

Political parties in Serbia's regions

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Despite the high centralisation of the State, Serbia has developed a vivid political scene in its regions, including a wealth of political parties, namely in the three ethnically heterogeneous regions Vojvodina, Sandžak, and Preševo valley. While previous work on the Serbian political landscape has mainly concentrated on the national political landscape of Serbia (Komšić 2003; Goati 2004, 2006; Lutovac 2005; Bieber 2003, etc.), regional parties have often been reduced to short paragraphs or footnotes, possibly because they appear to be not very crucial players on the national political level. Whereas the study of regionalism and regional party systems in many European countries has flourished in recent years (e.g. Heller 2002; Ishiyama 2002; De Winter/Türsan 1998, etc.), there is no such work known to the author on the Serbian case. Nevertheless, the study of regional parties in Serbia appears important because of two aspects. First, it might give new suggestions for research on territorial differences in party systems, such as the study of the importance of territorial ethnic divisions for party formation and electoral behaviour. Secondly, regional parties play an important part in Serbian political life, and should for this reason be looked at more closely. The most important ethno-regional and regional parties in Serbia exist in the Vojvodina region, followed by the Sandžak region, and in the Preševo valley.

Since the emergence of regional parties is to a large extent (but not exclusively) related to the ethnic structure of the country, and to territorially concentrated ethnic groups, this chapter offers at the same time a view on ethnically-motivated party formation and

electoral behaviour in Serbia. (For a view of other, not ethnicity- or region-related aspects, I refer to the chapter on Serbian parties in this book). In this chapter, I first discuss the political institutions and the social conflicts that are relevant for the creation of regional and ethno-regional parties. Building on this institutional and socio-economic framework, I discuss how territorial differences in the Serbian party system have developed since 1992, before having a closer look at regional parties, namely investigating the parties which play a role in the post-authoritarian period, which started in Serbia in 2000.

The institutional and socio-economic framework

Recently, two major contributions have proposed theoretical perspectives for the study of regional differences in party systems (Chhibber/Kollman 2004; Caramani 2004). Both look at *party nationalisation*, which is defined as the homogeneity of the party system and party strength across the territory. Strong regional and local parties and political organisations are understood as the contrary of a nationalised party system. In this section, the main arguments of these schools are reviewed, and their relevance is discussed for the Serbian case. This will help us come up with theoretically-based expectations about the occurrence and relevance of regional parties in Serbia.

The major school in this field contends that party nationalisation is a consequence of government institutions that incite the formation of a national party system. Chhibber and Kollman (2004: 222) relate party nationalisation mainly to the degree of centralisation of the government. In their view, when the main competencies lie with the

central government, then national political issues will dominate elections: “Voters are more likely to support national political parties as the national government becomes more important in their lives”, so that “local parties are abandoned altogether and disappear”. On the other hand, decentralised political structures and most importantly substantial policy competences at lower levels of government, help to nurture local and regional parties that can make a difference to their voters on the level of local or regional government.

In contrast to this school, Caramani (2004) argues instead for a cleavage-based view of party nationalisation. In this approach, a party system becomes nationalised when the main social and economic divides become national in their character, thus overriding (almost) all territorial unities. This is typically the case for economic cleavage, which – among other things – explains the development of highly nationalised party systems in many West European party systems in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Territorially-based conflicts, however, would explain why a party system might not become nationalised, and why regional parties emerge.

Aside from these views, electoral systems have been discussed as an institutional feature that can shape the format of a party system, and, among other things, contribute to the nationalisation of party systems, or in contrast to the emergence of regional parties (Cox 1999; Van Cott 2003; Bochslers 2006).

With its high centralisation, the Serbian institutional framework is rather unfavourable to the creation and success of regional parties. Like most post-communist countries in

Europe, Serbia has inherited a rather centralised administrative structure. The sub-national level of administration relies on two levels, and on the special status of the Vojvodina region. On the one hand, Serbia consists of 144 rather large municipalities, with their own elected municipal assemblies and executive bodies. On the other hand, these municipalities are aggregated in 24 districts that do not have any important tasks, or any elected institutions. The capital city Belgrade is its own 25th district, with a city parliament and a mayor, and consists of 16 city municipalities.¹ The Northern Serbian province of Vojvodina was accorded broad autonomy under the Yugoslav constitution of 1974, and had almost the same competencies as Republics. This autonomy was – as in the case of Kosovo – revoked in 1989, and less wide-ranging autonomy statutes have been introduced only twelve years later. Vojvodina has two million inhabitants (27 per cent of the Serbian population), and its own directly elected parliamentary assembly and executive body.

After an “omnibus law” that moved some of the competences back to the Vojvodina region, and a revision of the Law on Local Self-Governance in 2001-2, the policy competencies and financial situation of the Serbian municipalities and Vojvodina have improved, but they still lack the funds to implement their own policies. The degree of financial decentralisation is estimated at 27 per cent: the Vojvodina region managed about 4.7 per cent of the overall budget, and the municipal level about 22.3 per cent, while the central government administers the remaining 73.0 per cent (in 2002/3, numbers taken from Marcou 2005: 41).

¹ All the population statistics and financial statistics refer to Serbian territory without Kosovo, which has not been administered by Serbia since 1999. All population numbers are taken from the 2002 census.

Apart from municipalities and the Vojvodina regions, the National Minority Councils offer a further political space where (ethno-)regional parties can get active. The Hungarian minority was the first to constitute such a body, and by 2006, fourteen ethnic minorities – all ethnic minorities in Serbia with a substantial number of members, and a few extremely small minorities – had created such a body, except for the Albanian minority (Bašić/Crnjanski 2006: 90-4), but the competencies of the Minority Councils remain unclear, and their funds limited. Because these councils are neither territorially based, nor markedly dominated by political parties, they are outside the focus of this article.

Following Chhibber's and Kollman's view, the low level of decentralisation in Serbia should give only weak incentives for the creation of strong regional parties. But even if there is a correlation in many countries between decentralisation and regionalisation of the party system (Harbers 2008), this view is not uncontested: the causality may in fact be inverted. Decentralisation does not incite regional parties; instead, regional parties demand decentralisation (Caramani 2004). In particular, the processes of decentralisation in Central and Eastern Europe support this inverted causality (Bochsler 2006).

In this view, regional parties tend to emerge more along territorially-based social and economic differences (Caramani 2004) than along boundaries of sub-national territorial units. This second approach borrows elements of the cleavage approach by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), which argues that a party system is the product of the underlying structure of social conflicts.

Serbia offers a number of differences that might form the basis for politicised social cleavages with a territorial dimension. On one hand, the Serbian regions bear a diverse cultural and historical heritage and economic power. While the main parts of the country were under Ottoman rule before becoming independent, Vojvodina was part of the Kingdom of Hungary until the 16th century, and then – after two centuries under Ottoman rule – was part of the Habsburg empire from the early 18th century until World War I. The difference between Austro-Hungarian and Turkish influences is still visible today in local identities, in cultural aspects, and local dialects. Economically, the Vojvodina region (after the capital Belgrade) is still ahead of Central and Southern Serbia. And finally, the Austro-Hungarian experience contributed to shaping the ethnic structure of Vojvodina: It is ethnically much richer than the rather homogeneous central parts of Serbia,² and a number of ethnic groups that lived in the Austro-Hungarian empire now live in Vojvodina: first of all the Hungarian minority, followed by the Slovaks (see below for details). Ethnic engineering by Slobodan Milošević, who resettled ethnic Serbian refugees from Bosnia in Vojvodina, and the flight of many members of ethnic minorities during this period, contributed to a change in the ethnic structure of Vojvodina, and allegedly contributed to ethnic tensions in the region (Kerenji 2005: 363). Finally, several smaller regions in Southern Serbia are distinguished by their ethnic structure: The Preševo valley, at the border between Macedonia and Kosovo in Southern Serbia, is predominantly populated by ethnic Albanians. The Sandžak region, located partly in Serbia, partly in Montenegro, and

² When referring to central parts of Serbia here, I employ a geographical and not a political definition. The unit which is politically defined as “Central Serbia” encompasses ethnically heterogeneous regions in Serbia’s South.

connecting Bosnia and Kosovo, is home to the Bosniak minority, while ethnic Bulgarians constitute the local majority in the municipality Bosilegrad and the single largest community in the town Dimitrovgrad, both in the South-East at the Bulgarian border (see OSCE 2008). Both of these historic-cultural divides, and the partly territorially-based ethnic divides, thus provide a basis for the emergence of regional differences in the party system.

Furthermore, we would expect that due to the high degree of centralisation, and the importance of territorial divides, political pressure might be created for an enhancement of regional and local self-government. In that case the importance of strong autonomous institutions for the ethnic minorities becomes even more relevant, because in Serbia the state still plays a role in many spheres which are relevant for the minorities. For instance, the Serbian state (on all its levels) is (still) highly involved in public information: a slight majority of media outlets in minority languages are state-controlled, mostly funded by municipalities or the autonomous minority councils (Fond za otvoreno društvo 2007). Due to the importance of territorial divisions, and reluctant decentralisation in Serbia, we might ask whether the link between decentralisation and regional parties works as it does in other countries of the region, in the opposite manner to that suggested by Chhibber and Kollman. It is not necessarily the level of decentralisation that shapes the party system, but, on the contrary, territorial social divides may provide the basis for mobilisation of those regional parties calling for decentralisation.

A third element worth mentioning that might affect the way regional political differences translate into the territorial structure of the party system, is the national electoral system. In the Serbian case, the electoral reform of 2000 appears to have a peculiar effect. The district-based system was abolished, and a new single countrywide electoral district was introduced; however, it's not the *size* of this electoral district that directly affects the chances of regional parties.⁴ Rather, the change in the district structure also changed the effect of the legal threshold on the formation of regional parties. Already in the elections in the 1990s a legal threshold of 5 per cent was applied, on the basis of the share of the vote a party wins in the electoral district. With the electoral reform of 2000, and the introduction of the single nationwide electoral district, the 5 per cent threshold was applied at the national level. While it is easy for a regional party to pass the 5 per cent threshold in a *regional* district, 5 per cent of the votes *on the national level* are very difficult to reach. As a consequence, after 2000 regional parties no longer had a chance of being represented in parliament on their own, and instead joined electoral alliances. Only since the 2007 elections has the threshold been lifted for parties of ethnic minorities – but the law fails to define what such an ethnic minority party is (OSCE 2007).

Finally, the political parties in Serbia are heavily centralised. Internal party democracy and local autonomy are not very developed (Goati 2004: 110-1, 127-9, 133), and the electoral system provides closed national lists so that the voters do not have the chance to favour candidates from their own region. Even if all the major national parties except

⁴ With the same votes as a regional party gets in district-based elections, a party can gain approximately the same amount of seats in a nationwide constituency, and there is little reason why a regional party should gain or lose a substantial numbers of votes if small electoral districts are replaced by a single countrywide one.

the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) have their own Vojvodina organisation,⁵ internal party autonomy is rather limited. The party leadership can decide who will occupy over two thirds of the mandates in their parliamentary group ex post, irrespective of their order on the electoral list.⁶ This is aggravated because of the parliamentary practise that mandates are not free; rather, most parties demand undated letters of resignation from every MP (Orlović 2006: 110), so that the party leadership can put elected MPs under pressure. In a system with such centralised power, it is difficult for local branches to follow their own policies, and parties can hardly credibly differentiate their program according to regional differences in voter preferences. We might expect that as a consequence of the high degree of centralisation of the national parties, specific regional interests can only be expressed by specific regional parties, and not by the regional branches of national parties. Since party and electoral campaign financing is mostly concentrated on parties which are competing in national elections, local and regional parties have only a small state-funded income (Milosavljević 2005).⁷

Territorial heterogeneity in national elections

Before looking at the individual cases of regional parties, I will describe the territorial heterogeneity of the party *system* of Serbia. Measures of heterogeneity allow us to quantify the differences and similarities of party strength across the territory, and to compare it with other cases. In the early 1990s, there were still common Yugoslav

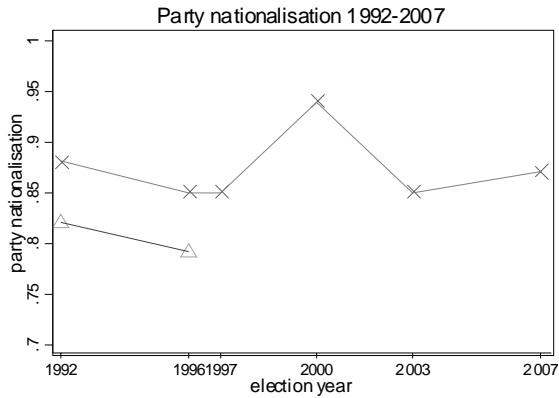
⁵ Many thanks to Vladimir Mihić for information on this aspect.

⁶ Electoral law (Zakon o izboru narodnih poslanika), art. 84. Available from <http://www.cesid.org/zakoni/sr/poslanici.jsp> (last accessed 6 April 2008).

⁷ Electoral campaign financing is fixed as a percentage (0.05 per cent at the local and regional level) of the budget of the relevant government authority, and due to the small budgets of local and regional governments, the state contributions for parties in local and regional elections are not very substantial.

elections to the Federal Assembly of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY, including Serbia and Montenegro at time). This allows a calculation of heterogeneity on the party system of FRY as a whole, as opposed to the heterogeneity of the Serbian party system. I employ the standardised party nationalisation score (Bochsler 2008), and look at the electoral results of the national parliament. Since political parties compete either in Serbia or in Montenegro, values for whole FRY reveal much stronger territorial differences than values only for Serbia (without Montenegro). In the case of perfect homogeneity across the territory, the employed measure would indicate a value of 1. This maximum is hardly ever reached, but the 2000 elections in Serbia, with a score of 0.94, came close to a very high level of party nationalisation (see table 9.1). Otherwise, the party nationalisation score was around 0.85 to 0.87. This is a value that typically emerges in countries with few territorial differences, such as Bulgaria, Slovenia, or Poland. It is higher than in countries with a general territorial split in the party system – such as it was the case for FRY, where the Montenegrin party system was fully different from the Serbian one, reflected through lower levels of nationalisation on the FRY party system about 0.79-0.82.

Table 9.1: Development of party system nationalisation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and in Serbia. (From: Bochsler 2008).



	1992	1996	1997	2000	2003	2007
FR Yugoslavia	0.82	0.79				
Serbia	0.88	0.85	0.85	0.94	0.85	0.87
<i>X Serbia; Δ FRY</i>						

The development of party nationalisation shall be discussed, and linked to aspects of party competition and of the electoral system. The main aspects that explain variance in party system nationalisation across the years are the legal electoral threshold, and electoral coalitions.

The impact of the legal threshold

The first aspect to discuss is the legal electoral threshold of 5 per cent. It was already enacted in the 1990s, but applied to electoral districts. This allowed Hungarians, Bosniaks, and Albanians to pass the threshold in the districts where they were concentrated. However, only the Hungarian minority parties had a constant representation in the Serbian parliament. In 1993 an alliance of two Albanian minority parties (Party of Democratic Action and Democratic Party of Albanians) won two mandates, and in 1997 one mandate was won by the Democratic Coalition Preševo-Bujanovac. Also, after discontinuing their electoral boycott in 1997, Bosniak parties

allied as “*Lista za Sandžak*” won three parliamentary mandates. The shifting of the legal threshold in 2000 from the local to the national level excluded all these (ethno-)regional parties from running independently in elections. This has contributed to an increase in party nationalisation this year. However, this does not necessarily mean that the regional parties have disappeared. As shall be shown later in detail, the introduction of a national legal threshold hinders regional parties from competing on their own in national elections, but they can still form electoral alliances, and remain represented in local and regional institutions. The consequences of the national legal threshold were partly reversed in 2007, when the threshold was lifted for parties of ethnic minorities, which explains why many ethno-regional parties run separately and that the degree of nationalisation has dropped.

The formation of tan opposition umbrella coalition in 2000

The second reason, besides the electoral system, that explains the change in party nationalisation is the formation of a broad umbrella coalition in the 2000 elections. The elections in that year were exceptional in their character, similar to the democratising elections in almost all post-communist countries in Europe. Almost all the democratically-oriented opposition parties ran jointly within a broad umbrella coalition called Democratic Opposition of Serbia (*Demokratska opozicija Srbije*, DOS). This coalition included many regional parties, namely the Hungarian minority party SVM, the Bosniak minority SDP, and the regional Vojvodina parties LSV, RV and KV (Goati 2006: 84) (see next section). Since the conflict between the old regime and the democratic reformers is not territorially based, the umbrella coalition gathered a very homogeneous vote throughout the territory. After democracy elections, such umbrella

coalitions everywhere in the region have quickly split up. Serbia is no exception to this rule, and thus party nationalisation has dropped again.

Coalition of regional parties

A very different type of coalition was formed in the subsequent elections in 2003, explaining a drop in party system nationalisation. In this election, ethnic minority and regional parties (namely the Vojvodina party LSV and the Šumadija party «*Liga za Šumadiju*», see below) attempted to pass the electoral threshold jointly, forming a broad coalition under the label Together for Tolerance (*Zajedno za Toleranciju, ZZT*). Although they failed to reach the necessary 5 per cent of the vote, their participation in elections has led to heterogeneity in the support level across Serbia: the party nationalisation degree of ZZT was about 0.45 (and has further negatively affected the party nationalisation degree of parties that are in electoral competition with ethnic and regional parties, which accordingly have lost votes in the regions where ZZT was strong). The exclusion of ZZT by means of the 5 per cent threshold becomes very substantial when we look at the numbers of *wasted votes* (votes cast for parties that fail to gain representation) by municipality. The national legal threshold has led to a fairly unequal representation of voters across the territory in parliament. In 13 municipalities with strong Hungarian or Bosniak minorities, the national legal threshold has – mainly due to the ZZT failure (and to a lesser extent due to the lack of success by other regional or small parties) – excluded from between 30 per cent to 70 per cent of the voters from being represented in parliament. In other municipalities, where the ZZT was weaker (below 10 per cent), the rate of wasted votes was only about 12 per cent. The failure of

the ZZT may have contributed to the exemption of ethnic minority parties from the threshold requirement after the 2003 elections (Bašić/Crnjanski 2006: 58).

(De)centralisation policies of parties in the national assembly

The theoretically relevant question of the relationship between the nationalisation of the party system and decentralisation makes it worthwhile to devote some attention to party policies regarding decentralisation.⁸ This question – namely with regards to the autonomy of the Vojvodina region – separates the Serbian parties. After the victory of the Democratic Opposition in 2000, the main parties of the “Democratic” bloc, the Democratic Party (*Demokratska stranka*, DS) and the Democratic Party of Serbia (*Demokratska stranka Srbije*, DSS), shifted their position regarding the autonomy of Vojvodina in 2000 and 2001. In the 1990s both parties were in favour of a limited autonomy, but later the DS approved territorial autonomy for Vojvodina, with a full institutional system, but without specifying the policy competences that should be decentralised. In 2001 the DSS introduced a regionalist concept that did not explicitly mention Vojvodina, and the party position remained partly ambiguous; it was afraid of any elements that might be seen as limited statehood for autonomous regions. The reformist G17+ party expressed support for an expansion of the autonomous status of Vojvodina. However, this positioning was de facto reversed in 2006, when all three parties supported the new Serbian constitution establishing a more restrictive centralisation of the Serbian state, mainly as a concession to the nationalist parties (Crisis Group 2006: 4). The parties related to the Milošević regime: namely the Socialist (*Socijalistička partija Srbije*, SPS) and the Radical Party (*Srpska radikalna stranka*,

⁸ Information on this aspect is taken from Komšić (2003: 83-8), Goati (2004: 42, 45-6, 52, 2006: 228-31), and International Crisis Group (2006).

SRS), reject any autonomy, and favour a unitary state. Claims for territorial autonomy, particularly if they come from multi-ethnic areas, are often interpreted as the first steps towards separatism, both by the nationalist parties and the media.

The lack of a particularly strong advocate for regional autonomies among the national parties in Serbia creates an opportunity for regional and ethnic minority parties to campaign on cultural and socio-economic differences, and to campaign on these issues by pressuring for increased decentralisation. Due to the change in the electoral system, no such party could gain any mandates in the national parliament on its own in the 2000 and 2003 elections, but nevertheless they could retain a certain relevance in the Serbian party system. On the one hand, the Serbian electoral system allows them to join electoral alliances, so that a few members of regional parties became members of the national parliament on the lists of mainstream parties, and become integrated in the caucus of the list on which they became elected. On the other hand, regional and ethnic parties have retained power in the regional and local representative bodies, as will be shown in the next section.

Regional parties in Serbia

While regional parties have been only marginally represented in the Serbian national assembly, they have clearly shaped the political landscape in the regional and local institutions. Despite the limited importance of lower levels of administration, quite a colourful collection of ethno-regional and regional parties has developed. Ethno-regional parties are based on the support of ethnic minority groups. Three out of the

four largest ethnic minorities in Serbia, the Hungarians (in the Vojvodina region), Albanians (in the Preševo valley), and Bosniaks (in the Sandžak region), are these with the richest set of relevant parties, but the multi-ethnic Vojvodina region also counts a few non-ethnically related regional parties, and parties of smaller minorities that are active mostly at the local level.

Three of the aspects shown in this section appear particularly relevant with regards to the underlying theoretical aspects. First, it shows how despite low decentralisation regional parties are formed along ethnic divides and along political issues that create territorial divides in Serbian politics. Second, I argue that one of the main issues of regional political parties is the claim for territorial autonomy. Their strength partly relies on the opposition of the national parties to these claims, and this supports the view that decentralisation might rather be initiated by regional parties than vice versa. And, third, comparison of electoral results at the local and national level of politics reveals the importance of local and regional institutions for the representation of local and regional parties, especially in cases where the electoral system hinders their representation in national institutions. In this section, I will discuss ethno-regional and regional parties that are active in the three mentioned regions of Serbia, and discuss their coalition strategies.

Vojvodina

Vojvodina is often portrayed as a multi-ethnic oasis in Serbia, with different historic-cultural roots, and the economic situation gives Vojvodina a particular profile within

Serbia. This is reflected politically as well, in that there are a number of regional and ethnic parties that compete exclusively in Vojvodina. The political scene of the Vojvodina region will be discussed here with a view to the elections to the Assembly of the Vojvodina region, their share of the vote in Vojvodina in national parliamentary elections and their representation in the national parliament, and their representation in municipal assemblies. Vojvodina is rich in its own parties, both those created along ethnic lines as those with a non-ethnic orientation. Unlike most Serbian mainstream parties, they advocate tolerance towards ethnic minorities and an improvement of their rights, and focus on decentralisation and territorial autonomy.

In the elections to the Assembly of the Vojvodina region (APV) in the years 1992-2000, the Socialist Party of Serbia dominated the political scene, partly due to the majoritarian electoral system that gave an advantage to the largest party and disadvantaged the non-unified democratic opposition. Only in the 2000 elections did the picture change, with DOS and the (ethno-)regionalist parties winning 117 of the 120 seats; this time the democratic victory was magnified by the majority vote system (Goati 2001: 248-9). The strength of the individual democratically oriented opposition parties and the regional parties is difficult to estimate for the elections before 2000, because they often formed electoral coalitions. In the 2004 elections to the APV, the electoral system was changed to a mixed non-compensatory electoral system,⁹ with 60 mandates in each tier, so that the strength of individual national parties and of ethnic and regional parties was for the first time clearly identifiable. Overall, (ethno-)regional parties obtained some 20 per

⁹ In a part of the literature, such systems are named mixed-member majoritarian; see Shugart/Wattenberg (2001) for a typology of mixed electoral systems.

cent of the votes and seats in the Vojvodina elections (see table 9.2). Furthermore, they became important players in many municipal governments.

In the national parliamentary elections, the vote shares of all large national parties in Vojvodina were lower than in the rest of Serbia (see chapter on Serbia in this volume),¹⁰ with only one exception, the Serbian Radical Party. It is often argued that SRS gets substantial support from ethnic Serb refugees from Croatia and Bosnia, who settled in Vojvodina in the 1990s. Generally it is observed that through the polarisation of the ethnic conflict in multi-ethnic areas, the less radical parties lose votes to the Serbian Radical Party, which takes more radical stances on ethnic issues (Bochsler 2007; Stefanovic 2008). Compared to the results in the local and regional elections, the regional and ethnic parties get lower vote shares in national parliamentary elections. On the one hand, national parties might be more visible with their national campaigns in national elections; on the other hand, the national legal threshold of 5 per cent has hindered regional parties and (until 2007) ethnic parties from competing on their own.

Table 9.2: Results of the elections to the autonomous assembly of the Vojvodina region, 2004, compared to the vote shares in the Vojvodina region in the national parliamentary elections of 2003.

Assembly of the Vojvodina region (APV) elections 2004				Local elections 2004		National parliamentary elections		
PR seats	District seats	Seat share	Vote share	Local mayors	Seats in local	2003, vote share in Vojvodina	2007, share	vote in

¹⁰ Own calculations for parliamentary elections in 2003 and 2007, data taken from Cesid. In the second round of presidential elections, DS candidates got better results.

				(PR)		assemblies		Vojvodina
National parties								
DS	15	20	29.2%	22.3%	9 ^c	338	9.9%	24.1%
SRS	21	15	30.0%	30.4%	14	442	31.9%	32.3%
SPS	4	4	6.7%	6.0%	3 ^c	124 ^c	5.1%	4.0%
DSS	4	2	5.0%	7.0%	2	112	12.2%	9.9%
PSS	4	3	5.8%	6.9%	1	101		1.7%
G17+	-	2	1.7%	5.0%	2	89	13.6%	6.3%
“Clean hands Vojvodina”	-	-	-	2.4%	-	15 (SPO) ^b	3.8% (SPO/NS)	2.1% (SPO)
NS	-	-	-	1.4%	-	5	with SPO	with DSS
Regional and ethnic parties								
SVM	6	5	9.2%	8.8%	2	73	13.0% (ZZT)	5.0%
Coalition “Together for Vojvodina” ^{aa}	6	1	5.8%	9.8%	-	74 (LSV) ^c	partly in ZZT	8.1% (with LDP)
RV	-	2	1.7%	-	2	9	1.7% (with SDP and others)	-
DSVM	-	1	0.8%		-	15	-	1.2% (with DZVM)
DZVM	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	
Local coalitions and local citizens’ groups	-	5	4.2%	-	8	-	-	-
Others	-	-	-	-	2	313	8.8%	5.3%
Overall	60	60	100%	100%	45	1666	100%	100%

			(120)					
<p>^a Vojvođanska unija – Vojvodina moj dom, Liga socijaldemokrata Vojvodine, Demokratska Vojvodina, Unija socijalista Vojvodine, Vojvođanski pokret, Građanski savez Srbije i Socijaldemokratska unija</p> <p>^b SPO, Vojvodina reformists, OTPOR</p> <p>^c 3 of the DS mayors were elected [vs1]for a coalition of DS and SVM; 1 of the SPS mayors was elected in a coalition with SNS. The SPS figures for the local assembly include 6 members elected on a common list with SNS, and 8 elected on SNS lists; 4 of the SPO local deputies were elected in coalitions with NS. The numbers for LSV include 4 members that were jointly elected in a broad coalition with minor parties.</p> <p>Sources: Vojvodina Government, Cesid, Statistical Yearbook of Serbia 2005, own corrections for local coalitions and own calculations.</p>								

Before discussing the ethnically-oriented parties in detail, let us look at the non-ethnic regional parties. The largest party in this field is the League of Vojvodina Social Democrats (*Liga socijaldemokrata Vojvodine*, LSV), followed by the Vojvodina Reformists (*Reformisti Vojvodine*, RV), which merged in 2005 with smaller parties into the Vojvodina Party (*Vojvođanska stranka*, VP) (Goati 2006: 258). The most common denominator is an accent on strong regional autonomy and decentralisation as a main goal and priority of the parties' programs.¹¹ Together with two other non-ethnic parties, they asked in 1997 for broad autonomy for the Vojvodina region.¹² In a 1999 declaration the LSV demanded a federalisation of Serbia (Komšić 2007: 272-3). Unlike the national parties, the Vojvodina regionalist parties rejected the new constitution in 2006, due to backward steps regarding regional autonomy.

¹¹ Found on <http://www.lsv.org.yu/> and <http://www.reformisti.org.yu/> (last accessed on 5 April 2008).

¹² "Deklaracija o Vojvodini - Koalicija Vojvodina", Novi Sad, 1 March 1997. http://www.lsvsu.org.yu/dokumenti/deklaracija_koalicija_vojvodina.htm (last accessed on 6 April 2008).

Otherwise, both the LSV and RV(VP) are among the democratically oriented parties. Some participated in the DOS alliance in 2000, and both declare themselves to be Social Democrats.¹³ Mihić (2002, 2005) characterises LSV and RV supporters as standing politically close to the DS and G17+. They are opposed to social authoritarianism, tolerant on ethnic questions, favour a normalisation of relations with neighbouring states, and are strongly pro-European. LSV supporters seem to be left-wing on welfare issues. The LSV electorate is ethnically mixed; ethnic identities are less important to average LSV supporters, but on the other hand they stress their Vojvodina identity.¹⁴ They have remained weak in their national representative institutions, and never became dominant in regional politics, but they obtained 9.8 per cent of the PR votes in the 2004 regional elections and three direct seats, and are included in governing coalitions at the local and regional level in Vojvodina (see table 9.2).

A second set of regional parties is related to ethnic minorities.¹⁵ However, they are not the exclusive representatives of ethnic minorities, since the regional and some of the national non-ethnic parties also compete for the votes of minorities, and occasionally

¹³ There are many parties that compete for the Social Democratic label in Serbia. Stojiljković (2007) considers LSV to belong to those parties which have a Social Democratic program and anti-nationalist, anti-traditionalist positions.

¹⁴ Mihić provides some of very rare studies that focus on voters in Vojvodina. The number of respondents (302, out of which 14.2 per cent LSV supporters) is rather small, but still very useful, if considering that the number of respondents in national surveys would be too small to analyse Vojvodina parties. The non-random sampling employed by the author does not follow standards employed in election studies. Most other Serbian party studies concentrate on the national parties, or on ethnically-oriented parties. The fact that the regional parties often competed in alliances in national elections means further that an analysis of aggregate electoral data from municipalities is difficult or impossible. Todosijević (2008) locates LSV similarly on the main political axes, based however on a survey of 120 students at the University of Novi Sad; a sample which might be seen as insufficiently representative, both in the choice of the locality and of the environment.

¹⁵ Information on these parties and their representation, where not stated differently, were taken from Bašić/Crnjanski (2006), and from electoral results.

include minority members on their electoral lists (Lutovac 2007). The minority parties will now be discussed for the different minority groups living in Vojvodina.

The **Hungarians** are the largest ethnic minority in Serbia. They account for 4.0 per cent of the Serbian population, and almost all live in the Vojvodina, where they account for 14.3 per cent of the population. They organised back in 1990 under the Democratic Union of the Vojvodina Hungarians (*Demokratska zajednica vojvođanskih Mađara*, DZVM). This party, lead by András Ágoston, radicalised during the first year under increasing Serbian repression, and demanded a strong autonomy Hungarians in Serbia similar to the one that was being discussed in peace plans for Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia at this time (Jenne 2004: 742). Since Ágoston was perceived as too radical, several parties split off in 1994. One of those, the Union of the Vojvodina Hungarians (*Savez vojvođanskih Mađara*, SVM), under the moderate Subotica mayor József Kasza, became the dominant party of the Hungarian minority (Jenne 2004: 743). In 1997, the Democratic Party of the Vojvodina Hungarians (*Demokratska stranka vojvođanskih Mađara*DSVM) broke away from the DZVM (Bašić/Crnjanski 2006: 44).

The Hungarian minority parties are distinct from the previously-discussed non-ethnic regional parties not only because of their exclusive orientation towards ethnic minority voters, but also with regards to their decentralisation program. The *non-ethnic parties* favour substantial autonomy for the *whole Vojvodina* region, and SVM supports this position, while DZVM considers this a *Serbian* issue in which the ethnic *Hungarians*

should not be involved .¹⁶ However, the Hungarian parties do not put their main focus on the question of *Vojvodina autonomy*, but rather demand a substantial political and cultural autonomy for the *eight municipalities with a high concentration of ethnic Hungarians in Northern Vojvodina*. However, they have never adopted separatist claims. On most issues, SVM supporters are politically close to LSV voters (Mihic 2005), while the other parties are too small to be polled.

In the current decade the SVM has been the most relevant representative of the Hungarian minority. In the Serbian parliament of 2000, it received six seats as part of DOS, and its leader Kasza became deputy prime minister in charge of minority affairs and local governments (Jenne 2004: 744). Three years later the SVM failed in the national parliament elections (being part of the failed ZZT alliance); in 2007 it won three seats with its own list. In the 2004 elections to the Vojvodina assembly, the party won 8.8 per cent of the vote and became part of the governing coalition. And in the municipal elections of 2004, SVM was by far the strongest of all Hungarian parties, though both the other Hungarian parties were also able to win a few mandates in local assemblies (see table 2). Furthermore, the DSVM won one seat in the Vojvodina assembly in 2004 in one of the majority districts. Instead of presenting a common candidate in the 2008 Serbian presidential elections, the Hungarian minority parties refused to cooperate with each other.

The parties of other minorities were active more on the local level, or competed on the lists of mainstream parties.

¹⁶ Politika, 23 December 2007, “Tema nedelje: Šta žele stranke nacionalnih – Namigivanje lokalnih šerifa”.

Slovaks (0.8 per cent in Serbia; 2.8 per cent in Vojvodina) are the second-largest minority in Vojvodina, and a quite large minority in municipalities such as Kovačica or Bački Petrovac (where they are the single largest ethnic group), and a few other places. In the 2004 local elections, the Slovak People's Party (Slovačka narodna stranka^[s3],), obtained 2 out of 31 mandates in the Bački Petrovac assembly. However, in municipalities with a high share of Slovaks, they mainly participate in political life through other parties with non-ethnic orientations. The head of the Slovak minority council and the (ethnic Slovak) mayor of Bački Petrovac were elected to the national assembly in 2007 as members of the DS.

The **Croat** minority (0.9 per cent of the Serbian population, 2.7 per cent in Vojvodina) live in a few parts of Vojvodina, namely in the districts of Northern Bačka and Srem. They form the Democratic Union of the Croats in Vojvodina (*Demokratski savez Hrvata u Vojvodini*, *DSHV*). The party gained access to the Vojvodina assembly in 2004, where it forms a local governing coalition with SVM and DS, and to the national parliament in 2007 with one deputy each, elected on the DS list.¹⁷ In the 2003 elections to the national parliament, the party competed on the unsuccessful minority parties' list.

Ethnic **Romanians** (0.5 per cent in Serbia, 1.5 per cent in Vojvodina) are concentrated in a number of municipalities in the Banat (South-Eastern Vojvodina), namely in Alibunar, Zrenjanin, Vršac, Kovačica, Kovin, Apatin and Žitište. There is a related minority of **Vlachs** (0.5 per cent in Serbia, not present in Vojvodina) who live mainly in

¹⁷ Danas, 25 August 2004, "Za evropsku Vojvodinu u evropskoj Srbiji"; Danas, 17 November 2006, "Kuntić na listi DS".

Eastern Serbia and speak a Romanian dialect; their own ethnic status is disputed by the ethnic Romanians.¹⁸ The Romanians and Vlachs share a common national minority council, and some minority parties address both Romanians and Vlachs jointly. The Movement of Romanians and Vlachs in Yugoslavia (*Pokret Rumuna i Vlaha u Srbiji*) competed in 2003 on the list of a minor political party for the national parliament, without gaining any seats. In the national minority council two marginal parties are represented, the Alliance of Romanians from Vojvodina (*Alijansa vojvođanskih Rumuna*), and the Democratic Union of Romanians (*Demokratski savez Rumuna*); generally Romanians and Vlachs tend to get elected on the lists of parties with a non-ethnic orientation; most notably in the town of Alibunar in Vojvodina on the DS, DSS, and G17+ list.

The **Bunjevac** (0.3 per cent in Serbia, 1.0 per cent in Vojvodina) live mostly in the towns of Sombor and Subotica. They have a specific regional origin in the Dinara mountains (on the border between Croatia and Bosnia, cf. OSCE 2008), but as Croats they are Roman Catholics, and they speak the same language, so that they are often perceived to be close to ethnic Croats. Bunjevac have their own national minority council, and they formed their own Bunjevac party (*Bunjevačka stranka*). While this party has remained without any larger electoral success, a descendant of a Bunjevac family, Oliver Dulić, became speaker of parliament in 2007, elected on the DS list. It might be indicative of the complexity of ethnic identities in the region that Dulić himself says that in his view, the Bunjevac belong rather to the Croats, but he declares himself to be a “child of a Yugoslav family and a big ‘Yugo-nostalgic’”.¹⁹

¹⁸ Danas, 15 October 2002, “Rusini, Slovaci i Rumuni u ‘elektorskoj groznici’. Do saveta u bar dve struje”.

¹⁹ Press, 27 May 2007, Oliver Dulić, predsednik Skupštine: Manjina.

Other, smaller, minorities in Vojvodina are not represented by their own parties, or they are too marginal to be individually discussed.

At the local and regional level, the ethnic minority parties and the regional parties in Vojvodina cooperate mostly with DS and G17+, not least in the Vojvodina government: After 2000, the DOS alliance formed the Serbian government (however, the DSS quit the government and the alliance in 2001 both at the national and at the regional level). After the 2004 elections a coalition was formed of almost the same parties, namely DS, SVM, the LSV coalition Together for Vojvodina (*Zajedno za Vojvodinu*), and the Movement of Serbian Force (*Pokret snage Srbije*, PSS) (Goati 2006: 79).

The DS and SVM have cooperated closely on the local and regional level, and occasionally presented joint candidates in local elections, particularly in elections where majority rule applies. However, the two parties perceive one another as fierce competitors for the same votes in areas that are ethnically mainly Hungarian (Lutovac 2007: 232). But cooperation is not limited to the democratically-oriented parties. In the Bečej municipality, the DZVM enabled the Serbian Radicals to lead a governing coalition after 2004.²⁰

Sandžak

Sandžak is a region covering eleven municipalities in both South-East Serbia and Northern Montenegro, on the border between Kosovo and Bosnia.²¹ The region is

²⁰ Politika, 23 December 2007, “Tema nedelje: Šta žele stranke nacionalnih – Namigivanje lokalnih šerifa”.

²¹ Information on the Sandžak draws mainly on a report by the International Crisis Group (2005).

populated mostly by the Bosniak minority, who are Muslims speaking Serbo-Croats, and are the largest ethnic group in neighbouring Bosnia. The Serbian part of Sandžak consists of six municipalities that have been split into two districts, so that the Bosniaks are in a majority in neither (Schmidt 1996). Apart from the power in the municipalities, the Bosniak minority is also organised in the Bosniak National Council.

The first Bosniak party was organised in 1990 as a local branch of the dominant party of Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka demokratske akcije*, SDA). With Bosnia's independence from Yugoslavia in 1992, the Sandžak SDA became its own organisation. The party, and its leader Sulejman Ugljanin, remained the dominant part of the umbrella organisation List for Sandžak (*Lista za Sandžak*) that was formed later. A referendum for political autonomy for the Sandžak region, organised by the SDA in 1991, affects the relations towards the Bosniak political organisations to this day. Ugljanin was accused of engineering Sandžak's secession from Serbia (ICG 1998: 8), even if all the relevant Bosniak leaders denied this (Bašić 2002: 58-9). In the same year, the Muslim National Council of Sandžak (*Muslimansko nacionalno vijeće Sandžaka*, MNVS) was formed as the representative body of the Bosniaks in the Sandžak region, later to be renamed as the Bosnian National Council of Sandžak (*Bošnjačko nacionalno vijeće Sandžaka*, BNVS).

In 1995, a leading member of the party, Rasim Ljajić, broke away and formed his own Sandžak Democratic Party (*Sandžacka demokratska partija*, SDP). The Bosniak political scene has remained deeply divided between Ugljanin and Ljajić, and until this writing has been overshadowed by physical violence between members of both main

party blocs.²² After the 2004 elections resulted in a change of the municipal government of the largest Sandžak municipality Novi Pazar, the new office holders were only able to move into their offices after the central government had sent special police forces to Novi Pazar. Apart from the personal rivalry, a major difference between both parties is the SDA's goal of a substantial autonomy that includes the Sandžak municipalities both in Serbia and Montenegro. Unlike Ugljanin, Ljajić's SDP does not refer to the Montenegrin Sandžak, and appears to take more moderate stands (ICG 1998: 10-2; Schmidt 1996), which makes it a more suitable partner for coalitions with Serbian parties, both in the Sandžak municipalities and at the national level. After 2000, SDP joined coalitions with DOS and later DS in the national parliament elections, and in exchange SDP leader Ljajić became a minister in the Serbian government. Recently, Ljajić has been aiming at an electorate beyond the Sandžak region, and defines his party as a non-ethnic, mainstream party.²³ However, it has no offices and has never ran in an election outside Sandžak.

However, within the Sandžak region the Bosniak parties profit from a strong alignment of voters, and in national elections they often join agreements with the non-ethnic national parties, which guarantee them a few seats in parliament in exchange for the Sandžak votes. In the 2003 and 2007 elections, the Democratic Party (DS) aligned with one of both large Bosniak parties (the SDA in 2003, the SDP in 2007) and helped the DS list to become the strongest in the six Sandžak municipalities (see table 9.3). Of the other national parties, only the new pro-European and minority-friendly Liberal-

²² For one of the latest incidents, see B92, 25.2.2008, "Bomba na kuću odbornika".

²³ Politika, 23 December 2007, "Tema nedelje: Šta žele stranke nacionalnih – Ne predstavljamo samo Bošnjake".

Democratic Party/Liberalno-demokratska partija (LDP) got a slightly better result in the Sandžak region than on the national average (table 9.3).

Table 9.3: Election results in the six Sandžak municipalities. Only parties over 5% considered.

	Local elections 2004		National parliamentary elections	
	number of seats in local assemblies	number of local mayors	2003	2007
Lista za Sandžak/SDA (Ugljanin)	71	2	40.1% (with DS)	27.9% (own list)
SDP (Ljajić)	55	2	20.6% (with ZZT)	31.1% (with DS)
NPS	10	-	-	-
DS	21 ^a	1	with Lista za S.	with SDP
SRS	23	-	18.1%	14.1%
DSS	18 ^a	-	6.1%	10.3%
LDP	-	-	-	5.6%
other Serbian parties	39			
others	15	SPS	15.1%	11.0%

^a 2 DSS mandates in a broad coalition with other ethnic Serbian parties. 9 DS mandates in a coalition with two smaller parties.
Source: Cesid, own calculations.

Apart from the two major players, many small parties have formed and disappeared, among which the most prominent is the Liberal-Bosniak Organisation of the Sandžak (*Liberalno-bošnjačka organizacija Sandžaka*).

Coalition politics in the Sandžak are to a large extent dominated by quarrels between Ljajić and Ugljanin. After the 2004 elections this even led to two remarkable anti-Ugljanin coalitions in the municipal assemblies of Novi Pazar and of Sjenica. In both cases, all the parties except Ugljanin participate in broad coalitions led by Ljajić's SDP, even including five deputies of the ultra-nationalist SRS.

Preševo valley

The Preševo valley, located in Southern Serbia at the border between Macedonia and Kosovo, consists of three municipalities. In two municipalities, Preševo and Bujanovac, ethnic Albanians (0.8 per cent of Serbia's population) are a local majority. Ethnic Albanians in the Preševo valley almost exclusively vote for their own ethnic parties, or abstain. After the introduction of a new electoral law and the abolishing of gerrymandered districts in Bujanovac in 2002, ethnic Albanian parties control the local authorities both in Preševo and in Bujanovac. Among these parties is the largest, rather moderate Party of Democratic Action (*Partija za demokratsko delovanje*, PDD), the more nationalist Party for Democratic Progress (*Pokret za demokratski progres*, Albanian LDP/PDP), the Democratic Party of Albanians (*Demokratska partija Albanaca*, PDSH/DPA), and the Party for Democratic Integration (*Pokret za demokratsku integraciju*, PDI).²⁴ Further breakaway parties have emerged, such as the PDD-splinter Democratic Union of the Valley (*Demokratska unija doline*, BDL/DUD) (see table 9.4 for their representation in local assemblies). The parties are politically oriented towards Kosovo, and have separatist programs. They like to refer to an unofficial 1992 referendum in which most ethnic Albanians of the valley voted for unification with Kosovo. In a common platform in 2006, all the parties called for a high degree of decentralisation and territorial autonomy and, seconded by Kosovo leaders, for a unification of the Preševo Valley with Kosovo if there should be any changes in the Kosovo borders (Crisis Group 2007: 10). The party divisions are based on legacies from the 2000/01 insurgence against Belgrade, personal rivalries, and differences in willingness to cooperate with Belgrade (Crisis Group 2007: 4-5). The radicalism in the

²⁴ Information on the Preševo valley rely on Crisis Group (2003: 19-24, 2007: 4-5, 10).

claims seems to be an important electoral vehicle, an observation that is in line with the ethnic outbidding effect that has often been described for ethnically divided societies: when several parties of the same ethnic group exist, the most hard-line party wins most of the votes.²⁵ Local governing coalitions in the Preševo valley are ethnically exclusive, and there is no cooperation between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs. The electoral results from different levels of elections are difficult to compare due to the large-scale election boycott of national elections by the Albanian minority in Preševo. In the period 2000-2007 Albanian parties boycotted all national elections in Serbia, and only participated in local elections (Crisis Group 2007). In 2007, and only due to international persuasion, two parties (PDD, BDL) participated in the elections as an alliance, and won a seat in the national parliament.

Table 9.4: Results of the 2004/2006 municipal elections.

	Bujanovac	Medveđa	Preševo
PDD	13	6	12
LDP	9		5
PDI			
BDL			5
PDSH			15
SRS	12	2	1
SPS		7	
DOS coalition	5		
DSS		3	
SPO		3	
Roma parties	2		
Other parties (ethnic Serbs)		11	
Sources: Cesid (Preševo, Medveđa 2004), and Crisis Group (Bujanovac, 2006).			

²⁵ See Mitchell (1995: 773), cf. Horowitz (1985: 291, 357-8).

Ethnic parties in other regions

Other ethnic groups are not relevant for the emergence of regional parties and party systems. Either they live spread throughout the country, or they are organised within the national, mainstream political parties.

The **Roma** minority makes up 1.4 per cent of the Serbian population, according to the census, but the number of Roma might be several times that.²⁶ Roma live throughout the country. Their political behaviour, however, appears to be mostly non-homogeneous. Two Roma parties, the Union of Roma in Serbia (*Unija Roma Srbije*), and the Roma Party (*Romska Partija*), gained representation in the Serbian national parliament in 2007, with one deputy each. There are several local councillors of Roma nationality, elected from different lists (OSCE 2008: 20).

Other minorities have only marginal parties which have a few municipal mandates.

Bulgarians make up 0.3 per cent of the population of Serbia, and live mainly in two towns in Eastern Serbia. There, vote distribution in the national elections does not substantially differ from the national average. The Democratic Party of Bulgarians (*Demokratska partija Bugara*) has entered local politics in Dimitrovgrad, and it was part of the minority parties' electoral list (ZZT) in the 2003 national elections, but in both Bulgarian-populated locations, the Serbian mainstream parties rule.

²⁶ See for instance the website of the European Roma Rights Centre, <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=398> [accessed 23/4/08].

The **Gorani** (0.1 per cent of Serbia's population) live mainly in and around Belgrade. Their language is very similar to Serbo-Croatian, but they are Muslims, and further identified through their origin in the South-Eastern part of Kosovo. The Civic Union of the Gorani (*Građanska inicijativa Goranaca*) was formed in 2006, under the same name as the Gorani Party in Kosovo.²⁷ It first competed on its own in the 2008 national elections.

Finally, the Šumadija Party (*Lista za Šumadiju*) is a tiny non-ethnic, regional party, which is related to the Šumadija region, South-East of Belgrade. It belongs to the democratic part of the political spectrum, and participated in 2003 in the ZZT coalition with regional and ethnic parties.

Summary

Despite its still strong centralisation, Serbia is a country that is rich in regional parties, some that compete with a regionalist program, and others that appeal for the votes of ethnic groups territorially concentrated in a small area. This has given party politics in three Serbian regions a specific touch: In the Albanian-dominated Preševo valley, mainly Albanian minority parties compete in elections, while Bosniak political parties play an important role in many of the municipalities in the Sandžak region where Bosniaks (Muslims) live. The largest regional parties, however, can be found in the multiethnic Vojvodina region.

²⁷ Danas, 4-5 November 2006, Osnovana Građanska Inicijativa Goranaca.

The nature of these (ethno-)regional parties shows clearly that they are based more on social and economic conflicts than administrative lines: either they campaign along ethnic boundaries, or they are formed to demand the restoration of the previous autonomy of Vojvodina. Looking at the theoretical explanations, the emergence of regional parties in Serbia fits well with cleavage-based explanations, and puts a question mark after the decentralisation approach. While for other areas of the world it has been argued that administrative decentralisation offers incentives for the creation of strong regional parties, the empirical evidence in the Serbian case looks rather the other way round: regional parties have been formed despite a lack of substantial decentralisation; or possibly they could be attracting their voters precisely *because* the major national parties were advocating a centralisation of the state (and have, after a short policy change, re-adopted this position again with their support for the new Serbian constitution). In any case, the stress of regional and ethnic minority parties on decentralisation issue can be a vehicle to put pressure on the political authorities to transfer more competences to autonomous provinces and municipalities. Certainly these parties might have remained weak in terms of seats, but they have been important coalition partners especially for the democratically oriented parties in Serbia in several national, regional and local government coalitions, and occasionally they have even helped the Serbian nationalists to obtain a governing majority. Their openness to coalitions on both sides puts ethnic and regional parties in a position that they might be able to use sooner or later to negotiate for a more decentralised system in Serbia.

This is why the sequence of events in Serbia brings into question the commonly supported hypothesis, and instead leads to the following question: when, if not during

the process of state-building, is the impact of party system patterns on the structure of a young democracy particularly strong – and vice-versa? From the perspective of the growing body of literature on party nationalisation and decentralisation, it would therefore be particularly relevant to keep a close eye on the further development of regional autonomies and (ethno-)regional parties in Serbia.

New reference

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