BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: STRATEGIES OF POLITICAL COOPERATION IN A POPULIST WORLD

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Abstract

A rising tide of populist anger lifts all boats, but it pushes some more than others. For representatives from smaller parties representing national minorities the question of how to exercise power at the national level without becoming the target of populists becomes increasingly pertinent. To investigate this this paper uses Social Network Analysis (SNA) to analyse the coping strategies of national minority political parties within Croatia and Serbia, attempting to understand how these parties view their political space and under what conditions they cooperate with populists and under what conditions they oppose populist politicians. More specifically, this paper analyses the evolution in strategies of political cooperation in the parliaments of Croatia and Serbia, the Sabor and Skupština respectively, to identify changes in response to rising populism. This analysis reveals that despite the virulent rhetoric and the politicization of ethnic issues during elections minority parties continue to be able to operate and accumulate influence at the elite level depending on their party size. Taken together this raises questions about the impact of populism on the political space and how politics functions in an era of polarization and conflict.

Keywords: *national minorities, elite networks, social network analysis, populism, europeanisation*

Introduction

From the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom, to the election of the Five Star Movement and Northern League in Italy, populist parties, politicians, and movements have begun to reshape the political landscape and affect politics in countries large and small. What has been the impact of this rising tide on the former Yugoslav region? This paper utilises a mixed methods approach involving Social Network Analysis (SNA) complemented by interviews to attempt to understand how the rising tide of populism has affected the political cooperation strategies of ethnic minority parties in Croatia and Serbia. In particular, the focus is on what if any changes in the political cooperation strategies of these parties has been in the parliaments of the two cases, the Sabor and Skupština respectively.

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Why this question, and why now? While there has been a blossoming of studies regarding the nature of populism, including Mudde's seminal work, studies helping to identify populist, or potentially populist, actors within the political space, identifying the underlying causes behind the populist surge, and examining populist parties impact on liberal democracy more widely, there has been a relative dearth of studies into how *non* populist parties react to the phenomenon. This relative lack of attention matters to understanding populism as a fact of modern political life as, while identifying and understanding any new force or movement in the first instance is crucial, failing to understand how other forces surrounding it are shaped by its existence leaves conceptual gaps.

In the region in question this is particularly pertinent given the recent violent impact of populism during the breakdown of Yugoslavia in the 1980's and 1990's helping to produce and reproduce narratives of historical repression of the nation and "people" by an "other", either pan-Yugoslav elites or foreigners. Despite the cataclysm of the wars in the 1990's each of the post-Yugoslav countries contains minority groups which are represented in parliament by various ethnically based parties. In line with bargaining theory and other rational choice approaches to political party competition, this paper investigates how these parties attempts to represent their interests have been affected by the rising tide of populism. Have minority Members of Parliament (MPs) been forced to change their patterns of political cooperation within the parliaments?

Case Selection

In line with the principles of comparative analysis, in particular the idea of a theory infirming/confirming case study, Croatia and Serbia were chosen because of their wealth of similarities and key differences. Both states emerged from the same socio-political unit, that of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. As part of said unified system their legal, economic, and political frameworks were, largely, analogous as they were governed by the same federal structure and shared in the same economic system: that of market socialism. While this system only lasted until the beginning of the Yugoslav wars both states have continued to share similar trajectories, despite the violent nature of their separation.

Throughout the 1990s, and under the leadership of President Franjo Tuđman, Croatia remained a presidential republic with a highly centralized power structure at its apex. The Tuđman era Croatian Democratic Party (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*, HDZ) won elections and maintained power through the promotion of a Croatian national identity to the exclusion of others. However, with the passing of Franjo Tuđman in 1999 and the election of Ivica Račan the government passed a new constitution which created a parliamentary republic. As part of these reforms

the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities was passed, guaranteeing representation for recognized national minorities within the Sabor. With the beginning of the return of refugees to the country, this created a situation where continued minority representation within the parliament was guaranteed.

On the other side of the war, Serbia also experienced a torturous route through the 1990s. While the toppling of war time president Slobodan Milošević in 2000, and the ejection from power of his Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socijalistička partija Srbije*, SPS), brought a brief lull in populist rhetoric and a brief moment of optimism the assassination in 2003 of Serbian Prime Minister Zora Đinđić by criminal elements within the state quickly brought the period of optimism to a close. The final dissolution of the rump State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006 coincided with the drafting of the post-Milošević constitution, and marked Serbia as on the path towards European integration along with the signing of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union in 2007.

Both states also continue to be populated by minority communities which were the targets of inter-ethnic, sometimes military scale, violence in the 1990s and who now have representatives in the legislatures. In Croatia ethnic Croats make up 90.42% of the population with ethnic Serbs making up 4.36% of the population and the remaining 5.22% of the population made up of a patchwork of other regional and ethnic affiliations. Collectively these parties have eight seats reserved for them within the 150 seat Sabor, with three seats reserved for the Serbian minority parties as it passes the 1.5% population threshold, and a further five seats reserved collectively for the remaining minority groups. In Serbia, ethnic Serbs also constitute 83.32% of the total population with the next largest group consisting of ethnic Hungarians (3.53%), Roma (2.05%), and Bosniaks (2.02%). Unlike in Croatia these groups do not have any reserved seats but, instead, parties representing them are not subject to Serbia's 5% electoral threshold during elections for the Skupština. This has guaranteed minorities variable representation in the Skupština, with a variance between 8 and 12 members of parliament per electoral cycle out of a total of 250.

Theory

For the purposes of this paper MPs are assumed to be rational actors who are seeking political power to achieve certain aims/goals for their members. In line with this, when faced with a dominant party in the system the parties must choose some response that will either augment their power or, at the very least, maintain their current power within the parliament to enable them to continue to best implement their party positions. Smaller parties then must choose among several options in order to implement this, attempting to leverage their potential power as kingmakers or key vote holders to complement or constrain the power of the dominant group.

The strategies available to the small parties in relation to the larger group can be divided as follows:

— opposition: a rejection of the demands and advances of the populist ruling party;

— co-existence: a moderate position vis a vis the populist party;

— co-option: joining with the populist party in government.

These options are in line with theory regarding coalition formation, with sufficient rewards (payoff) being required to bring possible coalition partners onside.

The game theoretical calculations involved in the choice of these strategies is also modified by the rhetoric and actions of the dominant, populist, party. Unlike other dominant parties, populist parties are marked by their emphasis on the "pure and good" people versus a corrupt elite, usually domestic but often as well including other forms of international organizations. Populist movements and groups within the region are operating also along an ethnic fault line due to the history of mixed ethnic communities in Central and Eastern Europe. This, then, adds in another factor to the populist "good" v. "evil" dichotomy: that of the "pure" nation and the "impure" outsiders, appending an "ethno-" to the "populist" label for regional parties.

Methodology

To address these questions this study uses Social Network Analysis (SNA) as the primary investigative tool. SNA as a method was developed in sociology to highlight the influence of connections between individuals in a network on selected outcomes, as opposed to more traditional hierarchical methods of organisation. As such SNA focuses the research on the types and quantities of ties which exist between various actors, or "nodes", within a network. Measuring these ties, their strength and frequency, allows for the computation of various standardized characteristics of networks which can be compared across cases and time. In addition, each node is ascribed values depending on their position within the network allowing for cross comparison of the relative network importance of the nodes. The comparison of the values of these nodes and network values allows for the identification of key actors during periods of change.

In this particular study the program GEPHI was used to generate the network maps and to compute the network values. While there are a large number of possible values only the following nodal values were chosen for analysis in this study:

— closeness centrality: length of the path between a node and every other node;

— betweenness centrality: number of shortest paths in the network that pass through a node;

— eigenvector centrality: measures not just the connections of the node in question but also incorporates how many connections the adjacent nodes possess.

Collectively these values can be used to measure the relative importance of a node to the network and, in turn, the relative power of the node. This is due to an understanding of power as an inter-relational trait: actors accumulate power through connections, through the ability to monitor the transfer of resources, and their ability to control or influence this transfer process. While, of course, this is dependent on the amount of resources the network has access to, with resourceless networks thus facing little to no competition for central positions, in organisations and institutions such as parliaments, which are the focus of study here, the ability to situate oneself centrally within the network thus enables actors to monitor or influence the distribution of resources on a national scale.

Data

Data was collected from the publicly available websites of the Croatian Sabor and Serbian Skupština for each electoral cycle from 2008. This provides a timeline of 2008-2016 for each of the countries, beginning with their 2008 elections and continuing through to the current parliamentary sessions. The 2015—2016 parliament in Croatia, however, was excluded from study due to its brief tenure. In addition to the names of MPs information was also collected on their party affiliation and membership of various committees and working groups. This information was then plugged into GEPHI and connections were drawn between the nodes depending on their shared membership in political parties, working groups, or committees. These ties were then weighted depending on their type, with the weighting determined by interviews conducted with current and former politicians. Tie weighting was determined based on results drawn from a frequency analysis of the various committees, with the committees meeting more frequently being weighted more highly than others, and due to the results of interviews conducted in the Serbia in two phases in 2019. The weighting of the ties is given in table 1 and the computed values, per cycle, is given in table 2.

Table 1 — Tie Weighting

Type	Croatia	Serbia
party membership/party group	1	1
club/party group	0.5	0.5
boards	0.25	0.25
election list	-	0.25
working group/delegation	-	0.15

Table 2 — Network Values

CROATIA			
Values	2008—2011	2011—2015	2016—Present
Av. Weighted Degree:	82.328	58.947	49.49
Diameter:	4	3	4
Graph Density:	0.964	0.683	0.613
Modularity:	0.42	0.434	0.357
Connected Components:	3	5	2
Av. Clustering Coefficient:	0.741	0.666	0.642
Av. Path Length:	1.485	1.618	1.672

SERBIA				
Values	2008—2012	2012—2014	2014—2016	2016—Present
Av. Weighted Degree:	85.526	57.843	120.995	78.612
Diameter:	2	3	3	3
Graph Density:	0.695	0.531	0.901	0.806
Modularity:	0.476	0.46	0.164	0.234
Connected Components:	1	1	4	2
Av. Clustering Coefficient:	0.607	0.609	0.74	0.743
Av. Path Length:	1.589	1.657	1.473	1.498

Analysis

Collectively this information illustrates trends in the structure and organisation of the two parliaments in question. The first measure of interest is the diameter of the networks, which fluctuate between two and three and three and four for the Skupština and Sabor respectively. Diameter for networks, as with the diameter for any geometric object, captures the maximum distance between the most distant connected nodes. The variation, while not particularly dramatic, is the first evidence of fluctuations in the unity within the parliaments with higher diameter scores representing increasing fragmentation within the parliaments.

In addition to the fluctuation in diameter the density of the graphs also changes with the fluctuation in party dominance reaching a peak of 0.901 in Serbia from 2014—2016, as the *Srpska Napredna Stranka* achieved almost total electoral dominance in the period, and the 2008—2011 period in Croatia, where the system solidified into two strong electoral lists with very few parliamentarians existing outside the two main masses resulting in a score of 0.964. The discrepancy between these two political systems, despite their similar density scores, is reflected in the modularity values which capture the existence of smaller in groups within the broader groups. The low score of 0.164 for Serbia 2014—2016 thus represents significantly lower amounts of sub-groups within that overall network, as compared with the 0.42 score in Croatia during the 2008—2011 period. However, while these overall network values are useful for providing broad insights the true answers lie with the individual values.

Table 3 — Croatian Minority MPs

Key: Cluster = Clustering Coefficient, BC = Betweenness Centrality, CC = Closeness Centrality,
EC = Eigenvector Centrality, WD = Weighted Degree, ☐ = Government Support, ▨ = Government

Member	2008–2011	Member	2011–2015	Member	2016–2018
Ratko Galjica (SDSS)	Cluster: 0.576 BC: 0.00199 CC: 0.6016 EC: 0.2149 WD: 17.25	Dragan Crnogorac (SDSS)	Cluster: 0.7 BC: 0.00064 CC: 0.5345 EC: 0.0609 WD: 11.5	Dragana Jeckov (SDSS)	Cluster: 0.485 BC: 0.00405 CC: 0.5709 EC: 0.1153 WD: 15.75
Mile Horvat (SDSS)	Cluster: 0.739 BC: 0.00015 CC: 0.5355 EC: 0.0969 WD: 9.0	Mile Horvat (SDSS)	Cluster: 0.584 BC: 0.00045 CC: 0.5269 EC: 0.0563 WD: 9.5	Boris Milošević (SDSS)	Cluster: 0.668 BC: 0.00078 CC: 0.5359 EC: 0.0878 WD: 12.75
Milorad Pupovac (SDSS)	Cluster: 0.738 BC: 0.00253 CC: 0.6741 EC: 0.4087 WD: 27.25	Milorad Pupovac (SDSS)	Cluster: 0.562 BC: 0.00284 CC: 0.5654 EC: 0.1898 WD: 16.25	Milorad Pupovac (SDSS)	Cluster: 0.529 BC: 0.00314 CC: 0.5820 EC: 0.1740 WD: 18.25
Zdenka Čuhnil	Cluster: 0.620 BC: 0.00086 CC: 0.5571 EC: 0.1382 WD: 11.0	Nedžad Hodžić (BDSH)	Cluster: 0.522 BC: 0.00221 CC: 0.5719 EC: 0.1255 WD: 12.75	Robert Janovics	Cluster: 0.549 BC: 0.00203 CC: 0.5687 EC: 0.1317 WD: 13.25
Nazif Memedi	Cluster: 0.643 BC: 0.00085 CC: 0.5634 EC: 0.1308 WD: 10.75	Šandor Juhas	Cluster: 0.547 BC: 0.00143 CC: 0.5547 EC: 0.1001 WD: 11.25	Ermina Lekaj Prljaskaj	Cluster: 0.468 BC: 0.00408 CC: 0.5820 EC: 0.1400 WD: 18.0
Furio Radin	Cluster: 0.829 BC: 0.00125 CC: 0.6453 EC: 0.3042 WD: 19.75	Furio Radin	Cluster: 0.646 BC: 0.00276 CC: 0.5951 EC: 0.1998 WD: 16.0	Furio Radin	Cluster: 0.673 BC: 0.01133 CC: 0.6008 EC: 0.2323 WD: 18.0
Deneš Šoja	Cluster: 0.610 BC: 0.00135 CC: 0.5634 EC: 0.0997 WD: 12.5	Vladimir Bilek (HNS-LD)	Cluster: 0.460 BC: 0.00636 CC: 0.5951 EC: 0.1837 WD: 30.25	Vladimir Bilek	Cluster: 0.524 BC: 0.00207 CC: 0.5539 EC: 0.0813 WD: 15
		Veljko Kajtazi	Cluster: 0.434 BC: 0.00445 CC: 0.5927 EC: 0.14722 WD: 18.25	Veljko Kajtazi	Cluster: 0.468 BC: 0.00408 CC: 0.5820 EC: 0.1171 WD: 18.0

Croatia

As shown in table 3, the individual values for Croatian MPs represents the evolution of the positionings of minority MPs throughout the period in question. As Croatia completed the process of EU accession party politics in the country moved from focusing on the ability of politicians to complete the "national mission" of EU accession, thus confirming the "Europeanness" of the Croatian national identity and on towards addressing domestic political problems. This created space for a reformation of the national political space, an opening into which populist parties moved particularly in the febrile atmosphere of the Eurozone crisis. In response to these movements the members of minority parties had to adapt their strategies of political representation and contestation. Throughout the period the relative positioning of members of the *Samostalna demokratska srpska stranka* (SDSS) decreased as the party moved out of coalition in the 2011—2015 period represented by a decrease in their weighted degree and centrality values. This is from a rather high peak, as the SDSS was in coalition with the ruling HDZ throughout the tenure of Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor, where two members of the SDSS (Mile Horvat and Milorad Pupovac) had clustering coefficients close to the parliamentary average and high centrality scores. These scores decreased when the SDSS left the coalition and took their place on the opposition benches.

However, all scores of all members of the SDSS did not collapse throughout the period in question. Mile Horvat and Milorad Pupovac raised their betweenness centrality scores, representing increased participation in parliamentary activity and the relative increase in their central positioning within the parliaments. This trend continued again into the 2016 parliament when the betweenness centrality score of Milorad Pupovac increased again along with his closeness centrality score, representing a further increase towards the centre of parliamentary politics.

This pales in comparison to values of Furio Radin, the representative for the Italian minority in the Sabor. As one of the longest standing members of the Sabor, representing the Italian minority community since 1992, Radin has also served on many of the key committees in the Sabor. His chairmanship of the Human Rights Committee since 2000 guarantees him a central position within the working of the Sabor. This is reflected in his high centrality scores, in particular eigenvector centrality, when compared with the relative scores of other minority MPs.

What can be learned from all of this in relation to the question at hand? It points to a relative resilience of minority parties in the face of rising populism. Despite the rise in incidents in the country targeting representatives of minority communities and a rising tide of nationalism in recent years, and a rising tide of populism at both the national and European level, MPs in Croatia appear to have adopt-

Table 4 — Serbian Minority MPs

Key: Cluster = Clustering Coefficient, BC = Betweenness Centrality, CC = Closeness Centrality,
EC = Eigenvector Centrality, WD = Weighted Degree,
▮ = Oposition, ▯ = Government Support, ▮ = Government

Member	2008–2012	Member	2012–2014	Member	2014–2016	Member	2016–Present
Fremond Árpád (SVM)	Cluster: 0.525 BC: 0.00215 CC: 0.6201 EC: 0.2711 WD: 31.5	Fremond Árpád (SVM)	Cluster: 0.685 BC: 0.00050 CC: 0.5583 EC: 0.2466 WD: 22.0	Fremond Árpád (SVM)	Cluster: 0.653 BC: 0.00185 CC: 0.6125 EC: 0.1649 WD: 31.25	Fremond Árpád (SVM)	Cluster: 0.660 BC: 0.00141 CC: 0.6509 EC: 0.2653 WD: 37.75
Elvira Kovács (SVM)	Cluster: 0.534 BC: 0.00201 CC: 0.6254 EC: 0.2887 WD: 32.25	Elvira Kovács (SVM)	Cluster: 0.522 BC: 0.00298 CC: 0.6368 EC: 0.4637 WD: 38.7	Elvira Kovács (SVM)	Cluster: 0.621 BC: 0.00425 CC: 0.6749 EC: 0.3008 WD: 49.2	Elvira Kovács (SVM)	Cluster: 0.678 BC: 0.00092 CC: 0.6359 EC: 0.2807 WD: 37.25
Dr Balint Pásztor (SVM)	Cluster: 0.619 BC: 0.00093 CC: 0.5952 EC: 0.2588 WD: 28.5	Dr Balint Pásztor (SVM)	Cluster: 0.590 BC: 0.00143 CC: 0.5971 EC: 0.3398 WD: 30.0	Dr Balint Pásztor (SVM)	Cluster: 0.729 BC: 0.00140 CC: 0.5889 EC: 0.1855 WD: 32.0	Dr Balint Pásztor (SVM)	Cluster: 0.767 BC: 0.00029 CC: 0.5863 EC: 0.2163 WD: 28.0
Lászlo Várga (SVM)	Cluster: 0.619 BC: 0.00093 CC: 0.5952 EC: 0.2588 WD: 28.5	Lászlo Várga (SVM)	Cluster: 0.720 BC: 0.00045 CC: 0.5596 EC: 0.2294 WD: 27.75	Lászlo Várga (SVM)	Cluster: 1.0 BC: 0.0 CC: 0.4554 EC: 0.00823 WD: 7.5		
		Zoltán Pék (SVM)	Cluster: 0.614 BC: 0.00077 CC: 0.5633 EC: 0.2399 WD: 22.5	Zoltán Pék (SVM)	Cluster: 0.630 BC: 0.00305 CC: 0.6586 EC: 0.2372 WD: 40.5	Zoltán Pék (SVM)	Cluster: 0.722 BC: 0.00043 CC: 0.6049 EC: 0.2116 WD: 28.5
				Anamarija Viček (SVM)	Cluster: 0.622 BC: 0.00341 CC: 0.6621 EC: 0.2717 WD: 47.25		

Petar Kuntić (DSHV)	Cluster: 0.666 BC: 0.001579 CC: 0.6687 EC: 0.4530 WD: 55.5	Petar Kuntić (DSHV)	Cluster: 0.572 BC: 0.00171 CC: 0.6241 EC: 0.5102 WD: 45.25			Tomislav Žigmanov (DSHV)	Cluster: 0.669 BC: 0.00078 CC: 0.5849 EC: 0.1493 WD: 20.25
Riza Halimi (PZDD)	Cluster: 0.542 BC: 0.00241 CC: 0.6416 EC: 0.3029 WD: 31.5	Riza Halimi (-)	Cluster: 1.0 BC: 0.0 CC: 0.45772 EC: 0.0104 WD: 5.5	Riza Halimi (PDD)	Cluster: 0.654 BC: 0.00077 CC: 0.6079 EC: 0.1623 WD: 27.0	Fatmir Hasani (PDD)	Cluster: 0.782 BC: 0.00019 CC: 0.5701 EC: 0.1245 WD: 16.5
Barjam Omeragić (SLPS)	Cluster: 0.548 BC: 0.00217 CC: 0.6453 EC: 0.3311 WD: 33.0			Šaip Kamberi (PDD)	Cluster: 0.701 BC: 0.00056 CC: 0.60643 EC: 0.1783 WD: 27.5	Prof. Dr Jahja Fehratović (SPP)	Cluster: 0.0 BC: 0.0 CC: 0.3498 EC: 0.0005 WD: 1.25
		Emir Elfić (BDZ)	Cluster: 1.0 BC: 0.0 CC: 0.4577 EC: 0.0104 WD: 5.5	Dr Sulejman Ugljanin (SDA)	Cluster: 0.916 BC: 0.00004 CC: 0.5385 EC: 0.0612 WD: 12.25	Dr Muamer Zukorlić (SPP)	Cluster: 0.911 BC: 0.008 CC: 0.5368 EC: 0.0571 WD: 9.5
		Bajro Gegić (SDA)	Cluster: 1.0 BC: 0.0 CC: 0.4577 EC: 0.0106 WD: 6.5	Sabina Dazdarević (SDA)	Cluster: 0.605 BC: 0.00149 CC: 0.6499 EC: 0.1996 WD: 35.2	Bajro Gegić (SDA)	Cluster: 0.688 BC: 0.00062 CC: 0.6093 EC: 0.1985 WD: 25.75
Esad Džudćević (BDSS)	Cluster: 0.531 BC: 0.00235 CC: 0.6423 EC: 0.3064 WD: 32.0	Enis Imamović (SDA)	Cluster: 1.0 BC: 0.0 CC: 0.4577 EC: 0.106 WD: 6.5	Enis Imamović (SDA)	Cluster: 0.713 BC: 0.00042 CC: 0.5833 EC: 0.1430 WD:21.85	Enis Imamović (SDA)	Cluster: 0.688 BC: 0.00084 CC: 0.6294 EC: 0.2704 WD: 32.25

ed a "wait and see" approach, attempting to maintain their positions close to the centres of power within the parliaments without engaging with populist parties or attempting to build wider coalitions against them. This strategy of co-existence without co-option by the majority appears to have worked in the case of Croatia in terms of preserving pure network and parliamentary influence.

Serbia

Table 4 shows the individual values of Serbian minority MPs during the period in question. Initially, under the premiership of Mirko Cvetković, all minority parties were supportive of the government if not actively taking part in the governing coalition. This is represented by the relatively high WD measures of the minority representatives across the board. While none come close to the network wide average of 85.526, their scores are generally higher during this point than in subsequent sessions. Collectively, the minority MPs in Serbia appear to have adopted all possible strategies in relation to the changes taking place within the Serbian political space: confrontation, co-existence, and co-option.

From the first to the second sessions in question two parties move from support into opposition: SVM and DSHV. While this shift led to a decrease in the centrality of some actors in the network it did not signify a decrease for all members of the parties: Petar Kuntić, of the DSHV, increased both his EC and BC by moving to the opposition benches as did Elvira Kovacs and Dr Balint Pasztor, of the SVM. Thus, for these individuals, moving to oppositional positions allowed them to move into more central positions in the new parliament rather than being subsumed by the rise of the SNS. This was confirmed in interviews where the oppositional stance was, at least initially, confirmed as valuable for minority MPs as it allowed them to leverage their opposition to gain power in committees before returning to cooperation later. The opposite was true in the cases of the minority MPs who opted for co-option by joining the SNS led ruling coalition as Rezi Halimi, running as an independent in 2012, saw a dramatic decline in all of his measures as did the new Bosniak MPs, Barjo Gegić and Enis Imamović, who took over for the now defunct BDSS and SLPS in the parliament.

Conclusions and Further Research

What can be learned from the comparison of both cases? First and foremost, is that despite the targeting of minorities by individuals on the ground and in populist rhetoric, seeking to exclude the minorities from the collective "people", there has not been a systematic exclusion of the minority representatives from collective decision-making networks. This is surprising given the nature and structure of populist discourse, and the specific history of the countries in question with a very recent his-

tory of active military conflict against the very ethnic groups represented by these MPs. That such a discourse still offers space for cooperation, and not just cooperation but even for the accumulation of power while in opposition, does challenge, to an extent, the idea that the populists represent a threat to the *de facto* liberal democracy within a state. While clearly the populist movements and parties represent threats to the *de jure* apparatus of the liberal state, through state capture of institutions or assaults on the freedom of the press, there appears to still be opportunities for these minority MPs to preserve and increase their power within the parliaments. A surprising result, given the relatively recent ethnic violence and the generally "exclusive" nature of populist parties in Europe.

Party size also appears to be a factor in determining the rate of co-option of minority MPs. The SVM in Serbia has managed to accumulate power in the parliament despite not joining explicitly with the SNS in coalition, instead using its heft to preserve influence within the parliament. Smaller minority parties have instead opted for co-option, joining in with the populist majority. Unfortunately for them, this does not seem to have preserved their power in parliament as they have simply been subsumed into the wider mass without preserving their influence. This then raises questions of why they were subsumed? One answer which was raised during field work was that the populists were a more effective ruling block than other previous governing coalitions, something that came up in the interviews. Seeing the penalties imposed via exclusion could also have been a motivating factor, or that the smaller groups were offered something within the parliament, or that they simply agree with the overall political program of the majority party. Given the small sample size of this study it is not possible to say at this point but, even with the limited data gathered here, it appears there is still much to understand about how populism affects the political landscape of countries as complex as those in the region.

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