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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Politics in the Balkans has been researched with increasing interest over the past few decades. The Balkans' tumultuous past, marked by conflict, transition and democracy consolidation issues, ethnic, religious and language diversity, geostrategic position, globalisation and European integration processes clashing with national identities and political culture, to a large extent determine the behaviour of political participants and the political events not only in this part of Europe, but also globally. This is why the whole world has taken an interest in the political processes of the Balkans. A lack of comprehensive academic studies and systematic research into the political processes has, along with existing prejudices, often given international audiences incomplete, interest-stigmatised and biased ideas about the Balkans. All this makes the Balkans of additional interest for research, which has, however, mainly restricted itself to the national scope. Comparative analyses, more thorough studies of politics in a number of this region's countries and efforts to describe the political processes, participants and institutions in a more comprehensive and scientific manner are rare, if not completely lacking. Broader insight into the events, key political inclinations and perspectives in the Balkans is further hindered by a lack of communication between researchers and the small number of journals and comparative projects dealing with longitudinal research into politics in this part of Southeast Europe. These are the main reasons which prompted us to set up a journal which would analyse the political phenomena in the Balkan states from a comparative perspective.



*Milan Jovanovic,  
Editor-in-Chief and  
Professor at the  
University of Belgrade*

This journal, the first issue of which we are presenting to the academic community and general public, is one of the results of the *Comparative Electoral Study: The Impact of Personal Vote on Internal Party Democracy* research project, implemented within the "Regional Research Promotion Programme" (RRPP), with the financial support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Coordination (SDC), and administered by the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. The content of this first issue has been inspired by the experiences gained from carrying out this project. Elections are the most crucial political process in all societies and the greatest mass form of political participation. Even after almost three decades of re-democratisation, elections are still a point of division and conflict in the Balkan states. The debate on electoral institutions as a means of strengthening democratisation continues with varied intensity throughout the Balkan states. Election results shape national policies and determine relations within the entire region. It is for these reasons that we have devoted the first issue to electoral campaigns.

Comparative Balkan Politics is devised as an expert scientific panel discussing all the relevant aspects of the organisation and functioning of the authorities, the (re) design of political institutions, the political institutions themselves, political parties, the non-government sector, public politics, geostrategic movements, international relations, security structure and European integration processes, focusing on the Balkan region. We are open to all researchers from universities, institutes and other institutions in the field of scientific research of the various aspects of political science, law, sociology and related disciplines.

Every beginning is a challenging one, and there is no guarantee of success. We will attempt to avoid the fate of so many journals that faded out after the initial enthusiasm. To achieve this, we will need the support and involvement of all those who see this project's significance for the academic community and general public in the Balkans. The more substantial the support is, the greater the odds are of Comparative Balkan Politics establishing itself as a relevant media publication. We are convinced that it will prove itself worthy of such support, and we invite all interested individuals and institutions to cooperate with us and offer their suggestions, remarks and contributions.

# **PERSONAL OR PARTY ELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN SERBIA – EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

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# PERSONAL OR PARTY ELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN SERBIA – EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

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## SUMMARY

The main hypothesis of this paper is that candidates that run for election on the electoral lists of political parties and coalitions or citizen groups, run extremely party-based campaigns, not personal ones. We perform the testing of this hypothesis with the help of empirical research (*Comparative Candidate Survey*), which was conducted in 2015 in the Republic of Serbia. In the survey, 268 respondents were interviewed. Given the nature of the paper, we are dealing with the relationship between citizens and MPs. The Serbian Constitution states that citizens are holders of sovereignty and exercise it through their freely elected representatives. The election feature which is associated most strongly with the theme of our research is the design of the electoral ballot papers. In the case of the closed-form list, it can be said that the candidates who are on the electoral list are discouraged from leading personal campaigns, and instead direct their activities during the election period towards promoting the party and the party leader. Candidates for members of parliament only run party-based campaigns. The results of research conducted on the attitudes and actions of candidates for members of parliament during the election campaign in 2014 confirm this fact. Examining the results of comparative research, we have noticed that party campaigns are predominant also in systems with a personalised ballot. However, there is definitely an impact from the type of electoral system and, in combination with undemocratic relations within parties, this can lead to a purely party-based campaign. The influence of the party leader, the leadership campaign, obedience and loyalty to the leader of the party and good relations with him are much more important for the candidates than contact with the voters and leading a personal campaign.

*Key words: campaigns, party campaign, candidate for member of parliament, survey, intra-party relations*

## Introduction

In this paper we discuss the election campaign during the 2014 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Serbia. The main hypothesis of this paper is that candidates that run for parliament on the election lists of political parties and coalitions or citizen groups, run extremely party-focused campaigns, not personal ones. We must bear in mind that party campaigns are in fact extremely leadership-based campaigns (Lončar & Stojanović, 2015, p.87), and we can conclude that these candidates run campaigns with the predominant goal of promoting the political party and its leader. We test this hypothesis with the help of empirical research (*Comparative Candidate Survey*), which was conducted in 2015 in the Republic of Serbia.

In Section 2 we present the theoretical framework in which we look at the topics of political representation, electoral campaigns and the impact of the electoral system on the campaign, and internet campaigns in the context of research. In Section 3 we lay out the research methodology. In Section 4 we present the results of research, while in Section 5 we attempt to prove the working hypothesis.

## **1. Political representation and election campaign – context of research**

The issue of political representation, elections and electoral rules as well as the rules defining the election campaign are broad themes that we will not deal with in detail, but they will be presented in the context of the research that has been done. Political representation in the broad sense: “1) is a label for an agent who acts on behalf of its authoriser (principal); 2) is to point out that one person shares the typical features of a certain group of persons to which it belongs; 3) is an indication that a person symbolises the identity or quality of a group in which he may, or may not, belong.” (Matić & Podunavac, 1997, p.317) From this definition we clearly see that the issue of political representation primarily takes place in the context of relations between citizens (or part/group thereof) and their politically elected representatives. Bearing in mind the institutional system in the Republic of Serbia, it is clear that the principal-agent connection can exist between citizens and MPs and between citizens and the directly elected president of the Republic. Given the nature of the paper, we are only dealing with the relationship between citizens and MPs. The Serbian Constitution states that: citizens are holders of sovereignty and exercise it through their freely elected representatives (RS Constitution, Art. 2, para. 1). The National Assembly is the supreme representative body and holder of constitutional and legislative power in the Republic of Serbia (RS Constitution, Art. 98).

Free and fair general elections are the basic starting point of any democratic political regime. Elections are the most commonly used form of political participation, and decision making involves all members of the political community (Jovanović, 2012, p.35). The electoral decisions of all citizens form a legislative body, meaning that citizens (principals) through elections elect their representatives (agents, proxies), whose interests they will represent. The electoral system – the rules of political electoral competition – is crucial for the transfer of sovereignty from principal to agent. Through the electoral system, distribution of power in society takes place by means of the signal sent by citizens when voting to elect their representatives who presented their programmes during the election campaign. “The impact of the electoral system on voters opting whether and how to vote is undeniable.” (Jovanović, 2012, p.35) The electoral system not only affects the allocation of voters, but also the behaviour of the candidates during the election campaign. The electoral system for the election of MPs in the Republic of Serbia is proportional (list system), with a single electoral unit, a threshold of 5% and a method of distribution of mandates by the highest quotient. The election feature associated most strongly with the theme of our research is the

design of the electoral ballot papers. “The ballot paper states the name of the party, the leader of the party and the first name on the party list. Since this is category voting, the voter votes by circling the ordinal number before the name of the list. The order of the parties on the ballot paper is defined on the basis of the order of submission and confirmation of the lists.” (Jovanović, 2015, p.29) In the case of closed-form lists, it can be said that candidates who are on the electoral list are discouraged from leading personal campaigns, but direct their activities during the election period at promoting the party and the party leader. “A voter in Serbia has no possibility to express his preference for any of the candidates from the chosen party. The electoral lists are closed and personalisation of the voters’ will is prevented. Their choice is reduced to voting according to personal party preferences, without the possibility of evaluating the candidates and decide on their election. (...) The design of the ballot guides the voter to choose exclusively the party and its leader. During the voting, the voter has no opportunity to be informed about all the candidates standing for the party he/she will vote for. The voter votes but does not elect – the election of MPs is essentially left to the parties.” (Jovanović, 2015, pp.29-30) Accordingly, given that the voter cannot vote for individual candidates, but only for a political party, the parliamentary candidates are encouraged to advocate for the promotion of the party and the leader. This means that for their personal selection, relations within the party and with the party leader are more important than their relationship with the voters from whom they should be seeking support and drawing legitimacy. “The leaders are not interested in sharing personal power and do not work on strengthening clear criteria for nomination or for preliminary elections; candidates are passive – both during and after the elections, their communications with voters is mediated exclusively by the party bureaucracy.” (Jovanović & Vučićević, 2014, p.19) These consequences of the electoral system have a number of negative implications on democracy in a society. It is our task to empirically test the hypothesis that the candidates for members of parliament run only party-based campaigns, and not personal ones.

In their paper dealing with election campaigns in the Republic of Serbia from the democratic changes in 2000 until 2014, Lončar and Stojanović reach the conclusions that the campaigns are extremely leadership-based, that in addition to being a leader and the carrier of the electoral message, he himself is often the only essence of the message. They offer two answers as to why this is so. On one hand this is due to the political culture and history, and the personality cult that is in the political memory of citizens. On the other hand, the answer can be found in the undemocratic practices of political parties and the extreme personalisation of the party in the form of their party leader. According to them, a leadership-based party necessarily produces leadership-based campaigns (Lončar & Stojanović, 2015, p.88).

The development of the internet and the increasing availability and growing number of users mean that online campaigns are more widespread than ever in comparative political practice. “The last decade was marked by a large increase in the importance of the internet in everyday life. The potential has not bypassed politics, and there is more frequent academic and practical study of the political potential of the global worldwide web.” (Spasojević, 2012, p.73) Through the internet it is possible to achieve a more immediate relationship between candidates and voters. “The most important

advantage of the internet over traditional media is its interactivity and the possibility to establish two-way communication between political organisations and citizens.” (Ignjatovic, 2012, p.183) However, it is important to look at the general characteristics of the political scene that define and use media, as well as their impact. “Here, first of all, we refer to a significant degree of centralisation of political power both in society and within the parties. This distribution of power renders obsolete the opportunities for participation which the internet provides, because the decisions might be affected very rarely.” (Spasojević, 2012, p.74) Online campaigning is characterised by increasing personalisation and opportunities for direct communication between candidates and voters. This is another factor that should be used by candidates in order to personalise their campaigns. In this paper we use research results in relation to internet campaigns just to see whether candidates for members of parliament use the internet for personal campaigns, and if so, how and to what extent. A stratification of the sample into younger and older candidates has been made just to see whether there are differences in the conducting of internet campaigns.

In this paper, through the results of the research we aim to prove the hypothesis that candidates for members of parliament run only party-based campaigns, and not personal ones.

## 2. Research methodology

The study, aimed at familiarising readers with the attitudes and actions of candidates for members of parliament in snap parliamentary elections in 2014, was conducted in the period from March to June 2015. The research is part of the project: “*Balkan Electoral Comparative Study: The Impact of Personal Voting on Internal Party Democracy*”, and the survey and data collection was carried out by a group of researchers from the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Belgrade, while the primary data processing was done by the Ipsos Strategic Marketing agency. In this paper the authors have carried out additional analysis of inferential statistics.

### 2.1. Description of the research sample

Based on the available data of the State Electoral Commission, 3,020 nominated people from the territory of the Republic of Serbia stood at the election. In the survey, 268 respondents were interviewed, so that a 95% statistical confidence interval for the incidence of 50% is  $\pm 5.7$ . The sample type is intentional/targeted.

Gender stratification shows that overall 60.4% of male respondents and 39.6% of female respondents took part in the survey. The average age of the respondents was 41 years. All the subjects were divided into two age groups that served for

post stratification and further analysis: young parliamentary candidates aged 40 years or less, and older parliamentary candidates older than 40 years. Table 1 gives a description of the sample based on age:

**Table 1:** Description of the sample on the basis of the age

Age of respondent	Number of respondents
40 years or less	133
More than 40 years	119

When it comes to education, within the sample we had the subjects at all levels of education. Table 2 shows the break-down of the education level of the respondents:

**Table 2:** Description of the sample based on the level of education

Education level	Percentage
Completed high school	7.3%
Completed higher education	7.7%
Undergraduate	7.3%
Completed faculty/graduate	53.6%
Postgraduate masters	18.4%
PhD	5.7%

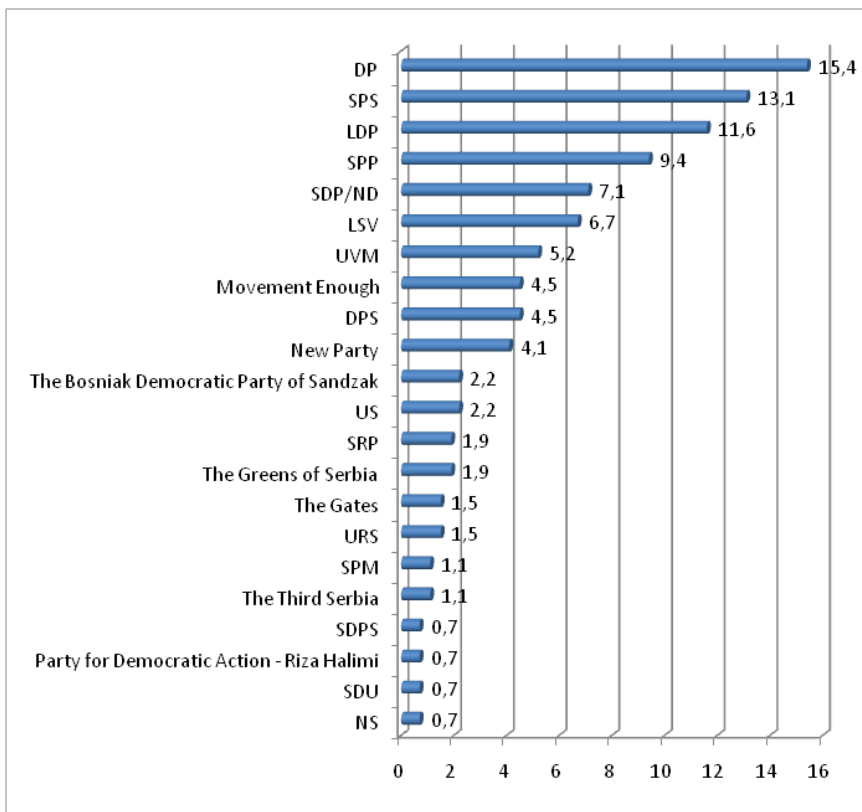
Out of total number of respondents, 8.7% live in rural areas, 37.6% of respondents live in a small or medium-sized town, 5.7% in the suburbs of a large town/city and 47.9% of respondents live in a large town/city.

The research was conducted by means of a questionnaire containing 81 questions divided into the following sections: political background and activities; the campaign; questions and policies; democracy and representation; and personal data.

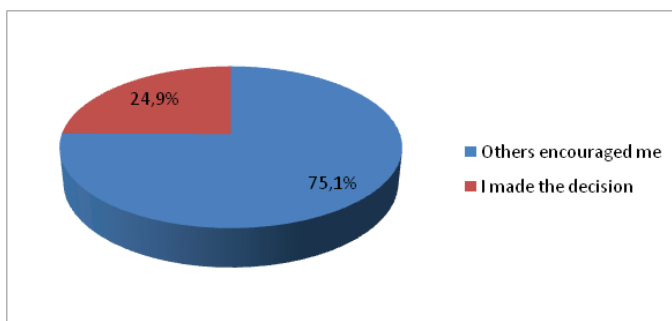
In the analysis of the data obtained, post stratification was performed by gender, age, education level and political party. The analysis used classic descriptive analysis (frequency and crosses), then correlation tests, t-tests for independent samples and tests of variance analysis.

### 3. Research results

Most of the respondents were candidates of the Democratic Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Liberal Democratic Party and the Serbian Progressive Party. The full break-down is given in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** The percentage of respondents in each party

As shown in Figure 2, the respondents' decisions to run in the parliamentary elections were mainly made on the basis of support from those around them, while every fourth respondent candidacy decided independently.

**Figure 2:** Who made the decision on nomination?

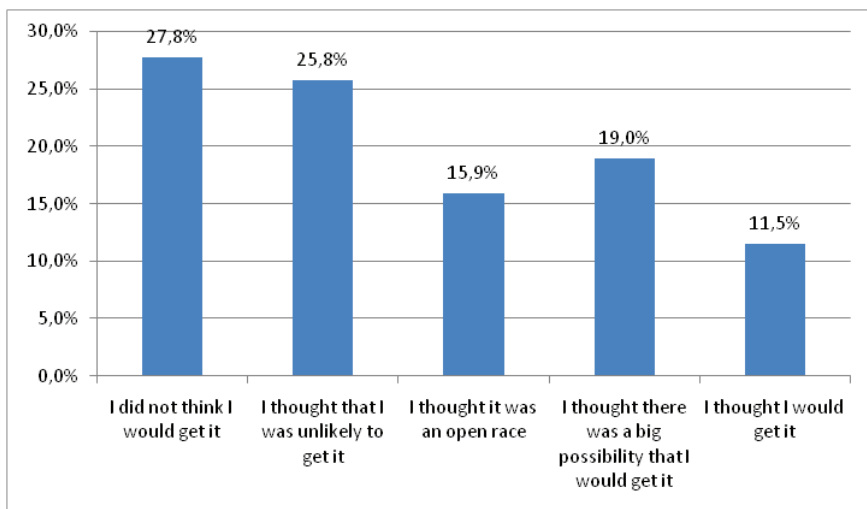
The decision to stand as candidate was most influenced by the political party, or somebody within the party (97.4%), followed by the family of the candidate (61.1%) and representatives of civic organizations and interest groups (21.8%).

When it comes to incentives from the party to run, our respondents pointed out that the key role was played by the party leadership (50%), party members in the candidate's electoral unit (24.2%), the candidate's management team in the electoral unit (10.9%), intra-election/party sympathisers (9.7%), open non-party elections (3.2%), the elected political representatives of the candidate's electoral unit (2%). These results, with statistically insignificant differences, were the same with most of the parties that we surveyed (the SPP, DP, DPS, SPS, SRP, New Party, Movement Enough and LDP).

It is a significant fact that a large number of candidates, more precisely one in four (25.4%), were not party officials at the time of their nomination. What is also important is that 60% of candidates for members of parliament in the 2012 elections had not stood for election before, while 40% of those who were nominated then, stood again as candidates in the 2014 elections.

Figure 3 illustrates how they rated their chances of winning a mandate:

**Figure 3:** Assessment of chances of winning seat



The respondents were then asked to specify which activities were a key part of their campaigns, circling one of the answers on a scale of one to five (1 – not significant; 2 – significant to a small extent; 3 – significant to some extent ; 4 – very important; 5 – of crucial importance). The obtained results in Table 4 are in order of the mean values, from the highest to the lowest:

**Table 3:** Importance of campaign activities

Activities	Average value
Public speeches and rallies	3.7
Media activities (interviews, press releases)	3.7
Meetings with party leadership	3.5
Presence at party events	3.2
Distribution of promotional materials	3.1
Door-to-door canvassing	3.0
Facebook	2.9
Visiting businesses and social organisations	2.7
Calling voters by telephone	2.7
SMS	2.4
Personal flyers	2.3
Posters with your face	2.2
Direct mail	2.2
Personal terms on TV and radio	2.2
E-mail	2.2
Twitter	2.1
Website	1.7
YouTube	1.6
Personal advertisement in the paper	1.3

Interestingly enough, we see no difference in the usage of email and websites related to the respondent's age. Differences are only observed in social networks, blogs and YouTube channels, as shown by Table 4:

**Table 4:** Use of social networks by age stratification

	Young candidates	Older candidates
Blog	14.3%	7.6%
Facebook	48.1%	31.1%
Twitter	23.3%	12.6%
YouTube	15.8%	8.4%

The tests of correlation show a moderate negative correlation ( $r = -0.34$ ) between the variables of "age" and "use of Facebook in the campaign". This correlation



shows that the younger candidates use Facebook more. Similar correlation values are obtained when it comes to blogs, Twitter and YouTube.

By cross-referencing this data with the parties they represent, we can see that some parties stand out for their use of certain media: the New Party and SRP with their use of websites, the DP and the SPP with use of e-mail, the Movement Enough with its use of blogs, the Movement Enough and the DPS for using Facebook, the Movement Enough and the New Party for using YouTube channels, and the Movement Enough for using Twitter.

It is also interesting to look at the percentages for activities that were not part of the campaign, as Table 5 demonstrates.

**Table 5:** Activities in the campaign

Campaign activity	Percentage
Posters with your face on	41%
Direct mail	41%
Calling voters on the telephone	24%
Door-to-door canvassing of votes	22%

The answer to the question “What was the purpose of your campaign?” best indicates how the candidate strategically conceived and implemented the campaign, as well as the role and place of the party in their promotion. Respondents were asked to rate this on a scale from 0-10, where 0 means that the campaign goal was self-promotion and 10 means that the goal was party promotion. On this scale of 11 divisions, the average mark given by the respondents was 7.1. This data tells us that the campaigns were more focused on connecting personal candidacy to the party than on popularising and promoting the candidate. As many as 34% of respondents said that the campaign was focused exclusively on the party, while a negligible 3% of respondents indicated that the campaign focused on them as candidates. The percentage of those who marked that the campaign was more focused on the candidates (score 0-4) was 15%, while the percentage of those who answered that the campaign was more focused on the party (score 6-10) was 64% .

The t-tests showed no statistically significant differences between the younger and older candidates in campaigning ( $\eta^2 = 0.005$ ), however, between the parties there are differences that can be seen through the average values, as seen in Table 6.

**Table 6:** The focus of the campaign, average scores by party

Party	Average score
New Party	7.50
DP	7.46

SPS	7.25
SDP	7.22
SPP	6.96
Movement Enough	6.90
LDP	6.40
SRP	6.00
DPS	5.10

Respondents stated that the most prominent issue in the campaign was (on a scale from 1–5) “openness towards voters in the electoral unit” (4.1); “socio-economic welfare in the electoral unit” (3.9); “specific issues in the party’s platform” (3.7); “provision of services and practical assistance in the electoral unit” (3.5); “policy advocacy that is required from voters in the electoral unit” (3.4); “personal characteristics” (2.9); and “issues that are specific to a personal campaign” (2.5).

It is of particular importance to look at the results to the final two questions. Personal characteristics and circumstances were highly emphasised in the campaign by only 10.8% of respondents, while issues that are specific to a personal campaign was strongly emphasised by only 6% of respondents. As many as 47.7% of respondents gave the answers “not much” or “not at all”.

As reported by respondents, the average number of people who worked on and assisted in the campaign is around 35, of whom only 8% were professional counsellors, while the rest had not been professionally trained in campaigning. The same data is obtained from both younger and older candidates. When it comes to parties, most candidates from the SPS (56), SPP (44) and DP (32) used the services of professionals. On the average, the candidate spent about 110,000 dinars. However, there are very large differences between candidates from different parties:

**Table 7:** Average money spent in campaign by party

Party	Average amount spent
SPS	270,000 dinars
DP	210,000 dinars
SDP	102,000 dinars
DPS	100,000 dinars
New Party	65,000 dinars
LDP	52,000 dinars
SPP	49,000 dinars
Movement Enough	17,000 dinars

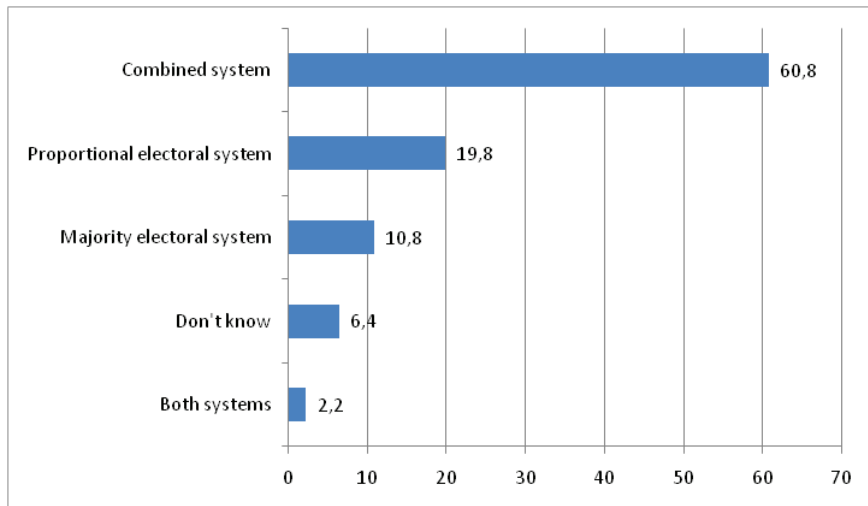
At the end of the questionnaire, there were a number of questions relating to the preferences of the respondents for a particular electoral system. We first presented the respondents with discursive statements with which they were supposed to agree or not agree, and the average marks on a scale from 1–5 shows how much the respondents agreed with the statement, as demonstrated in Table 8.

**Table 8:** Support for statements regarding electoral systems

Statement regarding electoral system	Average mark
The electoral system should ensure a high degree of proportionality between votes and mandates	4.2
The voter should be allowed to vote for both parties and candidates	4.1
The electoral system should contain elements that provide a stable majority government	3.2
The voter should be allowed to vote only for candidates	3.1
The voter should be allowed to vote only for parties	2.5

Regarding the modalities of the electoral system, Figure 4 shows the preferences as follows:

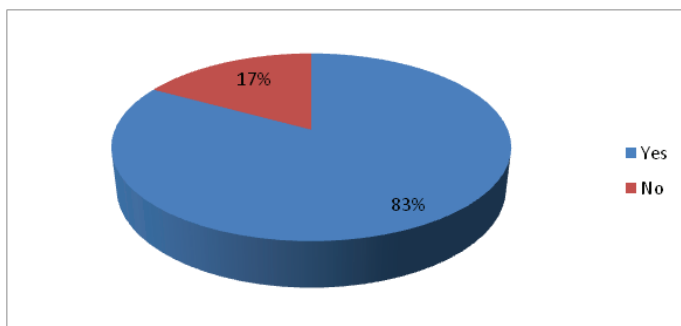
**Figure 4:** Preferences for electoral systems



The lowest amount of support for a combined system is evident in rural areas (34.8%), while support in small/medium-sized towns, in the suburbs of cities and in the cities themselves ranges from 63.5% to 73.3%. The system of proportional representation has the largest proportion of supportive candidates in the DPS (50%), the majority system is supported by 25% of candidates in the Movement Enough, combined with similar values DP, LDP, SPP, New Party, SPS and SRP.

When it comes to preferential voting, that is, adding features to the existing system that allow the voter to vote for one or more specific candidates on the list, respondents gave the following answers to whether they thought it was the best system, shown in Figure 5.

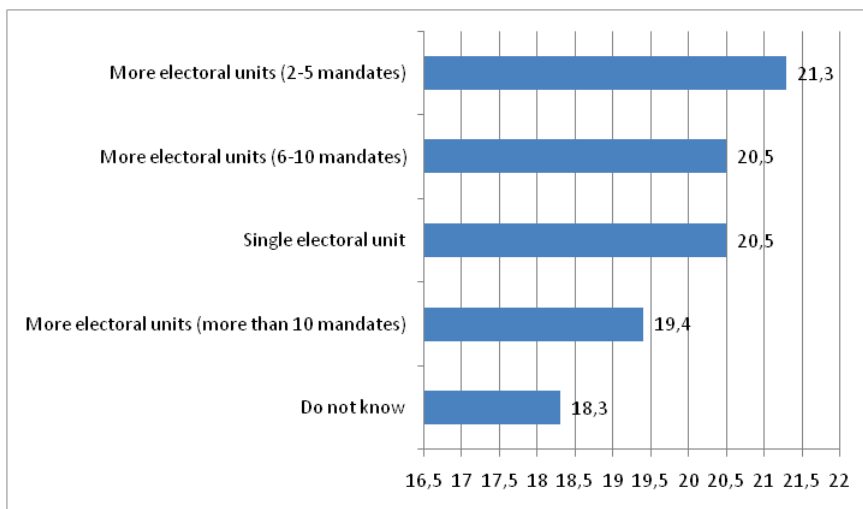
**Figure 5:** Proportion of respondents who believe that the preferential system is the best system



Respondents from most parties gave a similar balance of answers.

A particularly important issue in political and academic circles sporadically mentioned is the number of electoral units. Our respondents had very different opinions on this issue, which are represented in Figure 6.

**Figure 6:** Responses regarding the ideal number of electoral units



It was mostly respondents from rural areas that were in favour of more electoral units (30.4%), while the least interested respondents were from cities (17.5%). When it comes to parties, a single electoral unit is most supported by the SRP (60%), DPS (66%) and SPP (52%), while more electoral units are most supported by the New Party (45.5%), the Movement Enough (33%) and the DP (29%).

## 4. Party campaign instead of personal campaign

After reviewing the key findings in the research, in this section we will aim to prove the hypothesis that the campaigns in Serbia being run by candidates for members of parliament are predominantly party campaigns, and not personal ones. An important indicator for research into the campaign is also the process of nomination. Only a quarter of the respondents came to the decision to stand as a candidate independently. The most important indicator for our hypothesis is who had the most influence on the nomination, which was predominantly the political parties (97.4%). This data is somewhat expected, bearing in mind the way members of parliament are nominated (party list system). However, when we look at who in the party had the highest influence on the nomination, the party leadership stands out with 50%, while intra-party elections prompted only 9% of respondents to stand for election. This data demonstrates the highly significant role of the party leadership right from the process of nomination, which consequently causes candidates to promote the party rather than themselves. It is especially important to emphasise that the results of the research were about the same in all the parties that we surveyed.

An important fact that tells us about the uninstitutional party system and frequent changes, is that as many as 60% of the candidates in the elections are candidates who were not nominated in the previous elections. This figure of 60% being new candidates is an important indicator of relations within the party, bearing in mind that the party scene has not changed significantly in the period since the previous parliamentary elections. It is interesting to see how the candidates for members of parliament assessed their chances of winning seats. Only 30.5% of respondents thought they would be elected or had a good chance of election, while 53.6% of respondents thought that they would not be elected or that there was a very small chance of election. This data is of great importance because the candidates, despite their assessment that it would be difficult for them to get elected, led campaigns aimed primarily at the party they came from.

Looking at the activities that were part of the campaign, we can come to the clear conclusion that the candidates were primarily taking part in activities aimed at promoting the party they came from. The activities can be divided into two types: those that are intended to promote the party; and activities that are related to personal campaigning. The activities aimed at promoting the party can include: public speeches and rallies; media activities; meetings with party leaders; attendance at

party rallies; distribution of promotional materials. On the other hand, activities aimed at personal campaign include: door-to-door canvassing, Facebook activities, calling voters on the telephone, sending SMSs, distributing personal flyers, posters with a picture of the candidate on, personal time on air on TV and radio, Twitter, blogs, websites, newspaper advertisements, etc. The results of the research clearly shows that candidates for members of parliament predominantly took part in activities aimed at promoting the party. The figures obtained from the questionnaire show us the following: all kinds of activities aimed at promoting the party have values of responses ranging from 3.1 to 3.7 (on a scale of 1-5, where 1 means “not used” and 5 means “is crucial”), while all the above mentioned activities which are predominantly aimed at personal campaigning had values ranging from 1.3 to 3.

Bearing in mind the growing importance of online campaigning it is particularly important to note that even online activities which significantly personalise campaigns were not used to a great extent. Given the growing use of the internet among the younger population, we looked for differences and correlations with online campaigning and activities in this segment by additional stratification of the sample into younger and older candidates (above and below 40 years). There is a moderate negative correlation between age and use of the internet (social networks, blogs, YouTube, etc). However there are still not a great number using the potential of the internet. From the results of the research we have seen that while almost a half of the younger candidates used Facebook, a little less than a third of the older candidates did so, while other channels of communication are used much less. Low activity on the internet shows that the candidates are not interested in leading personal campaigns.

One of the key questions in the questionnaire that can confirm or refute our hypothesis is the question: “What was the main goal of your campaign? Where would you position yourself on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means attracting as much attention as possible to yourself as a candidate, while 10 means drawing more attention to your party?” The average value of the answer to this question was 7.1, which undoubtedly shows that the candidates were leading party campaigns. *Of great importance is the fact that 34% of respondents in the survey answered 10 (i.e. for the party). This means that a third of candidates led only party campaigns. On the other hand, the proportion of respondents who led exclusively personal campaign is only 3%. This data tells us that the campaigns were more focused on the personal connection with the party nomination than at popularising and promoting the candidates themselves.* The values vary depending on the party the candidate comes from, but the values range from 5.1 to 7.5.

The stated hypothesis that party candidates predominantly wage party campaigns and that personal campaigns have been completely ignored is confirmed through the results obtained to the question “To what extent have you pointed out in your campaign the following?” a) personal characteristics; b) issues connected to a personal campaign; and c) a specific issue in the party’s platform. The values obtained (on a scale of 1-5, where 1 means “minimally”, and 5 “a lot”) are displayed in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Questions and features of campaign

Question	Average value of respondents' answers
Issues that are connected to a personal campaign	2.5
Personal characteristics	2.9
Specific points in the party's platform	3.7

The response “very” to the question on highlighting personal characteristics was circled by 10.8% of the respondents, and to the question regarding specific issues connected to a personal campaign, only 6% of respondents gave the highest mark. As many as 47.7% of respondents answered “not much” or “not”. The results clearly show the orientation of candidates to run a party campaign, not a personal one.

Research results that are also of interest to us in proving the hypothesis are the number of people who were engaged in the campaign, as well as the money invested in the campaign. Although an average of 35 people were involved in the campaigns of candidates, only 8% of them were professionals trained to conduct campaigns. The average money spent was around 110,000 dinars for each campaign, which is an extremely small sum, considering how much parties spend on campaigns (see: Lončar; Stojanovic, 2015, pp.88–93). Although there are significant differences in these two indicators between parties, this data shows us that the campaign primarily focused on the promotion of the party, and not on a personal campaign.

To confirm the hypothesis, it is of crucial importance to see the results of research concerning the attitudes of candidates for members of parliament in relation to the electoral system. In the context of the research we have noted that institutional factors (the type of electoral system, primarily the design of the ballot sheet) have a great influence on the way the campaign is conducted. We wanted to see if the candidates showed a preference for a type of electoral system that included voting for candidates. On a scale of 1 to 5, the respondents are determined in agreement with the claims of what the electoral system should provide, or contains. Respondents assessed with an average score of 4.2 that the electoral system should contain a high degree of proportionality, however, respondents assessed with an average score of 4.1 that voters should be allowed to vote for both parties and candidates. These responses show the preference of the respondents towards the introduction of a personalised electoral system in which people can vote for candidates. The same questions rated with a score of 3.1 the type of electoral system in which a voter may vote for candidates (the corresponding types of majority electoral system), which is higher than the 2.5 score for the system where the voter is allowed to vote only for parties (corresponding proportional types of electoral system with closed lists, which is the current type of electoral system in Serbia). We immediately compared this with the next question that was related with the modalities of the electoral system. The response was inconsistent because the answers to this question show that the proportional system is supported by 19.8% of respondents, and majority system by

10.8%, which is at variance with the results obtained to the previous question. However, a combination of both systems is supported by as many as 60.8% of respondents, which clearly shows that the candidates for members of parliament preferred methods of personalised voting, or voting for candidates in addition to voting for a party. This is additionally evidenced by answers to the question regarding the possibility of preferential voting, adding features to the existing proportional electoral system introducing an open-list system in which the voter can vote for a party and vote for candidates on the list. Preferential voting is supported by 83% of respondents.

The data which can show whether the candidates are open to the personnel of the campaign is the question regarding electoral units. It is clear that the introduction of more electoral units leads to an institutional incentive to lead a personal campaign. Answers to this question show us the preferences of candidates to lead personal campaigns. Only 20.5% of respondents are in favour of the country remaining as one electoral unit. About 18.3% of respondents do not know what would be best, while the remaining 61.2% of respondents believe that it more electoral units are necessary. Of this 61.2%, almost identical percentages (20%) believe that it more electoral units are needed with 2–5 mandates, with 6–10 mandates and with more than 10 mandates. Respondents from rural areas were mostly in favour of more electoral units (30.4%), while the lowest proportion of interested respondents were from cities (17.5%), which is logical taking into account the expressed metropolitan bias of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia (the largest number of candidates come from the capital and the second-largest city). The introduction of more electoral units would address this metropolitan bias in Parliament and provide an opportunity for candidates to conduct personal campaigns in their electoral units.

*All the results of the research show that candidates for members of parliament run party campaigns, not personal ones.* However, the survey results show that candidates express their preferences for types of electoral systems that personalise the selection of members of parliament. Therefore, we have to ask ourselves what are the reasons for leading only party campaigns, and not personal ones?

In the introduction, we presented the institutional factors that affect the individual campaigns of candidates. The proportional electoral system with closed lists can be one of the key causes for the absence of personal campaigns by candidates and the orientation of the campaign exclusively towards the party. However, before we draw conclusions about the causes of party leadership campaigns by candidates will look at the results of the research into electoral systems which have elements of personalised voting.

Within the regional project (*Balkan Electoral Comparative Study: The Impact of Personal Voting on Internal Party Democracy*), in which research (*Comparative Candidate Survey*) was undertaken not only on the electoral system of Republic of Serbia, but also on the electoral systems in Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo\*. In Montenegro, a similar electoral system is present as in Serbia, however, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo\* have elements of personalised voting. We



will compare the results of the candidates from all these types of electoral system. The key question that we can use for comparison is “What was the main goal of your campaign?” That is, the positioning of their campaign on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means “to attract attention to yourself as a candidate”, and 10 means “to draw as much attention as possible to the party”. As we mentioned earlier in this section, the average response in Serbia was 7.1. In Montenegro, the average value of the responses was 8.2. On the other hand, in countries where we have a personalised type of electoral system, the value of the response is not very different from the results obtained in Serbia. The average value of the respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina is 7.2 and in Kosovo\*, 7.1.

These results show that the type of electoral system and elements of personalised voting do not affect the campaigning by candidates for members of parliament. Furthermore, the percentage of respondents who focused their campaign entirely on promoting their party (response: “for the party”) is lowest in Serbia (34.3%), while the percentages in Montenegro (45.6%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (41, 1%) and Kosovo\* (39.5%) are significantly higher. Thus, although the institutional element certainly has an impact on the behaviour of candidates, it is not of crucial importance, and it proves this comparative analysis.

However, the reasons for leading predominantly party campaigns should be sought in the common impact of the type of electoral system and in relations within the party. That is, we believe that the type of electoral system encourages highly undemocratic internal party relations. Parties in Serbia are extremely centralised, with power concentrated in the hands of the party leader and a close circle of loyal people. “Although in the majority of parties, internal relations are, at least formally, democratically regulated (by statutes and other organisational rules), so that the membership may participate in determining the party’s strategy and tactics and the choice of the party, there is a tendency, for various reasons such as the efficiency and logic of party discipline, for decision-making power to be restricted to the narrowest circle and to the leader.” (Stojiljkovic & Spasojevic, 2013, p.11) Candidates for members of parliament have no incentive to interact with voters and to conduct personal campaigns since, for their election to parliament, relations with the head of the party and the leadership are much more important because they are the ones who draw up the electoral lists and establish the order of the candidates. Consequently, candidates are focused on the promotion of the party and its leader by accepting the general instructions that come from the party headquarters. Political parties in Serbia run leadership campaigns (Loncar & Stojanović, 2015, p.87), and the candidates for members of parliament are only spokespeople that speak on behalf of the party leader.

## 5. Conclusion

Candidates for members of parliament run only party-based campaigns. The results of the research on the attitudes and actions of candidates for members of parliament during the 2014 election campaign in the Republic of Serbia (*Comparative Candidate Survey*) confirm this statement. Bearing in mind the type of electoral system, the reason for non-personal and party-based campaigns led by candidates for members of parliament should be sought in institutional factors. However, examining the results of the comparative research, we can see that party-based campaigns are also predominant in systems with a personalised ballot paper. However, there is definitely an impact from the type of electoral system, and this, in combination with undemocratic intraparty relations, leads to a purely party-based campaign. The influence of the leader of the party, the leadership campaign, obedience and loyalty to the leader of the party and good relations with him/her are much more important for the candidates than contact with voters and leading personal campaigns.

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# **Election Campaigns in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro and Serbia: A Comparative Study of the Prevailing Issues**

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# Election Campaigns in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro and Serbia: A Comparative Study of the Prevailing Issues

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## SUMMARY

The issues of election campaigns in the region of the former Yugoslavia are underrepresented in contemporary literature in political science. This paper represents a contribution to the existing literature, with the authors researching whether there are regional differences between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia in terms of the issues that dominate election campaigns in these countries. Statistical analysis of the recently published Comparative Candidate Survey is performed in order to provide evidence for the hypothesis that candidates in all countries perform locally based campaigns with significant differences in the frequencies of certain local campaigning mechanisms, while, at the same time, using party-centred campaigning strategies more often than personalised ones.

*Keywords: election campaign, comparative politics, national vs. local issues, party vs. personalised campaign.*

## Introduction

The first multiparty elections in Yugoslavia were held in 1990, when it was more or less nationalistic parties that won in all six federal republics. The ensuing years after the elections – some would say due to the results of the elections – were marked by the bloodiest period in post-World War II European history, with mass atrocities, the deaths of thousands of people and hundreds of thousands of refugees on all sides. Thus, one cannot go wrong by saying that the first experience of elections by the former Yugoslav peoples was a negative one.

The situation did not drastically change even after the war. The harsh economic situation, badly conducted privatisations and the difficult transition processes distracted people from having a strong interest in politics and made them struggle for survival rather than pay attention to the everyday political processes. Nevertheless, there were periods in all of these countries' developments when people changed their behaviour drastically, when most of them turned into Aristotle's *zoon politikon*

and started being more involved in current politics. These periods were election campaigns and the elections themselves. However, although they played important roles in the development of all the post-Yugoslav countries, studies of the election campaigns in them are underrepresented in the existing political science literature. The situation is similar when it comes to research about the voting behaviour of the former Yugoslav peoples, but also regarding the prevailing topics in contemporary political campaigns. Most of these issues will be dealt with in this paper. We will discuss the forms of election campaigns and conduct comparative analysis of these forms in four post-Yugoslav countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo<sup>3</sup>, Montenegro and Serbia. The main research questions of this paper are therefore: 1) Are there any differences in the topics that dominate the narratives of election campaigns within the region?; 2) Are there any differences in the forms of political campaigns that are performed in regard to the main focal point of the campaign (national/local issues, party/candidate)?; and 3) Are there any differences in these matters which could explain their occurrence?

Why do election campaigns even matter? First of all, they are one of the key parts of election processes in contemporary political systems around the world. Their main aim is to mobilise voters and stabilise and increase the already existing support for a particular candidate. Thus, their “primary goals (...) are to persuade and to motivate” (Brader, 2006, p.20). In order to achieve this, campaigns use various methods – newspaper, radio and television advertisements, political rallies, persuasion via the telephone and e-mail, or through canvassing or social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, etc. Nevertheless, election campaigns as a whole, as well as all of these elements taken separately, were unjustifiably neglected for most of the first part of the twentieth century, during which they were considered of little importance (Kriesi, Bernhard, & Hänggli, 2009, p.345). On the other hand, there existed little empirical and quantitative evidence for these claims. In recent decades, however, many research papers have been published that argue just the opposite: political campaigns do not just matter; they often play crucial, pivotal roles (Iyengar & Simon, 2000, p.150). Although there are still authors who think that the rise of catch-all and cartel parties has resulted in a notable decline in competition between parties (Gibson, Margolis, Resnick, & Ward, 2003), we tend towards the belief that political campaigns still play an important role in contemporary politics. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that – mostly by building on the methodology first developed by Lazarsfeld (See: Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944) – many scholars have relatively recently started researching which factors influence voters. Thus, George E. Marcus (2000) provided evidence that, when casting their votes, people are influenced not only by their emotions, but also their current moods and feelings. Hence, political advertisements aim to make an emotional impact on voters in order to get them to like – or in cases of negative campaigns, to dislike – a particular candidate. This is most effectively achieved through a “conjunction of words, music and images in a narrative structure”. (Brader, 2006, p.4) However, it also matters *who* delivers the message and *how* they do it. Thus, Sullivan and Masters

3 \* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on Kosovo's declaration of independence.



(1988) showed that the facial expressions of political leaders, the way they talk and address the electorate and how they behave on stage all have an influence on the way the candidates want to affect the audience. Understanding all of these findings can play a decisive role in determining the eventual winner of the elections, which makes research of these issues very important in contemporary political science.

Secondly, political campaigns are a global phenomenon. In every country that has at least a formality of elections, there are election campaigns that accompany them. Ranging from the fully democratic elections in most of the western world, through the semi-democratic systems and populist campaigns in South America and some East European countries, all the way to the authoritarian and totalitarian one-party regimes in the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea – all these systems have electoral campaigns. While, on one hand, in the case of democracies, they are used for the purpose of “persuasion and motivation”, the main aim of campaigns in semi-democracies and autocracies is rather to mobilise citizens and confirm the legitimacy of certain policies, but without any real effect in terms of changing the ruling elites, parties or individuals. Bearing in mind the different outcomes that are to be achieved through election campaigns, it is reasonable to expect that there are also regional differences among the forms and means of election campaigning, making country-based, context-oriented research of the issue even more important. The first major studies of election campaigning, according to Dominic Wring (1999, p.7), occurred in the United States in mid-1950s. Ever since, American authors have dominated academic literature relating to election campaigning, with names like Joe McGinnis, James Perry, Joe Napolitan, Timothy Crouse, Paul Lazarsfeld, Larry Sabato, Gary Mauser and many others being often considered some of the best-known writers in the field to date. Many of these authors' works contain comparative elements, which, without a doubt, adds to their scientific value, therefore comparison will also be an important segment of this paper, too. There is, of course, an abundance of notable works about many other countries and campaigning in them, as well – United Kingdom (D. Denver & Hands, 1997; D. Denver, Hands, Fisher, & MacAllister, 2003; D. T. Denver, 1994; Gibson et al., 2003; Johnston & Pattie, 1997; Pattie, Johnston, & Fieldhouse, 1995); Italy (Mazzoleni, 1991, 1996); Germany (Schoenbach, Ridder, & Lauf, 2001; Schönbach, 1991, 1996; Semetko, 1996); Greece (Papathanassopoulos, 2000, 2007); Russia (Oates, 2006a, 2006b; Solnick, 1998); Sweden (Esaiaasson, 1991); Hungary (Enyedi & Tóka, 2007; Popescu & Tóka, 2002; Vasary, 1991); Brazil (Da Silveira & De Mello, 2011; Meneguello, 1995); New Zealand (Denemark, 1991); and Australia (Tiffen, 1989) – to mention just a few. Nevertheless, despite the global trends of an increasing number of studies about this topic, the post-Yugoslav region is still underrepresented in academic literature, especially when it comes to English-language papers. There are several valuable works about Serbia (Milivojevic, 1993; Slavujević, 1990, 2007, 2009) and Croatia (Bagić, 2007; Balabanić, Mustapić, & Rihtar, 2011; D. Lalić & Kunac, 2010; Lalić, 2004), but to the best of these authors' knowledge, there has been no previous attempt to compare election campaigning in several post-Yugoslav countries, which will be done here. Therefore, this paper will represent a valuable asset to the existing literature, by being at the same time the basis for further research. It will serve the

purpose of normative and empirical evidence about the similarities and differences between campaigns in the four neighbouring countries.

## 1. Theoretical background

Of specific importance for this paper is the contextual orientation of election campaigns. This process is twofold: on the one hand, the context – meaning the current political, economic, security, social and cultural situation – determines the form and means of electoral campaigns, the campaigns themselves are capable of changing the context. There is evidence that contexts influence campaigns through “factors such as levels of economic development, political culture and electoral rules” (Gibson et al., 2003, p.49). On the other hand, the issues that are raised in the advertisements, during rallies or online, the discourses and narratives that dominate the campaign, as well as the means through which certain information is presented to the voters all have significant influence on the “hearts and minds” of the voters, hence changing the context itself. Thus, something that is commonplace in many election campaigns is the securitisation of previously unsecuritised issues, often such as political opponents, foreign threats or the so-called “home-grown enemies”, while, for instance, voters are not presented with the real situation in the economy. Therefore, these practices during campaigns tend to change the focus of the public towards issues possibly of less importance, but ones that could bring about a greater advantage for the candidate or the party.

Since these tasks are not as easy as they might seem, in order to achieve this, parties and candidates recently – about 30 years ago, according to some authors (Gibson et al., 2003, p.48) – started hiring large teams of professionals, whose only task is to work out the best possible campaign. This has led some authors to write about the “professionalisation of politics” (Mancini, 1999) and “professionalised campaigning” (Gibson & Römmele, 2009), while others argue that these newly appointed people have drastically changed the tools used in campaigns (Bowler & Farrell, 1992; Farrell, 1996; Farrell & Webb, 2006). On the other hand, there are also those who believe that “[t]he use of terms such as professionalisation and professionalism often hinders attempts to explain how the political campaign and the nature of communication have changed in recent decades” (Lilleker & Negrine, 2002, p.101). Anyhow, the tasks these people are requested to do are far from easy and demand high intellectual and psychological potentials: they analyse the “political market” through polling, they suggest policies, design advertisements and slogans, teach candidates how to behave, what to wear and how, when and why to say certain things, etc. In other words, they tend to improve the image of the candidate or the party in the eyes of the voters. On the other hand, if these tasks turn out to be too hard to achieve for any reason, there are at least two “tactics” that are often used to “distract attention” from the candidate’s or the party’s flaws, and which will be of special interest for this paper: 1) bringing the level of discussion down from national to regional or even

local issues (and vice-versa); and 2) changing the focus from a potentially unpopular individual candidate in, say, a presidential election, to the more popular party that nominated him for the post (and vice-versa).

The first task becomes extremely important in cases when a party does not have answers or solutions to national issues, or when a party or a candidate does not receive enough support at the national level, which is why they need to concentrate on local issues. These tendencies result in many interesting long-term consequences, among which the fact that “party professionals now seek to exercise much greater control over local campaigning by managing key constituency campaigns in crucial respects and integrating them much more closely into the national effort” (Denver, Hands, Fisher, & MacAllister, 2003, p.542) seems to be the most interesting one. This increasing differentiation between nationally and locally based campaigns has led to an increasing interest in the significance of the latter in national elections (Whiteley & Seyd, 1994). Thus, Huckfeldt and Sprague (1992) provide evidence that locally led campaigns can increase the popularity of parties at the national level, while Fendreis, Gibson and Vertz (1990) add that they have a positive influence on voter turnout as well. Therefore, focusing campaigns on local issues (i.e. making them locally based) rather than national issues could imply the wish of parties and candidates to increase either their support, voter turnout or both. This makes researching the prevailing issues in electoral campaigns an important topic, especially in countries with little experience with democratic elections, such as those that we are examining in this paper.

The second idea (i.e. putting the emphasis on either parties or individuals during campaigns) can be explained by the main aim of all participants in elections – to be elected. In cases when parties are more popular, it is reasonable to expect not-so-popular candidates to attempt to put the emphasis on their being members of a particular party. In the opposite case, when a party enjoys little support from the electorate, the candidate’s rational decision is to base their campaigns on self-promotion. A third possibility can also occur, although it will not be discussed in this paper: this is when a certain party has an extremely popular leader, and the candidates base their campaigns on neither the parties nor themselves, but rather on this particular person. Thus, the consequences of the “personalisation of political campaigns” (Kriesi, 2012), i.e. a process in which the political significance of “individual political actors [becomes] more prominent at the expense of parties and collective identities” (Karvonen, 2010, p.4; see also: Rahat & Sheafer, 2007), hold important implications for political situations in countries. At the very least, these practices can hinder the development of democracies in post-authoritarian societies (Kaase, 1994), or the leader could increase his power and autonomy within the party and the political executive to an almost-presidential level, regardless of the real institutional design (Poguntke & Webb 2005), which is an argument for the need to analyse them in depth.

Additional to what has been said, a short exploration of electoral systems is necessary. The proportional and majority electoral systems open up room for more personalised

and party-based campaigns (Eder, Jenny & Müller, 2015). When it comes to the cases that we will examine in this paper, Serbia and Montenegro (at-large electoral units) both have closed-list proportional representation; Kosovo has a preferential system of proportional representation, while a mixed electoral system is applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These differences should increase the variation in utilising local or national issues, or focusing on personal or party characteristics during the campaign.

Both “tactics” (nationally vs. locally centred issues, and personal vs. party-based campaigns) will be examined in this paper in our attempt to show that there are regional differences in these regards. All that has been said can be expressed by two hypotheses: **H1**) There is a difference in electoral campaigning among political parties and their candidates in parliamentary elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia in terms of paying equal attention to national and local (constituency) issues; and **H2**) There is a difference in electoral campaigning between political parties and their candidates in parliamentary elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia in terms of paying equal attention to the candidates and parties during the campaign. Furthermore, the variation in electoral systems across countries can be transferred into a directional hypothesis of more or less personalisation in the particular systems. We can expect more personalisation to occur in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina than in Serbia and Montenegro.

## 2. Data and Measurement

For the analysis in this paper we have used the Comparative Candidate Survey, which “was conducted from May to June 2015 and (...) encompassed 20% of the total number of candidates for MPs at the 2012 parliamentary elections, with participation of 30–40% of the candidates of parliamentary political parties” (CeMI, 2015). The sample in question is divided between Serbia (n=268), Montenegro (n=136), Kosovo (n=157) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (n=95). We selected these particular cases based on two criteria. Firstly, we chose cases based on the different system designs (Gerring, 2006) in the Western Balkan region. As no data is available for Macedonia and Albania, we excluded them from the analysis. Secondly, we are interested in countries with clear intentions to become EU member states. This particular dimension excludes Slovenia and Croatia, which are already member state countries, implying a difference in the development of their political systems, an additional EU election cycle and potential issues raised in the campaign. Despite the fact that a lot has been said in this paper about campaign strategies that include advertising and public appearances, we will not include these factors in the analysis. Instead, we will focus on the variables that measure the concepts in our hypothesis.

To test the *H1* hypothesis, we will use several different variables and compare them across the four countries in our sample. To operationalise the concept of local or national campaigns we used several questions. The questions that were used to

test the first hypothesis come from the same set of questions and use the same measurement scale. The candidates were asked how important some of the activities, if they had used them during their campaign, had been. In our analysis we paid attention to the following four activities: 1) Giving practical help and providing services for the people in your constituency or where you live; 2) Representing the policies demanded by the voters from your constituency or where you live; 3) Caring about the socio-economic conditions in your constituency or where you live; and 4) Openness and intensive communication with the voters from your constituency or where you live. The answers were recorded on a five-point scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning “very much” and 5 meaning “not at all”. The mentioned variable should provide insight into the different campaign strategies that the candidates used, namely if they were locally or nationally oriented. For the purpose of analysis, these variables were treated as continuous. Based on the level of measurement used in the testing of the first hypothesis, we decided to use one-way ANOVA as a statistical tool to reject or accept our null hypothesis.

Considering the  $H2$  hypothesis, we operationalised the concept of personalised vs. party-focused campaigns using the question: “What was your primary aim during the campaign?” The question was measured on an 11-point scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means “to attract as much attention as possible to me as a candidate” and 10 means “to attract as much attention as possible to my party”. In the analysis, this was also treated as a continuous variable. The first stage of hypothesis testing consisted of one-way ANOVA of these variables and two additional ones. Namely, we used the answers obtained from a set of questions similar to the ones used to test the  $H1$  hypothesis, which were also recorded in the same way. These were the answers from the question: “How strongly did you emphasise each of the following in your campaign?” where we focused on two specific matters: issues specific to the candidate’s personal campaign and particular items from the party platform.

In the second stage of our work, we conducted OLS regression analysis where the above mentioned variable was a response variable. Furthermore, on the explanatory side we used the variable *age*, which was obtained from the question “In which year were you born?” giving us the approximate age of the respondents. This data should provide insight into whether there is a difference between older candidates that have spent most of their adult life in non-democratic regimes and younger candidates, in regards to their party loyalty. In addition, we used the variable *place where you live*, which was measured on a four-point scale, and obtained from the question: Do you live in a: 1) village, 2) small or medium-sized town, 3) the suburbs of a city, or 4) a city? This question should test for any party disparity between small and large urban areas.

Next, we used the open-ended question: What percentage of the total campaign budget came from party resources? This should provide the answer to at least two questions. Firstly, how dependent are candidates on party resources? And secondly, does this dependence determine whether the campaign focus is on a particular candidate or the party itself?

We were also interested in the explanatory potential of political experience. In the survey, the question was asked: In which years did you stand as a candidate for the national parliament? Depending on the country in focus, the dates differed but, in essence, all respondents could answer positively or negatively for the five parliamentary elections that took place after 2000, and were offered an additional question for every election that took place before 2000. For the purpose of our analysis, these answers to these sets of questions were combined into one single variable ranging in value from 1 to 6, with 1 meaning they had been a candidate at one national parliamentary election and 6 meaning they had been a candidate at six national parliamentary elections.

Apart from these variables, we also used an additional three variables from the questions used to test the first hypothesis. These variables were: issues characteristic to your personal campaign; your personal characteristics and circumstances; and specific issues from the party platform.

Several limitations of our analysis should be mentioned here. Although both of our hypotheses aim to explain the content of the electoral campaign, we are not analysing the content itself. We are not in possession of data which show that a particular candidate has put an emphasis on local instead of national issues, or which candidates have put an emphasis on themselves rather than on the party. We have the second-best thing – the candidate's evaluation of their own campaign. This implies that the data we are using for the analysis can be influenced by the subjective stance of the respondents. For this reason, the results of our analysis should be taken with caution. Apart from the potential bias in self-reported evaluations, this approach gives an additional advantage: namely, content analysis is unable to capture the canvassing part of political campaigns, widely regarded as the most effective campaign mechanism<sup>4</sup> for increasing the turnout rate (see Gerber and Green, 2000). By using self-reported measurements of issues used in campaign activities, we are able to capture multiple dimensions: political advertising and door-to-door canvassing.

### 3. Analysis and results

To test the *H1* hypothesis in our analysis we defined the null hypothesis of there being no difference in electoral campaigning between local and national issues, and we divided the analysis into several specific issues. From this, we derived new hypotheses dealing with these issues.

Firstly, we tested the *H1a* null hypothesis of there being no difference between countries in providing help and services to the people in the candidates' constituency or

<sup>4</sup> By campaign mechanisms, we refer to the different campaign strategies that candidates can apply in order to achieve their campaign goals such as: advertising, media exposure, door-to-door campaigning, etc.

the place where the candidate lives. We conducted a formal one-way ANOVA test, which revealed statistically significant differences between the countries, so we failed to reject the null hypothesis of there being no difference. A closer inspection of the problem through a post-hoc Tukey HSD test revealed no difference between Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, either in terms of statistical or substantive significance. The only statistically significant difference is between Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where comparison revealed a mean difference of 0.569 in favour of Montenegro. Two conclusions can be drawn from this test: 1) A rejection of the null hypothesis of no difference between all countries is not justified by the data. The claim can be substantiated only in the case of Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, even though the difference is statistically significant, it is not substantively large. 2) One possible explanation for the difference can be the relative size of the countries<sup>5</sup> and the stability of the 25-year rule of Montenegro's Democratic Party of Socialists, which is often associated with strong clientelistic relations with its voters (Komar, Živković, forthcoming). The findings on this dimension do not correspond to the theoretical assumption we made earlier as to the effect of the electoral system. Namely, we expected more engagement in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina as opposed to Montenegro. The results of the analysis can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1:** One-way ANOVA: Providing help and services to the people of your constituency or/place where you live by country

	Sum of squares	DF	F test	Significance
<b>Variance between</b>	15.615	3	6.080	***
<b>Variance within</b>	874.950	623		
<b>Total</b>	900.565	626		
<b>Multiple comparisons - mean difference</b>				
	Serbia	Montenegro	Kosovo	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>Serbia</b>	-	-0.468**	-0.230	0.101
<b>Montenegro</b>	0.468**	-	0.238	0.569**
<b>Kosovo</b>	0.230	-0.238	-	0.332
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	-0.101	-0.569**	-0.332	-

Note: Tukey HSD post-hoc test

\*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; ' =  $p < 0.1$

Secondly, we conducted the same testing procedure for the *H1b* null hypothesis of there being no difference between the countries in representing the policy demanded

<sup>5</sup> The population of Montenegro is around 650,000 while Bosnia and Herzegovina has around 3.8 million citizens. (CIA, 2015)

by the voters in the candidate's constituency or place where the candidate lives. The one-way ANOVA test revealed statistically significant differences between the countries, so we are able to reject the null hypothesis. Furthermore, statistically significant mean differences emerge between Serbia and Montenegro of 0.6 in favour of Montenegro, and between Serbia and Kosovo of 0.58 in favour of Kosovo. Based on the test results, candidates in Serbia represent the policies demanded by the voters of the candidate's constituency or the place where the candidate lives on average less frequently than in other countries. One possible explanation is a combination of the electoral system and the share size of the country, where focusing on particular issues in a small constituency does not provide significant support at the national level. On the contrary, in the smaller Kosovo and Montenegro it can be argued that voter-candidate linkage is stronger and, in addition, every vote can be decisive, which, thus, forces the candidates to be more responsive to the inputs from their constituencies. Furthermore, the differences between Kosovo and Serbia correspond to differences in the electoral system. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** One-way ANOVA: Representing the policy demanded by the voters of the candidates constituency/place of life by country

	Sum of squares	DF	F test	Significance
Variance between	47.662	3	13.503	***
Variance within	735.339	625		
Total	783.002	628		
Multiple comparisons - mean difference				
	Serbia	Montenegro	Kosovo	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Serbia	-	-0.600***	-0.588***	-0.252
Montenegro	0.600***	-	0.012	0.348'
Kosovo	0.588***	-0.012	-	0.336'
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.252	-0.348'	-0.336'	-

Note: Tukey HSD post-hoc test

\*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; ' =  $p < 0.1$

Thirdly, we tested the *H1c* null hypothesis of there being no difference in caring for the socio-economic conditions of the constituency or place where the candidate lives by country. One-way ANOVA<sup>6</sup> revealed statistically significant differences, so we are again able to reject the null hypothesis. As in the previous case, Serbia differs from every other country in the sample and the differences are statistically significant. The mean difference varies from 0.31 in comparison with Bosnia and Herzegovina,

<sup>6</sup> Particular analysis did not fulfil all the assumptions of ANOVA testing as the response variable violated the normality assumption.



0.33 in comparison with Kosovo, to 0.62 in comparison with Montenegro. In the particular analysis, we can only discuss the substantial difference between Serbia and Montenegro. On average, Montenegrin candidates care about socio-economic conditions more frequently than others, while Serbian candidates care the least (although the difference is not that large). These differences can be explained by the same specificities mentioned before, namely, that the electoral system, country size and voter-candidate linkage (including clientelism) determine the nature of the relationship. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** One-way ANOVA: Caring for the socio-economic conditions of the constituency or/place where the candidate lives, by country

	Sum of squares	DF	F test	Significance
<b>Variance between</b>	35.763	3	13.931	***
<b>Variance within</b>	535.680	626		
<b>Total</b>	571.443	629		
<b>Multiple comparisons - mean difference</b>				
	Serbia	Montenegro	Kosovo	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>Serbia</b>	-	-0.625***	-0.327**	-0.310*
<b>Montenegro</b>	0.625***	-	0.298*	0.315'
<b>Kosovo</b>	0.327**	-0.298*	-	0.018
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	0.310*	-0.315'	-0.018	-

Note: Tukey HSD post-hoc test

\*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; ' =  $p < 0.1$

Fourthly, we tested the *H1d* null hypothesis of there being no difference in terms of openness and communication with the voters from the constituency or place where the candidate lives, by country. The model showed statistically significant mean differences, so we can reject the null hypothesis of no difference. Further insight reveals that there are statistically and fairly substantive differences between Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. Moreover, differences emerge between Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina and between Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro. In addition, differences are found between Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina. We can conclude from these four three-way relationships that the smaller countries (Montenegro and Kosovo) are more open to communication with voters than the larger ones (Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia). As all *H1* hypotheses test different aspects of the same concept, the same explanations can be applied as in the previous cases. We can claim that country specificities and differences in terms of size, electoral systems and voter-candidate linkage explain the differences in the level of openness and communication nicely. The results of the analysis can be found in Table 4.

**Table 4:** One-way ANOVA: Openness and communication with the voters from the constituency or/placewhere the candidate lives, by country

	Sum of squares	DF	F test	Significance
Variance between	35.539	3	13.572	***
Variance within	549.023	629		
Total	548.562	632		
<b>Multiple comparisons - mean difference</b>				
	Serbia	Montenegro	Kosovo	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Serbia	-	-0.513***	-0.407***	0.051
Montenegro	0.513***	-	0.106	0.564***
Kosovo	0.407***	-0.106	-	0.458**
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-0.051	-0.564***	-0.458**	-

Note: Tukey HSD post-hoc test

\*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; ' =  $p < 0.1$

Several conclusions can be drawn from the analysis above. On one hand, we have failed to reject the null hypothesis of there being no difference between the countries in terms of local vs. national campaigning strategies. However, the interpretation is not that straightforward. On the other hand, even though we found differences in the testing of individual hypotheses (H1a, H1b, H1c and H1d) both in statistical and substantive ways, based on the county means, which vary from 1.4 to 2.6 according to the country and particular issue, we can claim that electoral campaigning is very similar in all countries (which is not as expected given the variation in electoral systems). This means that, in essence, we cannot claim that candidates from one country are focused on nationally based campaigning, while others are focused on locally based forms of campaigning. What we can claim based on the results is that candidates in all countries conduct locally based campaigns with significant differences in the frequencies of certain local campaigning mechanisms. Furthermore, these differences seem to be associated not just with the electoral system in place, but also with the size of the country, as candidates in the relatively small Montenegro and Kosovo are more likely to nurture closer ties with the local communities.

After we failed to reject the H1 null hypothesis, we turned our analysis towards testing the H2 hypothesis. As in the previous case, we divided H2 into several hypotheses and conducted one-way ANOVA hypothesis tests and OLS regression as an explanatory analytical tool.

Firstly, we tested the *H2a* null hypothesis of there being no difference in the campaign goals between the countries. The test was highly statistically significant, so we

are able to reject the null hypothesis of no difference. As in previous cases, a Tukey HSD post-hoc test revealed individual differences between the countries. On one hand, statistically and substantively large differences are found in the comparison of Montenegro and Kosovo in favour of Montenegro by a mean difference of 1.16, and in the comparison of Montenegro and Serbia with a 1.153 mean difference in favour of Montenegro. The analysis implies that the candidate-party link is strongest in Montenegro. The result came as no surprise, since one party has dominated the political life of Montenegro for the last 25 years. We can assume that that the period of domination has influenced the process of strengthening the party structure of the ruling party, as well as the opposition parties, which need to maintain a high level of party discipline to have a fighting chance in the electoral contests. On the other hand, the mean values across the countries vary from 7.1 in the case of Serbia and Kosovo, to 8.2 in the case of Montenegro, which means that electoral campaigning strongly focuses on drawing attention to the party in every country in the sample. The results of the analysis can be found in Table 5.

**Table 5:** One-way ANOVA: What was the goal of your campaign by countrs?

	Sum of squares	DF	F test	Significance
<b>Variance between</b>	137.050	3	5.125	**
<b>Variance within</b>	5526.790	620		
<b>Total</b>	5663.840	623		
<b>Multiple comparisons - mean difference</b>				
	Serbia	Montenegro	Kosovo	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>Serbia</b>	-	1.153**	-0.01	0.130
<b>Montenegro</b>	-1.153**	-	1.163**	1.024'
<b>Kosovo</b>	0.01	-1.163**	-	-0.14
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	-0.130	-1.024'	0.14	-

Note: Tukey HSD post-hoc test

\*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; ' =  $p < 0.1$

Secondly, we tested the *H2b* null hypothesis of there being no difference in electoral campaigning between countries in terms of using questions and issues characteristic for the candidate's personal campaign. As a formal test, we used a one-way ANOVA<sup>7</sup>. The test was highly significant so we failed to reject the null hypothesis of no difference. Since ANOVA only tells us that there is a difference between countries and does not inform us of the nature of that difference, we conducted a post-hoc Tukey HSD test for individual differences between the countries. The test shows that questions and issues characteristic for the candidate's personal campaign are

<sup>7</sup> The formal requirements and assumptions of one-way ANOVA testing were met.

most frequently used in Kosovo and that the mean difference between Kosovo and every other country is statistically significant. Furthermore, as the difference ranges from -1.096 in favour of Kosovo compared to Bosnia and Herzegovina, to -1.533 in favour of Kosovo compared to Montenegro, these differences are substantially significant as well. The mean difference is in the alignment with assumptions associated with the types of electoral systems that these countries have. Kosovo has a version of proportional representation with preferential party voting (open lists). Thus, a focus on personal issues and questions could be expected in the case of Kosovo. The largest difference is between Kosovo and Montenegro and then, between Kosovo and Serbia – the two countries that have versions of proportional electoral systems. The smallest – but still statistically and substantively significant – difference is between Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has a version of a mixed electoral system, one that is the most similar to the one used in Kosovo. The results of the analysis can be found in Table 6.

**Table 6:** One-way ANOVA: Question and issues characteristic for your personal campaign by country

	Sum of squares	DF	F test	Significance
Variance between	209.632	3	43.438	***
Variance within	1013.453	630		
Total	1223.085	633		
<b>Multiple comparisons - mean difference</b>				
	Serbia	Montenegro	Kosovo	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Serbia	-	0.275	-1.258***	-0.163
Montenegro	-0.275	-	-1.533***	-0.437'
Kosovo	1.258***	1.533***	-	1.096***
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.163	0.437'	-1.096***	-

Note: Tukey HSD post-hoc test

\*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; ' =  $p < 0.1$

Third, we tested the  $H2c$  null hypothesis of no difference in the focus on specific issues from the party platform by countries. The formal test was statistically significant so we reject the null hypothesis of no difference. Further examination revealed small difference between Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. A slightly more substantive mean difference is to be found between Kosovo and Serbia in favour of Kosovo (0.48). The difference could be associated with the domination of Kosovo's party system by national parties, where policy areas are focused on the specific needs of Serbs or Albanians. In that regard, a strong party platform serves

as a unifying mechanism for all ethnic party voters. Apart from that, the general conclusion is that all candidates use many specific issues from the party platform in the electoral campaigning, since the mean varies across countries from 1.8 to 2.3. The results of the analysis can be found in Table 7.

**Table 7:** One-way ANOVA: Focus on specific party issues by countries

	Sum of squares	DF	F test	Significance
<b>Variance between</b>	22.804	3	6.581	***
<b>Variance within</b>	716.117	620		
<b>Total</b>	738.921	623		
<b>Multiple comparisons - mean difference</b>				
	Serbia	Montenegro	Kosovo	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>Serbia</b>	-	-0.239	-0.479***	-0.090
<b>Montenegro</b>	0.239	-	-0.240	0.149
<b>Kosovo</b>	0.479***	0.240	-	0.389*
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	0.090	-0.149	-0.389*	-

Note: Tukey HSD post-hoc test

\*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; ' =  $p < 0.1$

As in the case of *H1*, we failed to reject the *H2* null hypothesis of there being no difference between the countries in terms of personal vs. party campaigning strategies. On the other hand, even though we found differences in testing individual hypotheses (*H2a*, *H2b*, *H2c*) both in statistical and substantive ways, based on the county means, as in the case of *H1*, we can claim that electoral campaigning is very similar across all the countries. The data does not support the claim that campaigning in the four discussed countries differs in terms of personal vs. party campaigning strategies. What we did find is that candidates from all the countries in the sample use party campaigning strategies but with significant differences. The party aspect of the campaign is strong everywhere, but it is strongest in Montenegro and Kosovo. Once again the prediction of party versus personal campaigning fails to be explained by the variation in the electoral systems and more in-depth analysis is needed.

At this point, we can state that we failed to reject either of our null hypotheses. In order to add substantive analysis to this paper, we are interested not only in whether there are differences in electoral campaigning, but also if there are any factors that can explain the differences (apart from the ones mentioned in the previous analysis). For that purpose, we conducted OLS regression analysis across countries. The results can be found in Table 8.

**Table 8:** OLS regression analysis

	Estimate			
	Serbia	Kosovo	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro
(Intercept)	2.797(1.064)**	7.283(2.363)***	3.871(2.665)	5.611(1.448)***
Number of candidacies	-0.240(0.141)'	0.295(0.339)	-0.971(0.704)	-0.242(0.154)
Age	0.042(0.16)**	0.009(0.039)	0.045(0.036)	0.037(0.021)'
Place where candidate lives	0.168(0.164)	-0.315(0.293)	0.010(0.398)	0.303(0.219)
Campaign funding covered by the party	0.002(0.005)	0.020(0.013)	0.006(0.012)	-0.003(0.007)
Personal campaigning issues and questions	0.884(0.174)***	-0.011(0.329)	0.617(0.380)	0.014(0.187)
Personal circumstances and characteristics	0.209(0.178)	0.077(0.350)	-0.335(0.392)	0.351(0.186)'
Specific party platform issues	-0.536(0.158)***	-0.280(0.429)	0.399(0.436)	-0.263(0.223)
n	221	101	63	109
Residual standard error:	1450 on 213 DF	1079 on 93 DF	590 on 55 DF	483 on 101 DF
R <sup>2</sup>	0.243	0.064	0.118	0.114
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.218	0.006	0.006	0.053
F test	9.75***	0.916	1.051	1.875**

Note: \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; ' =  $p < 0.1$

Standard errors in parenthesis

In the case of Serbia, the model shows fairly good explanatory potential and a highly significant model fit. Apart from that, several explanatory variables are also statistically significant. Firstly, we see that there is a negative correlation between

the number of candidacies and the party campaigning mechanism applied. Although the estimate is not very high, it suggests that experienced politicians tend to incorporate more personal campaigning into their campaign programme. Secondly, a very small estimate for age indicates that older politicians (and probably also older party members) are more focused on party-based campaigning.

Thirdly, we found a very strong positive correlation between the use of personal campaigning and the campaign goal. A highly substantive estimate shows that candidates who use personal campaigning tend to focus less on getting as much general support as possible for the party. Fourthly, we found a negative correlation between using less specific party platform issues and aiming at getting general support.

On one hand, the argument can be made that the explanatory variables from the previous section measure the same concept as our response variable. On the other hand, the authors of this paper are convinced that the framing of words in questions clearly indicates the difference between what the concepts measure. The response variable is aimed at evaluating the primary goal of the political campaign, while these questions measure the frequency of the mechanism used to achieve that goal. While there may be some similarities between the goal and the mechanisms used to achieve it, this is not necessarily the case. For example, an extremely popular candidate can aim to secure large electoral support for their party and they can think that the best mechanism for doing so is forcing their own popularity into the focus of the campaign.

## 4. Limitations

Campaigns are dynamic processes that last several months with changing dynamics and intensity depending on the stage of the campaign. As we are not using longitudinal design, we are not able to access the temporal dynamics of issues raised in various stages of the campaign process. Instead, we have analysed a cross-sectional overview of candidates regarding their reflections on the campaign mechanism used and issues raised. For this reason the paper fails to capture potential changes in campaign strategies and relies on an overall evaluation. Furthermore, the self-reported measurement provided by elected officials was not validated. That endeavour goes well beyond the scope of this paper. Future research should focus on providing data for correlation analysis between self-reported measures of the campaign mechanisms used and the issues raised, with real-life data on the actual issues raised during the campaign.

Several issues about the analysis should be taken into consideration. Assumptions of linear regression are confirmed only in the case of Serbia. In the case of other countries, we have issues with the explanatory potential of the model, the model fit and, in general, its usefulness. This is for several reasons. The variable *place where*

*the candidate lives* is not very useful in the context of small countries such as Montenegro and Kosovo, but since we could lose valuable data for large countries that could make a difference, we decided not to combine it into a binary variable. The variable *number of candidacies* is not normally distributed (excluding the case of Serbia); it is positively skewed with a large number of candidates that had run in one or two elections. For that reason, the outliers influence the models for Kosovo, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because of the small regression sample, we decided not to exclude them from the analysis. Furthermore, comparison of R2 and the adjusted R2 reveals that the explanatory power of this model in the cases of Kosovo, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina rises only as a result of the mathematics behind the OLS regression and not because of the explanatory power of the variables. At this particular point, we draw two conclusions. Firstly, the model has no general usefulness and at this point cannot be used to compare all the countries. Secondly, as the model only makes sense in the case of Serbia, we have limited our interpretation to the particular sample.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have compared the mechanisms used in electoral campaigning in four Balkan countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. Our analysis shows that, regardless of the different political systems in terms of party systems, electoral systems, social cleavages and pressing political issues, there are still underlying characteristics that are common to all the countries in the sample. On one hand, candidates in each country base their electoral campaigns on specific party platforms, aiming to attract as much attention as possible to their parties rather than to themselves. However, among those campaigning mechanisms a significant difference emerges between the countries depending on the specific political context. Thus, candidates in some countries use more personalised politics to attract attention to their parties, while others use more specific issues from a joint party platform. On the other hand, similarities are to be found in the issues raised in the campaign process. Predominantly, candidates are focused on local rather than national issues while differences between countries emerge once again on particular issues. Thus, candidates from some countries communicate more with the voters from their constituencies, while others care more about providing practical goods and services. Furthermore, where they differ is the level to which they represent specific policy demands from their constituents and work on improving the general socio-economic conditions.

Therefore, regardless of the limitations of our work previously mentioned in the paper, we believe that our findings represent a valuable asset to the existing literature in this area of political science. Moreover, we can only hope that with a future advancement of available data, a comprehensive comparative analysis of the whole area of the former Yugoslavia will become possible, as well as a broader sample,



on which the analysis could be based. By that time, probably several more election campaigns will take place, thus making this kind of research even more important.

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# **The 2014 Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

*Are citizens able to elect a  
government  
which will represent public  
instead of party interests?*

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# The 2014 Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina

## *Are citizens able to elect a government which will represent public instead of party interests?*

### SUMMARY

Whether citizens are able to elect parliamentary and executive authorities which will represent public instead of party interests is one of most important pre-election questions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in many other countries. An answer to this question is provided in this paper by analysing whether systemic conditions existed during the last general election in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the election of representatives to the institutions of the parliamentary and executive authorities which would represent the public interest. Systemic conditions relate to the existence of a defined public interest, credible parties and candidates with the capacity to represent the public interest, an electoral system that provides fair elections, free media and other systemic conditions. The credibility of political parties is graded on the basis of the harmonisation of their election programmes with the public interest and the achieved objectives in the previous four-year period.

*Key words:* authorities, political parties, elections, election programmes, public interest, democracy.

### Introduction

The issue of electing to institutions of authority representatives, who would represent the public interest is the primary subject of this paper, and the primary thesis is that good parliamentary and executive authorities can be elected in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and other countries only with the existence of the necessary systemic and other conditions. This thesis will be verified by analysis of results concerning the existence or non-existence of a defined public interest, credible political parties with the capacity to represent the public interest in institutions of authority, fair elections and other systemic conditions, and it will be based on following criteria and conditions:

- Good parliamentary and executive authorities can only be elected if there is a systemically defined public interest and an obligation for its implementation in institutions of authority, if there are credible political parties with the capacity to represent the public interest, fair elections, free media, an established civil society and other systemic conditions.
- Relatively good authorities can be elected if there are credible and uncor-

- rupt political parties with the capacity to completely achieve their election programmes, fair elections, free media, an established civil society and other systemic conditions; and
- Good authorities will not be elected if there is no systemically defined public interest and no obligation to implement it in institutions of authority, if political parties are not credible to represent the public interest and achieve their election programmes, if elections are not sufficiently fair, if the media is not sufficiently free, if civil society is not sufficiently established and if there is a high level of corruption.

The public interest is the overall or collective interest of a community, meaning the one thing good for society as a whole (Heywood: 2004, 450). The public interest implies researched, debated, generally accepted and written positions verified by referendum, objectives and solutions about the most significant matters of state or other communities which need to be harmonised with the constitution and other legislative measures, election programmes, public policies, the exercise of power and the activities of political parties, the institutions of the system and other actors. Harmonisation of institutions' activities with the public interest provides an essential realisation of the representative component in the system so that elected representatives in institutions of authority have the responsibility and mandate to exclusively represent the previously defined and generally accepted public interest. This solution disables or significantly reduces the representation of partisan or other narrow interests in institutions of authority, as well as preventing the alienation and irresponsible behaviour of elected representatives.

In this paper we can consider as credible those political parties that potentially have the capacity to represent the public interest, have political programmes harmonised with the public interest and which, as ruling parties, completely or at least mostly, achieve their election programme and represent the public interest. Political programmes are the written documents of political parties which contain the objectives, solutions, public policies and other content intended or promised to be achieved by the political parties during the election cycle referred to in the political programme. The term 'government' implies institutions of parliamentary and executive authorities which are elected directly at elections or indirectly by elected representatives. The term 'good authorities' implies state, entity and cantonal parliamentary and executive authorities whose representatives offer and achieve an election programme harmonised with the defined public interest, and as relatively good authorities it could imply an uncorrupt government which completely achieves its election programme. Good authorities are embodied in a great statesman who knows how to utilise authority for the public benefit entrusted to him (de Montbrial: 2006, 400).

Democracy has become rather undefined as an ideal, because it is often used as a general description of any aspect of a political system or society that is trying to portray itself as a good one (Swift: 2008, 208). Democracy implies a political system which provides participation, equality, awareness, complete coverage of all adult



citizens and control of the agenda, including development, welfare and peace (Dahl: 2000, 44–89). Control of the agenda is an essential component of Dahl's definition of a democratic political system, and there is no control of the agenda without a clearly defined public interest and the obligation for quality representation in institutions of authority. Democracy is a desirable form of governing because it relies more on the common good than sectarian interests, and the most important factor is whether democracy as a political system can achieve the public interest (Barry: 2007, 346). Therefore, democracy is a political system that provides a satisfactory achievement of the public interest, which relates to the existence of political parties with the capacity to represent the public interest, satisfied citizens, the capability to influence the most significant decisions, just laws and the rule of law, protection of citizens, collective and minority rights, fair distribution of resources and the absence of any endangering public interests from other countries (Dejanović: 2014, 48). The existence of a systemically defined public interest and the obligation to achieve it is a *conditio sine qua non* of a democratic political system.

To verify the primary hypothesis, methods of content analysis have been used as well as surveys, noting that for purpose of this paper, the content and achievement of election programmes was analysed with the goal of verifying the credibility of relevant political parties to represent the public interest in the 2014–2018 election cycle. For this paper, the results of the research survey were used, as well as the theses, comments and other information from relevant scientific theory and other sources in order to verify the harmonisation of the election programmes and party activities with the public interest, as well as evaluation of the conditions in parts of the political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The dependent variable in this research is good parliamentary and executive authorities. The basic indicators for measuring the changes in the dependent variable and verification of the primary hypothesis were the existence of a systemically defined public interest, the obligation to represent these same things in institutions of authority and credible political parties with the capacity to represent the public interest and to satisfactorily achieve their election programmes; additional indicators are the existence of fair elections, free media and a developed civil society and the level of systemic corruption. Related to the levels of knowledge the scientific objectives of this paper are descriptive revealing, explanatory and predicting, with the note that the predictive objective will have a double verification, one in this paper and a consequential one which will be verifiable at the end of this election cycle.

With the failure to achieve democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with regard to the absence of a defined public interest, parties capable of representing the public interest in institutions of authority and other systemic preconditions, it is necessary, in the scientific, expert and public domain, again, and especially before every election, to reopen the debate about whether democracy is a myth, deception, reality or a disguised partocracy. Do citizens have a right to have good authorities? What kind of political system is needed? Should people vote at all, that is, are there any systemic preconditions to elect good authorities? Should there be a revolt against a non-democratic system, is it necessary to wait or accept the fact that at the next

elections, most likely, there will still be no systemic preconditions to elect representatives to institutions of authority that would represent the public interest?

## **1. Systemic preconditions for electing good authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Since reconstitution of multiparty system in 1990, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have had problems in electing state, entity, cantonal and local parliamentary and executive authorities that would satisfy the majority of voters. Majority satisfaction of citizens and representation of public interest is a crucial characteristic of good authorities. In order to estimate the possibilities for electing good authorities in the 2014 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we need primarily to analyse the presence of systemic preconditions for defining and achieving the public interest, and then the parties, electorate, institutions and legislative, the media, civil society and other parts of the political system, as systemic preconditions for the election and existence of good authorities, representation of the defined public interest and satisfactory fulfilment of election programmes.

Democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina and many other countries has no future unless the existing political system is abandoned and a new model created, which would entail a systemic definition of the public interest, sufficient harmonisation with the public interest during the activities of all the participants in the political arena, and establishment of mechanisms for verifying representation in institutions of authority (Dejanović: 2014, 230). The public interest would be defined in written documents with the positions, objectives and other content from the public, economic and social sectors, from areas of the state apparatus, the political system, foreign policy, ecology, social welfare, culture and sport and matters of NATO integration and other international organisations, to the minimum level of pensions and social welfare for the disadvantaged and unemployed. In defining the public interest we will be posing a minimum of three groups of questions: the first group mostly consists of basic, undisputed and generally acceptable questions, regarding such things as the political system, foreign policy, defence, security, combating crime, public finances, the economic environment, public companies, development, employment, social welfare, healthcare, education, science, culture, sport and similar. The second group contains questions that could be disputable and less acceptable for the majority, concerning, for example, the rights of minorities, gender equality, solidarity, protection of the environment, public development, communal order and similar issues. The third group contains questions on topics about which citizens do not have sufficient information, such as new technologies, health risks and environmental risks, genetically modified organisms and similar. The process of defining the public interest needs to have several phases. During the first phase it is necessary to determine the proposition of the subject and issues that needs to be covered by a document of public interest. In the second phase, a call for proposals would be announced for

the delivery of initiatives and proposals for defining the public interest. During the third phase, a working version of the document about the public interest would be created. During the fourth phase, the document would be presented and a public debate by experts would be organised on the working version of the document on the public interest. During the fifth phase, a draft version of the document about the public interest would be defined. During the sixth phase, a public debate about the draft document would be organised. In the seventh phase a proposal of the document on the public interest would be put forward. Finally, in the eighth phase, a referendum would be organised where citizens can exercise their choice about the proposal of the document on the public interest. This means that defining the public interest implies initiative, research, experts, consultations, harmonisation, debate, consensus, awareness, transparency, independent supervision and referendum verification. When speaking of Bosnia and Herzegovina, defining the public interest is harder and more complex because it has to respect national and entity divisions, which implies the procedure of defining the public interest at the national, entity and state levels, and also it implies the exclusion of issues of public interest at the state level which do not have consent at the national and entity levels. In divided societies such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, any definition of the public interest has to be made by consensus in order for it to be democratic, generally acceptable and achievable. One must keep in mind that the definition of the public interest is not something that is ever permanently complete, it is the beginning of a process which implies review and amendments to any defined public interest in order to make it more complete and closer to an ideal definition. The existence of a clearly defined public interest and the obligation to achieve it eliminates or at least significantly reduces the scope for domination of party-level or other interests and it truly constitutes a democratic, representative component of the system, because it creates the obligation to represent the public interest in institutions of authority. Bosnia and Herzegovina is nominally a democratic country, but in its constitutions, laws and in all other forms there are no systemic regulations governing the definition of and obligation to represent the defined public interest.

The basic dividing line along which political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina are created and conduct their activities is ethno-political, and consequentially this creates a nationally delineated, meaning exclusively or predominantly Bosniak, Serbian or Croatian party electoral body.<sup>2</sup> The religious and national divide in Bosnia and Herzegovina has deep roots in the centuries of history (Kasapović: 2005, 77), which in this period has been revived, and through the various parties it is established as a dominant feature with no prospect of changing. Political and party competition at the elections is only active within single-nation party blocs or subsystems and it implies the existence of at least two relevant parties in each national party bloc.

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2 At elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, over 90% of the election bodies vote for ethnically-based parties which have an exclusively or predominantly single-nationality election body (Dejanović: 2011, 133). The thesis, that all the relevant parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina are ethnic parties which have exclusively or predominantly a single nationality election body, has been verified and proved as correct, including the SDP BiH which has a predominantly Bosniak election body and which wins less than 1% of the votes at polling stations with Serbian or Bosniak election bodies (Dejanović: 2014, 74-77).

In the Serbian party bloc, these are the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD); in the Bosniak party bloc there is the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) and the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SDP BiH), with the Alliance for a Better Future (SBB) and the Democratic Front (DF) harbouring ambitions to become the two top Bosniak parties. In the Croatian party bloc there are the dominant Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ BiH) and the still insufficiently competitive Croatian Democratic Community 1990 (HDZ 1990). There are three primary groups participating in the elections: 1) relevant and mostly consolidated parties, which are truly parliamentary parties and have the status of being the leading ethno-political parties, either in power or opposition; 2) parties which are close to the threshold for gaining or losing their status as parliamentary parties; and 3) political parties that participate in elections for reasons of corruption, publicity or other reasons. The relevant political parties from Bosnia and Herzegovina mostly have the characteristics of cartel parties, which oligopolies the political space presenting themselves as the only serious choice for voters, they freeze the functions of their representatives, they vary very little in their programmes and mostly rely on state sources, which increases the gap between voters and politicians and endangers the foundations of democracy (Ravlić: 2008, 208–209). As such, political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not possess the capacity to establish a democratic political system, define the public interest, or fulfil their election programmes and satisfactorily represent the public interest in institutions of authority.

The constitutional provision of democratic elections in the narrower sense implies free and fair elections, and in the broader sense it implies elections with the participation of credible political parties and candidates with the capacity to represent the public interest. However, there is a broad discretionary space between the election results and the Government's decisions, because the elections only determine who will govern, and relate much less to the content of governing (Sartori: 2001, 122). Demising the democratic character of elections as the possibility for citizens to “kick out the scum” and make politicians responsible before the public (Heywood: 2004, 138) is reductionist and only partially accurate. At the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, now citizens only have the possibility of electing the same or a lesser evil, because the voter is forced to choose between options set in advance and not by free choice (Canfora: 2007, 302). The basic characteristic of Bosnia and Herzegovina's electoral system is partisan electoral regulations, party organs for conducting elections, nomination of political subjects at elections that will not represent the public interest, with a high level of corruption in the election process and an absence of institutional protection of endangered electoral rights. The last parliamentary and presidential elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were conducted in accordance with the election law from 2001, which underwent 20 changes and amendments. The last changes and amendments to the election law<sup>3</sup> provided for more gender equality in local election commissions and on election boards, as well

3 Law on Changes and Amendments to Bosnia and Herzegovinian Electoral Law published in the Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 7/14 ([https://www.izbori.ba/Documents/documents/ZAKONI/SI\\_gl\\_BIH\\_07\\_14/IZ-SI\\_gl\\_7-14-bos.pdf](https://www.izbori.ba/Documents/documents/ZAKONI/SI_gl_BIH_07_14/IZ-SI_gl_7-14-bos.pdf)).

as redefining the electoral units in the Republic of Srpska (RS). With the new law on the financing of political parties<sup>4</sup> which was adopted three years ago, the system was superficially changed but is still partial to parties, because of changes to party interests which were created, proposed and adopted by the representatives of the ruling parties in state parliamentary and executive authorities without the participation of non-governmental organisations or public debate. The changes relate to the possibility of political parties borrowing from banks, a significant increase to the limit on annual incomes based on donations by legal and physical persons, limitations on overall resources from the state budget for financing political parties, the banning of receiving donations from workers' unions, associations, other states and foreign political parties and legal entities, enabling donations to certain private companies and allowing the use of business premises in the public ownership by political parties without any compensation. In the previous period the State Parliament and Central Electoral Commission did not accept any of the initiatives for changing electoral or other laws in order to establish non-partisan organs for the implementation of elections, obligatory and impartial monitoring of the election process which would be financed from the budget, the introduction of electronic voting and video surveillance, the disabling or prevention of trading positions on the electoral board, preventing the addition of direct votes on ballot papers, complete oversight of party expenses, prohibiting election nomination of political parties and candidates who are illegally financed or who represent a party's or someone else's interest instead of the public interest.

Implementation of elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina lies in the jurisdiction of the Central Electoral Commission, 142 local electoral commissions and 5,254 electoral boards in regular polling stations. The members of the Central Electoral Commission are former members and current sympathisers of political parties, while the members of local electoral commissions and electoral boards are exclusively made up of the members of political parties. Fair elections should fulfil the preconditions for non-partisan electoral organs and regulations, that there is independent and complete monitoring of the election process. The last elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were mostly not fair for the reason that the election law, the law on the financing of political parties and the law on conflicts of interest were created by a monopoly of political parties, which made, passed, changed and implemented these laws without consultation, debate or respect for civil initiatives and the public interest. This includes organs for implementing elections which are under complete party control, dependent and mostly biased in their work, prone to and tolerant of corruption<sup>5</sup>, because on most electoral boards there were some political subjects that illegally had more members, there was no complete and obligatory independent monitoring of the election process and political parties and candidates were

4 Law on the Financing of Political Parties published in the Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina No. 95/12 ([https://www.izbori.ba/Documents/documents/2012/Finansiranje\\_politickih\\_partija\\_2012\\_a.pdf](https://www.izbori.ba/Documents/documents/2012/Finansiranje_politickih_partija_2012_a.pdf)).

5 Research conducted by the Centre for Humane Politics shows that at 44% of polling stations in Bosnia and Herzegovina there were abuses by the electoral boards (file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/izvjestaj\_o\_rezultatima\_predizbornog\_anketnog\_istrazivanja\_i\_analize\_izbornih\_programa%20(11).pdf).

not audited or prevented from receiving illegal financing, abusing public resources, bribing voters or committing electoral fraud.

The state, entity and cantonal parliaments and governments, the judiciary, public administration and regulatory organs are part of a partocratic system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which does not question usurpation by parties, self-interest and control of the political system and electoral process. Practically that means that parliaments accept the domination by the government and political parties, that the judiciary protects or favours government and party interests, that the administration is more partisan than public and, during the passing and implementation of laws, the public interest is suppressed in favour of party, group or personal interests. Because of this partocratic system and the mostly unfair elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is no possibility of fulfilling the constitutional principles of a democratic state, and because of partisan electoral commissions and electoral boards there is no basis to achieve legislative norms regarding independent and impartial organs for the implementation of elections. Also, the organs for the implementation of elections, prosecution offices and other organs of oversight do not respond officially at all to the endangerment of the electoral process, and when abuses are reported, they act only rarely and symbolically<sup>6</sup>. During the last elections the large political parties had several times higher expenses compared to what was reported, the ruling parties at the local, cantonal, entity and state levels abused public resources to achieve their election goals, they organised mass bribing of voters, there was voting for people who were not present, direct votes were added to ballot papers and ballot papers were being declared invalid, there was no monitoring system or auditing of party expenditures and mostly there was no institutional protection of electoral rights and other values. Because of all this the 2014 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were mostly unfair<sup>7</sup>.

The media in Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided by entities, nationalities, parties and interests, and as a consequence this means that the public and professional interest is subordinated to national, ethnic, partisan, commercial, corruption and other interests<sup>8</sup>. The mass media has become the primary tool for the objectification of manipulative democracy, because the orchestrated mass media turns force

6 Under pressure and because of corruption, Doboj County Prosecution Office, during the final stages of proceedings, dropped criminal prosecutions for bribing voters and other abuses of the election process at the 2008 local elections.

7 Corruption of the election process in Bosnia and Herzegovina was identified and described at the 2010 General Election (Dejanović: 2011, 128).

8 The behaviour of media in the RS is especially illustrative of this position. Regarding the informative programmes of the three most watched TV channels in the RS, the public broadcaster is completely in the service of the entity regime and party interest, the most watched private channel is completely in the service of the opposition which is financed from the budgets of the municipalities and cities ruled by them, and the second most watched private channel is courting favour with one party or another and is slightly more taking the side of the ruling regime than the opposition. The most read daily newspapers in the RS are on the ruling regime's side, internet portals are mostly divided between the Government, opposition and the interests of publishers and foreign donors. During the last few years there has been a tendency for obedient journalists from the public media to become spokespersons and heads of departments in entity governments and other public-sector institutions.

into a right and submission into a duty (Vasović: 2008, 20). Divisions, corruption and a deficit of freedom in the media<sup>9</sup> imply a controlled selection of topics and the exclusion of different opinions labelled as undesirable; because of this the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina mostly cannot achieve its mission of professional, objective and impartial informing of the public. Media coverage of topics of public interest is mostly insufficient, sidelined, selective and manipulative. Before the 2014 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the media mostly did not cover subjects such as research, dialogue, non-selective and professional topics about the conditions in the country, entities and cantons, who has responsibility for conditions, the lack of credibility of political parties and candidates at elections due to an absence of serious programmes for the execution of power, corruption in the election process and systemic causes which do not provide representation of the public interest in institutions of authority.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, civil society has not been established or is not sustainable, and civil society organisations are mostly systemically orientated to the short term in terms of projects and donations. In practice it means that civil society organisations are mostly active only occasionally and temporarily for the duration of projects, they are interested in dealing with problems only when they are paid for it, the majority of active lobbying organisations stop working if there is no donor financing, they deal mostly with problems resulting from systemic errors in peripheral issues, they are not interested in changing the non-democratic and imposed system, they are more interested in LGBT and minority rights than the interest of the majority, they are either for or against the ruling regime depending on their donors and they are strategically disorientated. When civil society organisations are not capable of formulating a clear civil strategy of democratic development and demanding change, they end up vegetating in a marginalised civil society (Pavlović: 2009, 227–228), which is exactly what is happening to the civil society organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the last elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a section of the civil society organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina was active in monitoring the financing of pre-election campaigns and media reporting, informing about the content and realisation of election programmes, calling on citizens to vote at the elections, in limited monitoring of the elections and similar activities. The final effect of the pre-election activities of this part of civil society organisations has been modest and limited, because each consequent election has been less fair than the previous one, there is more illegality and abuses in financing pre-election campaigns, there are more abuses on election day and elected governments are becoming more and more irresponsible. It is especially wrong to call on citizens to participate in elections and vote in conditions when there are no systemic or other preconditions for electing good authorities, which demonstrates the mentioned systemic character of civil society organisations, because their concrete activities are carried out to preserve an undemocratic system, persuading citizens to elect authorities that they will not be satisfied with, leading campaigns which could be in the interest of the opposition, smaller and new political parties, servile relation to donors and treating

9 According to research by *Freedom House*, the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina enjoys only partial freedom (<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2015#.VhpKCPntmko>).

citizens as if they are stupid. Instead of calling for elections, civil society organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina should take the side of the opponents of the imposed undemocratic system and lobby for radical changes which would provide systemic preconditions for electing good authorities.

## 2. Achievement of election programmes in the 2010-2014 electoral cycle

The rating of the credibility of the ruling parties in the previous four-year period was based on the results of analysing the achievement of their election programmes and conditions in the area of representation. Ruling political parties that achieve over 90% of the objectives from their election programmes are credible; those which achieve more than 66% of their programme objectives are potentially credible; and those which achieve less than 66% of their programme objectives are not credible. Previously, analysis was carried out on the election programmes of the ruling parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the 2010–2014 electoral cycle, during which, by a method of content analysis, the programme objectives were identified as those objectives whereby the political parties promise to or set as their goal for that electoral cycle to solve a certain problem, change something, improve conditions in a certain area or similar. For this analysis, programme objectives are the relevant subjects, while party positions, comments and other programme subjects are considered irrelevant subjects. The analysis of the achievement of the programme objectives of the SDP BiH, SDA, HDZ BiH and SNSD, as the leading parties at the state and entity levels in the 2010–2014 electoral cycle, was based on representative indicators gathered from the relevant ministries<sup>10</sup>, statistical agencies and other sources. The programme objectives were qualitative and quantitative variables, and based on these their programme achievement was graded as complete, partial or non-existent<sup>11</sup>.

The analysis of the achievement of the election programmes by the ruling parties at

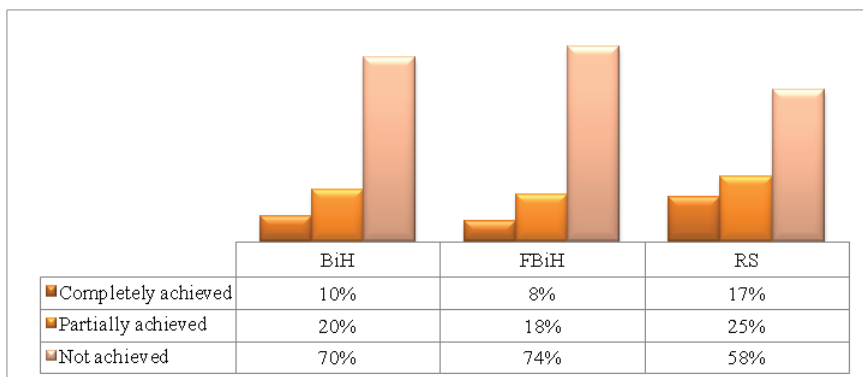
10 The largest amount of indicators for verification of achieved programme objectives were gathered from the relevant state and entity ministries. It should be emphasised that access to information from the relevant state and entity ministries is still limited and hard to access, because only 20% of the ministries provide data within the statutory period, and around 60% only provide it after multiple requests, with longer or shorter delays, and around 20% do not provide the data at all. Among those who behave illegally and obstruct access to information are the general secretariates of the Council of Ministers and entity governments, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Ministry of Justice, noting that two-thirds of the ministries do not provide all the requested data.

11 The achievement of qualitative programme objectives, such as candidate status for EU membership, construction of 19 km of highways per year, increase of pensions to 60% of average salaries and similar, is rated as being achieved if by the end of electoral cycle the country has the status of candidate for EU membership, 19 km of highways has been constructed and if pensions rise to 60% of the average salary; it is rated as unachieved if the country does not have the status of candidate, if less than 19 km of highways has been constructed per year and if the level of pensions is less than 60% of the average salary. Achievement of quantitative objectives, such as combating corruption and similar, is rated as completely achieved if the corruption perception index (CPI) is 60 or over, partially achieved if the CPI is 40–59 and unachieved if the CPI is 39 or lower for 2014.



the state and entity levels is based on achieved, partially achieved and not achieved programme objectives or promises, and the results of the analysis are presented in Figure 1.

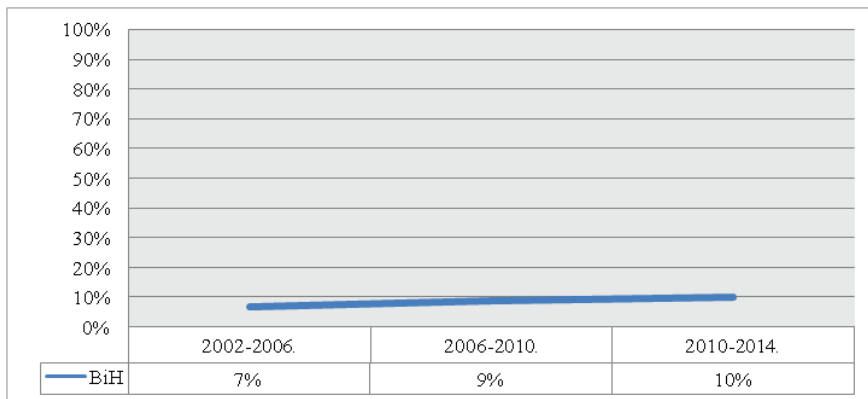
**Figure 1:** Achievement of 2010–2014 election programmes



**Source:** (1) state and entity ministries, (2) state and entity statistic agencies.

The leading ruling parties from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) during the 2010–2014 election cycle completely achieved around 10%, partially achieved around 20% and did not achieve around 70% of the objectives or promises from their election programmes. The leading ruling parties from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) completely achieved around 8%, and the leading ruling parties from the RS achieved around 17% of the objectives or promises from their political programmes. Unsatisfactory achievement of election programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina has a systemic cause, because there are no credible political parties on the political scene with the capacity to satisfactorily achieve their election programmes. Minor differences in the achievement of programme objectives between the ruling entity structures can be correlated with the magnitude of the promises and the crisis in authority in the FBiH. The leading ruling parties in the FBiH had a larger number of programme objectives which could not be achieved because they were unacceptable to the other ethnic parties, several programme objectives were harder to achieve due to their specificity and generally a large number of programme objectives were harder to achieve, such as honest and uncorrupt authorities, determining facts about the character of the last war, reform of the public administration and the judiciary, not compromising and determined combating of organised crime and corruption, confiscation of illegally acquired property, building the capacity for an alternative supply of natural gas, the return of refugees and displaced persons and similar.

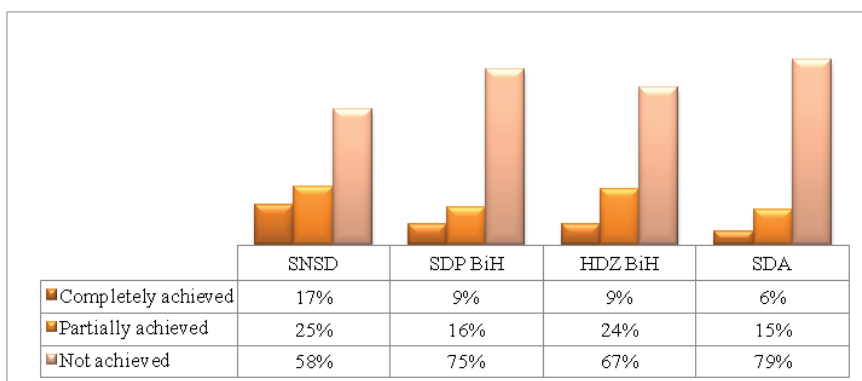
The indication that this is a trend and not an accident in the results of the achievement of the election programmes of the ruling parties from Bosnia and Herzegovina during the previous three electoral cycles is shown on Figure 2.

**Figure 2:** Achievement of election programmes in the previous three electoral cycles

**Source:** Centre for Humane Politics.

These results show approximately the same failure among the ruling parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina in achieving their election programmes in the previous three election cycles. It is necessary to look for the causes in the irresponsible and non-credible leading ethnic parties, partial changes to the ruling party structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the elections and similarities or the non-existence of needed competitiveness between ethnic parties in the same national election bodies.

The results of achievement of the election programmes by the leading ruling parties from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 2010–2014 electoral cycle, are shown in Figure 3.

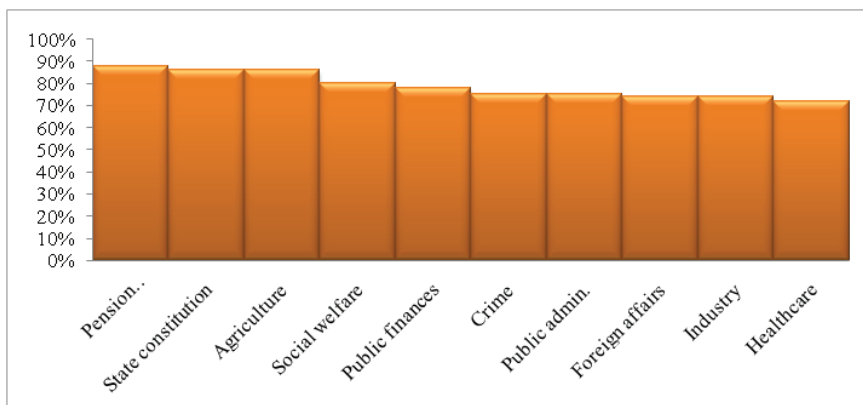
**Figure 3:** Achievement of the 2010–2014 election programmes of the leading ruling ethnic parties

**Source:** (1) state and entity ministries, (2) state and entity statistic agencies; **other notes:** due to the inaccessibility of necessary data, samples of 94% of the SNSD's programme objectives were processed, 77% of the SDP BiH's programme objectives, 61% of the SDA's programme objectives and 89% of the HDZ BiH's programme objectives.

The results show minor differences between the leading ruling parties in achieving the election programmes, where the SNSD achieved slightly more, and the SDA achieved the least of their programme objectives. Minor differences in achieving objectives are the consequences of the magnitude of the promises, the existence of unachievable programme objectives which were unacceptable to the other ethnic parties and the crisis between the leading ruling parties in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The SDA had the smallest number of achieved programme objectives: around 20% of their programme objectives remained unfulfilled due to being completely or partially unacceptable to the Serbian and Croatian ethnic parties, and also 15% of their programme objectives were very specific and the majority of those remained unfulfilled, and also they had no prime-ministerial position in the Federal Government.

Again in the last four-year period the leading ruling parties did not achieve the majority of their programme objectives of special public interest. The SNSD did not achieve its programme objectives regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina's status of candidate for EU membership, a reduction of public-sector administration, demilitarisation, a reduction in public administration expenses and an increase in funds for investment and incentives, economic development, finalisation of the privatisation review, development of agriculture and water management, realisation of flood protection projects, reforms of the pension system, an increase of pensions to 60% of salaries, healthcare for all citizens, free school books up to the fourth grade of elementary school, a free media, support for the NGO sector and other things. The SDP BiH did not achieve its programme objectives of an honest and uncorrupt government, reform of public administration and the judiciary, combating organised crime and achieving a lower level of corruption, confiscation of illegally gained properties, more rational public expenditure, economic development, a review of privatisation, participation of workers, reform of the social welfare system, an average pension above 50% of the average salary level, the opening of a public social dialogue and other things. The SDA did not achieve its programme objectives about determining the facts and character of the previous war, resolving open issues with neighbouring countries, candidacy for EU membership, public administration reform, an efficient judiciary, development of civil protection, uncompromising combating of organised crime and corruption, legalisation of illegally constructed buildings, reduction in the grey economy and public expenditure, economic development, a coverage of imports by exports of 65%, an increase in the employment rate of 5% annually, reform of the social sector, finalisation of the return of refugees and displaced persons, providing 2% of the budget for science and other things. The HDZ BiH did not fulfil its promises about a new constitution, candidacy for EU membership, combating crime, confiscation of illegally gained properties, reduction of public expenditure and an increase in the employment rate of 2% annually, reform of pension system and other things.

Figure 4 displays the data by area in which the ruling parties had the most unachieved programme objectives in the 2010–2014 electoral cycle.

**Figure 4:** Most unachieved programme objectives by area 2010–2014

**Source:** (1) state and entity ministries, (2) state and entity statistic agencies.

These results show that the ruling parties from Bosnia and Herzegovina were similarly unsuccessful in almost all areas, that the most unachieved programme objectives are in the area of pension security and that the high percentage of unachieved programme objectives in the area of the state constitution is mostly a consequence of unachievable unitary promises given by Bosniak parties.

The conditions in 10 representative areas in 2010 and 2014 can be correlated to the success of the ruling structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and data on these conditions is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Conditions in representative areas 2010–2014

Representative areas	BiH		FBiH		RS	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
<b>Euro integrations</b>	No progress		-	-	-	-
<b>Crime</b>	No progress		No progress		No progress	
<b>Public adminis- tration</b>	Not reformed		Not reformed		Not reformed	
	Partisan		Partisan		Partisan	
	71,671	73,993	46,573	48,279	22,552	23,714
<b>BDP, billions of BAM</b>	24.9	26.9	15.9	16.9	8.3	8.8
<b>Public debt, billions of BAM</b>	8.9	10.8	5.3	6.0	3.6	4.8
<b>Highways, km</b>	37	133.7	37	101.7	0	32.0

<b>Unemployment</b>	517,004	545,470	364,929	387,405	145,620	146,616
<b>Salaries, BAM</b>	795	829	804	833	784	822
<b>Pensions, BAM</b>	-	-	343	366	319	331
<b>Poverty</b>	17.9%	19.1%	17.1%	18.5%	19.5%	19.9%

**Source:** (1) state and entity ministries, (2) state and entity statistic agencies, Republic Agency for Statistics and the BiH Central Bank; **other notes:** the data for public administration presented in numbers is related to the number of employees, and data on poverty in 2014 is an estimate by the BiH Central Bank.

Conditions regarding European integration are approximately the same or unchanged over the last four years, bearing in mind the evaluation from the European Commission's report and the failure to receive the status of candidate. Also, during the last four years the conditions have remained approximately the same in area of risk from by crime, meaning combating crime, because the indicators are approximately the same or even worse concerning those from the governing structures that have been convicted for economic and organised crime, official duty prosecution, corrupt behaviour in the area of public acquisitions, uncollected debts for public income and similar.<sup>12</sup> In the area of public administration, conditions are the same or even worse, because there has been an increase in the number of employees and the level of partisan employment. There was a symbolic growth in GDP, and average salaries and pensions, noting that there is still no change in or an unfavourable difference between average salaries and pensions. There was more progress in building highways, noting that the Banjaluka–Gradiška constructed highway is not yet operational, because the bridge over the River Sava has not yet been built. Conditions in the areas of unemployment, public debt and poverty are worse than they were four years ago. By comparing data about the conditions in these representative areas for Bosnia and Herzegovina, it can be concluded that the conditions in 2014, compared to 2010, were worse in 30% of the areas, in another 30% they remained approximately same, in another 30% they were slightly better and in the remaining 10% of the areas they were better. If the data for entities is compared, it can be concluded that conditions in the FBiH and RS remained approximately the same, because the conditions in both entities in 11% of the areas improved, in 33% of areas they slightly improved, in 23% of areas they remained approximately the same and in 33% of areas they worsened.

The results show that the relevant parties from Bosnia and Herzegovina were unsuccessful during the last three cycles, because they fulfilled only a tenth of the promises they made in their election programmes and they did not provide the necessary

<sup>12</sup> During the last four years none of the presidents of the governments, ministers, municipal chiefs, mayors, directors of public companies or others highly positioned in public-sector institutions were convicted of crimes, prosecution offices did not investigate or indict by official duty, and it is estimated that at least 500 million BAM every year is lost in public acquisitions and that the amount of uncollected public income gets larger every year (uncollected public incomes in Bosnia and Herzegovina are around 8 billion BAM).

or expected changes in the representative areas in the 2010–2014 election cycle. Based on the achievement of election programmes and the conditions in the representative areas it can be concluded that the leading ruling and opposition parties from Bosnia and Herzegovina are not credible<sup>13</sup>, and their election programmes were only partially harmonised with the public interest and the expectations of citizens.

### 3. Party competitiveness and programme legitimacy at the 2014 elections

Party and candidate competitiveness is an important factor in the election process, and influences the possibility of electing good authorities. Of course, for political and electoral competitiveness it is very important to have credible political parties and candidates, which have good election programmes and the capacity to implement them, from whom citizens would be able to elect those who would represent their interests in a satisfactory manner and achieve their programme objectives. The primary precondition for competitiveness of political parties is the existence of at least two credible political parties or two credible Bosniak, Serbian and Croatian ethnic parties.

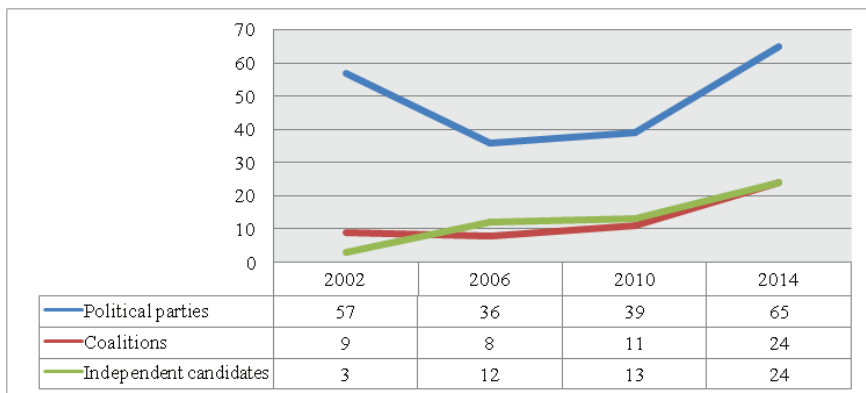
Three groups of political subjects were registered for participation in the 2014 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first group is well known, long-established and mostly from the current and former parliamentary parties<sup>14</sup>. The second group consists of new political parties and independent candidates with ambitions and with more or less chance of entering parliament, and also a smaller number of political parties and independent candidates who do not have any chance of entering parliament and who are participating in the electoral process for traditional, adventurous or similar reasons. The third group is made up mainly of new, smaller parties and independent candidates who are participating in the elections exclusively for reason of corruption, the most common example of which is the selling and trading of positions in electoral boards to larger political parties.

The number of registered political parties, coalitions and independent candidates at elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 2002 and 2014 is shown in Figure 5.

13 In the previous three electoral cycles the SDA achieved 8% and the HDZ BiH 9% of their programme objectives. In the previous two electoral cycles the SNSD achieved 14% of its programme objectives, the SDS fulfilled 2% of its programme objectives in the 2002–2006 election cycle and the SDP BiH achieved 9% of its programme objectives in the last electoral cycle.

14 These are the SDA, SDS, HDZ BiH, SDP BiH and the SNSD as the leading ruling and opposition parties, then the SBB, SBiH, BPS, DNZ, DSS, PDP, SP, HDZ 1990 and the NSRzB as relatively stable parliamentary parties and finally the ASDA, SDU, NS, NDP, BOSS, HSP, PosS, HSS and the HKDU, as current and former insufficiently stable political parties.

**Figure 5:** Political subjects at the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2002–2014



**Source:** Central Electoral Commission BiH.

In the 2014 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina there were almost twice as many political subjects than in the previous elections. Out of the total number of political parties participating in the previous elections, there are approximately equal numbers of parties with current or previous members of parliament, parties which are not participating in parliament but did participate in the previous elections, and new political parties which are participating in the elections for the first time. At the last elections a fifth of all the parties had candidates at all levels of authority, which indicates serious electoral parties regarding personnel, finances and development. Among the new political parties and independent candidates, the majority are those participating in the elections for reasons of corruption.<sup>15</sup> Among the new political parties, the DF, which was created from a split in the SDP BiH, has the greatest chance of entering parliament. After the last elections, the party scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina slightly changed in that the leading ruling ethnic parties achieved overall worse results, and the HDZ BiH by far confirmed itself as the leading Croatian party and the pre-electoral coalitions increasing, rather than reducing, the number of parliamentary parties.

Political parties and the political subjects participating in elections should identify themselves to the public through electoral programmes, their candidates and their credibility to represent the public interest and fulfil their promises. The fact that party platforms and manifestos need to be read with a certain dose of skepticism (Lijphart: 2003, 127), as well as the fact that party programmes and pre-electoral promises are vague and do not predict all the issues that need to be resolved in one mandate (Lauvaux: 1999, 69), speak of the ubiquitous lack of responsibility of

<sup>15</sup> The majority of smaller parties and independent candidates participate in the elections for purpose of trading and profiting from selling their positions on electoral boards, and some of them were registered by larger parties in order that they should give them their positions on electoral boards or to take a section of the votes away from competing parties. It is estimated that by selling their positions on electoral boards, at the 2014 elections the smaller political parties and independent candidates will have earned more than 2 million BAM.

the parties and their inability to identify themselves as credible representatives of the public interest. Responsible political parties should, before the start of the election campaign, have a complete electoral programme, harmonised with the public interest and publicly accessible to voters. Approximately 10% of the political parties had published their election programmes when the campaign started, and by the end of the campaign less than half of the political parties and candidates had their programmes published for the 2014 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>16</sup> By analysis of the available election programmes of relevant ethnic parties it can be determined that there is no qualitative difference compared to previous elections<sup>17</sup>, that the programmes for the 2014–2018 election cycle were not harmonised with the public interest, and were dominated again by familiar and vague promises, that the ruling parties are making promises that they could and should have fulfilled in the previous period and that all relevant parties have programme content in which the dominance of the party and the nationality of the election body is recognisable. Instead of identifying themselves as credible representatives of the public interest, political parties and candidates identify themselves, by means of false and unachievable promises, as the best representatives of endangered national, state and entity interests, as being less evil than the others, with hackneyed slogans about a future for everybody, a better and normal life, closeness to people, strength and unity, victory for the RS and similar nonsense, embellished by portrayals of the candidates, the charisma of a leader from a neighbouring country, meetings with world statesmen, primitivism and corrupt behaviour.

Representing the public interest is an essential characteristic of good authorities and a democratic political system, which can exist only when the election programmes of relevant political parties are harmonised with the public interest and when the ruling parties mostly or completely achieve their election programmes that have been harmonised in this manner. The elected representatives in parliament should

16 At the start of the election campaign only these parties had published and made available their election programmes on the internet: the SDS, DNS, NSRzB, SDP BiH, NS, PosS and the DF. The SDA published its election programme on the third day of campaigning, the SDP BiH, SNSD, HDZ BiH, SBIH, SP, NDP and the SNS published their programmes in the middle of their campaigns.

17 Comprarasment analysis of the election programmes of five relevant ethnic parties (the SDA, SDP BiH, SDS, SNSD and the HDZ BiH) for the last two election cycles shows that there is no significant difference in the analysed elements and that none of the relevant parties have a complete thematic coverage of their programmes, they have a large imbalance of content by topic, they have objectives that are unacceptable to voters of other nations, they do not have enough precise objectives and they do not have objectives related to necessary systemic changes. Analysis of the results from the 2010–2014 election cycle shows that: the election programmes of relevant political parties contained between 851 and 16,184 words, between 36 and 311 objectives and between 62% and 95% of the content was relevant. Between 58% and 95% of the content covered topics, between 5% and 8% consisted of precise objectives, around 15% was repeated objectives that should have been achieved in the previous period, and between 5% and 20% of it consisted of unacceptable objectives for election bodies of other nationalities. The proportion of the content per topic was between 0.1% and 24.5%. For the 2014–2018 election cycle, the election programmes of relevant political parties consisted of between 2,974 and 27,767 words and between 48 and 244 objectives. Between 59% and 95% of the content was relevant, between 47% and 95% covered topics, between 2% and 15% were precise objectives, around 15% were repeated objectives that should have been achieved in the previous period. Between 4% and 19% of the content was unacceptable objectives to election bodies of other nationalities. The proportion of the content per topic was between 0.1% and 26.4%.



represent the public interest, which implies rising above special interests (Ravlić: 2008, 218). The problem of incompatibility of political parties' election programmes with the public interest exists for at least two reasons: firstly because political parties represent party interests, which is only one of many collective interests which are in conflict or incompatible with the public interest; and secondly, because nobody is systemically and institutionally determining the public interest in order for it to become known, widely accepted and obligatory. In order to solve this serious problem, new systems and institutional solutions must de-monopolise and disempower political parties, so that parties would only control the function of representing the public interest in the institutions of the parliamentary and executive authorities, while the public interest would be defined outside of political parties and the party system (Dejanović: 2014, 233-234). The central problems of a representative democracy system have been pointed out by many theoreticians of democracy and political representation who propose a limiting of political representation (Cunningham: 2003, 160). The existence of a defined public interest, harmonisation of party election programmes with the public interest and an obligation to represent the public interest in institutions of authority limits partisan representation. Considering that the public interest in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still an abstract and undefined category, it was necessary to conduct research about the harmonisation of election programmes from political parties with the needs and/or interest of the majority of citizens. The results of this research show that the election programmes of political parties from the previous political cycles were not harmonised with the interest of the majority of citizens (Dejanović: 2014, 156). A rating of programme harmonisation from 2014 was derived by comparing the analysed contents of these programmes with the content of the programmes from the previous cycle, and on the basis of this it is determined that the election programmes from 2014 were not harmonised with the public interest.

In the election platform of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) from 2014, the content is pro-Bosniak, unitary, hard to achieve, repetitive, previously unfulfilled and relatively new. In the pro-Bosniak content a warning stands out or a message to the Bosniak election body that it is necessary to ensure a strong Bosniak political position to resolve the most significant state and political issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the pro-Bosnian or patriotic content it speaks about others as the enemies of Bosnia and Herzegovina who are destabilising and weakening the country, and promises to resolve the status of the organiser of resistance to aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina from 18 September 1991 to 8 April 1992. The SDA have a history of making promises about a Bosnia and Herzegovina without entities and the existing cantons, with state, regional and local levels of authority, which the SDA knows cannot be fulfilled and these promises are mostly used for ethnic party and internal Bosniak legitimisation. As the ruling ethnic party for the last 25 years, the SDA makes promises about reforms, development, employment, reduction of administration, the harshest combating of crime, the return of refugees and displaced persons, stopping regression and similar, by which they are compromising and disqualifying themselves and proclaiming themselves non-credible, because those promises could have and should have been fulfilled in the previous period by them as the ruling party.

Programme objectives about a reduction in public expenditure by 4.5% annually or 1.22 billion BAM in four years, public administration down by 20%, unemployment down by 48,000 per year and income taxation below 50%, as well as realisation of capital infrastructure and energy projects, are good and necessary, but at the same time overly ambitious, unrealistic and hard to achieve. Also, the programme objectives regarding the reduction and equalisation of salaries in the public sector down to the average level of salaries, limiting and reducing salaries to members of the state presidency and directors of public companies, cancelling compensation for working in commissions and similar, look like populist measures and acceding to demands from protests held in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2014.<sup>18</sup>

The Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SDP BiH) published a document titled “Manifesto”, which can be said to relate to the 2014–2018 election cycle, even though it is not specified anywhere in the document. This manifesto contains statements about justice, Euro-Atlantic integration, the economy, education, healthcare and social policy, but there is nothing contained in it about issues regarding the Constitution and arrangement of the state, public administration, relations with neighbouring countries, ecology and other areas. The first thing to note is that there is only a quarter of content than in the election programme from 2010, it is dominated by general content, there is nothing specially new and there are a lot of similar and repeated promises, which the SDP BiH, as the leading ruling party should have and could have achieved before. Justice for all, a zero rate of corruption, return of looted properties to citizens and processing of privatisation-related crimes, are just some of the fairytale and familiar promises that will almost certainly not be fulfilled. More realistic programme objectives are made about growth of GDP by 3%, while promises about the elimination of the budget deficit, investments of 25% of GDP, European standards in healthcare, reduction of poverty by half are overambitious and hard to achieve. The manifesto contains unfulfilled promises repeated for the third time about the finalisation and review of privatisation, while it does not contain the unfulfilled promises from the 2010 election programme about countering liberal capitalism.

Before the 2014 elections the Croatian Democratic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ BiH) published a programme consisting of parts relating to changes in the Constitution, the rule of law, Euro-Atlantic integration, economic growth, education and culture, social policy and the homeland war. Even though this programme is not defined as being election-related or time-specific, it can be assumed that it is an election programme, which is the same as the previous one, modest in content, general, imprecise and frivolous. This programme contains a familiar ethnic political orientation and objectives about changes to the Constitution that would resolve the Croatian national issue, a Bosnia and Herzegovina with four federal units and a radio-television station in the Croatian language. Also, HDZ BiH is hoping that in

18 During protests in FBiH in February 2014, besides demands for resignations, processing those responsible for crime, a review of privatisation and similar, demands were also made for a reduction of the salaries and other privileges of officials (<http://www.bhrt.ba/vijesti/bih/danas-protesti-u-nekim-bh-gradovima/>).

the following four-year period Bosnia and Herzegovina will become a candidate for EU membership, and it will try to intensify economic growth, which had also been absent during the previous four years and it will pay special attention to combating organised crime, corruption and terrorism.

The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) has a platform with three content elements, which are related to the Dayton structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a comparative overview between the five years before 2006 and nine years after, and economic policy for coming out of the crisis. The first two documents of the platform mostly speak about the past, comparing the alleged results of the SNSD's rule with the rule of the SDS and PDP, they see the anti-Dayton structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the largest problem for the RS and they are only promising a return of jurisdictions from the state to the entity level. The document New Economic Policy for Coming Out of the Crisis contains nothing particularly original or convincing, especially when we bear in mind that the crisis did not start in 2014, that the SNSD as the leading ruling party had an obligation and opportunity to implement this policy in the previous two electoral cycles and the programme objectives about reindustrialisation are repeated as being unfulfilled from the previous period. In the election platform there is nothing about foreign policy, defence, security, the judiciary, ecology, spatial planning, traffic, social and retirement security, healthcare, science, culture, or sport and youth, noting that the content dealing with public administration, education and other areas is exceptionally modest and sporadic. The SNSD promises a continuation of combating corruption, which did not take place in the previous period. If there is something that needs to be emphasised, it is precise objectives and rather elaborate measures for development of agriculture, promises about realisation of concrete projects for flood protection worth over 150 million BAM and admitting responsibility for tax debt amounting to 1.5 billion BAM. The election platform is dominated by irrelevant and general content, as well as the impression that the SNSD has lost its vision and is tired of ruling.

The Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) has published a White Book and it is not entirely clear whether this book is an election programme or whether there should be special programme based on it for the 2014 elections. The content of this book is largely an analysis and comment on the existing state of and responsibility of the entity government in last two cycles, and one smaller part contains general and familiar objectives that the SDS would achieve as the ruling party in the 2014–2018 election cycle. The programme-related part of the book has content related to most areas and it is larger in scale than this party's previous election programmes. The 10 major promises made are economic growth, an increase in budget income and a decrease in budget expenses, a reduction of public debt, reduction of taxes, introduction of different rates of value added tax, reform of pension system and healthcare, a more responsible banking sector and a smaller public administration. Among the concrete programme objective, emphasis is put on reindustrialisation, a reduction of electrical distribution losses, an increase in subsidies in agriculture, reorganisation and decentralisation of forestry management, zero tolerance for corruption, confiscation of illegally acquired properties, implementation of elections in the RS

by the Republic Election Commission and reorganisation of the healthcare fund. Among the detailed promises are economic growth of 3%, taxes and contributions on salaries to go back to previous levels, the minimum monthly pension to be 300 BAM and funding for science of 1% of GDP.

The Democratic Front (DF), as a new political party with large ambitions for the elections, in its programme from 2014 has almost no content that would make it any different or more serious than other relevant political parties; over a third of the programme consists of irrelevant content, not enough objectives from the economic sector and they make promises that are mostly familiar, repeated and were unfulfilled in the previous period. Besides that, the DF does not have an election programme, but has a political programme in eight areas set for the period from 2014 to 2022, so it cannot be precisely correlated to the 2014–2018 election cycle. The DF, with its programme objectives of adopting the German constitutional system and a regional arrangement of Bosnia and Herzegovina with three levels of authority, the state institutions strengthened and membership of NATO as its foreign policy priority, which are identical or similar to the positions of the Bosniak political parties, is positioned to be the dominant Bosniak electoral body<sup>19</sup>. However, given its position that it is unacceptable to have the extreme options of centralisation and decentralisation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, that the overall accepted constitution model needs to be based on political agreement and that a politically stable Bosnia and Herzegovina implies acceptance by all nations and citizens, the DF could maybe be a somewhat different and more successful party to resolve the current state problems, if they have support from relevant Serbian and Croatian political parties. In the end, the promise that the DF would do anything so that citizens could walk with their heads held high, equally valued and proud of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was only one of many idealistic slogans with an unachievable objective or only one achievable in the long term, which require radical system changes which were not foreseen by this political programme.

Considering that the 2014 elections were contested by the leading ruling and opposition ethnic parties which had been during the previous period unsuccessful in achieving their election programmes, that the election programmes from the 2014 elections were not harmonised with the public interest and that the political subjects in the pre-election campaign were not legitimised as credible representatives of the public interest, it can be concluded that, at the 2014 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there were no credible political parties or candidates with the capacity, not only to represent the public interest in institutions of authority, but also to satisfactorily achieve their programmes in the 2014–2018 election cycle.

19 At the 2014 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, predominantly the Bosniak electoral body voted for the DF. In its programme, the DF had objectives for the state and federal levels of authority, around 3% of their objectives could be unacceptable to a majority Serbian or Croatian electoral body, they did not have candidate lists in the RS and in areas with Croatian electoral bodies in FBiH they won less than 1% of the votes.

## 4. Conclusion

During the last elections, citizens were again unsuccessful in electing good or relatively good state, entity and cantonal parliamentary and executive authorities, because there were no systemic or other conditions for this. This conclusion comes from analysis of results which confirm the primary hypothesis that good parliamentary and executive authorities, with which citizens can be satisfied and which would work for the public interest, can be elected in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries only when there are necessary systemic and other conditions. These systemic conditions for electing relatively good authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not exist because:

- In the Constitution and other acts there is no obligation for the definition and representation of the public interest, nor is there in any other matter a defined acceptable public interest;
- There was no election of credible ruling political parties for the state, entity or cantonal parliamentary authorities, because the SDA, HDZ BiH, SDS and SNSD, as ruling parties, do not have the credibility to represent the public interest and satisfactory achievement of their election programmes, given that they have programmes which are insufficiently harmonised with the public interest and that in the last three electoral cycles they have achieved less than 15% of their programme objectives, noting that other parliamentary parties do not have their election programmes harmonised with the public interest either.
- The last elections were not sufficiently fair, because the election regulations and organs for implementation of the elections are partisan, there was no impartial or complete monitoring of the election process, there is no satisfactory institutional protection of electoral rights and there was a high level of corruption in the election process, because the ruling and other larger parties and candidates were illegally using public and other resources for self-promotion, attracting and bribing voters, the media and the organs for the implementation of elections, buying positions on electoral boards, voting for absent people, adding direct votes about individual candidates, rendering ballot papers invalid and monitoring of the voting process;
- Also, there were no other systemic conditions, because the media is not sufficiently free, civil society is not established, there is high systemic corruption and the other parts of the political system are either partisan or regime-oriented.

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# **The Balkan Federation: Unfulfilled Plans (1944–1948)**

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# The Balkan Federation: Unfulfilled Plans (1944–1948)

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## SUMMARY

The idea of uniting the various Balkan countries in the community commonly referred to as the Balkan Federation, traces its roots back to the mid-20th century. In the period between the two World Wars, the idea of creating of the “Balkan Communist Federation” was the official policy of the communist parties of the Balkans, and of course, that of the Comintern.<sup>2</sup> After the Comintern was disbanded in May 1943, the idea of a federation remained part of the policy of its former members, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Bulgarian Workers’ Party (Communists).

*Keywords:* Balkan Federation, People’s Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, People’s Republic of Bulgaria, People’s Republic of Albania, Josip Broz Tito, Georgi Dimitrov, Enver Hoxha, Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Bulgarian Workers’ Party (Communists)

## 1. First plans for the establishment of the Balkan Federation (1944–1945)

The nearing of the end of World War II marked a revival of the idea of creating a Balkan Federation or joint Yugoslav–Bulgarian state union. Joseph Stalin personally gave his approval for the formation of the Federation to Josip Broz Tito during the latter’s visit to Moscow in the autumn of 1944. (Kardelj, 1980: 103; Banac, 1990: 44; Dragišić, 2007: 59)<sup>3</sup> The initiative for the Federation was launched at the beginning of November 1944, and the first contacts were established between the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) and the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Workers’ Party (BWP) (Communists). The exchange projects for the future federation went primarily conducted between the National Liberation Committee of Yugoslavia and the Bulgarian Government’s Homeland Front; negotiations were conducted along party and state lines. (Skakun, 1984: 163)

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2 For more information, consult: Stavrianos, R.S. “The Balkan Federation Movement: A Neglected Aspect, in: *The American Historical Review*, vol. 48, no. 1 (Oct. 1942): 30–51.

3 During his reception for Edvard Kardelj, Ivan Šubašić and Stanoje Simić in Moscow on November 22 1944, Joseph Stalin forced the creation of the Yugoslav–Bulgarian federation. Stanoje Simić reported that Stalin stood by his view that “...Bulgaria needs to speed up this federal community. What the people want – nobody can prevent”. (Petranović, 1990: 126)

Official negotiations on the Federation began at the end of 1944, however the Yugoslav and Bulgarian sides at the very beginning did not agree on some basic issues in its structure, such as the solution to the status of Pirin Macedonia<sup>4</sup> and whether to have a two- or seven-member organisation of the Federation.<sup>5</sup> Yugoslavia advocated a pluralistic concept in accordance with the federal structure of Yugoslavia established by the Second Meeting of the Antifascist People's Liberation Council in November 1943. The Bulgarian side insisted on a dualistic concept for the Federation, which would consist of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, rather Bulgaria and the six Yugoslav federal units (that would automatically constitute a numerical superiority for the Yugoslav Federation, and the Bulgarians felt that this would weaken their position in the Federation). (Petranović, 1990: 126)

The first drafts by the respective governments were published during November and December of 1944. The Yugoslav delegate, Edvard Kardelj, visited Bulgaria from 22 to 24 December 1944 and exchanged several project contracts concerning the Federation. The initial plan was to sign the agreement by 1 January 1945. (Dragišić, 2007: 64) Kardelj in his memoirs stated that on 23 December, the government in Sofia wrote to Tito that the proposal by Sofia reduced the concept of the Federation practically to an agreement of mutual assistance. (Petranović, 1990: 127)<sup>6</sup> In addition, the plans differed on several points; the Yugoslav proposal for the structure of the Federation was that the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia and Bulgaria unite as "one federal state, which will consist of seven federal units: Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will have in common popular representation and which will form a single customs territory". The second point was related mainly to customs duties, autonomy in the internal administration of the republics, and to joint administrative bodies. The third point conditioned the establishment of a joint Bulgarian-Yugoslav Commission<sup>7</sup> based in Belgrade, whose task would be to prepare the founding documentation of the future federation. On the other hand, the Bulgarian proposal stated that the governments of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia would achieve the unification of the South Slavs by creating a federal state under the name the *Federation of the South Slavs*. The

4 Pirin Macedonia is the colloquial name for the geographical area in Macedonia, which became part of Bulgaria during the Balkan wars in 1912-1913.

5 The Yugoslav leadership required that Bulgaria enter the federation as the seventh republic, while the Bulgarians claimed that it should be a dual state, like the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. They pointed out that it was inconceivable that Bulgaria, as a country with an old tradition, would be equal to some Yugoslav republics, which, according to their interpretation, have never had any form of statehood until 1945 (Banac, 1990: 44; Pirjevec, 2012: 239).

6 Kardelj claimed that Yugoslav recognition of Bulgaria as an ally would be bad for Yugoslavia because of the situation in domestic politics: "...given the fact that Bulgaria was a defeated country, such a pact downgraded the role of Yugoslavia as a winner". Kardelj concludes: "...the text of the agreement is so unfair that it is still very far from uniting. Bulgarians would bring benefit for themselves, but damage to our foreign policy." However, it is known that Kardelj was against the creation of any kind of federation with Bulgaria or Albania, arguing that those poor and unstable countries would create new problems for Yugoslavia, and preferred "...to enter into a federation with Switzerland or Sweden..." (Kardelj, 1980: 103; Pirjevec, 2012: 241).

7 The official name of the board would be the "Commission for South Slav Unity", and would have a total of seven members: one from Bulgaria and one from each of the federal Yugoslav republics. (Mojsov, 1979: 213-214; Dragišić, 2007: 61)

Bulgarian draft did not make reference to whether Bulgaria should have the same status as every individual Yugoslav Federal Republic or as Yugoslavia as a unit. (Petranović, 1990: 127) The rest of the draft (proposal to create a joint commission to draft a constitution and common administrative chamber) was broadly similar to the Yugoslav proposal. (Mojsov, 1979: 214) As for the status of Pirin Macedonia, according to the Bulgarian proposal, it would be attached to Macedonia (within Yugoslavia), while the regions which in 1919 had belonged to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (the counties of Caribrod and Bosiljgrad), would be returned to Bulgaria. (Dragišić, 2007: 61) The Bulgarian proposal stipulated that the exchanges of territory would be performed after the formation of the Federation, while the Yugoslav attitude was that the issue of the exchange of territory in general should not be placed in the context of the formation of the Federation, and that this would be resolved regardless of whether the Federation was to be formed or not. (Banac, 1990: 44; Dragišić, 2007: 64.)

A Yugoslav delegation visited Moscow in late January 1945 to hear the official Soviet position on the Federation. Stalin changed his mind and said that the opportune moment for the formation of the Federation had not yet come and that the two governments should begin the preparation of agreements on political, military and economic cooperation. (Dragišić, 2007: 70) The prominent Yugoslav communist, Moša Pijade, then put together a new project, which was mainly related to forming an alliance, development of cooperation and mutual assistance. No mention was made of the provisions of the Federation, according to Stalin's orders. His project did not offer a concrete solution to the territorial questions of Pirin Macedonia and the counties of Caribrod and Bosiljgrad. Both sides agreed to the text of the agreement on 27 January. (Dragišić, 2007: 73–74) The British representative in Sofia, Houston-Boswall, on 26 January lodged a protest against the attempts to form the Federation, as well as against the initiatives to annex Pirin to Vardar Macedonia. Moša Pijade explained in the 17 February report to Tito that the impact of the international circumstances makes the establishment of the Federation impossible. After that, at the request of the Soviet government in late February 1945, further negotiations were postponed indefinitely. (Kardelj, 1980: 103; Mojsov, 1979: 212–213) The reactions by the Western allies made any attempt to form a joint Yugoslav–Bulgarian state virtually impossible. (Banac, 1990: 45)

While the views of the Soviet leader were aligned with the wishes of the Yugoslav and Bulgarian governments on the formation of the Federation, Stalin was not too concerned about the fate of Albania. The Soviets did not have too much influence or interest in Albania until 1948. (Životić, 2009: 94–95; Banac, 1990: 45) Tito's version of the Federation, apart from Bulgaria, planned also to include Albania, and thus to create a great socialist state, which was also a supposed wish of the people's republics in Central Europe. The Federation with Bulgaria needed to resolve the impasse over the Macedonian issue. This move, and taking into account the potential victory of Greek partisans in the Greek civil war would have united all three parts of Macedonia (Vardar, Pirin and Aegean). At the beginning of the civil war, Tito wholeheartedly believed the Greek communists would be victorious, and gave them much support.

However, the British were determined to keep their influence in Greece, which had the tacit approval of Stalin. Stalin held to the "Percentages Agreement", which he had suggested to Churchill at the Moscow conference on 9 October 1944. According to him, the West held 90% of the influence in Greece, and Stalin agreed to this.<sup>8</sup>

The accession of Albania into the Balkan Federation had been considered by Yugoslavia's leadership as a done deal ever since the end of World War II. In this way, the separatist desires of the Albanian majority in Kosovo and western Macedonia would be greatly alleviated or completely eliminated.<sup>9</sup> In a sign of diplomatic support for the new government of Enver Hoxha in Tirana, the Government of Yugoslavia on 28 April 1945 recognised his government and established diplomatic relations. (Dedijer, 1979: 73) The Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance between Yugoslavia and Albania was signed on 10 July 1946 in Tirana, the capital of Albania.<sup>10</sup> Immediately after the war, purges against anti-Yugoslav-oriented cadres were carried out within the Albanian Communist Party. In 1946 the Albanian communists, at the initiative of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, carried out land reforms, expropriating large amounts of land from landowners. Yugoslavia formed joint stock companies with Albania, the same model that the Soviet Union had applied in the East European countries under its control. Despite the economic assistance that Yugoslavia provided to Albania (\$33 million in the period 1945–1948),<sup>11</sup> the Yugoslav leadership treated Albania as its own satellite state. (Shoup, 1968: 133–134) However, a turning point in Yugoslav–Albanian relations came in July 1947 when an Albanian delegation visited Moscow. (Životić, 2009: 95–96) From this moment, Albania gradually began to reduce its relations with Yugoslavia even before the events related to the Cominform resolution in June 1948 started to unfold. The Albanian communists were aware of their situation; the country was underdeveloped with a strong influence from Yugoslavia, and they knew that their Party would be reduced to a mere "branch" of the Yugoslav Communist Party in any future Balkan Federation. They saw stronger Soviet assistance as a way of reducing Yugoslav influence. The Soviet leadership also noticed Yugoslavia's increasing influence in Albania and decided to take measures as of the end of 1947. (Životić, 2009: 115–116)

8 Stalin and Churchill met at the conference without the presence of the US President Franklin Roosevelt, who was busy in the United States. During the first meeting, on 9 October, Churchill said in an interview with Stalin that, given the situation on the ground, it was best to immediately determine the sphere of influence in the Balkans. Thus in Romania the Soviet Union had 90% compared to the West's influence of 10%, the West got 90% of Greece, Yugoslavia's influence was divided 50:50, the same percentage as in Hungary, and in Bulgaria the Soviet Union had 75% and West 25% of the influence. (Stavrianos, 2005: 781–783).

9 CPY delegates went to occupied Albania in 1941 and helped several Albanian communist groups to form the Communist Party of Albania on 8 November 1941, and their members soon launched an armed uprising. Cooperation between the people's liberation movements lasted until the end of the war in Albania and Yugoslavia (Petranović, Branko. *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988*. Vol. 3. Beograd: Nolit, 1988: 199).

10 Borba, *U Tirani izvršeno svečano potpisivanje ugovora o prijateljstvu i uzajamnoj pomoći između FNRJ i NR Albanije* (11 July 1946): 1.

11 For comparison, UNNRA provided less than \$7 million to Albania in the same time period. For more information see: Petrović, Ljubomir. "Kulturne veze Jugoslavije i Albanije 1946–1948", in: *Istorija 20. veka*, no. 2, 2002: 61–87.

Although Stalin halted the closer convergence of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Albania on their way to the formation of the Federation, these three countries continued to develop economic, cultural and political cooperation.

## 2. Negotiations on the Balkan Federation during 1947 and 1948

For Bulgaria, recognition of the new government by Yugoslavia was particularly significant, especially because Yugoslavia enjoyed the privilege of being a member country of the Antifascist Coalition and its People's Liberation Army had been officially recognised by the Allied antifascist coalition at the Teheran Conference in November 1943. On the other hand, Bulgaria had an inferior status as a country that had spent most of the war as an ally of the Axis powers. (Petranović, 1990: 126–127)<sup>12</sup> The new government of the Fatherland Front had great difficulty in gaining recognition by other countries. Of the major allies in World War II, only the government of the Soviet Union recognised it. That is why Yugoslavia's recognition of it would be to its advantage at the upcoming Paris Peace Conference, held from 29 July to 15 October 1946. The peace treaty with Bulgaria was signed in Paris on 10 February 1946 and was ratified on 27 August 1947.<sup>13</sup> It entered into force on 15 September of 1947, after being ratified by the United Kingdom, USA and USSR. After this move by the international community, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria ratified their Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. (Nešović, 1979: 139)<sup>14</sup>

The moment for Bulgaria to sign the peace treaty at the Paris Peace Conference was approaching and would thus make it a sovereign country with the right to negotiate agreements; at this moment the idea of the Balkan Federation again came up. Tito and Dimitrov met in Moscow on 5 June 1946, and agreed to begin negotiations on the Federation as soon as possible. (Pirjevec, 2012: 240–241) Unlike over a year before, Stalin this time encouraged their intentions, claiming that the two united countries in the Balkans had an important role. The three of them spoke again about these plans at the funeral of the Soviet politician, Mikhail Kalinin, on 7 June 1946. They agreed to reach an agreement on the Federation after Bulgaria was to sign a peace agreement in early 1947 (which entered into force on 15 September 1947). The

12 Sygkelos, Yannis. *Nationalism from the Left: The Bulgarian Communist Party during the Second World War and the Early Post-War Years*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, Balkan Studies Library, 2011: 149.

13 During the visit of the Bulgarian delegation headed by Dimitrov, in late July and early August 1947, most important gesture for Bulgaria was that the Yugoslav leadership gave up the rights of an allocated \$25 million that Bulgaria should pay Yugoslavia as a war indemnity. In this way, the Yugoslav leadership recognised the importance of Bulgaria's participation in the final operations for the liberation of Yugoslavia, emphasising the fact that Bulgaria, under the flag of the Homeland Front, was aligned with the Allies. (Nešović, 1979: 136–137; Petranović, 1988: 190).

14 Yugoslavia had already ratified the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with the USSR on 11 April 1945, with Poland on 18 March 1946, with Czechoslovakia on 9 May, with Albania on 10 July, with Hungary on 8 December and with Romania on 19 December 1947 (Dedijer, 1979: 70–72, 93–95; Petranović, 1988: 192)

drafting of the Bled Protocol on 1 August 1947 was one step closer to implementation of these plans; these were the drafts on future cultural and economic cooperation between the two countries. After that, Dimitrov insisted: "We will make the Federation better than the Russians' one, because we have a higher cultural level, we are more cultivated..." (Dedijer, 1984: 311; Pirjevec, 2012: 241) When Stalin heard from Dimitrov what had been discussed in Bled, he sent a telegram on 12 August to Tito and Dimitrov with a robust rebuke for not having informed the Soviet leadership about their plans. Stalin paid special attention to the fact that the agreement was set by Bulgaria's signing of the peace agreement in Paris and that gave the West reason to increase its military presence in Greece and Turkey. Regardless of Soviet criticism, Tito signed an agreement with Dimitrov in Evksinograd on 27 November of the same year, but still upheld the Soviet observations just to the agreement limited to 20 years. (Pirjevec, 2012: 241–242) Meanwhile, a controversial interview given by Dimitrov aroused criticism from Stalin. (Vukmanović, 1981: 295–297) While returning from a visit to Romania, Dimitrov spoke to Western reporters on the train on 17 January and made a statement, which neither Tito nor Stalin liked the sound of. The journalist asked Dimitrov, in the context of creating a Balkan Federation and a federation of entire areas of eastern and south-eastern Europe, whether other countries could also join it. Dimitrov, of the opinion that the Federation should be formed soon, replied:

*"The issue of the Federation is a premature question for us. It stands currently on the agenda and that is why this issue was not discussed at our conference. When the issue is ripe, and it will necessarily mature, then our nations of popular democracies – Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Greece – don't forget Greece! – will resolve it."*( , , ) Stalin knew that such a statement was to the advantage of the British and Americans and he was angry because none of them had asked the advice of the Soviet Union. First of all, the newspaper *Pravda* characterised his statement as "troublesome and reckless", and then in early February, Stalin summoned Tito and Dimitrov to Moscow. His plan was to once and for all clear up the situation about how their correspondence with the Soviet Union should really operate. (Pirjevec, 2012: 248)

Dimitrov accepted the invitation and arrived in Moscow on 9 February, while Tito, instead of going himself, sent a delegation consisting of Milovan Đilas, Edvard Kardelj and Vladimir Bakarić on 8 February. The meeting took place on 10 February. Stalin criticised the Bled Protocol, Dimitrov's interview, relations between Yugoslavia and Albania and the related events in Greece. He noted about Bled that the Yugoslav and Bulgarian governments had allowed foreign moves that had occurred without Soviet consent. Stalin directed all his criticism towards Dimitrov, but, according to Kardelj, this indirectly criticised the Yugoslav Communist Party and its leadership. Stalin knew that Tito could not be swayed by threats or blackmail (he enjoyed great support at home, and had been greeted with enthusiasm by the local population in recent visits to Czechoslovakia, Poland and Romania). Although Dimitrov was a world-wide famous revolutionary, he had been out of his country and the party too long, and did not enjoy so much support from the Bulgarian communist party



leadership. (Vukmanović, 1981: 298–299) As a guarantee that such situations would not occur without prior consultation, Stalin and placed Dimitrov and Kardelj before a *fait accompli*. They were instructed to sign international agreements with the Soviet Union on the basis of which their countries would give up having an independent foreign policy, and would be committed to their country's future in all "important international issues to consult with Moscow." (Pirjevec, 2012: 251) Stalin, in spite of everything, supported the Yugoslavia–Bulgaria customs union and the Federation, but only according to his model, not Yugoslavia's one. He sharply objected to Dimitrov's plan to ask Romania to join a customs alliance with Bulgaria, because he had other plans for Romania. Stalin envisioned only Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania being in the Federation. () According to some claims, "with such a federation Stalin would allow us to bring in the Trojan horse, and then remove Tito and our Central Committee", (Pirjevec, 2012: 251) i.e. for Stalin, with the help of "his people" in the Bulgarian government, through the Federation, it would be "overwhelmingly easier to subordinate Yugoslavia as the strongest factor in the region". (Dedijer, 1980: 462–463)

As for Albania, in the period of the second half of 1947, Albanian communists were pretty surprised, as expected, that their leadership had not even been informed about the founding of the Communist Information Bureau of the Communist Parties which took place in Szklarska Poręba on 23–28 September 1947. The Soviet leadership considered the Yugoslav Communist Party a designate of the Albanian Communist Party and did not want to violate that order. The Albanian leadership learned of the founding of the Cominform almost two months later, on 16 November 1947. (Životić, 2009: 110–111) Meanwhile, during the autumn of 1947, western European languages were removed from Albanian middle schools' curriculums and replaced with Serbo-Croatian and Russian. (Životić, 2009: 112) These are only a few examples of the gradual subjecting of Albania to the interests of Yugoslavia during 1947. The apparent suicide of Nako Spiru (Banac, 1990: 50)<sup>15</sup> in November 1947 and further development of the relations between Yugoslavia and Albania prompted Stalin to invite the CPY Central Committee Politburo member, Milovan Đilas, via Josip Broz Tito, to discuss issues related to Albania. Among a number of his concerns were questions about why Yugoslavia was only developing joint stock companies with Albania and not with the Soviet Union. The Soviets became aware that the unification of Yugoslavia and Albania would strengthen the international position of Yugoslavia and its influence in the Mediterranean. Moreover, the indigenous socialist revolution in Yugoslavia during World War II threatened to strengthen the Yugoslav leadership's role within a single socialist bloc. That is why the Soviet leadership soon began to rein in Yugoslav ambitions by all measures possible. (Životić, 2009: 113–114)

<sup>15</sup> Nako Spiru (1918–1947) was an Albanian politician and high-ranking official of the Communist Party of Albania. After 1945, he was one of the fiercest proponents of closer Albanian–Soviet ties and was the main opponent to Koçi Xoxe's (Albania's interior minister; b. 1911, d. 1949) politics of closer Albanian–Yugoslav relations.

### 3. Cominform Resolution: the end of the efforts to form the Federation

Although relations between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and Albania and Yugoslavia had some individual differences, such as the nature of the Yugoslav–Bulgarian federation, questions concerning the uniting of Pirin Macedonia with the People’s Republic of Macedonia, Albania and economic and political dependence on Yugoslavia, a complete cessation of these relations came about due to “external factors”, i.e. the conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. This happened as a result of a letter from the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) addressed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia on 27 March 1948. This culminated on 28 June 1948, when the hidden conflict between the two parties spilled out into the public arena with the publication of the Cominform’s “Resolution on the situation in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia”. One of the reasons why Stalin decided to form the Communist Information Bureau in 1947 was to put the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and Tito under greater scrutiny because of Tito’s reputation in the communist movement and an overly independent policy than was to Stalin’s liking. (Dragišić, 2007: 197; Dedijer, 1979: 145–160) However, developments at the international level have also had a decisive influence on the founding of the Cominform. The polarisation of international relations and the launch of the Marshall Plan for Europe were just some of the reasons. ( )

At a meeting on 19 February 1948 attended by Josip Broz Tito, Edvard Kardelj, Aleksandar Ranković, Blagoje Nešković, Ivan Gošnjak, Boris Kidrič, Franc Leskošek and Milovan Đilas, Tito was said to be “... against the federation with Bulgaria. He considers that the thing is still not mature among the Bulgarian leadership. He believes that even in our nation things are not yet mature, then there are economic reasons... economic difficulties”.<sup>16</sup> At the meeting of the expanded Politburo on 1 March 1948, Tito noted that Yugoslav–Soviet relations were not going anywhere, which was confirmed by the fact that the Soviets were trying to push Yugoslavia into economic dependence and make it enter into a federation with Bulgaria, which also envisaged a fusion of both country’s parties. According to Tito’s claims, this would lead to them having a Soviet “Trojan horse” in their camp and would strengthen the influence of the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, in the Balkans. ( , ) At the end of the meeting, it was decided that the discussions should be kept confidential, especially from the Soviet ambassador, Anatolij Lavrentiev. However, Yugoslav politician Sreten Žujović-Crni informed the ambassador, who promptly reported this to Stalin. In reaction to this and subsequent reports, Stalin launched a number of moves to put pressure on the Yugoslav leadership, to subject it to greater control. (Pirjevec, 2012: 254 - 255) Meanwhile, Koçi Xoxe, the Albanian interior minister and a proponent of closer Albanian–Yugoslav ties, undertook a purge of anti-Yugoslav-oriented members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Albania during its 8th plenary session, which lasted from 26 February to 8 March. Even Enver Hoxha himself was

<sup>16</sup> AJ, CK SKJ 3/31a, CC CPY meeting 19 February 1948.

forced to submit a self-criticism regarding his attitude towards Yugoslavia. (Banac, 1990: 54) The head of the Soviet Military Mission, General Barskov, informed General Koča Popović on 18 March that the Soviet government was drawing its instructors, because it was, he claimed, “surrounded by inhospitality”. (Dedijer, 1980: 472) Tito sent a letter to Stalin on the occasion of the move. Stalin and Molotov answered with a letter on 27 March, accusing the leading people in Yugoslavia of “slandering” the Soviet Union. (Dedijer, 1980: 474–475) This letter was not just addressed to the Yugoslav Communist Party, but copies were also sent to all the party members of the Cominform. ( )

At that time, the Soviet representatives began to bring answers from certain parties in the Cominform, which were not too different in tone and content from Stalin’s letter. By 19 April the Yugoslav Central Committee had still not received an answer from the Bulgarian side. On that day, a Bulgarian delegation was passing through Belgrade on its way to Prague, where the delegates were going to sign a treaty of friendship and mutual assistance between Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. Dimitrov was one of the delegation members. The Yugoslav Central Committee determined that Milovan Đilas should welcome Dimitrov at Belgrade railway station. The conversation between the two lasted only a few minutes, but Dimitrov said that he was aware of the letter from the All-Union Communist Party (ACP) (the Bolsheviks), and said: “Hold on tight! ... The most important thing is to be solid, and the rest will take care of itself”. Despite Dimitrov agreeing to stay in Belgrade a few days when he returned from Prague, the meeting never took place. (Dedijer, 1980: 254–255; Ibid: 490; Dragišić, 2007: 197–198) In the meantime, he received a letter from the BWP’s Central Committee (c), signed by Vulko Červenkov, in which the Bulgarian leadership expressed its solidarity with the ACP (b). (Dedijer, 1980: 490)

Finally it was decided that a Cominform meeting to discuss the case of the Yugoslav Communist Party should be held in June 1948. Tito received a notification on 19 May. At the session of the Central Committee held the next day, it was unanimously decided not to go to the meeting. (Ibid: 495–496) Dimitrov was the only top leader from East European countries who still maintained contact with the Yugoslav leadership. On 25 May, the Yugoslav Central Committee decided to hold a Party Congress on 21 July 1948, so that the membership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia could have the opportunity to make a statement about the conflict between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. (Ibid: 497) The Cominform officially invited the Yugoslav Central Committee to send representatives to the Bucharest meeting, but the invitation was turned down on 20 June. The Cominform session began on 26 June, but was not attended by the Polish leader, Władysław Gomułka, and the Bulgarian leader, Georgi Dimitrov. Moreover, on 17 June Dimitrov celebrated his birthday, and Tito sent him a congratulatory message. Dimitrov thanked him on 26 June, which was the day that the first session of the Cominform was being held. In the Cominform resolution which was published on 28 June 1948, it was noted that the citizens of Yugoslavia needed to force their government to submit to the Soviet Union, and if the government refused, the people would need to dismiss the government and set in place a new one that would be subject to the will of the Soviet Union. ( Ibid:

498) Stalin thought that Tito's Yugoslav leadership would collapse within two months, but this did not happen either then or later. His judgment was completely wrong on this, and he came to realise that the Yugoslav leadership could count on a strong army and police, loyal only to their leaders, not to Moscow. He had not been aware that the majority of the population supported Tito to resist Soviet influence (Pirjevec, 2012: 274)

From several examples in practice, one could see that Bulgaria, until the publication of the Cominform Resolution, had not specifically changed its attitude toward Yugoslavia. Such motives stemmed primarily from the efforts of both sides of the conflict not to act rashly, but to await the final outcome of the Yugoslav-Soviet dispute. In addition, the situation in the region was not too good either. The Greek civil war was still going on with no clear end in sight, while only a few days before the publication of the Resolution, the situation in Europe became even more tense with the Soviet blockade of Berlin (which lasted from 24 June 1948 to 12 May 1949) to prevent the Western democracies from having access to the occupied sector (West Berlin). The situation in the Middle East had also worsened after the proclamation of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948. Immediately afterwards, the surrounding countries (Egypt, Transjordan, Syria and Iraq) launched an attack against the new state (Israel won the war after 10 months of fighting). The situation in Europe and its neighbourhood was certainly not suitable for the unifying of the Soviet bloc.

Correspondence between Tito and Stalin about the “uncooperative environment” for the Soviets in Yugoslavia began on 27 March 1948, but in Bulgaria expressions of friendship towards Yugoslavia were still present. Thus, at the May Day celebrations in Sofia, there were portraits of Tito, Yugoslav slogans and Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations were celebrated. The day after the publication of the Cominform Resolution, the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a note in which it was stated that the resolution did not change the existing relations between the two countries. However, the actual position of the Bulgarian leadership was far from friendly. (Dragišić, 2007: 200) The very next day the Bulgarian newspaper, *Rabotničesko delo*, voiced criticism and levelled accusations against the Yugoslav Central Committee that they had abandoned “Marxism-Leninism” and the “dictatorship of the proletariat”, and had moved to a position of nationalism. Like the Soviets, the Bulgarians called for “reasonable forces” in Yugoslavia to return the country to the “right path”. Their formulas were similar. The management of the Yugoslav Communist Party was assessed as an “error” in the internal and external policies, but they emphasised that they believed that the “reasonable forces” in Yugoslavia would oppose the Yugoslav leadership's policy. (Dragišić, 2007: 201) On the other hand, the Albanian leadership was very disappointed with the fact that Yugoslavia did not have any intention to hand over Serbia's autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija (Banac, 1990: 203–206)<sup>17</sup> to Albania or to allow Albania to gain more political independence from Yugoslavia. Albania thus became the first socialist state that within a very short timespan rejected all its agreements with Yugoslavia. The Albanian leadership was

17 The majority of the population of Kosovo and Metohija was made up of ethnic Albanians. For more information about the situation in Kosovo and Metohija during the first years of socialist Yugoslavia

also the first one to conduct a purge of the Titoist fractions from within its ranks. (, :) For the first few months after the resolution, Georgi Dimitrov did not publicly express his position, although it led to attacks on the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Dimitrov made a public attack on the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party at the Fifth Congress of the BWP (c), held from 18 to 21 December 1948, in which he pointed out that the Yugoslav leadership, embodied in "Tito's nationalist group", had betrayed the "great teaching of Marxism-Leninism". Some disagreements within the leadership about Bulgaria's attitude towards the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, regardless of everything, did not question the loyalty of the Bulgarian government's policy of Moscow toward Yugoslavia. Although the opinions of some politicians could be heard in favour of the Yugoslav leadership, there was no one at the top of the BWP (c) who was willing to risk his position and openly defy the Cominform line. (Dragišić, 2007: 204–205) Bulgaria soon started a gradual cessation of economic and cultural cooperation with Yugoslavia. This campaign ran along the same lines as the practices that were carried out by the other East European countries led by the Soviet Union, in order to isolate Yugoslavia and to push them in a difficult position. As noted above, Albania instantly terminated all contracts and relations with Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav leadership's intention at the beginning was not to break off relations with the East European countries and the USSR; the Yugoslav side initiated several initiatives for cooperation after the Resolution. From the beginning of October 1948, Bulgaria's attitude, in terms of economic and cultural cooperation, was no longer kept a secret. After that, Yugoslav–Bulgarian relations definitely waned, but officially they were terminated by the breaking of the Bulgarian Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance on 1 October 1949. (Dedijer, 1979: 478–479) This also marked the end of the initiative for the Balkan Federation.

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# **Parliamentary Elections in Serbia 2016**

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## Parliamentary Elections in Serbia 2016

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These were the 11th parliamentary elections for representatives in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia since the beginning of the re-democratisation process in 1990. They were also the seventh parliamentary elections following the 5<sup>th</sup> of October changes in 2000 and the fourth parliamentary elections in that period that were held early. Elections for the people's representatives were held simultaneously in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, cities and municipalities.

Both the professional and politically knowledgeable public considered there to be no rational reasons for early parliamentary elections, as the government had been supported by more than 80% of MPs. Opinion polls showed that public confidence in the prime minister was quite high. The main partner in the government, the Socialist Party of Serbia, publicly opposed the idea of early elections. The President of the Republic of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolic, also stated that he thought early elections unnecessary. However, the Prime Minister, Aleksandar Vucic, made it clear that they were not the ones to decide whether the elections would be held early, claiming that the government could not operate with its policies and results constantly being challenged and that the statements by both the government and opposition must be evaluated at elections.

However, the actual reasons for early parliamentary elections were shaped by the following factors: fear of poor results in local and provincial elections and the conviction that the reforms imposed by the IMF would reduce public support for the government. The Serbian Progressive Party was formed as a sort of social movement. Different factions within the party often conflicted on the matter of the allocation of the leading positions on local boards. The party suffered from a deficit of candidates for public functions. The local boards of opposition parties still had their strongholds in the electorate. A combination of these unfavourable factors had the potential to challenge the local governments in many cities and municipalities. Poor election results at these levels of governance would increase the criticism and additionally weaken the government's position. Nevertheless, Vucic accurately assessed that, in these conditions, electoral success would only be partial without full support, which was not feasible from the prime minister's position.

In order to transfer the support to the local and provincial levels, Vucic had to create the conditions to call for early parliamentary elections. Hence, at the government's proposal, the President of the Republic of Serbia dissolved the Parliament on 4 March and called for early parliamentary elections on 24 April 2016.<sup>2</sup>

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2 Decision on the Call for Early Parliamentary Elections.

## 1. Political framework

Modernisation was proclaimed as a crucial goal of Vucic's cabinet in a speech he made on 27 April 2014, when the National Parliament elected the government. Three of the main priorities of his government were economic reform based on market principles, providing incentives for private-sector development (small and medium-sized enterprises) for the purpose of reducing unemployment rates and consolidation of the budget by reducing expenditure and increasing revenue. His manifesto contained a set of specific promises with precise deadlines for realisation: reducing public expenditure and salaries in the public sector by 10%, an aggressive fight against the grey economy, the resolution of disputes over problematic privatisations of SOEs, the privatisation of enterprises that were in the process of being restructured, a reduction of losses and increasing level of professionalism in public companies, increasing fiscal discipline, raising the age for retirement, etc.<sup>3</sup>

Kick-starting the economy was the central activity of the government. The budgetary deficit was significantly reduced in the period 2014–2015: from 6.6% to 3.7%. The budget was consolidated through savings in the area of expenditure – a reduction of pensions and salaries in the public sector, rigorous cuts of public expenditures on per diems, use of official vehicles, and revenue from donations and SOE incomes. The government continued to provide subsidies for enterprises that were in the process of restructuring. These enterprises were not privatised, but instead remained insolvent. Reform and rationalisation of the public administration (determination of the maximum number of employees, introducing payment grades and a reduction of bureaucracy) did not progress according to plan. Promises regarding professionalisation of public companies' management and prevention of employment of political parties' activists in the public sector were forgotten. The Fiscal Council warned that the savings made through the reduction of salaries and pensions had been lost due to the losses of public enterprises. The macroeconomic indicators for the period 2014–2016 demonstrated the ambivalence of the government's measures. Inflation was kept under control and at a low level. According to the official statistics, unemployment rates were slowly but consistently falling. In this period, the public debt was constantly increasing – from the 61.2% of GDP recorded in 2013 to 77% in 2015, while economic growth was estimated to be lower than 1% in 2015.<sup>4</sup> In the field of infrastructure, activities on the finalisation of road corridors were accelerated. However, the project “Belgrade on Water” (Serbian: *Beograd na vodi*) caused public outrage. The city authorities and the government made available a huge amount of space in the central area of the capital and, together with investors from the United Arab Emirates, launched the construction of residential and commercial buildings, envisioned to be the new business-tourism centre of the capital, Serbia and the region. At the end of its mandate, the government managed to privatise one of the largest companies, the “Smederevo” Steel Factory with an agreement that

3 Manifesto of the President of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, on 27 April 2014.

4 Fiscal Trends: Annual Report for 2015 and Analysis of Current Trends, Fiscal Council of Serbia.

saved the jobs of all its employees and increased production. However, the problems of the companies FAP from Priboj, RTB Bor, Azotara in Pancevo, etc. had not been resolved. The announced investments in the field of agriculture and IT sector were not realised. Construction of the “South Stream” gas pipeline was halted. The government’s policies were also strongly affected by the devastating floods in the spring of 2014 and a dry year in 2015. On the other hand, the government was not weakened by the demonstrations over education-sector reform and protests by lawyers due to the measures in the Law on Public Notaries.<sup>5</sup> The results of the fight against organised crime will be known after the verdicts of the first-instance courts are published this year. In general, the government’s economic policy was based on austerity measures and subsidies for foreign investments, without specific strategies for either the reindustrialisation or modernisation which were previously announced. Instead, in both cases the government was relying on the practices of the previous executive, the effects of which are not yet reflected in citizens’ standards of living.

The foreign policy of the government is based on good relations with neighbouring countries, balancing relations with Washington, Brussels and Moscow, the relaxation of relations with Prishtina, orientation towards the EU and balancing military neutrality and relations with NATO through the Partnership for Peace programme. Vucic was very agile in assuring neighbouring countries of his government’s determination to build mutual trust through cooperation. The trust-building process was not derailed by incidents such as attempts to lynch the prime minister during a commemoration ceremony in Srebrenica, provocations by the Albanian prime minister over a football match between the Serbian and Albanian national teams, the reluctance of both the government and opposition to cooperate, or a worsening of the position of Serbs and Croatia’s blockade of European roads, because all of these incidents were handled calmly by the government. The government continued to implement the Brussels Agreement. Serbia had fulfilled all of its obligations, but the authorities in Prishtina obstructed the formation of a Community of Serbian Municipalities, which was a key part of the Brussels negotiations. The government presented this situation as an argument for the withdrawal of state authorities from Kosovo and Metohija. The separatist authorities in Prishtina were rewarded with visa liberalisation within the EU and membership of both FIFA and UEFA, but Kosovo’s membership of UNSECO was prevented. Its presiding over the OSCE and organising of its General Assembly in the period of the Ukraine crisis was recognised as successful. Serbia continued to maintain relations with Moscow at a high level. Russia exercised its veto power in the UNSC in order to prevent adoption of the resolution on Srebrenica, which directly accused Serbia of genocide and which was supported by the United Kingdom. The US also demonstrated a positive attitude towards the government through high-level visits by the Vice-President, Joseph Biden, and conservative senators of the Albanian lobbyists and direct support for the EU integration policy.<sup>6</sup> Serbia increased its level of cooperation with NATO to such an extent that any further development of their relations would practically represent NATO integration.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the main

5 “Prosvetni radnici radikalizuju štrajk”, *Novosti*, “Kako je štrajk advokata prevazišao svoj povod”, *Vreme*

6 “Dan samo za Bajdena”, *Dan*.

7 “NATO u Srbiji dobio diplomatski imunitet”, *Blic RS*.

goal of the government – acceleration of EU negotiations – was realised within the planned timeframe: only two chapters were opened: Chapter 32 (Financial Control) and Chapter 35 (referring to Kosovo). Overall, the government's foreign policy improved Serbia's position both in the region and worldwide, and it also unravelled war-related stereotypes, which improved what had been a negative image of Serbia.

The public image of the Government was characterised by numerous affairs, gaffes by state officials, tensions in relations with regulatory bodies and intense verbal disputes with opposition political parties. At first, the SNS undertook measures to organise early provincial elections, which it failed to achieve despite sharp criticism from the provincial prime minister and Democratic Party leader, Bojan Pajtic. Media appearances by the prime minister, such as frequent press conferences, the dramatic tone of his speeches and the release of party statements on a daily basis, created an atmosphere of pressure and tension with the public. Pink TV and the tabloid "The Informer" became the principal transmitters of the messages of the government and the ruling party. Many of the opposition politicians, NGO activists and political analysts who were critical of the government, were part of the negative campaign by these media outlets at some point. Indications of self-censorship and cases of pressure on the media and journalists culminated in the termination of the famous political show "Impression of the Week". Affairs related to surveillance of the prime minister and the state president; the attack on the prime minister's brother by guards during the LGBT "Pride" parade; allegations of plagiarism in a doctoral thesis by Nebojsa Stefanovic, the vice-president of the SNS, Minister of the Police and the prime minister's closest associate; and accusations against Sinisa Mali, the Mayor of Belgrade, were not brought to an end.<sup>8</sup> It was also never clarified whether the crash of a military helicopter during a mission dedicated to saving an ill baby's life, in which seven people lost their lives, happened due to omissions of the minister of defence, who was later replaced due to sexist comments addressed to a B92 female journalist. Additional tensions were brought to the political arena through criticism of the project "Belgrade on Water" and a lack of transparency in the UAE's contracts, accusations of slow implementation of reforms and presentation of false indicators in the economic sector, etc. The release of Vojislav Seselj until the verdict on his case is published and acquittal by the Hague Tribunal were great incentives for the Serbian Progressive Party.

The political scene was dominated by the SNS, which resulted in a sharp growth in its membership.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the non-parliamentary Democratic Party of Serbia fought internal divisions and a leadership contest. In a nutshell, the opposition political parties were fragmented, incapable of acknowledging the mistakes that had put them in such a position and of revitalising their programmes, policies and human resources. The first positive effects of government policies, followed by painful reforms, media domination, a lack of strategy and opposition fragmentation were clear indicators of early parliamentary elections, together with the elections at the

8 "Kako do doktorata? Lako! Slučaj ministra Stefanovića", Pescanik, "Velike tajne Malog majstora. Ili kako je Siniša Mali ukrao doktorat", Pescanik.

9 "Svi bi u SNS!", Telegraf RS.

local and provincial levels. The winner of the elections was already known and the political actors were only arguing about the results, with the prime minister and his main coalition partner, Rasim Ljajic, claiming they would consider any result under 50% of the votes a failure.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Electoral System

The people's representatives in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia are elected through a proportional electoral system in a single-mandate constituency, with a 5% electoral threshold and closed lists, while allocation of the seats is based on the D'Hondt method. Candidates can be nominated by political parties, coalitions of political parties and groups of citizens, provided that the lists are supported by at least 10,000 signatures of voters. Political parties declaring themselves advocates for national minorities' interests in their Rules of Agreement and political programme have to comply with different legal conditions in order to run in elections: 3,000 supporting signatures of voters and no electoral threshold as a condition for participation in the allocation of seats in the Parliament. This electoral system has been applied since 2001 and has not undergone any significant changes over this period of time. The same model has been applied in elections at the local level since 2004. In addition to that, the electoral system has also been used in elections in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina since 2014, when the mixed electoral system – election of 60 MPs through a proportional electoral system and another 60 MPs through a majority electoral system – was abandoned. (Jovanović, 2015, p. 27 – 49)

## 3. Actors – political parties and coalitions

There were a record number of electoral lists at this election – 30. However, only 20 of them (one more than at the previous election) entered the political arena with a total of 3,270 candidates. Among the candidates, 38.19% were women, which was well above the legal stipulation. Eight electoral lists were submitted by political parties, while coalitions and groups of citizens each submitted six electoral lists. As many as eight lists ran in elections on behalf of national minorities, as political parties were able to fulfil the legal conditions for registration in this category. A curiosity of the elections were electoral lists that represented a Russian national minority, in spite of the fact that there were only 2,588 (0.05%) Russians in Serbia, according to the last population census.<sup>11</sup> It is obvious that certain outsiders were deliberately abusing the institute of positive discrimination of minorities in order to attain parliamentary status. The electoral process was additionally complicated

<sup>10</sup> "Vučić: Sve ispod 50 odsto na KiM je veliki neuspeh", B92. Ljajić: Sve ispod 50 odsto je poraz.

<sup>11</sup> Ethnic Structure of Serbia.

by various decisions by the Republic Electoral Commission (REC) and the Administrative Court on the matter of minority lists' candidacy for elections. Specifically, the REC refused to accept the following lists as minority lists: the Russian Party, Republican Party and the Serbo-Russian Movement. However, the Administrative Court abolished the REC's decision as a higher instance authority in proceedings concerning protection of voters' rights. One list was rejected on the grounds that only the surnames of the leaders were stated in the list, instead of their full names, while the Republican Party – granted minority party status by the Administrative Court – turned out to have forged its signatures of support, but there was no legal mechanism to prevent its participation in the elections. All of the above and the rejection of additional five electoral lists, was just an introduction to the conflicts that were to escalate on election day. In addition to that, a specific form of manipulation in the candidacy process was identified: infiltration by the SNS's "Trojan horses", the purpose of which was to confuse the voters of the SNS's opponents "U inat - složno za Srbiju" and "Dialogue – Youth with Attitude".

In spite of the proportional electoral system being based on the individual candidacy of political parties, coalitions came across as the most frequent form of electoral list in each election cycle. The Serbian Progressive Party led a coalition of its partners in the previous government – the Social Democratic Party of Serbia, Serbian Renewal Movement, New Serbia, Socialists' Movement and the Strength of Serbia Movement, with additional participation of the Party of United Pensioners of Serbia (PUPS) – the Socialist Party of Serbia's partner in three electoral cycles, the newly formed Serbian People's Party, the Autonomous DSS (a fraction from the Democrats led by Vojislav Kostunica) and Nenad Popovic – the former vice-president of the Democratic Party of Serbia, an associate of the former prime minister, Vojislav Kostunica, and an entrepreneur with strong ties with Russia. Bearing in mind that the above list also comprised candidates of the People's Peasant Party, Serbian Renewal Movement and an association of Coalitions of Refugees in Serbia, the SNS can easily be profiled as a catch-all party. The Socialist Party of Serbia maintained its coalition with Unique Serbia, but included the Greens of Serbia and the Communist Party – Joska Broz in their alliance, probably in order to overcome pensioners' party affiliation to the SNS and to enhance their leftist coalition image. Fractions of the Democratic Party tried to establish a coalition, but it was evident from the very beginning that a functional alliance of recently conflicted groups was very unlikely. Having failed to establish a large coalition, the Democrats gathered around two lists. The first was led by the Democratic Party and consisted of the following parties: the NOVA Party of the former stand-in prime minister – Zoran Zivkovic; Together for Serbia, led by former vice-president, Dusan Petrovic; and the regional parties: Together for Sumadija, led by the former Mayor of Kragujevac, Verko Stevanovic; the Movement for Krajina, led by the former president of the Municipality of Zaječar and the Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina. The second bloc of the Democrats – the Ceda-Boris-Canak coalition, was formed by the Social Democratic Party, led by Boris Tadic, the Liberal Democratic Party of Cedomir Jovanovic and the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, led by Nenad Canak. It also comprised the Greens and the National Movement. The non-parliamentary status of political

parties seemed to have cured their vanity. Hence, the Democratic Party of Serbia (Sanda Raskovic) and the Serbian Movement Dveri, strengthened by representatives of the Association of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, the Serbian Liberal Council and the Ravnogorski Movement, united in an attempt to pass the electoral threshold. Another coalition list consisted of the Third Serbia, the People's Alliance, the Serbian Left, the Movement for Reversal, the Social Democratic Union and the New Association of the Pensioners of Serbia – all of which were formed by former members of the DS. The Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina got coalition support from the Democratic Party of Hungarians in Vojvodina and the Party of Hungarian Unity. The long list of coalitions ends with the coalition gathered around the Serbo-Russian Movement, which consisted of former members of the radical DSS, Dveri of the Serbian Patriotic Front, the Eastern Alternative, the Serbian League, the Veterans' Movement, the Hungarian League and the "Patriots' Coalition", and the Serbian Renaissance coalition which united small patriotic associations led by Jovan Deretic, the main promoter of the pseudo-historical claim that the Serbs are the oldest nation in the world and that all languages in the world derive from the Serbian language.

Large coalitions make it hard to determine the exact number of political parties, associations and other organisations in the electoral lists – 58 in these elections. This also proves that the party system is far from being at a desirable level of institutionalisation. In addition to that, the Serbian political scene lacks the ideological and programme left/right classification of political parties. Hence, practice shows that coalitions in Serbia are often characterised by ideological or programme variety. Thus, it can be concluded that their desire to pass the electoral threshold is what drives them together, otherwise they would only be perceived as small political organisations which lack foundation and electoral support ("census coalitions"). The outcome of large electoral coalitions is fragmentation of the proportional electoral system which results in: fractionalisation of political parties, a disproportionate coalition potential of small parties and difficulties in the formation of a parliamentary majority and the functioning of the government.

## 4. Campaign

The formal presentation of the electoral lists to the public was short and consisted of general messages, with occasional negative campaigning. However, this was just a facade. Constant announcements of early parliamentary elections basically made political parties lead constant electoral campaigns. Bearing in mind these were the third elections in only four years, it is rather obvious that both political parties and voters were fatigued.

Foreign-policy topics were not as dominant as they were in the previous electoral campaign. Electoral messages were primarily oriented towards economic and

social issues, such as: reduction of unemployment rates, increasing standards of living, supporting entrepreneurship, rationalisation of the state administration and a reduction in expenditure. The ruling SNS praised the government's results and the prime minister's contribution to the stabilisation of public finances, compared to the "catastrophic performance" of previous governments, acknowledging citizens' support for austerity measures and promising more jobs, more foreign investment and the growth of salaries, pensions and standards. Their coalition partner, the SPS, was not as visible during the campaign. They were put in an unenviable position as, on one hand, they supported the measures of the government aimed at a reduction of labour legislation, salaries and pensions as a leftist party, but on the other hand, they caused the debt crisis as a coalition partner in the previous government that enabled the growth in pensions and salaries. The opposition criticised the government's austerity policy and low income from direct investment, and accused it of jeopardising the freedom of the press and of persecution of its political opponents. The only electoral list that shone during the electoral campaign was the list "It's Enough – Sasa Radulovic" (Serbian: *Dosta je bilo*). This list had a brief and specific electoral programme consisting of 20 focal points regarding the manner and subject of reforms.<sup>12</sup>

The media provided routine coverage of the electoral campaign, taking up the role of transmitters of political parties' messages, rather than analysing key issues in the campaign and organising political debates. The national TV station Pink, together with the tabloid "The Informer", explicitly supported the SNS. The rest of the media balanced their reports from political rallies between the political parties. Non-parliamentary parties such as the DSS, Dveri, SRS and the "It's Enough" list were among the least visible ones during the campaign. Each campaign was based on the role of the leader, leaving other candidates in the shadows. The general impression was that SNS was dominant in the media, that it had professional political marketing and an effective "door-to-door" campaign.

The preliminary reports indicate that political parties invested less money in political marketing: TV representation cost the political parties 25% less than in the elections held in 2014 – roughly €7 million, while billboard expenses were 50% lower than during the 2014 election.<sup>13</sup> The SNS invested 60% of the above amount, while the "It's Enough" list did not invest any money at all in TV marketing. It would be rather wrong to assume that political parties were implementing austerity measures in their own electoral campaigns. Legal stipulations regarding proportional allocation of the budget for electoral campaign among all political parties in Parliament put the SNS in the position of having extra money for campaigning.

<sup>12</sup> Elections 2016 – Electoral Programme in 20 points.

<sup>13</sup> Transparency Serbia (2016). Monitoring of the Financing of Electoral Campaign 2016.



## 5. Results

The main characteristics of these elections were: higher electoral turnout, victory by the SNS and relatively good results for the coalition gathered around the SPS, the political reanimation of the SRS, DSS and Dveri, the entry of two coalitions of Democrats into Parliament, the excellent results of the “It’s Enough” movement, good results by national minorities’ lists, a dramatic fall in disperse votes, accusations of ballot theft, the recounting of votes and reruns of elections at 15 polling stations.

**Table 1:** Number of votes and seats of electoral lists in elections for people’s representatives in the People’s Assembly of the Republic of Serbia

No.	Name of the electoral list	Number of votes	% of voters who voted	Number of seats won	% of seats won
1.	ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ - SRBIJA POBEĐUJE	1,823,147	48.25	131	52.40
2.	IVICA DAČIĆ - SPS, JS - Dragan Marković Palma	413,770	10.95	29	11.60
3.	Dr VOJISLAV ŠEŠELJ - SRPSKA RADIKALNA STRANKA	306,052	8.10	22	8.80
4.	DOSTA JE BILO - SAŠA RADULOVIĆ	227,626	6.02	16	6.40
5.	ZA PRAVEDNU SRBIJU - DEMOKRATSKA STRANKA (NOVA, DSHV, ZZS)	227,589	6.02	16	6.40
6.	DVERI - DSS- SANDA RAŠKOVIĆ IVIĆ - BOŠKO OBRADOVIĆ	190,530	5.04	13	5.20
7.	BORIS TADIĆ, ČEDOMIR JOVANOVIĆ - SAVEZ ZA BOLJU SRBIJU	189,564	5.02	13	5.20
8.	Savez vojvođanskih Mađara - ISTVAN PASTOR	56,620	1.50	4	1.60
9.	Borko Stefanović - Srbija za sve nas	35,710	0.94	0	0.00
10.	MUAMER ZUKORLIĆ - BOŠNJAČKA DEMOKRATSKA ZAJEDNICASANDŽAKA	32,526	0.86	2	0.80
11.	SDA Sandžaka - dr Sulejman Ugljanin	30,092	0.80	2	0.80

12.	Za slobodnu Srbiju - ZAVETNICI - Milica Đurđević	27,690	0.73	0	0.00
13.	ZELENA STRANKA	23,890	0.63	1	0.40
14.	U INAT - SLOŽNO ZA SRBIJU - NARODNI SAVEZ	17,528	0.46	0	0.00
15.	PARTIJA ZA DEMOKRATSKO DELOVANJE - ARDITA SINANI	16,262	0.43	1	0.40
16.	RUSKA STRANKA - SLOBODAN NIKOLIĆ	13,777	0.36	0	0.00
17.	GG ZA PREPOROD SRBIJE - PROF. DR SLOBODAN KOMAZEC	13,260	0.35	0	0.00
18.	SRPSKO RUSKI POKRET - SLOBODAN DIMITRIJEVIĆ	10,016	0.27	0	0.00
19.	DIJALOG - MLADI SA STAVOM - STANKO DEBELJAKOVIĆ	7,744	0.20	0	0.00
20.	Republikanska stranka - Nikola Sandulović	4,522	0.12	0	0.00
	Number of registered voters	6,739,441			
	Number of votes	3,778,923	56.07		
	Number of invalid votes	107,906	2.86		

**Source:** Results of the elections for people's representatives in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia held on 24 April and 4 May 2016

[http://rik.parlament.gov.rs/doc/izbori-2016/rezultati/1.%20Zbirni\\_rezultati.pdf](http://rik.parlament.gov.rs/doc/izbori-2016/rezultati/1.%20Zbirni_rezultati.pdf).

The growing trend of electoral abstention was reversed by a 3% higher turnout in these elections than in the elections held in 2014. This result is a positive indicator of democratic consolidation: it raises the level of the institutions' legitimacy and confirms that, despite their problems, citizens are not politically apathetic. Twelve electoral lists obtained parliamentary status. However, broad coalitions provided seats for 27 political parties.

The SNS was the overall winner of this electoral cycle. It increased its number of votes by 100,000 compared to the previous election, they have an absolute majority in Parliament – 63 MPs in Vojvodina, and they won the majority of the votes in 175 municipalities. Other political actors only managed to obtain majorities in nine other municipalities: Surdulica – SPS; Bačka Topola, Ada, Kanjiza and Senta – SVM; Sjenica and Tutin – SDA, Sandzak; Bujanovac and Presevo – Party for Democratic Action. Yet, in comparison with all the other electoral results, this win by the SNS tastes like a Pyrrhic victory. The coalition gathered around the SNS has 27 seats less than

in the previous convocation of Parliament. In addition to that, the SNS on its own had an absolute majority in the previous convocation, whereas now they have 98 MPs. It is a direct consequence of a lower number of disperse votes, that will have a particular influence over the functioning of the Parliament.

In two years, the SPS has lost 80,000 voters. However, their electorate was not significantly weakened by tensions and attacks by their coalition rival, the SNS, threats of expulsion from the government, accusations of not being loyal and not deserving a seat in the new government, or PUPS's transfer to the SNS. They remain the second largest political party with good coalition potential.

The DS has halted its dramatic fall and retained its parliamentary status. Media demonisation, past debts, divisions and fragmentation have not pushed the party into chaos. The DS won the internal fight with its fractions, the Social Democratic Party of Boris Tadic, the Liberal Democratic Party of Cedomir Jovanovic and the New Left of Borislav Stefanovic. The first two entered Parliament due to the support of Nenad Canak's League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina.

The "It's Enough – Restart" movement was the complete surprise of this electoral match, despite not having any infrastructure, being demonised in the media and winning only 2% in the previous elections. With their number of votes, they left the Democrats trailing and proved that citizens still had a sensibility for new political parties, people and ideas.

In spite of the fact that in the previous elections the nationalist political parties failed to win seats in Parliament and their disappearance was expected, the situation changed at these elections. The reason behind the SRS's reanimation was that the Hague Tribunal had kept their leader imprisoned for 12 years and released him pending the verdict. Another group of political parties resumed their activities on the grounds of pure mathematics. Dveri and DSS did not repeat their mistakes from previous elections, so now some of their parliamentary seats will be taken by EU sceptics, harsh opponents of NATO integration and major critics of the government's policy towards gradual recognition of Kosovo and Metohija's independence.

The national minority parties of Hungarians, Bosniaks and Albanians from the southern region of Serbia obtained expected results. Three of the Bosniak parties, led by Rasim Ljajic, Muamer Zukorlic and Sulejman Ugljanin, won seats in Parliament. It remains to be seen whether political competition, rivalry and animosities between these parties will affect the overall performance of both Parliament and the government.

The elections were challenged by the activities of certain political actors and the REC in the process of counting and publishing the election results. For instance, the DS claimed they had evidence of pressure being exerted on voters, vote rigging by the so-called "Bulgarian train" method and doubts regarding the regularity of election protocols from Kosovo and Metohija, prior to the publishing of the official results.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> DS: Prvi put raskrinkan „bugarski voz“.

After the polling stations were closed, election monitoring organisations CeSID, IPSOS and CRTA published different estimations of the lists that had passed the threshold. The following lists struggled to pass the threshold: Dveri DSS, “It’s Enough – Restart” and Tadic and Jovanovic’s Association for a Better Future. Based on 77% of the counted votes, Vucic stated in a press conference that three of the above lists were due to pass the threshold.<sup>15</sup> The REC did not take part in the preliminary results publishing contest of the agencies and electoral blocs, due to their obligation to verify each electoral protocol prior to publishing the results. The leaders of the lists who were uncertain of passing the threshold rushed to declare ballot theft and during the night broke into the premises of the REC.<sup>16</sup> Tensions arose additionally after the Democrats gave their support to these lists, by requesting that they should be allowed to examine electoral materials and by organising demonstrations. On the other hand, the SNS also had several complaints about the regularity of the elections at certain polling stations. However, the joint activities provided room for speculation about the potential unification of opposition political parties.<sup>17</sup> The preliminary results clearly showed that Dveri DSS had failed to pass the threshold by a single vote. Elections were rerun at 15 polling stations, with the political rivals of the DS supporting this and calling for citizens to vote for Dveri DSS. As was the case with the presidential elections when the SNS accused the Democrats of stealing 500,000 votes, the allegations of ballot theft were rejected immediately when the election results were published, according to which Dveri DSS won mandates in the parliament. However, these disputes were not entirely put aside and the SNS announced it would ask for a special commission to determine the facts related to allegations of theft. International election observing missions of the OSCE and Council of Europe found that the elections had been held in accordance with democratic standards, but concluded that “the unfair advantage of the ruling party and the lack of distinction between state and party activities endangered the equality of opportunities for electoral competition by all political subjects”. The questioning of the election results is only a confirmation of the need for fundamental reform and professionalisation of the electoral administration,

with political parties participating in the process of staging the elections as observers only.

## 6. Political consequences – formation of the government

The political consequences of the early parliamentary elections will only be visible in the policies of the new government. However, the election results already point to four long-term consequences for the political arena in Serbia.

<sup>15</sup> Election day – Aleksandar Vucic’s speech from SNS headquarters.

<sup>16</sup> “Nezadovoljna opzicija u RIK-u”.

<sup>17</sup> “Protest ispred RIK-a: Ko ruši izbornu volju, ruši zemlju”.

The first of those consequences is the variety of the political parties within the Parliament. The profiles of the political parties in the Parliament are much more diverse now than they were in the previous convocation of the Parliament. In particular, parliamentary status has been gained by parties that are eurosceptic, opposed to any form of cooperation with NATO, that advocate for building stronger ties with Russia, the SNS's opposition political parties, etc. However, despite being numerous, these political parties are not a unified opposition force. Parliament will be a place of harsh confrontations on crucial issues, priorities and alternatives. The public will witness criticism of the government more frequently and loudly. Compared to the previous term, this time the ruling majority will have to invest a lot of energy and skill in the debates on their proposals, as they are likely to be carefully observed and challenged by the public. "Unfounded" criticism of the government's performance by the opposition was one of the key arguments for early parliamentary elections. The election has not released the government from such criticism, and it will instead be facing even harsher criticism from the opposition in the new composition of Parliament. Time will show whether this will consolidate trust in the government or raise the opposition parties' ratings.

The second consequence refers to the ratio of government and opposition forces in the Parliament. Namely, the coalition gathered around the SNS has won a significantly larger number of votes compared to the previous elections, but has not won a large number of seats. In the previous convocation of the Parliament, the SNS had 158 MPs, with its caucus alone comprising 135 MPs – an absolute majority. With the coalition gathered around the SPS, the government was then supported by more than four out of five MPs. However, in the new convocation of the Parliament, the SNS will have a significantly weaker majority – 131 MPs together with its coalition partners, and 95 MPs in its caucus. Bearing in mind the challenges that this government will be facing, such as agricultural reform, EU integration, social policies, regional and international matters, the above mentioned majority is not a solid foundation for the implementation of ambitious policies that are already expected to be challenged by other actors. Thus, the number of seats won gives the SNS's triumph features of a Pyrrhic victory.

The absolute control of the SNS and its coalition partners in Vojvodina and almost every other city or municipality should be regarded not only as a homogenisation of the policies at all levels of the vertical organisation of governance, but also as strong political support for the central authorities. Despite gaining an absolute majority in the Parliament of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the SNS has made a coalition arrangement with the SPS and Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina – the strongest political party of the Hungarian minority, which proves its commitment to providing the largest possible support for its policies. The latter is especially visible at the local level where the SNS governs through diverse coalition arrangements that include even the LDP, SRS, DS and other political opponents with whom they had been reluctant to cooperate. Of course, the tradition of switching political parties continued: in the period from 2012 to 2016, 100 of the 343 MPs in the five municipalities of Vojvodina changed their party affiliation, usually for the purpose

of joining the SNS or other ruling coalition members. (Pavićević, 2016) Hence, the reconfiguration of the party system is based on personal interests, rather than ideology, programme or political principles.

Despite the clear victory by the SNS, a government has not yet been formed two months after the elections. The executive branch is operating on a technical level only, which is the fourth consequence of this electoral cycle. The leader of the SNS, Aleksandar Vucic, announced the formation of the government immediately after his party's assembly, on 28 May. He has on multiple occasions avoided delivering any such speech to MPs since he was given the mandate to form the government. First he said that the government ought to be formed prior to arrival of the Chinese president and that he was only lacking solutions for two ministries.<sup>18</sup> It was not long before this deadline was forgotten, so the SNS leader explained that the formation of the government was a serious matter, not one of wishful thinking, and that it was highly unlikely that he would have it finished prior to the Chinese president's official visit. According to him, the government was to be expected "within the first third of the legal deadline" for the establishment of a government.<sup>19</sup> One month later, he said "we will have the government as soon as we get it", in response to a comment that the even the United Kingdom managed to form a post-Brexit government.<sup>20</sup> The delay to the formation of the government was subject to numerous speculations, bearing in mind the following circumstances: the unexpected visit of the former prime minister to Moscow for a conversation with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin; the sudden delay to a visit to the US and EU; accusations from tabloids close to the former PM that foreign embassies had supported protests against the illegal destruction of buildings within the project "Belgrade on Water" and were trying to destabilise Serbia through the Ukrainian scenario, etc. People had different perceptions of the reasons behind the prolongation of the government's formation: bargaining with potential coalition partners; the pending Brexit referendum results; issues related to EU negotiations and the opening of Chapters 23 and 24, as well as the privatisation of the steel factory through a Chinese company; balancing relations with Washington and Moscow; low personnel potential for a new composition of the government; the former PM's ability to respond to both party requests and the coalition partners' appetites; etc. There is truth to each of these speculations and the future PM must solve this puzzle by the beginning of September. Ministers and coalition partners have never been as mysterious as they are now. Yet certain facts provide insight into the future composition of the government. Fully aware of the possibilities for different outcomes, it is our opinion that the government will be formed by a coalition of political parties. Apart from the SVM, Vucic's government will be supported by the SPS, as it is now needed more than in previous elections. The election of Muamer Zukorlic as the president of the Parliamentary Board for Education indicates that the Bosniak Democratic Community of Sandzak will also support the new government. Public statements by the LDP's leader, Cedomir Jovanovic, explicitly demonstrate its willingness to join the government if it is invited to

18 FORMIRANJE VLADE - Nikolić ponudi mandat Vučiću.

19 Zašto Vučić pomera rok za formiranje vlade, Politika, 14 July 2016.

20 Vučić: Nisam sa Dačićem razgovarao o vladi, Politika, 14 July 2016.

do so. These political parties do not necessarily need to have ministerial positions, but the future PM will try to extend the reach of the parliamentary majority as much as possible. That being said, it would not come as a surprise if more political parties endorse the government. Bearing in mind Vucic's "Scheherazade" approach (public appearances on a daily basis for the purpose of presenting new stories, ideas, information or projects, and maintaining an intense public atmosphere), it can be concluded with some certainty that the government will be established within the constitutional deadline – by the end of August 2016. Taking into consideration that the PM's manifesto consisted of more than 200 pages, we are probably looking at a detailed plan of the government's activities, a stormy debate in Parliament and a dynamic political arena, in expectation of the regular presidential elections next year.

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