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Editor

Regional and National Elections in Eastern Europe

Territoriality of the Vote in Ten Countries

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9

Serbia and Montenegro. From Centralization to Secession and Multi-ethnic Regionalism

Christina Isabel Zuber and Jelena Džankić

9.1 Introduction

Since the early 1990s, Serbia and Montenegro transformed from a centralized and authoritarian federation into a highly decentralized and democratic union of states and finally broke up into three independent territorial units: Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo. The simultaneous pro-

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cesses of territorial change and regime transformation happened over a time span of only two decades. This makes multi-level elections in Serbia and Montenegro a compelling, but also a challenging case to study. Three time periods have to be differentiated when analyzing nationalization and regionalization of the vote in Serbia and Montenegro (Table 9.1). The first period starts with the break-up of Yugoslavia when the two former republics of Serbia and Montenegro formed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (*Savezna Republika Jugoslavija, SRJ*) on 27 April 1992, which existed until the end of 2002. Within this formally federal republic, Milošević's authoritarian regime centralized power and stripped Serbia's two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Metohija and Vojvodina, of the autonomy they had been granted under the Yugoslav constitution of 1974. Until the 1997–98 elections in Montenegro and the 2000 elections in Serbia, elections during this period could neither be considered free nor fair (Goati 2001, p. 199; Bieber 2003, p. 74).¹ Elections were taking place under the authoritarian regime headed by Slobodan Milošević and the Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socijalistička partija Srbije, SPS*). The regime exercised thorough control of key political institutions and the economy, counting on the support of the military and the security forces, as well as paramilitary and organized crime groups (Boduszynski 2010, pp. 172–3). The transitory federal elections of 24 September 2000 were the first free elections held since 1992. However, as explained in more detail in Sect. 9.2, Montenegro boycotted these elections.

The second period commences when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was transformed into the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (*Državna zajednica Srbije i Crne Gore, SCG*) on 4 February 2003, following the transition to democracy after the fall of Milošević in 2000. The highest representative body of the State Union (2003–06) was the unicameral parliament of Serbia and Montenegro (*Skupština Srbije i Crne Gore*). During the short-lived existence of the State Union, the parliament was constituted once, namely on 25 February 2003. However, it was not elected directly by the people, but by former members of the SRJ federal parliament and the republic's parliaments.

¹ Official results of these elections can be found in the appendix to Goati (2001, pp. 209–22).

Table 9.1 Elections included in the analysis per territorial unit and time period

Territorial unit	Period 1: Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SRJ), 1992–2002	Period 2: State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (SCG), 2003–2006	Period 3: Montenegro and Serbia as independent states, 2006–2015
Federation	No democratic elections; Montenegro boycotts 2000 election; de facto separate party systems in Montenegro and Serbia	No direct elections; parliament elected by Montenegrin and Serbian parliaments and former members of the SRJ federal parliament	Territorial unit no longer exists
Montenegro	No democratic elections until 1998; Analysis of the territoriality of the vote in the 1998, 2001 and 2002 elections	Analysis of the Serbian vote in the election of 2006	Analysis of the Serbian vote in the elections of 2009 and 2012
Serbia	No democratic elections until 2000; Comparison between Serbia and Vojvodina for the election of 2000	Comparison between Serbia and Vojvodina for the election of 2003	Comparison between Serbia and Vojvodina for the elections of 2007, 2008, 2012 and 2014
Kosovo	No democratic elections until 2000; Not included because under UN rule since 1999	Not included because under UN rule since 1999	Not included because under UN rule since 1999; Kosovo declared independence in 2008
Vojvodina	No democratic elections until 2000; Comparison of 2000 Vojvodinian to 2000 Serbian election	Comparison of 2004 Vojvodinian to 2003 Serbian election	Comparison of 2008 and 2012 Vojvodinian to 2008 and 2012 Serbian elections

The third period began on 3 June 2006 when Montenegro declared independence and seceded from the Union, leaving a Serbian state to grapple with the remaining territorial questions of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Since 1999, Kosovo has been administered by the United Nations interim administration mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).² Kosovo issued a declaration of independence on 17 February 2008. Multi-ethnic Vojvodina continued on its quest for re-establishing autonomy within the boundaries of Serbia. Today, the Republic of Serbia is thus an asymmetrically decentralized state with the autonomous province of Vojvodina.

The upshot of all these developments is that elections to federal representative bodies are excluded from the analysis: they were neither free nor fair during the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and there were no directly elected representatives in the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. Without a federal reference point, we have to turn to the territorial units of Montenegro and Serbia to study nationalization and regionalization of the vote (Table 9.1). In Sect. 9.2 we analyze territoriality of the vote for Montenegrin elections. Nationalization of the vote is probed by looking at vote shares for pro-independence and unionist parties for the 1998, 2001 and 2002 elections. After 2003, Montenegro functions as a de facto independent state. This precludes the analysis of nationalization of the vote. Regionalization of the vote is studied by looking at the extent to which Serbian voters voted for Serbian ethnic parties during all Montenegrin elections held since 1998. Sect. 9.3 turns toward Serbia and compares outcomes between upper (Serbia) and lower (Vojvodina) levels for elections taking place between 2000 and 2014.

²The United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999 established the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to internationally administer this region after the 1999 conflict. Municipal elections have been held in Kosovo since 2000, and Kosovo-wide elections since 2001. A number of Serb parties in Kosovo has boycotted the elections in Kosovo under UNMIK, and the Serb population in the North of Kosovo voted in Serbian, rather than Kosovar elections.

9.2 Elections in Montenegro

Montenegro and Serbia cohabited in a federation (SRJ 1992–2003) and in a state union (SCG 2003–06). As the federal assembly consisted of two chambers, there were different mechanisms for regulating the election of representatives in each of them. Article 80 of the 1992 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia provided for direct elections to the citizens' chamber, whereby one parliamentarian would represent 65,000 people. It also guaranteed 30 seats for Montenegrin deputies.³ The same constitutional provision stipulated that the chamber of republics would be composed of 40 representatives, 20 from each of the constituent republics. While elections to the citizens' chamber were regulated through a federal electoral law, elections to the chamber of the republics were a competence of the republics of Serbia and of Montenegro, respectively. Although such a system had been established to guarantee adequate representation for both members of the federation (that differed significantly in terms of population and territory), it became a point of friction.

After the 1998 parliamentary elections in Montenegro, the representation of this republic in the federal assembly became a complex issue. The 1997 split of the Democratic Party of Socialists (*Demokratska partija socijalista*, DPS) brought about not only the departure of a part of the Montenegrin ruling elite from Milošević but also the end of the political monolith in this republic because the DPS had been capturing most of the popular support throughout the 1990s (Morrison 2009). The split created two factions of an approximately equal size—the DPS and the Socialist People's Party (*Socijalistička narodna partija*, SNP)—which became the government and the opposition in Montenegro.

When the DPS-led government sent its newly elected representatives to the chamber of republics in 1998, the federal assembly rejected their mandates. As a consequence, 14 out of 20 Montenegrin parliamentarians who had been elected to the chamber of republics in 1996 withdrew their mandates to support the DPS that opposed Milošević. The remaining six deputies from the SNP, that was close to Milošević, stayed as Montenegrin representatives in the chamber of republics. This resulted

³ Član 80, *Ustav Savezne Republike Jugoslavije* (Službeni list SRJ 1/92).

in further detachment of Montenegro from the federal institutions, since this republic's government considered federal laws unconstitutional and thus rejected their implementation. The 'creeping independence' process (Roberts 2002, p. 4) that followed entailed the establishment of separate political institutions in Montenegro including a different currency, customs policy, pension fund, police force, visa regime and diplomatic representation (ESI 1999). The same process also shaped the dynamics of political competition in Montenegro, analyzed in the following section.

Nationalization of the Vote in Montenegro

This section will examine in detail the nationalization of the vote in the 1998, 2001 and 2002 elections in Montenegro, during which the main regime cleavage of support for or opposition to Milošević transformed into the division over statehood and identity. As a republic in the SRJ, Montenegro had a unicameral parliament (*skupština*), composed of 76 to 78 deputies (one deputy for 6000 inhabitants), directly elected through proportional representation. From 1998 to 2011, Montenegro has used affirmative action for the Albanian population, but has since extended it to other minority communities.⁴ The results of the 1998 parliamentary elections presented in Table 9.2 show the attraction of voters for the factions of the former DPS (OSCE-ODIHR 1998, pp. 6–8). The main cleavage that shaped the political contest of Montenegro in 1998 was neither ethnic nor territorial; rather it was a regime cleavage over the support for or opposition to Milošević. While only 0.4 percent of the electorate was neutral in this division, the pervasiveness of the regime cleavage is also corroborated by the very small percentage of votes directed toward

⁴ In 1998, the Montenegrin Electoral Law was amended to allow the Parliament to adopt a special decision guaranteeing five seats for the representatives of the Albanian minority in Montenegro, elected by votes in municipalities listed in the Parliament's decision (areas with a significant proportion of Albanians). In 2011, the Electoral Law was amended to abolish the 3 percent threshold for entering the Parliament for all ethnic minority parties (Articles 36, 43 and 94). Rather, parties that have over 0.7 but below 3 percent of voter support can add up their votes in a joint list. This would guarantee them up to three seats. As the Croat minority in Montenegro is rather small (1 percent of the overall population), if neither election list of this minority reaches 0.7 percent, the most successful one will be granted one parliamentary seat provided that it gains 0.35 percent of votes.

parties with ethnic prefixes. As Table 9.2 indicates, Serb ethnic voters supported the political camp close to Milošević.

The situation in Montenegro changed after the ouster of Milošević in 2000. The government and the opposition in Montenegro, which had previously defined themselves through their relationship to Milošević, reconstituted their political identities. Since the Montenegrin government boycotted the federal presidential elections in 2000, an alliance was created between the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (*Demokratska opozicija Srbije*, DOS) and the SNP. The SNP affirmed their commitment to the preservation of the federal state with Serbia and attracted the votes of those who self-declared as Serbs after 2003 (Jenne and Bieber 2014; Džankić 2014). The DPS, which opposed Milošević, became the proponent of Montenegrin independence and a separate Montenegrin national identity. Other minorities, including Albanian, Bosniak/Muslim and Croat, were supportive of Montenegrin independence. According to Bieber (2003), since 1998, the DPS attracted the non-Serb minorities through its rhetoric on multiculturalism and inclusiveness, thus ‘instrumentalizing’ their votes to stay in power.

In other words, the ouster of Milošević significantly changed the profiles of political parties in Montenegro. It transformed the previous regime cleavage into extreme regionalization, coupled by the claim to autonomy based on an ethno-territorial cleavage. The ‘marriage’ between extreme regionalization and ethno-territoriality, however, manifested itself between Montenegro and the federal state, and not as much within Montenegro itself. That is, the different ethnic groups (Albanians, Bosniaks, Croats, Montenegrins, Serbs)⁵ were divided over whether Montenegro should stay in a federation with Serbia or not. Minorities did not seek territorial autonomy within Montenegro as is evidenced by two extraordinary rounds of elections—on 22 April 2001 and on 20 October 2002.

The results presented in Table 9.2 indicate political polarization over the issue of independence in the 2001 and 2002 elections in Montenegro.

⁵Albanians, Bosniaks, Croats and Muslims are the major ethnic minority communities in Montenegro. Due to the division over identity of Serbs and Montenegrins, Serbs were not formally a minority in Montenegro before independence.

Table 9.2 Montenegrin parliamentary elections by cleavage: May 1998, April 2001 and October 2002

Party/coalition	Regime (A-M) 1998		Ethno- territorial (P-I) 2001		Ethno- territorial (P-I) 2002	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
'For a Better Life'/'Victory is Montenegro'/'For a European Montenegro' DPS-SDP	49.5	42	49.5	36	48	38
Liberal Alliance of Montenegro	6.3	5	6.3	6	5.7	5
Democratic Alliance of Montenegro ^a	1.6	1	1.0	1		
Democratic Union of Albanians ^a	1.0	1	1.2	1		
Democratic Coalition—'Albanians Together' ^a					2.4	2
Party of Democratic Action in Montenegro ^b	0.6	0				
Bosniak-Muslim List/Coalition in Montenegro ^b	0.1	0	1.1	0	0.6	0
Party of Democratic Prosperity— Osman Redza ^b			0.4	0		
Liberal Democratic Party of Montenegro			0.1	0		
People's Unity—Novak Kilibarda			0.1	0		
Bosniak Democratic Coalition— Harun Hadžić ^b					0.7	0
	Regime (P-M)		Ethno- territorial (A-I)		Ethno- territorial (A-I)	
Socialist People's Party—Momir Bulatović	36.1	29				
Serbian People's Party ^c	1.9	0				
Serbian Radical Party—Dr. Vojislav Šešelj ^c	1.2	0			0.24	0
League of Communists of Montenegro/Communist Parties for Yugoslavia	0.5	0	0.1	0	0.4	0
'For Serbdom' ^c	0.4	0				
Serbian People's Radical Party ^c	0.2	0				
Yugoslav United Left in Montenegro	0.1	0	0.05	0		
'Together for Yugoslavia'/			40.8	33	38.4	30
'Together for Changes' SNP-SNS-NS						

(continued)

Table 9.2 (continued)

Party/coalition	Regime (A-M) 1998		Ethno- territorial (P-I) 2001		Ethno- territorial (P-I) 2002	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
People's Socialist Party—Momir Bulatović			2.9	0		
Patriotic coalition for Yugoslavia					2.85	0
	Regime (neutral)		Ethno- territorial (neutral)		Ethno- territorial (neutral)	
Party of the Law of Nature	0.2	0	0.1	0		
Party of the Human Ways	0.1	0				
Party for the protection of savings in foreign currency	0.1	0	0.2	0		
Party for the protection of savings and social security of citizens			0.05	0	0.24	0

Source: Džankić (2009) drawing on official electoral results: Centar za Demokratsku Tranziciju. Official results: Parliamentary Elections 1998, 2001, 2002 and 2006

Notes: ^aEthnic Albanian party, ^bethnic Bosniak/Muslim party, ^cethnic Serb party, Abbreviations: A-M against Milošević, P-I pro-independence, P-M pro-Milošević, A-I against independence. Continuing coalitions are counted as the same entity, coalitions that changed in composition obtain a new entry

Parties developed their agendas around the ethno-territorial cleavage (division over statehood and identity) that overtook all other socio-economic issues. The pro-Milošević parties turned into unionist parties, whereas the anti-Milošević parties became pro-independence. Both camps attracted similar vote shares in the 1998, 2001 and 2002 elections with the exception of the pro-independence camp in 2001 whose vote share decreased by almost 5 percent compared to the bloc that opposed Milošević in 1998. This can be explained by the fact that the People's Party (*Narodna stranka*, NS) left the DPS-SDP coalition 'For a better life' ('Victory is Montenegro' in 2001) and joined the 'Together for Yugoslavia' coalition.⁶

⁶ The NS defined itself as a party that was against Milošević, but supportive of the Yugoslav federal state and of the Serb ethnic origins of Montenegrins. The move of the NS to the opposition is an indicator that the two political camps transformed from pro/against-Milošević into pro-independence and pro-union, respectively.

Extreme regionalization and its link with the ethno-territorial cleavage intensified after the 2001 elections (Bieber 2003, p. 36). The ruling DPS aligned with the Social Democratic Party (*Socijaldemokratska partija*, SDP) and the Liberal Alliance (*Liberalni savez Crne Gore*, LSCG) to form a government that would push for Montenegro's independence from the federation. The coalition with LSCG provided an impetus for the DPS to formally change its political profile and formally support a 'democratic and internationally recognized and independent state of Montenegro' (DPS Istorijat 2015). Yet, broader international pressures and demands decreased the party's independence drive during 2001 and 2002. As a result, the DPS eventually supported the Belgrade Agreement of 14 March 2002 that marked the decay of the SRJ, and gave birth to the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2003. The State Union was short-lived and Montenegro declared independence on 3 June 2006, following the independence referendum that took place on 21 May.⁷ This event induced another realignment of the Montenegrin vote, in particular with respect to vote shares won by Serb parties as analyzed in the following section.

Ethnicization of the Vote in Montenegro

In the period from 1998 to 2006, we can observe an ethnicization of the Serbian vote, that is, parties with ethnic Serb prefixes increased their vote share. This process was reversed in more recent elections in independent Montenegro as displayed in Table 9.3.

The ethnicization of the Serb vote in Montenegro between 1998 and 2006 is a direct consequence of extreme regionalization within the common state with Serbia and the internal Montenegrin division over national identity. In the early 1990s, the Montenegrin and Serb ethnic identities were not mutually exclusive (Darmanović 1992, pp. 27–9).

⁷At the referendum, a total of 55.5 percent of the votes were cast for independence and 44.5 percent for the preservation of the union with Serbia. The referendum law adopted through EU mediation stipulated that the threshold for independence was 55 percent of the total valid votes. The minimum turnout was set to 50 percent of the total electorate; the actual turnout was 86.5 percent.

Table 9.3 The Serb vote in Montenegro for 1998 until 2012

Election	Party and vote percentage			Total % of votes
1998	SNS 1.9	SRS 1.18	SNRS 0.22	3.3
2001	SNS 3.7 ^c	SRS 1.18		4.9
2002	SNS 7.7 ^c	SRS 0.24		7.9
2006	The Serb List			14.7
2009 ^a	NOVA 9.3	SNL 1.3	OSS 0.7	11.3
2012 ^b	Serb Unity 1.3			1.3

Source: Centar za Demokratsku Tranziciju (www.cdtmn.org). Official results: Parliamentary Elections 1998, 2001, 2002 and 2006; State Electoral Commission of Montenegro (<http://www.dik.co.me>). Official results: Parliamentary Elections 2009 and 2012

Notes: ^aPeople's coalition (*Narodnjačka koalicija*, NK) also took part in the 2009 elections. As it consisted not only of ethnic parties it is excluded

^bDemocratic Front (*Demokratski front*, DF) also took part in the 2012 elections. As it consisted of ethnic and non-ethnic parties it is excluded

^cAs the SNS joined the SNP-led coalitions in 2001 and 2002, the percentages are derived by multiplying the total vote share for the coalition by the proportion of seats for the SNS

Individuals could identify as Serb and Montenegrin at the same time, and ethnic voting was present only among minorities such as Muslims/Bosniaks and Albanians (Kubo 2007, pp. 167–9).⁸ After the split of the DPS, which pushed the NS to align with the party's faction that opposed Milošević, a faction of this party broke off and established the SNS in 1998. Over the subsequent decade, the SNS grew into a key party for those voters who identified as ethnic Serbs.

The data presented in Table 9.3 indicate that support for the ethnic Serb parties first increased at the 2001 elections, which revolved around the status of Montenegro in the common state with Serbia after the fall of Milošević. The SNS ran as a member of the SNP-led coalition 'Together for Yugoslavia' and received a total of two out of the 33 parliamentary seats allocated to the coalition whose vote share amounted to 40.5 percent. At the subsequent elections of 2002, support for the SNS increased. The SNS received six out of 30 seats from the SNP-led coalition 'Together for Changes' that had a total vote share of 38.4 percent. The SNS's seat

⁸ Even though Albanian, Bosniak/Muslim and Croat minorities in Montenegro vote for their ethnic parties, their demands are socio-cultural rather than territorial (Jenne and Bieber 2014; Kubo 2007).

share of 20 percent within the coalition was equivalent to 7.7 percent of the total vote.

The rise in the SNS vote between 1998 and 2006 is attributable to the internal division over whether Montenegrins were a separate nation or a subgroup of Serbs (Džankić 2014). As asserted by Džankić (2014) and Jenne and Bieber (2014), with the gradual separation of Montenegro and Serbia, Montenegrin ethnicity became largely associated to independence, while Serb ethnicity became associated with the preservation of the common state. This redefinition of ethnic identities was corroborated in the 2003 population census, where the number of self-declared Montenegrins decreased from 61.9 percent in 1991 to 43.2 percent in 2003 (Monstat 2003). Simultaneously, the share of self-identified Serbs increased from 9.4 percent in 1991 to 32 percent in 2003 (Monstat 2003). The changing ethnolnational identification equally affected the voting preferences of the self-identified Serbs, who in 2001 and 2002 supported ethnic parties within the political camp that favored the preservation of the common state with Serbia.

The next parliamentary elections took place in September 2006 and were held in Montenegro as an independent state. Voter preferences for the ruling DPS-led coalition remained the same,⁹ while the opposition was faced with clustering along the socio-economic, the ethnic and the regime cleavages. After the loss at the independence referendum, the SNP—the pillar of the former unionist bloc—reformed its agenda to focus on socio-economic, rather than ethnic issues. However, this meant that a share of SNP's voters who had by 2006 self-identified as Serbs would flee to the SNS, a party that established the 'The Serb List' coalition. The primary goal of this coalition's political program has been to advocate 'cultural and educational autonomy for the Serb people and its proportional representation in public administration' (Radović 2008). The SNP rejected the invitation to join the 'The Serb List' as it considered itself a 'civic party' and called for a wider anti-government coalition (PCNEN 2009). Yet the regime cleavage became an essential pillar for

⁹The DPS-SDP coalition, joined by the Croatian Civic Initiative (*Hrvatska građanska inicijativa*, HGI) received a total of 48.6 percent of votes, winning an absolute majority of seats in parliament (39 out of 76).

the Movement for Changes (*Pokret za promjene*, PzP), which grew out of a civil society organization that opposed the state capture by the ruling DPS.

The 2006 electoral results indicate that the opposition fragmented into three almost equally sized blocs based on these cleavages.¹⁰ A share of the votes of the former SNP-led coalition went to PZP, a newly established party that professed neutrality regarding the statehood and identity debate, attracting people disillusioned with the perpetuation of the DPS in power, the oligarchic accumulation of wealth and ethnic divisions. Equally, by departing from ethnic issues and by orienting itself toward transitional reforms, the SNP lost a considerable number of Serb votes to the SNS, a party with a clear ethnic profile. The ethnicization of the Serb vote in the first post-independence election was caused by two interrelated factors: the association of the Serb ethnicity with the SNP-led coalition that supported the preservation of the common state in the pre-referendum period; and the reconstitution of the SNP as a moderate civic party and the voters' shift to the SNS as the key party that represents the interests of the Serbs in Montenegro.

The share of the Serb vote declined significantly in the 2009 elections, when the Serb National List remained without parliamentary representation, while the SNS spin-off party New Serb Democracy (*Nova srpska demokratija*, NOVA) won eight seats (four down from the 12 previously held by the Serb National List). In 2009, the SNP focused almost exclusively on socio-economic issues and the state capture by the ruling DPS. It regained some of the support it lost to ethnic parties in 2006 and won 16 seats, while the PzP was weakened by inexperienced leadership and lost six seats compared to 2006. Given the strengthening of the ruling DPS coalition after independence and its grip over the state, the ethnic cleavage became completely subsumed by the regime cleavage in the 2012 elections, which brought about a coalition between NOVA and PzP and the emergence of new political actors opposing the long term DPS rule, such as Positive Montenegro (*Pozitivna Crna Gora*).

¹⁰The three blocs included: (1) the ethnic Serbian List (SNS-led) captured 14.7 percent of the vote and 12 seats in parliament; (2) the reformed SNP-NS-DSS coalition focusing on socio-economic issues received 14.1 percent of the vote and 11 seats; and (3) the PzP won 13.1 percent of the vote and 11 seats (Centar za Demokratsku Tranziciju, Official results: Parliamentary Elections 2006).

In summary, from 1998 to 2006, the ethnic and territorial cleavage largely overlapped; that is, Serb voters supported the common state of Serbia and Montenegro. After Montenegro's independence in 2006, the Serb vote became detached from the territorial cleavage and related almost exclusively to ethnic identity, which never became related to new territorial demands *within* Montenegro. Hence, there is no regionalization but ethnicization of the vote after independence of Montenegro. This is further corroborated by the decline of the ethnic vote in the 2009 and 2012 parliamentary elections. The next section analyzes elections in Serbia where, by contrast, the quest for autonomy of the multi-ethnic province of Vojvodina constitutes a territorial but not an ethnic cleavage.

9.3 Elections in Serbia

Serbia has two sub-state levels of government, the local level that consists of municipalities (*opštine*), cities (*gradovi*), and the city of Belgrade (*grad Beograd*) and the level of the autonomous provinces (*autonomne pokrajine*; *Zakon o teritorijalnoj organizaciji Republike Srbije* 2007, art. 2). Serbian constitutional law defines two autonomous provinces that together constitute Serbia's intermediate or regional tier of government: the autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija and the autonomous province of Vojvodina (Serbian Constitution, art. 182). Kosovo is not included in our analyses because it had been administered by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) since 1999 and declared independence on 17 February 2008 (Table 9.1). In contrast to the purely administrative Serbian districts (*okruzi*), Vojvodina has institutions of regional self-government, such as its own legislative assembly (*Skupština Autonomne pokrajine Vojvodine*) and provincial government (*Pokrajinska Vlada*). Direct elections to the legislative assembly were held in 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012, establishing chains of accountability between regional institutions of self-government and a regional electorate.¹¹ The

¹¹ Results for the 2004–12 elections can be retrieved from the online archive of the provincial electoral commission. For the 2000 elections, a file with the names and party affiliations of the regional Members of Parliament (MPs) elected can be downloaded. The electoral commission confirmed that the votes cast by candidate in 2000 were not archived.

next section will discuss provincial governmental and provincial electoral institutions, followed by three sections analyzing provincial electoral outcomes.

Regional Government and Regional Elections in Vojvodina

The province's asymmetrical status is enshrined in the Serbian constitution of 2006. Serbia's territorial regime can therefore be classified as a 'constitutionally decentralized Union' (Watts 1999). However, the constitutional provisions remained vague with regard to the actual scope and substance of Vojvodina's status and its financial resources. They left these aspects to be determined in ordinary legislation that can be adopted with a simple majority vote in the Serbian parliament. Komšić (2013, p. 354) therefore argues that the 2006 constitution established merely 'another form of permanently overseen administrative self-government'.

Vojvodina has competencies in the areas of 'urban planning and development; agriculture, water economy, forestry, hunting, fishery, tourism, catering, spa's and health resorts, environmental protection, industry and craftsmanship, road, river and railway transport and road repairs, organizing fairs and other economic events; education, sport, culture, health care and social welfare and public informing at the provincial level' (Serbian Constitution, art. 183). In order for the province to exercise these competencies, the budget of Vojvodina shall make up at least 7 percent of the Serbian budget (*ibid.*, art. 184). However, the wording in the constitution leaves room for interpretation with regard to the exact basis from which the 7 percent are to be calculated. According to commentators from the province, this vagueness has been used for 'creative saving' by the central government in the past (Boarov 2012). Following the adoption of the 2012 Serbian Law on the Budget System, the province appealed to the Constitutional Court to dispute the Law for violating the constitutional provision of 7 percent (Komšić 2013, p. 338). Vojvodinian political parties and civil society actors have long been calling for a reform of the Serbian 2006 constitution to consolidate Vojvodina's status within Serbia (for a selection of recent statements, see

Komšić 2013, pp. 335–7, 339–40), but the center has not shown much interest in tackling the required changes, independent of who was governing. Tellingly, the Serbian constitution of 2006 had failed to convince an absolute majority of registered voters in Vojvodina, though gaining the support of 53 percent of registered voters' in Serbia as a whole.¹²

Another recent source of the center-periphery conflict has been the statute of autonomy the province is entitled to adopt as its 'supreme legal act' according to Article 185 of the Serbian Constitution. The parliament of Vojvodina had originally adopted its statute on 14 October 2008. After more than a year of controversy, the statute was finally ratified in the Serbian parliament on 30 November 2009. In 2013, the Democratic Party of Serbia (*Demokratska stranke Srbije*, DSS), a conservative Serbian nationalist party, whose MPs had earlier voted against the statute at both the provincial and the Serbian level, took the statute to the constitutional court. On 5 December 2013, the court ruled that two-thirds of the provisions of the statute were not in accordance with the Serbian constitution. The conflictive issues were mostly of a symbolic nature. The statute had granted a range of attributes of statehood to the province, such as treating Novi Sad as Vojvodina's 'capital' (*glavni grad*) and calling the executive body 'the government of Vojvodina' (*Vlada Vojvodine*). Following the setup of a working group at the central level and an agreement between DSS and the main regionalist party, the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (*Liga socijaldemokrata Vojvodine*, LSV), as protagonists of the center-periphery conflict, revisions to the statute were agreed in the Serbian parliament and the revised version of the statute was adopted by Vojvodina's parliament on 22 May 2014.¹³

The provincial electoral system has been subject to a series of reforms that have subsequently brought it closer to the preferences of the regionalist LSV. The first democratic election of 2000 had employed a majoritar-

¹² Republican electoral commission, http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/latinica/propisi_frames.htm [17 February 2015].

¹³ The current version of the statute as adopted on 22 May 2014 can be found at: <http://www.skupstinavojvodine.gov.rs/Strana.aspx?s=statut&tj=SRL> The previous version of 2009 that was taken to court by the DSS can be accessed at <http://www.dnv.co.rs/03NavigacijaV/Dokumenti/Zakon/STATUT%20AUTONOMNE%20POKRAJINE%20VOJVODINE.pdf> [29 January 2014].

ian electoral system with all 120 regional MPs elected in single-member districts. The 2004, 2008 and 2012 used a mixed electoral system with 60 members elected according to party-list proportional representation (d'Hondt method with 5 percent threshold, from which parties and coalitions of parties representing national minorities were exempted) and 60 elected according to two-round majority voting in single-member districts. On 6 June 2014, the regional parliament adopted the decision to reform the electoral system once again (*Pokrajinska skupštinska odluka o izboru poslanika*). The next regional elections in 2016 will be held under closed-list proportional representation with one province-wide district, a 5 percent threshold (from which parties representing national minorities or coalitions of parties representing national minorities will be exempt), and using the d'Hondt formula to transform votes into seats. With these characteristics, the regional electoral system will resemble the system used for elections to the Serbian parliament. The final solution closely resembles the initial proposal made by LSV.

Congruence of the Vote

Figure 9.1 presents a series of measures comparing electoral results within the whole of Serbia to those within the region of Vojvodina. They allow us to assess whether and to what extent voters in Vojvodina vote differently from the rest of the country. Growing incongruence of the vote across territorial levels can be seen as evidence of regionalization. Conversely, if electoral results differ hardly at all between levels, nationalization prevails. The index of dissimilarity (Schakel and Dandoy 2013, p. 19) is used to compare election results in Vojvodina to national elections. The index is calculated taking the sum of absolute differences between regional and national vote shares for each party and dividing the sum by two (to avoid double counting). Three indices of dissimilarity are calculated: (1) *Party system incongruence* compares national election results for the whole of Serbia (NN) to Vojvodinan election results (RR); (2) *Electorate incongruence* compares national election results for the whole of Serbia (NN) with national election results for Vojvodina (NR); (3) *Election incongruence* compares how the Vojvodinan electorate voted in the national election

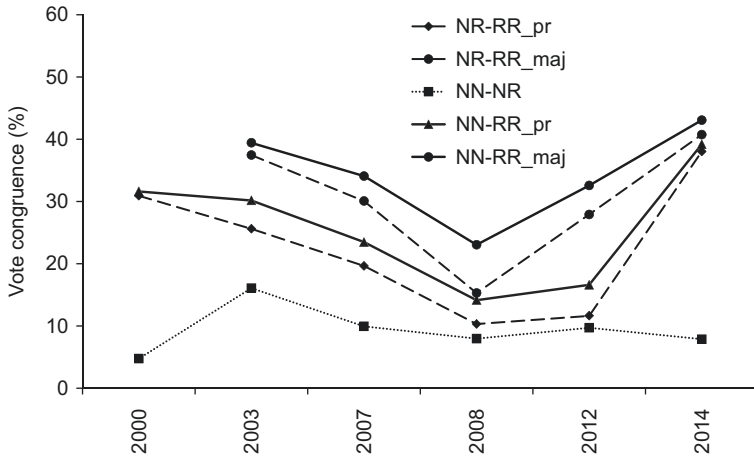


Fig. 9.1 Congruence between the regional and the national vote (Notes: Shown are average dissimilarity scores. See Chap. 1 for the formula. *NR* National vote in the region, *NN* National vote at the statewide level, *RR_pr* Regional vote in the region, proportional tier, *RR_maj* Regional vote in the region, constituency vote in the majoritarian tier, 2nd round results)

(NR) to how the Vojvodinan electorate voted in the Vojvodinan election (RR). For party system and election incongruence, we look at Vojvodina's majoritarian (RR_maj) and proportional tier (RR_pr) separately.¹⁴

We can observe the highest levels of dissimilarity when looking at *party system incongruence*, that is, when comparing national results to regional results in the majoritarian tier in Vojvodina (NR-RR_maj). This makes intuitive sense since the effect of electing different representative assemblies is added to the psychological and mechanical effects of applying two different electoral systems. The summed differences between parties' vote shares between territorial levels reach peaks of 37 percent (when comparing the 2003 national election to the 2004 regional election) and 41 percent (when comparing the 2014 national elections to the 2012 regional elections).

¹⁴Since the first elections of 2000 were held under a purely majoritarian system, focusing on the majoritarian tier for the mixed system elections can maintain comparability over time. We further focus on results of the second round in the majoritarian tier since a wide range of very small local citizens' organizations field candidates who are not viable in the first round.

The smallest difference can be found in the case of *electorate congruence* (NN-NR), that is, when the election is held constant and voting patterns in the region are compared to voting patterns nationwide. Looking at changes over time shows that for all types of congruence, territorial differences between parties' vote shares reached their lowest level in 2008. This can be explained by two factors: the introduction of vertical simultaneity and the polarization of party competition.

Serbian party scholars classified the entire period between 2002 and 2008 as a period of polarized pluralism in Sartori's ([1976] 2005, pp. 117–118) sense of the term (Goati 2004, p. 229; Orlović 2005, p. 181). At one side of the spectrum, we find two anti-system, Serbian nationalist parties, the Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socijalistička partija Srbije*, SPS) and the Serbian Radical Party (*Srpska radikalna stranka*, SRS) that initially did not accept the results of regime change. The civic and pro-democratic Democratic Party (*Demokratska stranka*, DS) occupied the other end of the spectrum. Together, they were putting the centrist DSS government under pressure through bilateral opposition. With the nationalism/regime cleavage dominating party competition, pro-autonomy voters in Vojvodina that were also pro-democracy can be assumed to have voted for DS rather than for a regionalist party in order to avoid the worst outcome of a government led by the SRS.

European integration was far from being a valence issue in 2008. Party competition was extremely polarized with a civic, pro-EU block headed by the DS that was campaigning against a nationalist, anti-EU block headed by the SRS. In addition, in 2008, national and regional elections were held simultaneously for the first time. Voters were thus giving their vote for representatives at different levels, but under the impression of the same informational environment where European integration was the key issue defining the political agenda. Nicholson's (2005) theory of agenda voting posits that agenda issues prime vote choice across elections for different representative offices. He argues that unlike political scientists, voters do not group elections by type, but by informational environment. Applying this idea to the 2008 regional and national elections would imply that voters were primed by European integration. It took precedence over whatever specific preferences they might have had for the distinctive representative offices they were asked to elect. Voters

gave their vote to either the pro- or the anti-EU block that had formed congruent electoral coalitions across levels. In addition, LSV formed part of the DS-led electoral alliance at the national level, so there was no trade-off for a pro-European regionalist voter whose preferences could be catered for by the alliance. Following the 2008 elections, a DS-led government was formed that ended up including both regionalist parties from Vojvodina, the LSV officially as part of the electoral alliance led by DS, and SVM, based on an agreement between the two parties (Szöcsik and Bochsler 2013).

Subsequent to the 2008 elections, the Serbian Progressive Party (*Srpska napredna stranka*, SNS) split off from the SRS, distancing itself from the latter with a decidedly pro-EU stance and taking the bulk of voters' support with it. European integration is now a valence issue since all major (and following the 2014 elections all parliamentary) political parties support Serbia's accession to the EU. The 2012 elections were again held simultaneously with regional elections. The higher levels of incongruence in 2012 reflect the fact that SNS gained a relative majority of seats in the Serbian parliament while the DS-led electoral coalition won the 2012 elections in Vojvodina.

Second-Order Election Effects

Are elections in Vojvodina second-order? When we look at turnout, a key indicator for whether the central or the regional level takes precedence for voters, Vojvodina's elections display some characteristics of second-orderness. Figure 9.2 plots the percentage of eligible voters who turned out for regional and national elections respectively and again differentiating for the regional elections between the majoritarian (second round) and the PR tier. Turnout figures are available for the regional elections of 2004, 2008 and 2012. Unfortunately, turnout figures are missing for the 2000 regional election, for the majoritarian tier in the 2012 regional election and for the national election of 2003. Therefore, our empirical basis is even more limited than in case of the analysis of congruence, and turnout data needs to be interpreted with care.

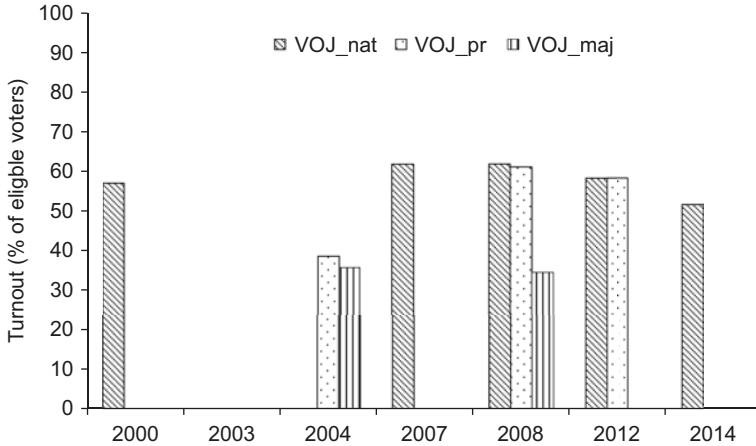


Fig. 9.2 Turnout in regional and national elections (*Notes: Shown are turnout rates per regional and national election. VOJ_nat turnout in Vojvodina for national elections, VOJ_pr turnout in Vojvodina for the proportional tier in provincial elections, VOJ_maj turnout in Vojvodina for the second round in the majoritarian tier in provincial elections. Data for the 2000 regional election, for the majoritarian tier in the 2012 regional election and for the national election of 2003 is missing. More details can be found in the country Excel file on Serbia and Montenegro*)

With the results of just four regional elections and turnout figures for only three of them, we cannot yet answer the question whether Vojvodinian elections are second-order in a conclusive way. In those instances where regional and national elections were not held on the same day (the 2004 regional elections and the second round of the majoritarian part of the regional elections in 2008), a turnout gap of around 20 percent can be observed. This might indicate that voters treat elections to the Serbian parliament as more important than elections to the regional parliament. However, the empirical basis is too thin to draw any conclusions about a trend.

By contrast, voters' substantive choices and their consequences in terms of government formation indicate that Vojvodinians have not used regional elections to punish the government at the central level. Rather, they have expressed consistent support for the DS, independent of whether DS was in opposition or in government at the central level,

Table 9.4 Elections and governments in Serbia and Vojvodina 2000–14

Parliament	Date of election and electoral system used	Government formed
Narodna skupština Srbije	23 December 2000 (PR)	DS-DA-ND-SDU-SVM-PDS-DSS-SD-RV-GSS-DHSS-ASNS-KV
	28 December 2003 (PR)	DSS-G17+-NS-SPO-SDP
	21 January 2007 (PR)	DSS-DS-G17+-NS
	11 May 2008 (PR)	DS-SPS-G17+-PUPS-SDP-SDA Sandžaka-SPO
	6 May 2012 (PR)	SPS-SNS-URS-PUPS-SDPS-PS-NS-SDA Sandžaka
	16 March 2014 (PR)	SNS-SPS-SDPS-PS (Pokret socijalista)-NS
Skupština AP Vojvodina	24 September 2000 (majoritarian)	DOS
	19 September 2004 (mixed)	DS-LSV-SVM-PSS
	11 May 2008 (mixed)	DS-LSV-SVM-G17+-SPS
	6 May 2012 (mixed)	DS-LSV-SVM

Sources: Serbian governments 2000–08: Orlović (2008, p. 603); Serbia 2012: Wikipedia; Serbia 2014: Official website of the government of Serbia. Vojvodina 2000 and 2004: Parties and elections in Europe (<http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/vojvodina1.html>); Vojvodina 2008: Wikipedia; Vojvodina 2012: Official website of the government of Vojvodina

and even when DS was ousted by newcomer SNS at the central level in 2012. The 2012 election led to Serbia's first experience with incongruent governments at the provincial and the national level (cf. Table 9.4). SNS, the party that was elected into office at the national but not the regional level, responded with calls for early elections in Vojvodina¹⁵ and attempted to overthrow the DS-led Vojvodina government (something it had already successfully achieved with the local governments and mayors of Belgrade and Novi Sad, Vojvodina's main city).

¹⁵ According to Article 8 of the Provincial decision on the election of regional MPs, the president of the parliament of Vojvodina can call early elections in the following cases: if the parliament gives up its mandate prematurely, if the provincial government is not elected within 90 days after the constitution of the parliamentary assembly or if the parliament fails to elect a new government upon resignation of the president of the provincial government for 60 days (*Pokrajinska skupštinska odluka o izboru poslanika u Skupštinu Autonomne Pokrajine Vojvodine* 2014).

In sum, whereas turnout was lower for regional elections, voters appear to not have used regional elections to punish the central government as predicted by the second-order elections model. Vojvodinians stuck to their regional DS-led government while the DS-led central government was replaced by a coalition of the newly founded SRS-splinter SNS and SPS. It remains to be seen whether more consistent conclusions can be drawn as a longer time series of regional elections becomes available. In any case, the incongruence of the vote displayed in Fig. 9.1 cannot be explained by second-order election effects. The next section explores whether regionalization is driving the Vojvodinian vote.

Regional Election Effects

Several characteristics of Vojvodina should favor regionalism. First, the region has a distinct history as part of the Habsburg Empire differentiating it from the Ottoman past of the rest of Serbia. The historical boundaries of the Habsburg Empire still play an important role in the collective identity construction of the region (Tomić 2015). Second, the region has a history of autonomy since it enjoyed a status almost on par with the other constituent republics under the Yugoslav constitution of 1974. Survey results summarized in Table 9.5 show that many citizens of Vojvodina want the province to get closer to these historical levels of self-government again though the percentage of those demanding more autonomy has been decreasing as Vojvodina was regaining competencies.

Third, the region has a particular identity defined by multicultural and multi-religious tolerance (Komšić 2006b, pp. 251–2; Lazar 2007, p. 12) and a multinational conception of regional citizenship (Stjepanović 2015). As Petsinis (2008, p. 270) puts it, Vojvodina identity ‘provides a powerful umbrella that transgresses ethnic boundaries’. This specific regional identity was manifest in high numbers of inter-ethnic marriages during communist times as well as a lower nationalist orientation, less ethnic distance and a more cosmopolitan attitude toward other nationalities than the Yugoslav average (Komšić 2006b, p. 506; Petsinis 2008, p. 270, footnote 11). In more recent times, survey research continues to confirm that Vojvodinians’ views are more favorable toward cultural

Table 9.5 Voter preferences regarding Vojvodina's status and Serbian decentralization

Year	N	Territory	Item	Decentralist (%)		Centralist (%)
				Same	More	Less autonomy
2001	1500	Vojvodina	Preferred status for Vojvodina	13.9	71.8	3.5
2002	1253	Vojvodina	Status of Vojvodina	13.9	68.5	13.5
2009	1480	Vojvodina	Preferred status for Vojvodina	41.9	41.7	6.0
2011	1000	Serbia excl. Kosovo	Decentralization & regionalization index	Vojvodina: 58.0 Central Serbia: 40.0 Belgrade: 29.0	Vojvodina: 13.0 Central Serbia: 23.0 Belgrade: 33.0	

Sources: 2001: Scan Agency, results discussed in Komšić (2006a, p. 60); 2002: Novi Sad University, results provided by Lazar (2007); 2009: Scan Agency, results obtained from Scan Agency by Christina Zuber; 2011: CeSID. Decentralizacija i regionalizacija Srbije iz ugla građana. Belgrade 2011: available from http://www.decentralizacija.org.rs/new_file_download.php?show=vesti&int_asset_id=390&int_lang_id=33 [17 February 2015]

Notes: 2001: More autonomy in 2001 is the sum of the answer categories 'autonomy of 1974' (39.1 percent), 'Republic in federal state' (5.9 percent), 'more than now, less than 1974' (21.3 percent), 'independent state' (5.5 percent). 2002: Current status in 2002 refers to 'a mixture of practically suspended powers of provincial authorities and partially returned administrative government offices' (Lazar and Stepanov 2007, p. 53) legally defined by the 1989 constitutional amendment of the Republic of Serbia and the 1990 constitution whereby Milošević stripped the autonomous provinces of their special status and suspended the legislative powers of their parliaments and the 2002 law on autonomous provinces (ibid.). More autonomy in 2002 is the sum of the answer categories 'economic, political and cultural autonomy' (57.9 percent), 'independent republic in the common state of Serbia and Montenegro' (9.8 percent), 'independent state' (0.8 percent). Less autonomy is the sum of the answer categories 'abolition of autonomy' (0.6 percent) and 'administrative region' (12.9 percent). 2009: More autonomy in 2009 is the sum of the answer categories 'autonomy of 1974' (19.6 percent), 'Republic in federal state' (3.8 percent), 'more than now, less than 1974' (14.2 percent), 'independent state' (4.1 percent)

diversity than those of citizens in the rest of Serbia. A good example is a question from an IPSOS survey in 2011 where individuals were asked about the main topic in history textbooks in Serbia. The share of respondents who were in favor of including the history of *all* ethnic groups in Serbia was 26 percent in Vojvodina compared to 16 percent in Belgrade and 17 percent in Central Serbia (Results reported in Jovanović 2014, p. 99).

However, Vojvodina provides a puzzle for scholars of territorial politics. It has territorial specificities and, as shown in Table 9.5, voters show consistent support for regional autonomy, yet this has not led to a fully mobilized center-periphery cleavage. Table 9.6 shows support for regionalist parties in Vojvodina in regional elections. The results for national elections are not displayed since LSV joined an electoral alliance headed by DS in all national elections except for 2003. The results show weaker support for regionalist parties than could be expected on the basis of voter preferences in favor of regional autonomy. The comparatively higher result for regionalist parties in 2000 is due to the fact that the electoral alliance for regime change, the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (*Demokratska opozicija Srbije*, DOS), ran both as DOS *and* with a regional list (DOSV) in Vojvodina. Members of DOSV were not identical to members of DOS and ran on the promise to re-install Vojvodina's autonomy (Korhec 2002, pp. 290–1). However, even the 2000 result remained far below the autonomist potential of 71.8 percent in favor of more autonomy for the province in 2001, as shown in Table 9.5. The results appear particularly weak when compared to historical regions with

Table 9.6 Vote share for regionalist parties in regional elections

Election	LSV		SVM		Total	
	PR	MAJ	PR	MAJ	PR	MAJ
2000		15.0		10.8		25.8
2004	9.8	0.7	8.8	8.4	18.6	9.1
2008	8.5	1.1	7.6	9.4	16.1	10.5
2012	11.6	6.3	6.5	6.6	18.1	12.9

Notes: PR results in regional elections proportional tier, MAJ results in regional elections majoritarian tier, second round. The result for LSV in the 2000 election pertains to DOSV (*Demokratska opozicija Srbije*, Democratic Opposition of Serbia). LSV *Liga socijaldemokrata Vojvodine*; League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina; SVM Hungarian, *Vajdasági Magyar Szövetség*; Serbian, *Savez vojvođanskih Mađara*; Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians

a specific identity in Western Europe. The statewide parties gain the highest vote share even in the PR tier during regional elections, the most likely scenario for a high vote share for LSV. We can, however, observe that the PR tier indeed works in favor of LSV, whereas the Hungarian minority party SVM that has a support base of voters who are territorially concentrated in districts in the North of Vojvodina is similarly successful in gaining candidate and party-list votes.

The very construction of regional identity as multicultural may be precisely the first reason that can explain why regionalist mobilization has remained comparatively weak. Serbian democratization coincided with strong nationalist mobilization along exclusivist, ethnic lines. Regionalist mobilization attempts, which due to Vojvodina's ethnic composition had to be of an integrative nature, were competing with divisive, ethnonationalist appeals. The fact that Vojvodina is a multi-ethnic region means that parties cannot mobilize voters along their regional and ethnonational identity simultaneously. Vojvodina is not a core region for a minority nation such as Catalonia is for the Catalans. Vojvodina hosts 67 percent of Serbs, 13 percent of Hungarians and a large number of smaller ethnic minority groups, such as Roma, Slovaks, Croats, Ruthenians and Germans (Statistical office 2012, pp. 22–3). Hungarians are therefore a minority also in Vojvodina, which is why their more ethnonationally oriented parties demand ethno-territorial autonomy for Hungarians in Vojvodina's North (Zuber 2013). Unlike in other regions, minority nationalism is not a natural ally of regionalism. The multi-ethnic, multi-religious composition of the province with its internally cross-cutting cleavages hampers coordination in favor of regional interests in a context where ethnically defined platforms were the dominant form of political mobilization between 2000 and 2008. Only a small minority of 1.5 percent of the regional population made use of the answer category of 'regional affiliation' when asked about their ethnic identity in the 2011 Census (Statistical office 2012, pp. 30–1). Vojvodina's ethnic minority communities are, however, very sympathetic to regional autonomy which implies that there is room for a multi-ethnic regional project. According to a 2009 regional survey conducted by the Novi Sad based SCAN Agency (2009, p. 18), support among members of the minority communities for returning the status of 1974 to Vojvodina was higher than

among the Serbs. However, during elections, the regionalist potential is divided up into the ethnic minority vote (SVM and smaller minority parties), the vote for civic mainstream parties (in particular DS) and the vote for the autonomist party LSV.

Another factor is that the composition of the regional population changed thoroughly between Yugoslav times—characterized by a specific regional culture of multicultural tolerance and civic potential, high levels of trust between ethnic groups and low levels of ethnic distance (Komšić 2006b, pp. 382, 506)—and the onset of democratic elections after the 2000s when support for regionalist parties could be openly displayed. Between 1991 and 1995, Serbian refugees from Bosnia and Croatia who had undergone radicalizing experiences during the wars were strategically resettled into Vojvodina by Milošević in order to change the ethnic makeup of the regional population in favor of ethnic Serbs, who had no previous experience with Vojvodina's culture of living together, while Croats and also some Hungarians were forced out of the province (Komšić 2006a, b, p. 383).

Finally, the statewide DS has traditionally had a strong support base within Vojvodina. Regional preferences have therefore to some extent been catered for by a statewide party, although DS's relationship toward Vojvodina's autonomy has been characterized as ambiguous. Having adopted an accommodative position in favor of broad asymmetrical autonomy in 2000, the party reduced its autonomist stance considerably during the debates about the 2006 constitution where it treated Vojvodina merely as an element of local self-government (Komšić 2013, pp. 352–3). The party's ambiguous position reflects the fact that within the party as an organization, there is a strong Belgrade but also a strong Vojvodina wing since both the city of Belgrade and the province of Vojvodina are the traditional strongholds of DS. The Vojvodina branch of the party has continuously governed the province since 2000, and it has done so in coalitions with the regionalist LSV and regionalist/Hungarian ethnic SVM (see Table 9.4).

9.4 Discussion

This chapter has analyzed regional elections in Serbia and Montenegro. This has meant dealing with various, rather than one political system where the boundaries and hierarchy between territorial units of self-government varied over the period of the analysis (1998–2014). As a federal unit of the state union of Serbia and Montenegro, Montenegro underwent a process of extreme regionalization. Already since 1998, elections in Montenegro had little in common with those at the federal level. Consequently, Montenegro seceded from the union in 2006, being the last of the former constituent republics of Yugoslavia to gain independence. Whereas the new unitary Montenegrin state witnessed an ethnicization of the Serbian vote during and after secession, this did not provide the basis for persistent regionalization and the mobilization of a genuine territorial cleavage. By contrast, Serbia chose asymmetrical decentralization, granting regional authority only to Vojvodina (and formally also to Kosovo and Metohija). Rather than aiming to carve up historical autonomies and install symmetrical regions, the Serbian state opted to maintain the boundaries of its autonomous province and the asymmetrical distribution of regional authority, though proving slow in returning competencies and financial resources that had been centralized under Milošević.

The national party system dominates elections in the province of Vojvodina, with regional branches of statewide parties gaining the bulk of regional votes and dominating regional governing coalitions. Despite a strong regional identity and a history of autonomy, no genuine regional party system has developed, and support for regionalist parties remains rather low. Hungarians are territorially concentrated in Vojvodina, but are nonetheless a minority within the province. Vojvodina is thus a historical but not an ethnic region and it has traditionally defined itself as multi-ethnic. Attempts to mobilize regionalist sentiment in Vojvodina therefore do not find a natural ally in the self-determination grievances of a national minority. This could be one reason for the comparatively high degree of nationalization. However, given the consistently autonomist preferences of voters within Vojvodina, this reason is not exhaustive. No far-reaching inferences should be drawn from our analysis since

it covered only four regional elections that were held in a period when fears of secession were omnipresent among voters and autonomist parties were often portrayed as a direct threat to the territorial integrity of the Serbian state (Komšić 2013). It could therefore be the case that voters voted strategically in favor of statewide parties with more centralist positions than the Vojvodinian median voter's ideal point in order to avoid the least preferred outcome of secession, feared to follow from autonomist demands.¹⁶ Survey-based research is called for to assess whether this explanation stands up to empirical testing. Some recent developments indicate, however, that there might be room for increased regionalization in the future. First, as desired by LSV, the next regional elections in 2016 will employ a PR electoral system. This could work in favor of the regionalist party. Second, Vojvodina's long-sitting president Bojan Pajtić was elected president of DS in May 2014. For the first time, the party's Vojvodina branch has thus come to dominate the internal organization of the statewide party that enjoys consistent support within the province. Scholars of territorial politics should therefore keep a close eye on developments in Vojvodina. Like Istria in Croatia, Serbia's multi-ethnic province provides an important counterexample to ethnically framed claims for territorial self-determination that were long dominant within the region.

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¹⁶Personal communication with Dejan Stjepanović, March 2015.

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