support for illiberal political parties. Employing regression models and principal component analysis (PCA), the survey data indicate that a significant portion of the population supports strong, decisive leadership and is skeptical of traditional democratic processes. This preference for authoritarianism is further reinforced by perceived threats from foreign cultures and dissatisfaction with current living conditions. Importantly, those who strongly disagree with illiberalism (and could potentially counterbalance illiberal leaders) recognize the importance of political connections and clientelism, providing deeper insight into the political dynamics at play. Moreover, a majority of respondents report clientelist practices and illiberal behaviors, such as coercion into party membership to secure employment or career advancement. This entrenchment of clientelism undermines democratic norms and perpetuates the power of illiberal parties. Thus, the study on Serbia offers a comprehensive analysis of the social foundations driving illiberalism and how economic and social factors, along with perceptions of clientelism, support illiberal politics.

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Gender and Ideology: Serbian political party positions on women's issues

This paper explores the relevance of party ideology for the positions of women MPs on gender issues. Looking at the speeches of women representatives in the Serbian parliament from 2000-2020, the paper aims to understand how their party ideology affects their preferences on gender issues and how their positioning on gender issues has changed over time. The existing datasets that measure parties' policy preferences have rarely referred to gender related issues. Following Regional Manifestos Project, which has for the first time included gender domain among its indicators, this paper explores MPs' gender positions in four dimensions: welfare and labour market; violence; representation; and values and identity.

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Gender Gap in Voting

In recent years a wide gender gap in voting has emerged amongst young voters in a number of countries, with young women more likely to vote for left-wing and socially liberal parties than young men. The rapid growth in the size of this gap defies explanations that propose (gradual) structural change. To probe the nature of the gap in the United Kingdom I use linear and polynomial regression analysis on data from the British Election Study to explain how gender and age combine to affect the vote intention and political ideology of English and Welsh voters between 2016 and 2023. I find that there are significant gender differences in the way voters' political ideologies vary with age, even when structural factors are controlled for. These differences are particularly notable in relation to so-called culture wars issues, with (especially young) women taking a more socially progressive stance than men.

GS20: FPS Graduate Students' panel

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The Impact of Media Consumption on Voting Behavior in Serbia: An Analysis of Television, Internet Portals, and Social Media

Media plays a crucial role in shaping political opinions and voter behavior. This paper explores how daily consumption of media, including TV channels, internet portals, and social media platforms, affects voting preferences for four groups: ruling parties, civic opposition, right-wing parties, and abstainers. We investigate the effect of different media types (television, internet portals, and social media) on voting behavior for various political groups in Serbia. Using logistic regression analysis, we assessed the impact of media consumption on voters' likelihood to support specific parties or to abstain from voting. The analysis includes demographic controls such as age, education level, urban or rural residence, and regional differences. As a method we used logistic regression to analyze the impact of various media types on voting preferences. The dependent variables are the likelihood of voting for each of the four groups. Independent variables include demographic factors and media consumption. The results indicate that media consumption significantly impacts voting behavior, with television and internet portals having a more substantial effect compared to social media. The ruling parties benefit most from traditional media (TV), while the right-wing parties gain significant support through internet portals. Social media platforms show mixed effects, with certain platforms like Facebook and Instagram boosting right-wing support.

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CNN effects in hybrid regimes: the effect of the type of televised media on perception of the Russian Federation

It has been researched that mass media has effect on foreign policy of democratic countries, especially in the case of the CNN effect. Meanwhile, research has shown that following government media tends to shape foreign policy attitudes in authoritarian regimes. But what about hybrid regimes? To what extent does following a certain type of media in hybrid regimes (pro or anti government) shape foreign policy attitudes of citizens? This paper examines to what extent the television media in Serbia shapes the perception of citizens towards the Russian Federation. The paper wants to find out if the media has an influence on citizens perceiving Russia as a friend. The paper claims that, in accordance with the theory of manufactured consensus, the media will have an influence on shaping public opinion and creating a desired image of a certain state. The paper, using factor analysis (Principal component analysis; Promax 4 rotation), singles out two latent variables among the media in Serbia. The first consists of the 'regime media', i.e. all five television stations with a national frequency. The second consists of the 'opposition media', that is, N1, Nova S, and Euronews. The paper then uses binomial logistic regressions to compare how much the probability of that perception increases/decreases depending on the type of media being followed. The model itself is controlled by demographic variables, respondents' ideological affiliation, as well as the normative backlash (hostility towards the United States). The analysis itself shows a statistically significant effect of media influence on opinion formation.

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Ka legitimnim predstavničkim institucijama: predlozi institucionalizacije nasumičnog odabira političkih predstavnika u Srbiji

Kao odgovor na poljuljanu legitimnost predstavničkih institucija, izazvanu korišćenjem izbora kao jedinog mehanizma biranja političkih predstavnika, rad razmatra mehanizme odlučivanja koji počivaju na nasumičnom odabiru političkih predstavnika kao alternativni koja bi tu legitimnost nadomestila na primeru Republike Srbije. Istraživanja pokazuju da sve više građana gubi poverenje u političke predstavnike i odustaje od političke participacije kroz izbore. Uzrok tome nalazi se u samoj prirodi izbora, koji ulogu građana u procesu donošenja političkih odluka svode na čin glasanja, a odlučivanje prepuštaju profesionalnim političarima. Rešenje se vidi u nasumičnom odabiru političkih predstavnika. Često se mehanizam nasumičnog odabira onih koji vrše vlast ističe kao differentia specifica pojma lotokratije. Zapravo, u pitanju je mehanizam koga politička teorija od svojih početaka vezuje sa samom suštinom demokratije. Ponovno oživljavanje antičkog demokratskog ideala kroz nasumičan odabir političkih predstavnika stvorilo bi jednake mogućnosti za učešće građana u donošenju odluka koje ih se tiču i dalo veći legitimitet poretku. Predlažu se tri modela implementacije nasumičnog odabira političkih predstavnika i razmatra njihova primenljivost u kontekstu Srbije. Prvi model su deliberativne mini-javnosti, drugi je nasumičan odabir predstavnika u jednom od domova nacionalnog parlamenta i treći je multy body sortition, složen sistem predstavničkih tela koji uključuju nasumičan odabir njihovih članova.

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The effect of the low empathy and altruism on voting abstinence in Serbia

Abstinance from electoral process represents one of the main distortions of democratic legitimacy and deliberation. In Serbia, abstinance is often explained by the lack of trust in the political institutions and parties or politicians themselves. The goal of this paper will be to explore the less emphasized effect that lack of empathy and altruism have on the voting abstinence in Serbia. By using logistic regression analysis, we examined how different levels of altruism and empathy influenced the electoral choices of Serbian population across the ideological board. We used demographic variables such as income, gender, region and education level but also satisfaction with institutions and political system for control. The results of the research indicate that higher levels of empathy and altruism make the participants in the research more likely to vote for either the government or the certain parties of the opposition. The research signifies that low levels of empathy and altruism constitute a statistically significant part of the explanation why some people in Serbia abstain from voting.

SS22: Dilemmas of Ethnopolitical Mobilization and Representation

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Detection of Minority Specific Issues in Parliamentary Debates in Serbia (2020-2023)

International monitoring reports regularly welcome Serbia's efforts to improve the political-parliamentary representation of national minorities; although the system only makes it easier for them to obtain parliamentary mandates and does not guarantee it. Nevertheless, the Hungarian, Bosnian, and Albanian representation can be said to be almost constant since the regime change, but MPs with other ethnic background also appear in the parliamentary benches from time to time (e.g. Croatian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Roma, Russian, Ruthenian, and Vlach). With regard to the concept of the limited parliamentary representation of national minorities in Serbia, it logically follows that how far the MPs with minority ethnic background ensure the protection of the interests of those national minorities that did not enter the parliament. Therefore, the paper examines what topics the minority representatives spoke on in the 12th and 13th National Assembly of Serbia; whether the speeches were directed towards the improvement of the situation of a concrete community or all national minorities living in Serbia; and whether they were successful in interest protection/representation at all. Although the study covers two incomplete parliamentary mandates (2020-2022, 2022-2023), the selection of the period is not accidental. Covid, the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and the still pending Kosovo case all greatly influenced parliamentary communication at that time. The question is, under such circumstances, what might be considered a minority-specific issue in the Serbian parliament. Several studies have already confirmed that descriptive representation of minorities does not necessarily mean their substantive representation. The goal of the paper is to tone this conclusion and adjust it with regard to the behavior of individual MPs coming from various minority ethnic groups.

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Electoral mobilization in minority council and parliamentary elections in Central and South Eastern Europe

The elected forms of minority cultural autonomies (minority councils/self-governments) are specific, yet understudied mechanisms of ethnic voting and channels of ethnicity-based representation in the four relevant countries of Central and South Eastern Europe (Croatia, Hungary, Serbia, and Slovenia). In order to grasp the electoral participation of the minorities in question, a comparison could be made with the results of the parliamentary elections, where the above countries also follow an accommodationist strategy through various measures (reserved/guaranteed seats, lower thresholds, parliamentary spokespersons) to foster minority representation in their legislatures. In this regard, the questions to be addressed include whether and which role minority autonomies are to play in electoral mobilization in parliamentary elections, which institutional structures are more likely to increase or decrease minority participation. Since some countries could be defined increasingly as electoral autocracies (Hungary, Serbia), this leads further to investigate how these regimes built and used these channels, whether they represent effective participation in public life, as envisaged by the international standards of minority protection. Further, where, geographically, and to what extent voters tend to support minority lists, candidates and ethnic parties running in the parliamentary elections, compared to the elections of their autonomous bodies. The major aim of the paper is, therefore, to present and analyze the levels of electoral mobilization in the elections of minority councils/self-governments, the national variants of non-territorial cultural autonomies, comparing them with the results of another key institutional channel of participation, the past two or three parliamentary elections in the four countries.

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Parliamentary Representation and Linguistic Minorities in Italy – Effective form of participation?

The most recent legislative reform of the electoral law in Italy continues to offer a facilitated procedure for territorially concentrated, recognised linguistic minorities to gain a seat in parliament. The presentation first gives an overview on the international standards relevant to the right of national minorities to participate in public life, especially to minorities' representation in legislative bodies. International instruments, OSCE and Council of Europe expert recommendations recognize various procedures that may guarantee for minorities an effective participation in public life: there is not any specific requirement to grant minorities representation in national parliament. The question addressed here is how the arrangements for a facilitated parliamentary representation of minorities in Italy affect questions regarding equality among minority communities, the principle of equal voting rights, and the effectiveness of minority representation in parliament. These issues are analysed in light of Italy's international obligations on minority rights – especially under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

GS23: Lokalni izbori i lokalna samouprava

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Model neposredno biranog gradonačelnika i odnos predstavničkog i izvršnog organa vlasti: uporedna analiza Republike Hrvatske i BiH i potencijalna primena u Republici Srbiji

Neposredno birani gradonačelnik predstavlja jedan od potencijalnih modela iz uporedne prakse kada građani na opštim i tajnim izborima biraju gradonačelnika glasajući za određenu ličnost koja poseduje integritet u određenoj lokalnoj zajednici. Ovako izabran gradonačelnik se naziva jakim gradonačelnikom budući da svoj suverenitet crpi direktno od građana. Iako je ovaj sistem znatno popularniji u anglosaksonskom svetu nego u kontinentalnoj Evropi, poslednjih godina se beleži porast broja država sa ovim modelom posebno u novim i krhkim demokratijama. U regionu bivše Jugoslavije, ovaj sistem je prisutan u četiri republike (Slovenija, Hrvatska, BiH i Severna Makedonija), dok Srbija i Crna Gora, osim u jednom kratkom periodu, zadržavaju sistem sa posredno biranim odnosno slabim gradonačelnikom. Jedno od ključnih polja analize jeste odnos između predstavničkog i izvršnog organa vlasti u okviru ovog modela. Stoga, osnovno istraživačko pitanje glasi: Da li kohabitacija u modelu neposrednog biranog gradonačelnika predstavlja slabost ili prednost ovog modela u pogledu njegove demokratičnosti? Ovaj rad analizira model direktno biranog gradonačelnika u sistemu lokalne samouprave i odnos između predstavničkog i izvršnog organa vlasti. Fokus ovog istraživanja je na uporednoj analizi specifičnih gradova i opština iz Republike Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine, gde se istražuje kako ovaj model oblikuje dinamiku vlasti na lokalnom nivou i poziciju lokalne samouprave u uslovima kohabitacije. Kako je Republika Srbija imala kratko iskustvo sa ovim modelom, u radu se analizira i potencijalni povratak na ovaj model kroz promenu zakonodavstva i ističu izazovi i moguće prednosti koje bi ovakva promena mogla doneti u kontekstu decentralizacije vlasti i jačanja lokalne demokratije.

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Nacionalne manjine na lokalnim izborima u Srbiji 17. decembra i 2. juna

Ovim radom želimo da analiziramo učešće nacionalnih manjina na lokalnim izborima u Republici Srbiji, koji su održani 17. decembra 2023. i 2. juna 2024. godine. U prvom planu će nam biti stranke najbrojnijih nacionalnih manjina u Srbiji – Albanaca, Mađara i Bošnjaka, a sumarno stranke ostalih nacionalnih manjina. Nastavljajući trend sa prethodnih izbornih ciklusa stranke nacionalnih manjina uzele su aktivnog učešća u lokalnim izborima. Na njima su nastupali u skladu sa svojim programskim afilijacijama – u saradnji sa strankama vlasti ili opozicije, ili pak neutralno, kombinujući samostalne i koalicione nastupe. Njihovo aktivno učešće na izborima, kao i favorizovanje nacionalnih manjina u izbornom zakonodavstvu Srbije stvorilo je pogodne osnove za njihovo predstavljanje u lokalnim parlamentima i ulazak u vlast u lokalnim sredinama gde čine većinu, ili su pak kao deo predizbornih koalicionih aranžmana sa strankama većinskog naroda koje su osvojile vlast u drugim sredinama. Participaciji je doprinelo i izborni zakonodavstvo koje maksimalno favorizuje učešće manjinskih stranaka, što je dovelo do njihovog poboljšanog izbornog skora i, konačno, do činjenice da stranke nacionalnih manjina uzimaju učešća u vlasti u nekoliko desetina opština i gradova širom Republike Srbije. Autori će se rukovoditi analizom rezultata lokalnih izbora u manjinskim sredinama. Takođe će se predstaviti rezultati tokom prethodnih izbornih ciklusa kako bi se pratile trajektorije vezane za učešće u izbornim procesima i manjinsko predstavljanje u sredinama gde one predstavljaju većinu.

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Neposredno birani gradonačelnik – evropska iskustva i mogućnosti primene u Srbiji

U Evropi postoje brojne države u kojima se gradonačelnik bira neposredno. Među njima je evidentan veliki broj bivših socijalističkih država u kojima je neposredno birani gradonačelnik percipiran kao instrument jačanja demokratije i čvršćeg vezivanja vlasti za građane. Nameće se pitanje kako je moguće da ovaj sistem opstaje u mnogim evropskim zemljama a da to nije slučaj u Srbiji. Ovo je i osnovno istraživačko pitanje ovog rada. Shodno rečenom sačinjena je i struktura rada. Najpre se daje uvid u osnovne izazove demokratije u savremenim društvima i državama našeg regiona te elaborira značaj disperzije političke moći i jačanja veza izabranih vlasti i građana (kroćenje moći etabliranih i vladajućih političkih partija). Nadalje, u radu se obrazlaže da neposredan izbor gradonačelnika može biti jedan od načina jačanja ove veze. Potom se daje pregled argumentacije i iskustava evropskih država po pitanju načina izbora gradonačelnika uz objašnjenje prednosti i izazova modela neposredno biranog gradonačelnika. Glavni deo rada je fokusiran na mogućnosti buduće primene ovog modela u Srbiji. Zaključak je da bi ovaj model bio blagotvoran za razvoj demokratije u Srbiji ali i primenljiv kao deo šireg reformskog paketa koji bi uključivao veći broj promena u sistemu lokalne samouprave.

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Diskurs nacionalnih pitanja u kampanji za lokalne izbore u Srbiji

Београдски локални избори већ дуго у политичком дискурсу Србије служе као проширена платформа за опште парламентарне или председничке изборе, с којима су често заједно расписани. Ове године (2024) локални београдски избори расписани су независно од општих избора, али то не значи и промену у наративу којем београдски избори припадају. И странке блиске власти и странке опозиције говориле су највише о темама које нису уско спецификоване за Београђане, већ припадају тематици националних питања и политике целе државе. У предложеном раду биће анализирано којим темама и стилско-реторичким поступцима су се користили кандидати на локалним изборима у Београду 2024. За узорак је узето четири најбоље пласиране листе, међу којима су по две различито идеолошки оријентисане – дискурзивном анализом биће анализирани слогани, рекламни спотови и говори (на митинзима и у гостовањима) примарних говорника наведених листа – Александар Шапић, Саво Манојловић, Добрица Веселиновић и Бранимир Несторовић. Главна претпоставка истраживања је да се реторички поступци наведених говорника заснивају на принципима лидерске политике, еристичком проширивању тема на општа државотворна питања и идеолошким разликама према политичким ривалима у погледу националних питања, док су локална питања Београда у другом плану и служе само као додатни аргумент за доказивање становишта о идејама за политичко управљање у општем смислу.