

**It is the Logic of Dominant Party Systems that Matters: Revisiting
the Case of Montenegro**

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Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the puzzle of almost three decades of lack of alternation in governance in Montenegro from the perspective of dominant party systems. I argue that the current scholarship, by focusing mostly on individual-level and party-level explanations, still does not provide a complete insight into the case. Therefore, relying on the theory of the logic of dominant party systems I argue that the case of Montenegro is not peculiar as the current literature suggests but represents a typical example of the dominant party system which has a recognizable set of syndromes that manifest through the cycles of dominance which I explore. In my research, I rely on theory-testing process tracing method: first, I deduce the theory on the logic of dominant party systems from the overall literature, then I define the suggested causal mechanism, and finally, I turn to the step-wise analysis of the empirical data. The analysis shows that the Montenegrin dominant party system went through two cycles of dominance (1990-2001 and 2002-2015) and is currently awaiting the outcome of the third cycle (2016 – up to date). Although the regime type changed from authoritarian (1990-1997) to democratic (1998-2015) and back to authoritarian (2016-up to date), the theorized mechanism still applies indicating the primary importance of the suggested logic of dominant party systems.

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List of Abbreviations

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Original full name</i>	<i>Translation</i>
DF	Demokratski front	Democratic Front
DK	Demokratska koalicija	Democratic Coalition
DPS	Demokratska partija socijalista	Democratic Party of Socialists
DSCG	Demokratski savez u Crnoj Gori	Democratic Alliance in Montenegro
DSS	Demokratska srpska stranka	Democratic Serb Party
DUA	Demokratska unija Albanaca	Democratic Union of Albanians
HGI	Hrvatska građanska inicijativa	Croatian Civic Initiative
LSCG	Liberalni savez Crne Gore	Liberal Alliance of Montenegro
NOVA	Nova srpska demokratija	New Serb Democracy
NS	Narodna stranka	People's Party
PCG	Pozitivna Crna Gora	Positive Montenegro
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional	Institutional Revolutionary Party
PzP	Pokret za promjene	Movement for Changes
SD	Socijaldemokrate Crne Gore	Social Democrats of Montenegro
SDA	Stranka demokratske akcije	Party of Democratic Action
SDP (also SDPCG)	Socijaldemokratska partija	Social Democratic Party
SKCG	Savez komunista Crne Gore	League of Communists of Montenegro
SNP	Socijalistička narodna partija	Socialist People's Party
SNS	Srpska narodna stranka	Serb People's Party
SPS	Socijalistička partija Srbije	Socialist Party of Serbia
SRSJ	Savez reformskih snaga za Jugoslaviju	Alliance of Reformist Forces for Yugoslavia
SRS	Srpska radikalna stranka	Serb Radical Party
URA	Ujedinjena Reformska Akcija	United Reform Action

Introduction

Twenty-nine years after the collapse of communism and the acceptance of multi-party competition, Montenegro still awaits the key test of democracy, the periodic alternation in government. This phenomenon puzzled scholars for a long time: some described this as “enigma” (Komar and Zivkovic 2016) and “thought-provoking” (Vukovic 2015). Although new contributions are still being made, the political science literature on Montenegro remains scarce and focused mostly on case-specific explanations of preserved dominance of DPS that is still in power. For the purposes of theoretical clarity, I will argue that the phenomena of one-party dominance, in general, can be analyzed at three different levels: (1) individual – focusing on voting behavior; (2) party – focusing on individual political parties (most often the dominant party itself) ; and (3) system – analyzing, according to Sartori’s (2005, 39) famous definition, a set of patterned interactions among political parties - in this case the dominant party system. The scholarship on Montenegro, then, could be divided into two main approaches: (1) individual-level explanations focusing on voting behavior; and (2) party-level explanations focusing on the evolution and success of the ruling DPS. In this thesis, I aim to fill in the gap by providing a system-level explanation of the case.

The most salient explanation of one-party dominance in Montenegro focuses on the importance of social cleavages and their influence on voting behavior. According to this approach, the most powerful explanatory factor is the old ethnic division stimulated by historical events related to the so-called “Statehood issue”. The division dates to the beginning of 20th century when the conflict between “Greens” and “Whites” emerged over the status of Montenegro and its relations with neighboring Serbia, with the former supporting the Independence and the latter advocating unification. The roots of the conflict can be found at the end of the First World War in 1918, when the so-called “Podgorica Assembly” was organized by the pro-Unionist forces and with the help of the Serbian army - the result was a forceful integration of Montenegro into

the newly formed Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Sukovic 2006; see also Roberts 2007). Scholars argue that this ethnic division between Serbs and Montenegrins presents the main factor which explains the preserved dominance of the ruling DPS (Komar 2013; Komar and Zivkovic 2016; Stankov 2016). The ethnic voter-party linkage theory was also put to an experimental test (Stankov 2016). However, although the results within the Montenegrin sample provide support for the hypotheses related to the ethnic voter-party linkage, they remain inconclusive for the sample of Serbs (Stankov 2016, 68). This is somewhat similar to inconclusive experimental results in the case of testing the effects of anxiety on in-group bias in ethnically divided societies – the student sample showed that although the bias was detected in case of Montenegrins within the sample, the same did not occur within the sample of Serbs (Batricevic 2015). These experimental studies appear unconvincing as both show inconclusive results and fail to provide solid evidence for the claim that ethnic cleavage is the major factor explaining voting behavior. Scholars within this stream of the literature have also argued that there is an additional factor that can contribute to explaining the Montenegrin “enigma” – the so-called image of invincibility, i.e. the voters’ belief that the dominant party will win no matter what (Komar and Zivkovic 2016). However, the image of invincibility itself reveals little if one does not know how the dominant party built that image over time and whether that image was particularly important during one and less important during another period. Most importantly, long-term rule does not provide advantages automatically – it also creates a series of challenges for the dominant party (Pempel 1990, 353). Finally, it was shown that authoritarian submission as a psychological factor plays a role in explaining the preserved dominance of DPS (Davidovic 2018). However, even this explanation suffers from the simple fact that society’s traditions and characteristics change over time, which is of special importance for understanding dominant party systems. Davidovic herself concludes that the results of the survey data analysis for the sample of educated youth, although still significant, show that “educated youth is generally less

submissive and are less supportive of 'unquestionable' respect to political authority" (Davidovic 2018, 72).

The other stream in the literature on “Montenegrin puzzle” analyzes the case from the perspective of political parties. For example, Vukovic (2014, 2015) argues that the focus should be on the dominant party and suggests that it is: (1) the party’s high level of institutionalization during the first elections; and (2) the political transformation from the supporter of union with Serbia to Montenegrin Independence that preserved the dominance of DPS. In order to test his hypotheses, Vukovic employs process tracing and analyzes how the dominant party developed from first multi-party elections up to date. Although an important novelty in approaching the case of Montenegro, the work of Vukovic remains focused only on the dominant party and the case-specific “formula for success” (Vukovic 2015, 89). Most importantly, this approach neglects the role of other actors in the system.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no attempts to explain the case of Montenegro from the system-level perspective, analyzing the mechanism of the dominant party system. Therefore, I argue that the current scholarship on Montenegro still does not provide a complete insight into the case. For example, although the ethnic cleavage plays an important role, I claim it is just a part of the bigger picture and certainly not as “all that matters” as Stankov (2016) claims. The ruling party did not own the “Montenegrin issue” since the very establishment of the dominant party system – owning this issue came as a strategy later and was combined with a set of policies aimed at reconstructing the Montenegrin identity frame. Furthermore, if the ethnic cleavage is all that matters, as the literature on Montenegro suggests, then one cannot explain the most recent multiplication and rise of the so-called “civic opposition” parties, which evade positioning themselves on “the Statehood issue” and instead focus on issues of democratization, crime and corruption. For example, a coalition of two recently formed civic opposition parties won twice as many votes compared to the so-called “traditional opposition” in the 2018 local

elections in the country's capital, Podgorica.¹ This result is very important given that Podgorica is Montenegro's economic, educational and cultural hub and a city with a growing population. Most importantly, the ethnic cleavage approach is insufficient for explaining the most recent civic resistance movement organizing series of mass protests and civic disobedience activities with the support of all opposition parties as a response to the most recent corruption scandal that hit the dominant party. It appears, then, that Montenegro acts according to a broader "logic of dominant party model" (Arian and Barnes 1974, 596) where regimes age and epochal events, such as state-building process, slowly fade into memory creating an opportunity for change (Levite and Tarrow 1983, 299).

I aim to contribute to the existing literature by taking a system-level approach to explore possible additional explanations of the Montenegrin case and connect it to the literature on dominant party systems. I ask the following question: What explains the lack of alternation in governance in Montenegro? To answer the research question, I use the theory-testing process-tracing method (Beach and Pedersen 2013): first, I review the literature on one-party dominance in order to deduce the theory of dominant party systems; second, I operationalize the causal mechanism; and finally, I turn to empirical evidence in order to test the suggested mechanism of dominant party systems in the case of Montenegro.

I see potential not only to contribute to the literature on Montenegro, but also to the literature on dominant party systems in general. The current research in the field, to the best of my knowledge, (still) has not reached a consensus on what the underlying mechanisms of dominant party systems are, what the main phases of the system's development and what the possible outcomes are. Most importantly, the key concepts of dominant party and dominant party system

¹ Coalition named "Ljudi za 21. vijek" (*People for 21st Century*, translation mine) won 25.85%, while the political alliance composed mainly of conservative pro-Serb parties called Democratic Front won 12.2 % of the total votes in Podgorica (<http://www.izbori2018.me/#/lokalni-izbori>). The coalition "Ljudi za 21. vijek" was formed by two civic parties: Civic Movement URA and Democratic Montenegro.

are often mixed, with scholars usually referring to the former but also providing insight into the latter. Therefore, following Sartori's (1976, 2005) seminal contribution to the scholarship on party systems, I also argue that there needs to be a clear distinction between the (dominant) party and the party system.

To completely understand what Arian and Barnes (1974) call “the logic of dominant party model”, I will compile theoretical concepts from several important contributions in the field. Among these different approaches, I argue that what I term *the cycle theory* of one-party dominance offers a good starting point because of the concept of “virtuous cycle of dominance” which has clearly identifiable phases of development (Pempel 1990), while the *resource-based* (Greene 2007, 2008, 2010) and what I refer to as *legitimacy theory* (Levite and Tarrow 1983; Di Palma 1990) provide important amendments to the cycle theory. Building upon these efforts, I present my own theory of the logic of dominant party systems with an aim to offer a more comprehensive framework for the analysis of dominant party systems.

The thesis is structured as follows: in Chapter 1, I briefly discuss the case selection and methodology. In Chapter 2, I define the key concepts and review theories of one-party dominance that explain the phenomena from the system-level perspective. This theoretical review helps me develop what I refer to as *the theory of the logic of dominant party systems* which rests mainly on cycle theory, but also includes amendments from the resource-based and the theory of legitimacy. Then, following the logic of my theoretical model, in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 I turn to the step-wise analysis of empirical evidence from Montenegro and analyze three cycles of dominance. In Chapter 3, I explore the development of the first cycle of dominance under mostly authoritarian rule (1990-2001). Then, in Chapter 4, I explore the second cycle of dominance (2002-2015), which reveals how the dominance was preserved under the democratic regime with the help of ideology and resources. Finally, Chapter 5 is dedicated to the most recent, third cycle of dominance (2016 – up to date) in which the dominant party, amid major

corruption scandals and decreased dominance, switched back to authoritarian strategies of preserving power.

Chapter 1 – Method and case selection

I have decided to focus on the case of Montenegro for two reasons. First, as I have stated previously, the current scholarship Montenegro by focusing on individual and party-level explanations still does not provide the full explanation of why there is a lack of alternation in governance. In addition, scholars consider Montenegro “enigmatic” case due to the fact that one party is still in power. However, I claim that it is not a peculiar case but the typical example of dominant party system for which I expect the suggested theoretical model to apply. Second, the case of Montenegro, due to its oscillations between dominant party authoritarian and dominant party democratic system presents a great opportunity to test the expectation that the suggested broader logic applies independently of regime type. In the following two sections I briefly discuss the regime type classification and the method used for empirical analysis.

1.1 Regime type

In classifying regime type, I will follow Bogaards' (2004) suggestion on using Freedom House scores where applicable, but also argue that for what I consider to be third cycle of DPS dominance one needs to be more conservative than Freedom House. Given that Freedom House provides scores and status of electoral democracy for Montenegro only since 2006, I will follow the consensus in the literature on Montenegro that takes the 1998 elections (after the dominant party split) to be the first mostly free and fair elections (Goati 2001, 153; Pavicevic 2007, 46-47; Darmanovic 2007, 92). Although Freedom House rates Montenegro as “electoral democracy” from 2006 up to date, I consider the regime after the 2016 parliamentary elections to be of authoritarian nature. I will support this argument mainly with my own empirical data in Chapter 5, but here I shall note that international scoring databases on Montenegro too pick up the negative trend since the dominant party survival after 2013-2015 crisis period. For

example, FH *Freedom in the World* data on Montenegro show decline in all three components of electoral democracy: electoral process, political rights and civil liberties² (figure 1).

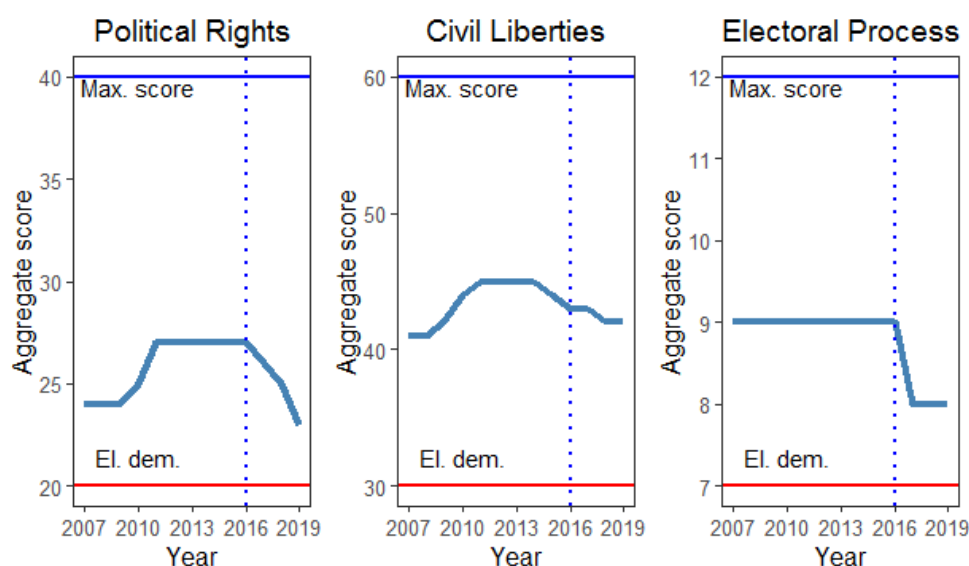


Figure 1. Freedom House electoral democracy components for Montenegro.

Source: Data from *Freedom in the World Data and Resources* (Freedom House 2018), *Freedom in the World 2019 report: Montenegro* (Freedom House 2019).

Note: Electoral democracy minimum requirements: (1) Electoral Process – 7/12, (2) Political Rights – 20/40, and since 2016 (3) Civil Liberties – 30/60.

Another database on democracy, *The Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index*, shows that Montenegro made a backslide to hybrid regime in 2016. According to this database, in hybrid regimes:

Elections have substantial irregularities that often prevent them from being both free and fair. Government pressure on opposition parties and candidates may be common. Serious weaknesses are more prevalent than in flawed democracies (...) (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2018a, 49)

² Civil liberties became the third component of “electoral democracy” after 2016 methodology review.

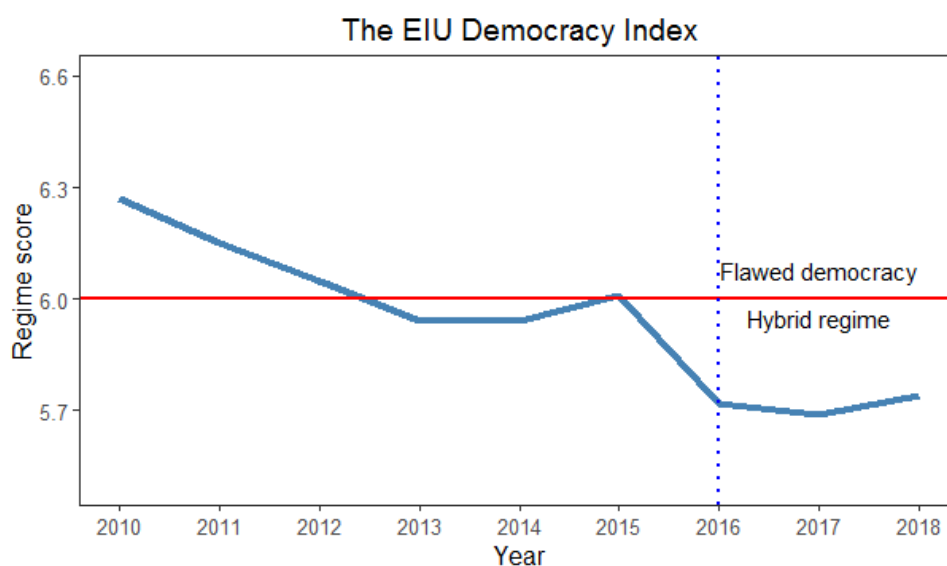


Figure 2. The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index: data for Montenegro.

Source: Data from The Economist Intelligence Unit (2018).

Note: Regimes between 6 and 7.9 are considered Flawed democracies, while those between 4 and 5.9 are Hybrid regimes.

Therefore, for the rest of my analysis I will consider the nature of the Montenegrin dominant party system as authoritarian during the 1990-1997 period, democratic during the 1998-2015 period and authoritarian during the most recent, third cycle of dominance (2016- up to date).

1.2 Method

For the purpose of testing the causal mechanism I introduce in the theory chapter, I will use the theory-testing process-tracing method (Beach and Pedersen 2013). As stated previously, theory-testing process-tracing deduces the theory from the overall literature and then relies on evidence from a particular case in order to test whether the proposed causal mechanism was in place (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 3). More precisely, theory-testing process-tracing method involves three steps: (1) conceptualizing the causal mechanism; (2) collecting empirical evidence; and (3) step-wise empirical analysis which will serve to reveal whether the suggested mechanism was present or not in the case and whether it functioned as expected (Beach and Pedersen 2013, 14).

In the step-wise analysis of the empirical evidence, I will rely mostly on secondary data that includes historical reviews of the analyzed period; expert reports; and archival material (newspapers, audio and video material). The events I focus on can serve as indicators for each phase of the suggested theoretical model of the dominant party systems. I will argue that the Montenegrin dominant party system went through two cycles of dominance (1990-2001 and 2002-2015) and after the most recent crisis is awaiting the outcome of the third cycle (2016- up to date). During the whole period, both primary attributes for identifying dominant party systems are present: unimodal concentration of power and limited alternation in Government. Regarding the secondary attributes, the Montenegrin dominant party system is (currently) continuous in its duration, while the format changed from single-party (1990-1997) to coalitional (1998 up to date).

Chapter 2 – Dominant parties and Dominant party systems

In this chapter, I present key concepts that I will use in my analysis and the theories that present the system-level explanations of the one-party dominance focusing on: (1) the cycle (or mechanism) of dominance; (2) resource advantages; and (3) the struggle for legitimacy. Among the presented theories, I consider the cycle theory as the most important starting point in studying dominant party systems because of the idea that dominant party systems have clearly identifiable phases of development: (1) the establishment; (2) the maintenance; and (3) the crises, which might or might not end the rule of the dominant party. However, because cycle theory does not offer a complete review of each phase, I will include the resource-based and legitimacy theory which will provide useful amendments. This extensive theoretical review will allow me to compile all relevant concepts that will become essential parts of what I will call, according to the seminal contribution by Arian and Barnes (1974), *The Logic of Dominant Party Systems*. In addition, and following the arguments by Friedman and Wong (2008), I claim that my theoretical model applies not only to democratic but also authoritarian regimes of dominant parties, with regime type being important for specific phases of development but not for the overall logic of the dominant party systems.

2.1 The Dominant Party and the Dominant Party System

In a seminal contribution to the scholarship on parties and party systems, Giovanni Sartori (1976 [2005]) calls for making a distinction between the party and the party system. Most importantly, in his discussion on why “one-party systems” cannot be considered as party systems, Sartori (2005, 39) argues that for a system to exist, two criteria must be met: (1) the system contains its own properties that cannot be solely attributed to its components; and (2) the system consists of a set of patterned interaction among its components, with these interactions being the boundaries of the system.

In his famous typology, Sartori (2005, 112) distinguishes between the hegemonic party and the predominant party system. The key difference is that the hegemonic party allows existence of opposition parties only as satellites (hence, no real interaction that would satisfy the system typology criteria), while in the predominant party system there is real competition where the single party manages to govern alone by winning electoral majority and not being subjected to alternation (ibid).

However, Sartori's seminal framework for the analysis of parties and party systems is flawed exactly in the field of defining the dominant party system. Sartori's concept of "predominant party system", as Nwokora and Pelizzo (2014) show, is taken out of his original framework, causing the concept to be avoided by scholars and creating confusion in the literature with scholars using different concepts to describe the same phenomena. Most importantly, Sartori's criteria for identifying the predominant party system help identify only obvious cases of one-party dominance (Nwokora and Pelizzo 2014, 824). Therefore, in defining the concept of the dominant party system, I will rely on Nwokora and Pelizzo's (2014) amendments to Sartori's work. According to them, the dominant party system is a radial category, which has two primary and three secondary attributes (Nwokora and Pelizzo 2014, 828). The primary attributes necessary for identifying the dominant party systems are: (1) *unimodal concentration of power*, and (2) *limited power alternation*; while the secondary attributes are: (a) *format* (single vs coalitional), (b) *duration* (continuous vs interrupted), and (c) *integration* (national and sub-national vs regional) (ibid, italics mine).

In defining the concept of the dominant party, I will follow Dunleavy's definition:

- 1) It is seen as exceptionally effective by voters, so that it is set apart from all other parties.
- 2) It consequently has an extensive 'core' or protected area of the ideological space, within which no other party can compete effectively for voters' support.

3) At the basic minimum level of effectiveness that voters use to judge whether to participate or not, the lead party has a wider potential appeal to more voters than its rivals. (Dunleavy 2010, 24)

2.2 Dominant Party Authoritarian vs Dominant Party Democratic System

In an important contribution to the literature on dominant party systems, Bogaards (2004) brings back Sartori's typology of party systems and calls for introducing an important distinction between dominant party systems based on the nature of the regime. According to this approach, for understanding dominant party systems it is important to differentiate between *dominant party democratic* and *dominant party authoritarian systems* (Bogaards 2004, 178). The distinction is important as the strategies used to maintain dominance significantly differ in the two types of regimes: in authoritarian regimes the dominant party relies on non-democratic practices to limit competition thereby making alternation in government hardly possible (Bogaards 2004, 178); while in democratic regimes the dominant party has to compete with its rivals who have "ample opportunities for open and effective dissent" (Sartori 2005, 177).

I agree with Bogaard's (2004) suggestions regarding the importance of introducing regime type into the analysis of dominant party systems. However, I claim that the regime type matters for specific phases of dominance and not for the general logic of dominant party systems, which will be described later. Here, I follow the argument by a group of scholars in a book edited by Friedman and Wong (2008) that dominant parties in both democracies and autocracies face the possibility of losing after which the transformative processes within the party and the system are unleashed, while the major difference is seen in how they respond to crises: whether they crush their opponents or accept the defeat. Following this line of argument, I will now move on to the theory review which I begin with what can be called, following Pempel's (1990) contribution, "the cycle theory."

2.3 The Cycle of Dominance

Probably the most interesting aspect of dominant party systems inviting further research is the claim that they have dynamics of their own (Arian and Barnes 1974; Nyblade 2004; Dunleavy 2010), the so-called “virtuous cycle of dominance” (Pempel 1990, 16). The theory suggests that the mechanism of one-party dominance has a clearly identifiable beginning, maintenance and crisis phase followed by a post-crisis period which might or might not be marked by the end of dominance (Pempel 1990, 340-341; Friedman and Wong 2008, 4-5). Under the umbrella of this theory, one can also include approaches based on analyzing maintenance and demise of dominance (Dunleavy 2010) and exploring the mechanism of dominance in three arenas: electoral, parliamentary and governmental (Boucek 1998).

2.3.1 The Beginning of Domination

According to the cycle theory, dominance can be traced back to a clear beginning, the so-called “mobilization crisis” (Pempel 1990, 340-343) – a major event, or series of events that facilitated the establishment of dominance. The dominance, therefore, is established at a critical juncture - in most cases it is a regime change; a war or the end of it; a state-founding process; or an economic crisis. Simply put, the root of dominance is not in “normalcy” (Pempel 1990, 343). For example, in Italy and Japan it was the end of war that preceded the formation of the dominant party system; in Israel, India and Malaysia it was the state-building process and fight for independence; while in Mexico it was a revolution. The presented list of events is of course not exhaustive, but the indication should be clear - it has to be a major social change that shakes and gives “a new roll to nation’s political dice” (Pempel 1990, 342).

2.3.2 The Maintenance of Domination

Once in motion, the mechanism of one-party dominance needs systematic attention to maintenance of dominance, i.e. a set of mutually reinforcing processes that will allow the system to continue to function (Pempel 1990, 16; see also Boucek 1998; Dunleavy 2010).

Maintaining dominance requires preserving the dominant position in three arenas: electoral, parliamentary and executive (Boucek 1998). The dominance is maintained through material and symbolic means (Pempel 1990, 346); by building clientelist networks and investing in preference shaping strategies (Dunleavy 2010); and by manipulating institutions of political system (Boucek 1998). This includes both harvesting the benefits of institutional and exogenous factors, such as the type of electoral system or social cleavages, but also having an influence on them.

Material means of maintaining dominance include the development of patronage networks and filtering inputs from particular segments of society. Symbolic appeals are important in maintaining traditional support and gathering new loyalists – dominant parties manipulate traditional symbols and utilize instruments of political socialization in order to solidify their support and undermine the support for their opponents (Pempel 1990, 346-351).

Finally, maintenance of dominance also requires manipulation of electoral institutions, which will, in turn, affect parliamentary dominance and this will then affect executive dominance (Boucek 1998). Altogether, this establishes “an interrelated set of mutually reinforcing processes that have the potential to beget even more dominance” (Pempel 1990, 16). However, this “machinery”, as we will see, is not perfect: it eventually wears itself out and the system enters the phase of crisis (Pempel 1990; Dunleavy 2010).

2.3.3 The Crises of Domination

Although one-party dominance may appear as a *perpetuum mobile*, it is far from being so. Duverger was probably first to describe this phenomenon by arguing that “the dominant party wears itself out in office, it loses its vigour, its arteries harden” (1954, 312). Therefore, to understand dominance, one need not only understand the creation of the dominance cycle, but also its demise (Nyblade 2004; see also Dunleavy 2010).

Maintaining dominance for a long period is a difficult task given that society changes over time and new issues, groups and orientations emerge (Pempel 1990, 348; Boucek 1998; Dunleavy 2010). Dominant party's attempts to outspend on preference-shaping strategies and invest into clientelist networks can prove devastating as they eventually slide the system into corruption affairs, erode the support for the dominant party and create a chance for coordinated opposition efforts (Dunleavy 2010, 36).

Apart from corruption affairs, an important factor causing crises of domination is factionalism (Boucek 1998; Boucek 2012). As Boucek (2012, 37-38) shows, the long-lasting success of dominant parties appears also as the source of their demise as it provides incentives for factional splits and party implosion due to the increased demand for resources within the party, emergence of conflicting ideological and policy claims, and increasing gap between party and individualist goals.

2.3.4 Post-crisis period and consequences of long-term dominance

After the crisis shakes the system, the dominant party is still in a position to re-invent itself to maintain dominance. Friedman and Wong (2008, 4-5) show that what happens after the crisis depends much on dominant party's willingness to accept the defeat, which will in turn affect its willingness to accept democracy. To survive, dominant parties can re-invent their identity, re-configure party appeal, change policy platform or reorganize internally (Friedman and Wong 2008, 5). Since the long-term dominance permits them to become deeply entrenched into the system, even if they fail, dominant parties can count on the effect of "nostalgia" of past times: as shown in the case of Mexico, the former dominant party made an electoral comeback due to its ability to attract older generation of voters who counted on governing experience of PRI to return the era of economic and political stability and partly due to the voters' fatigue with the incumbent party (Serra 2013). Therefore, the end of dominance is one outcome of the crisis

phase, while survival and return to governing position are the other two options (Friedman and Wong 2008, 5).

2.4 Resource-based theory

Another approach to explaining dominant party systems is the resource theory (Greene 2007; Greene 2010). The importance of the resource theory is that it can provide an essential amendment to the maintenance and crisis phases suggested by the cycle theory by exploring the role of resources and patronage networks in dominant party systems as well as concrete strategies dominant parties rely on to maintain their dominance (Greene 2007, 33). The basic argument of resource-based theory can be summarized in the following claim:

(...) challenger party competitiveness is primarily determined by two types of dominant party advantages: the incumbent's resource advantages and its ability to raise the costs of participation in the opposition. Dramatic resource advantages allow the incumbent to outspend on campaigns, deploy legions of canvassers, and, most importantly, to supplement policy appeals with patronage goods that bias voters in their favor. (Greene 2007, 5)

The theory suggests, then, that the so-called *hyper-incumbency advantages* are key to understanding dominant party systems, both of democratic and authoritarian nature (Greene 2010). These hyper-incumbency advantages are gained through:

- 1) Diverting funds from state-owned enterprises;
- 2) Using a huge public sector as a resource of patronage jobs;
- 3) Making domestic business rely on "pay to play" strategy to survive; and
- 4) By transforming public agencies into campaign headquarters that provide resources, such as vehicles, phones and materials, to mobilize voters. (Greene 2010, 158-159)

The resource advantages skew partisan competition and make the dominant party the winner of the elections even before the election day, while opposition forces, faced with the high costs of competition are limited to developing niche, even radical, policy appeals as only those who strongly oppose the status quo will join their cause (Greene 2007, 5; Greene 2010). Only when

hyper-incumbency advantages are diminished can more moderate, catch-all opposition parties, develop (Greene 2007, 6). The hyper-incumbency advantages are diminished through the processes of privatization in the economy and professionalization in public bureaucracy (Greene 2010, 160).

Resource theory also looks at strategies dominant party can use when faced with the threat of losing votes to opposition forces. These are: (1) “firefighting” opposition efforts by changing its own policy appeals; and (2) demobilizing forces on its other flank with patronage and repression (Greene 2007, 114). The firefighting strategy is used for redistribution of collective goods through the change of policies so to appeal to the electorate mobilizing for change (Greene 2007, 73); while the development of patronage networks allows buying voter support (Greene 2007, 114). Relying on repression remains as the least preferable option (ibid).

In addition, the theory suggests that in authoritarian dominant party regimes the dominant party can resort to the so-called “heresthetical moves”, shifting the positions in two-dimensional space (traditional cleavage/ regime cleavage) in order to preserve dominance (Greene 2008). This strategy includes moving away from the competitors in the area of traditional cleavage in order to attract those voters who might have changed their mind due to opposition appeals in the area of regime cleavage. For example, in the case of Mexico, PRI moved between left and right in order to attract votes on this dimension (traditional cleavage), while opposition appealed on the issue of democracy (regime cleavage) (Greene 2008).

2.5 Theory of legitimacy

Another approach to studying dominant party systems is to focus on the struggle for legitimacy (Levite and Tarrow 1983; Tarrow 1990; and Di Palma 1990). Analyzing cases of Italy and Israel, Levite and Tarrow (1983) discuss the importance of dominant party’s ability to legitimize itself as a protector of the system by establishing a connection to historical events, such as state foundation or fight against communism, while at the same time delegitimizing

opposition as an actor that will destabilize the system they protect. Opposition forces, on the other side, can adopt one of the following strategies:

- 1) *Sectarian closure* as a response to repression and delegitimation;
- 2) *Alliance seeking* as a response to isolation;
- 3) *Adopting dominant norms and values of the society* as a response to societal consensus;
- 4) *Accepting institutional rules of the game* as a response to long participation in institutions that provide them with benefits (Levite and Tarrow 1983, 298).

Most importantly, Levite and Tarrow (1983, 297) argue that this delegitimation of the opposition, as they call it, is equally constructed as the dominant party's hegemony. In addition, delegitimizing is seen as a reversible process, subject to change (ibid). Related to this, an important argument about the societal and cultural aspect of dominant party systems is that:

Regimes age and even epochal events pass into memory: the original political agenda changes, the subcultural bases of party dominance erode, new electors with no memories of the past appear, and society frequently becomes fundamentally secular, that is, it becomes both distinct from the state and immune to political charisma that attached to the leaders who found the state or guided it through major watersheds. (Levite and Tarrow 1983, 299)

The consequence of such changes in society is that the dominant party loses symbolic endowment and needs to change the strategies of dominance, treating voters "either as interest-oriented or appeal to them based on issues and events" (Levite and Tarrow 1983, 299). As epochal events eventually become less important, then, new issues will populate the political arena, opening place for a change.

Within this approach, it is also argued that much depends on the ability of the dominant party to accept the democratization process and choose which actors can then enter the liberalized political arena - the so-called *garantismo strategy* (Di Palma 1990, 177). As dominant party becomes a guarantor of the democratic transition and allows other actors to enter into the newly liberalized political market, its power becomes solidified due to the fact that it then becomes

identified as a creator and protector of the newly democratized political system. In addition, empirical analysis indicates that a political party that adopts a moderate position will have a higher chance of success in establishing dominance by relying on *garantismo strategy* compared to the extreme left or right (Di Palma 1990, 164).

2.6 The Logic of Dominant Party Systems

The reviewed literature on dominant party systems reveals that although to a certain degree distinct, the selected theories do share several commonalities: they analyze the underlying mechanisms of one-party dominance; they include in the analysis both the dominant party and opposition; and they focus on factors that can establish, maintain and erode the system. Therefore, I see evidence for building a more coherent approach that would be based mostly on the cycle theory but improve the overall argument with important amendments from the resource-based and legitimacy theory. Following this argument, I now turn to presenting a my theory that outlines the logic of dominant party systems.

In analyzing the phenomena of one-party dominance, I argue that it is important to understand how the party system functions as a whole instead of focusing on individual or party level explanations and case-specific peculiarities, which, although providing a useful insight, leave out the bigger picture. Dominant party systems, in terms of Arian and Barnes (1974), have an identifiable logic of their own. This logic or what Pempel (1990, 340) calls “a reinforcing syndrome of conditions that separate dominance from non-dominance”, I argue, is present in both authoritarian and democratic dominant party systems. The regime type matters for specific phases of dominance cycle: for example, the strategies used to maintain dominance and overcome crises can differ greatly depending upon the regime type.

Dominant party systems are established after a major change in a society: a war or end of it; collapse of the previous regime; transition to democracy; economic or social crisis. This change opens a place for a political party to establish itself as a legitimate creator and protector of the

newly established epoch. Higher chances for establishing the dominance cycle will be in cases when the party adopts a moderate position (Di Palma 1990). If the dominance cycle is successfully established, then one can speak of initial “epochal” victory also known as “tsunami elections” (Müftüler-Baç and Keyman 2012), after which the system enters the phase of maintaining dominance.

Maintaining dominance requires the dominant party to keep winning in the struggle for power and legitimacy with opposition forces as opponents. Here, the regime type matters: in democratic dominant party systems, dominance can be maintained by ideological and policy appeals, but it can also be supported with clientelist networks, as it was the case in Italy and Japan. In authoritarian dominant party systems, such as Mexico (before 1970s) and Malaysia (during UMNO rule) the available strategies also include repression against the opposition, voter intimidation, electoral fraud, limitation of the free speech and control of the media (see Greene 2007; Estevez, Diaz-Cayeros, and Magaloni 2008; Mauzy and Barter 2008). However, even in authoritarian dominant party systems, as Greene (2007) shows in case of Mexico, repressive strategies are less preferable. The dominant party will sustain dominance mostly relying on substantial resource advantage and the status of legitimate protector of the system allowing it to reformulate the political regime according to its own political agenda. This will eventually allow it to become entrenched so deeply into the system later that even a short period out of office might not end its dominance. The dominant party will develop links to key social groups; use the strategies of symbolic appeals and develop patronage networks in order to keep its core of supporters loyal. As previously mentioned, the dominant party will develop “the virtually bottomless campaign war-chest” (Greene 2010, 159) by diverting funds from state-owned enterprises; increasing public sector to create patronage job offers; and transforming public agencies into vote-mobilizing machinery. All these processes will increase the costs of joining opposition forces, especially in the case of authoritarian dominant party systems. Hence,

the opposition forces will likely resort to “clear water” strategy³ to populate the available ideological space (Dunleavy 2010, 15). As a result, this will lead to fragmented opposition unwilling to bridge huge differences despite the common goal of defeating the incumbent.

As the time passes, however, the historical momentum of the initial “epochal victory” will slowly fade into the memory, and the electorate will become concerned with new issues (Levite and Tarrow 1983). In addition, the processes of modernization in the economy will decrease the major source of patronage resources (Greene 2007). Altogether, these processes will influence the change of inter- and intra-party dynamics. As a result of these changes, the dominant party will be faced with increasing pressures coming both from internal factions and opposition. In response to the challenge, the dominant party can resort to increased preference shaping, spending a vast amount of resources on further development of clientelist networks, and in autocracies this will likely be combined with increased repression against the opposition, media and the civil society organizations. However, these extreme measures will eventually slide the system into corruption affairs and erode the legitimacy of the dominant party, while at the same time increasing the likelihood of successful oppositional coordination and legitimation. Apart from corruption affairs, the system can be shaken by factional exits due to increased struggle for power and resources within the dominant party (Boucek 1998, 2012). In response to increasing pressure, the dominant party can use some or mix of all of what Friedman and Wong (2008, 5) call “adaptive strategies”: (a) re-inventing its identity; (b) re-programming its policy platform; (c) re-organizing internal institutions; or (d) crushing the opponents.

I argue that the crisis phase represents a turning point with two possible outcomes: (1) survival of the dominant party and return to the maintenance phase; for which I adopt Greene’s concept of *equilibrium dominance* – i.e., “the long-term continuous rule of a single party with existing

³ By which Dunleavy (2010, 29) means maximizing own vote support and not trying to erode the dominant party’s ideological core.

but ineffective challenger parties” (Greene 2007, 71); or (2) failure of the dominant party which leads to the process of political transformation. Political transformation itself can have the following outcomes: (a) successful transformation ends the dominance cycle; while the failure can lead to: (b) old dominant party returning to power, or (c) new party establishing the dominance cycle. I will refer to the two outcomes of failed political transformation using Nwokora and Pelizzo's (2014) work as: (1) *alternating dominance* (the new party establishing dominance); and (2) *interrupted dominance* (old dominant party returning to power). The suggested theory of the *Logic of Dominant Party Systems* can be summarized graphically as in figure 3.

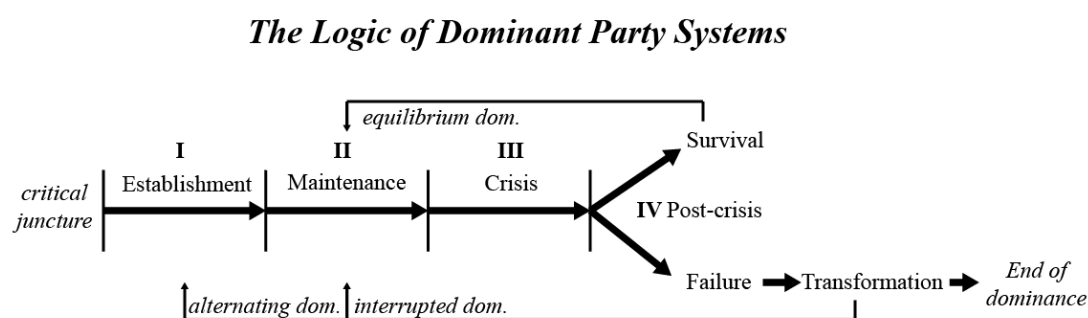


Figure 3. Author's own proposed theoretical model of the logic of dominant party systems.

Chapter 3 – Cycle I: From 1989 Revolution to surviving the party

split

Let me explore how the Montenegrin “virtuous cycle of dominance” was established and how it developed over time. I will begin by describing how the first cycle of dominance was established, how it was maintained, and how it entered the crisis period.

3.1 Establishment of the cycle

To understand each case of one-party dominance, as I have argued before, one needs to go back to the roots of dominance. As different theories suggest, and as I underline in my theory on the logic of dominant party systems, these roots are not in the state of normalcy. In case of Montenegro, the roots of DPS dominance can be traced back to the 1989 January Revolution and the first free elections in 1990.

3.1.1 “Years begin in January”⁴

The so-called “January revolution” of 1989 was a culmination of street protests that began in August 1988 in several Montenegrin cities, formally to provide support to Serbs and Montenegrins living in Kosovo, but with the real goal of overthrowing the old Montenegrin communist leadership (Rastoder 2018b). These protests were orchestrated by Serbia’s leadership under the influence of Slobodan Milosevic, in order to gain control in the federal bodies of the country that was facing a demise (Bieber 2003, 14-15). The calculations behind these “revolutions” that occurred also in Vojvodina and Kosovo were simple – change the leadership in two of Serbia’s autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo) and Montenegro in order to secure votes in the federal Presidency (Rastoder 2018a).

The old communist leadership in Montenegro knew about the real goal of the protests, but failed to act promptly and decisively which was a good indicator, in words of a historian Serbo

⁴ This was the main campaign slogan of then-League of Communists, the future dominant party.

Rastoder, “that a rusty system cannot be repaired and needs to be dismantled” (Rastoder 2018c; translation mine). By October 1988, over 40 protests were organized in major Montenegrin cities (Rastoder 2018c). As scholars note, these protests eventually became a mass expression of social unrest, dissatisfaction with the economy and the state of society in general (Goati 2001; Bieber 2003).

On 10 January 1989, the protests continued in front of the Republic’s Assembly with about 30,000 people gathering (Rastoder 2018d). During the protests, a body called “Organizational board” was formed with the goal of leading the protests - it included representatives of academia, working class and socialist youth organizations (ibid). Among them were the future leaders of the dominant party, the so-called “young, pretty and smart”: Milo Djukanovic, Svetozar Marovic and Momir Bulatovic. Finally, on 11 January, after day and night protests in front of the Republic’s Assembly which gathered around 100,000 people, and faced with possible violent confrontations, the old communist leadership resigned (Rastoder 2018e). Member of the Organizational board and future president of the Republic of Montenegro, Momir Bulatovic, announced that “The people won, because they had to” (ibid).

After the old communist leadership accepted to resign under pressure, the new leadership trio Djukanovic-Marovic-Bulatovic took over the most important positions in the old League of Communists of Montenegro. The party, under their leadership, was set on the road of evolutionary reforms in order to survive.

3.1.2 First free elections in 1990

After the old communist leadership was overthrown, the plans for the first multi-party elections started developing. The legislation was changed in order to allow other parties to form and participate in elections (Pavićević 2007, 13-14). In addition, the lawmakers accepted the Proportional Representation and set threshold to 4 % (ibid, 24). The parties that took part in the seat allocation process after the first elections were: the reformed communist party with the

new leadership and still an old label - League of Communists of Montenegro; a coalition of liberal and social democratic parties called “Alliance of Reform Forces for Yugoslavia”;⁵ party representing extreme Serb nationalism called “People’s Party”; and an alliance of political parties representing minorities called Democratic Coalition (Bieber 2003, 16).⁶ The results of first elections are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Results of first free elections in Montenegro (1990)

Party	Votes (percentage)	Seats (out of 125)	Seats (percentage)
SKCG	56.2	83	66.4
SRSJ	13.6	17	13.65
NS	12.8	13	10.4
DK	10.1	12	9.6

Source: Data from Pavicevic 2007, 25.

As shown by table 1, the reformed SKCG won an absolute majority of the votes and secured a two-third majority in the parliament. Scholars studying this period argue that the one of the most important factors explaining the success of SKCG in the first elections is the economic one. In an empirical analysis, Goati (2001, 33-34) compares the election performance of former communist parties across member states of Former Yugoslavia and within states to show that there was a strong link between economic development of the state and the level of support for the former communists during the first multi-party elections in Yugoslavia’s two economically least developed states: Serbia and Montenegro. Apart from the economic factor, the following are also found to be relevant for the success of former communists: strong support for the communist party in the time of single-party rule; affirmative stance towards socialist “self-governance” principle; and specific political and cultural properties of the society (ibid).

⁵ Members of the coalition were LSCG, Socialist party, SDPCG, Independent organization of communists and the Party of national equality (Pavicevic 2007, 25).

⁶ Democratic coalition consisted of: Party of Democratic Action for Montenegro (representing Muslims); Party of Equality (representing Muslims); and Democratic Alliance of Montenegro (representing Albanians) (Pavicevic 2007, 25).

If one looks at the pre-election presentation of the SKCG on the national TV (Televizija Titograd 1990), then it becomes clear that the economic issues were also recognized by the ruling party as the most important. According to their own statements during the discussion, the party printed 200,000 leaflets containing the detailed social and economic reform agenda, while their video and printed advertisements contained, among others, two slogans: “We know how”, which was explained by party’s PR as a reference to their knowledge on how to plan and implement reforms, and “Years begin in January” (which appeared both in the promotional video and the printed posters), as a reference to 1989 protests that brought down the old communist elite. The party also had significant advantage over its opponents due to the simple fact that it existed for a long time, enjoyed inherited resources and developed party infrastructure.

It becomes clear that the party established its dominance, to use Di Palma’s (1990) concept, from the moderate position, accepting to liberalize political arena. It resorted to legitimization strategy (making references to the January revolution - the “new epoch”) and has appealed to expertise (the “We know how”). This confirms previous theoretical expectations: the dominant party will establish its rule after the important change in society, usually as the protector of the new system or epoch and by adopting “garantismo strategy” where a transition takes place, allowing others to join the newly liberalized political arena.

It is important to underline that although nationalistic discourse did not evade Montenegro after the collapse of communism, the extreme nationalist parties failed to secure broader support in the first elections. The People’s Party won 12 percent of the vote; while Serb Radical Party failed to reach threshold. Some scholars explain the failure of the nationalist parties with the fact that the reformed communist parties in Montenegro and Serbia populated the large sphere of political arena, leaving these parties only the option of going to the extreme (Goati 2001, 30). This, according to the theoretical expectations, presents the phase of adopting “clear water”

(Dunleavy 2010) strategy by the opposition parties in order to establish themselves. Most importantly, the sectarian closure of marginalized opposition together with “garantismo” strategy helped DPS to establish an unquestioned dominance.

3.2 Maintenance phase: 1992-1996

After the first elections, the ruling party underwent formal transformation and changed its name in 1991 to Democratic Party of Socialists. The party adopted what Bieber (2003, 17) calls “double strategy”: while it collaborated with the Milosevic’s regime and his Socialist Party of Serbia; it also aimed to preserve some degree of separateness. However, the former part of the “double strategy” did not serve the goal of Independent Montenegro that the party is currently proud of. In the beginning, one of the leaders of DPS Milo Djukanovic labelled the oppositional SRSJ as consisting of “a handful of Montenegrin nationalists, crazy Islamic fundamentalists and Albanian separatists” (Fatic 1990; translation mine). On the other hand, SKCG described itself as a party “looking in the future” (ibid).

The cooperation with the Serbian regime was very useful for maintaining dominance. Not only the new ruling elite of DPS was brought to power with the help of Slobodan Milosevic and his “anti-bureaucratic” protests, but it also received support from its populist regime which helped the party remain in power (Darmanovic 2003, 147). In addition, DPS formed coalition with Milosevic’s SPS in the federal parliament. This cooperation proved useful for adopting the 1992 federal constitution which established new Yugoslavia comprising only of Serbia and Montenegro.

For theoretical expectations it is important to note that DPS opted for a more reformist strategy in foreign and economic policy compared to SPS, and additionally supported the peaceful resolution of Yugoslav conflict, thereby causing dissatisfaction of Milosevic regime and deterioration of relations with SPS from 1991 to 1994 (Bieber 2003, 24-25). This

“disobedience” shown by DPS caused Milosevic’s regime to impose various forms of economic pressure (Bieber 2003, 24).

Soon after the new federal constitution was adopted in 1992, the federal allies DPS-SPS initiated quickly prepared elections, followed by the change of electoral laws without any consultations with the opposition (Goati 2001, 48-49). The manner in which the federal ruling parties, Montenegrin DPS and Serbian SPS, acted in 1992 resulted in opposition boycott, protests and request for early elections in both Republics (Goati 2001, 53). The requests of opposition were accepted, and the roundtable negotiations were initiated before the new elections were held in December (Goati 2001, 55).

After the 1992 parliamentary elections, the DPS secured yet another super-majority in the Parliament. Despite this, given that war broke out on the territory of former communist Yugoslavia, the ruling party decided to form a large coalition which included opposition SDP, NS and LSCG - however, this coalition lasted only a year as opposition parties soon withdrew their support (Goati 2001, 133). Nevertheless, scholars argue that the “grand coalition” served as a good tool to secure the stability of the ruling party after initial deterioration of relations with Serbian leadership and to respond to the economic sanctions imposed on the country by the international community (Bieber 2003, 24).

From the theoretical perspective, historical evidence shows that the ruling party maintained dominance from the moderate position (in contrast to the extremist position of the Milosevic’s SPS), accepting to liberalize political arena to the extent it was necessary. In addition, the adoption of the 1992 Yugoslav constitution and the campaign that preceded it helped the party establish itself as the protector of Yugoslavia, which will be an important resource of legitimacy for 1996 elections.

3.2.1 Maintaining resource dominance: “The Economy of Smuggling”⁷

The sanctions imposed on Serbia and Montenegro during the war in Bosnia present an important factor for understanding early dominance. Former president Bulatovic recalls in his book that these sanctions were among the harshest measures ever applied in international relations: they prohibited any import and export activity to and from Yugoslavia, any kind of financial transfers, air transport, scientific and cultural cooperation, and even participation of sport teams (Bulatovic 2004, 117).

It was during the sanctions that the regime tried to prevent the collapse of the economy by organizing the cigarettes and oil smuggling which eventually promoted suspicious businessmen and the class of “*nouveaux riches*” (Bieber 2003, 25). The operations were conducted through Montenegrin airports and bays, with Italy, Albania and the Republic of Srpska as main locations. Both operations were happening under the official stamp “classified” (Bulatovic 2004, 118). They were conducted with the help of private individuals and their quickly formed companies with everyday breach of both domestic and international laws (Bulatovic 2004, 121-122). The difference between the two operations, however, was that oil smuggling over the Montenegrin-Albanian border was more controlled by the state, while this control was lost in a much more profitable cigarette transit business with Italy (Bulatovic 2004, 130). The latter also involved highly positioned dominant party officials, cooperation between the two secret services and finally, collaboration with the Italian mafia (Bulatovic 2004, 133). These illicit activities allowed the country to survive, yet they also allowed suspicious individuals to earn millions of then-deutschmarks in cash, leading to devastating levels of corruption– especially within the party (Bulatovic 2004, 122).

⁷ The concept of “The Economy of Smuggling” is my translation of the chapter title in Bulatovic’s (2004, 117) book.

The cigarette smuggling business provided enormous resources for the highest officials within the dominant party and their closest allies. Bulatovic (2004, 137-139) recalls that he personally got an offer worth two million US dollars in cash for making a simple phone call to allow several individuals to get a “license” for the smuggling operation over the border. As a President, he also received a document from the secret service showing that then-vice-president of the party Svetozar Marovic was already involved in the illegal operations (2004, 139). To follow the theory, then, the time of sanctions was a period of developing “virtually bottomless campaign war-chest” (Greene 2010, 159).

3.2.2 Repressing the opposition

Apart from resource dominance, the party relied heavily on repressive strategies. Secret service and the police were used to repress and intimidate the opposition and help the ruling party in the field. For example, in 1992 armed forces prevented several attempts of pro-Montenegrin LSCG to gather its supporters in the North by using road blockades and even brute force (Kostic 1992; Vukmanovic 1992). In 1994, in an operation with a code name “*Lim*” the leader of opposition SDA⁸ Harun Hadzic and ca. 50 party officials were arrested and tortured under false accusations of preparing actions against the sovereignty of Yugoslavia (Radoncic 2003, 59-63). SDP reported seeing police forces tearing down opposition campaign posters, shutting down electricity during their field campaign as well as intimidating their supporters (Radoncic 2003, 103). The ruling aparty, on the other side, received extensive support from the secret service, including the 1996 field campaign during which they worked to suppress the increasing negative reactions from the crowd (Bulatovic 2004, 246).

⁸ Party representing Bosniak minority.

3.3 Entering crisis: “Firefighting” and demobilizing opposition pressure (1996)

The adverse impact of economic sanctions on everyday life of Montenegrin citizens combined with increasingly repressive regime significantly eroded the legitimacy of the ruling party and opened up place for opposition cooperation. According to opinion polls at the time, support for the ruling party dropped to 35 percent in 1996 (D. Sukovic 1996a). In addition, during 1996 the disagreements between the Prime Minister Djukanovic and President Bulatovic over several issues such as the composition of the Government and the secret service became more frequent and intense (see Bulatovic 2004, 136; Radoncic 2003, 91-92).

Although the literature on Montenegro suggests that ethnic division is the key for understanding election outcomes, little attention is paid to the fact that exactly this ethnic division was quickly overcome during early stages of the party system development. On 22 August 1996, leaders of pro-Montenegrin LSCG and pro-Serb NS signed the document establishing the opposition alliance called *Narodna sloga* (People’s Unity) (D. Sukovic 1996b). The document states that the best option for opposition parties in times of ruling party’s continuous malpractices is to unite, “to put the party banners down” and the differences aside in order to fight for the common goal: democracy (ibid). As the theory predicts, the opposition parties sought to utilize the eroded legitimacy of the dominant party and its internal conflicts.

The main slogans of the coalition were, among others, “Give Back the Money” and “Better National Harmony than Drugs”;⁹ while the two leaders raised hands with both two and three fingers,¹⁰ thereby signaling unity of Serbs and Montenegrins (Djuranovic 1996a). One of their first major gatherings, termed by Perovic as “earthquake for DPS”, was a true novelty as no nationalistic symbols appeared while the two leaders sent messages of unity and the need to

⁹ This slogan rhymes in original: “*Bolje sloga nego droga.*”

¹⁰ Two fingers became a symbol of LSCG and fight for Independence; while three fingers represented Serbian nationalism.

bring down the authoritarian rule (Redzic 1996). They blamed the dominant party for devastating corruption, misuse of public resources and the overall state of poverty (Bulatovic 2004, 244). The dominant party was especially provoked with publicly well-known slogan “Put an end to theft”¹¹ and anti-Government songs composed by a group called “Brain eliminator” which lead to the arrest of an independent journalist suspected to be behind these ideas (Radoncic 2003, 104).

In a response to increasing pressures, the dominant party adopted following “firefighting” strategies: (1) it manipulated the electoral rules in the year of elections to discourage broader opposition cooperation; (2) it employed delegitimization strategy presenting opposition as a threat to Yugoslavia; and (3) it relied on “a virtually bottomless campaign war-chest” (Greene 2010, 159) filled with black funds during the sanctions period.

3.3.1 Electoral manipulation

To suppress joint opposition cooperation, the ruling party decided to manipulate electoral laws by abandoning previous PR formula with whole country as one constituency (“at large” system) in favor of PR with 14 constituencies (see Pavicevic 2007, 45). However, as the change came in the year of elections and was not preceded by political debate, the opposition LSCG, NS and SDPCG strongly objected to it. The parliamentary debate on the proposal lasted ten days and was marked with numerous mutual accusations. The ruling party defended the proposal on the basis that it will promote stronger links between citizens and their representatives, while the opposition criticized the ruling party for manipulating the minorities and trying to win super-majority with just one fourth of the votes (Radulovic et al. 1996a, 1996b). The proposal was finally adopted on 19 July 1996 with the votes of the ruling party, while the opposition parties LSCG, NSCG and SDPCG left the parliament (*Pobjeda* 1996a).

¹¹ In original, the slogan rhymes: “Tačku na pljačku.”

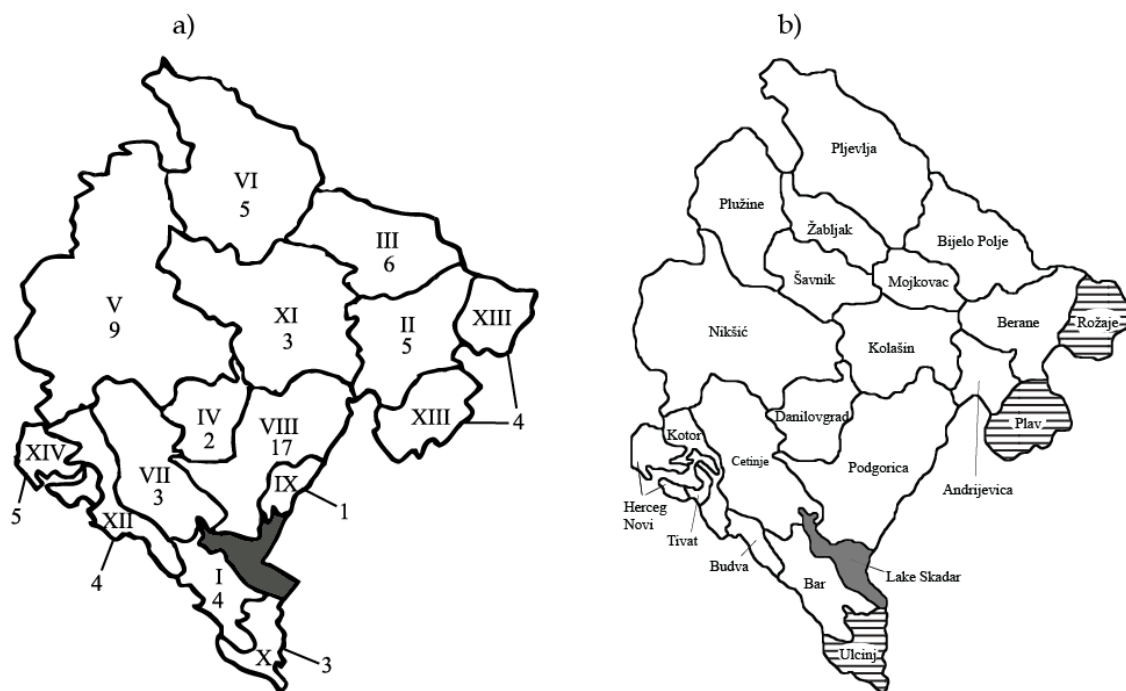


Figure 4. Electoral manipulation in 1996.

Source: a – Adapted electoral map of Montenegro, *Republička izborna komisija 1996*; b – Adapted map of Montenegro, *PANONIAN 2009*.

Note: Map a - electoral districts (Roman numerals mark districts, Arabic numerals mark number of seats); map b - municipalities' borders. In municipalities marked with horizontal lines minorities represent majority of the population.

After a deeper look at what was called “new electoral map of the Republic” (*Pobjeda 1996a*) it becomes clear that it was gerrymandering at stake. As figure 4 shows, the capital Podgorica was divided into two constituencies: one larger in which 17 MPs were elected and the other, much smaller and mainly populated with Albanian minority where just 1 MP was elected; municipalities in the North, Andrijevica and Berane were combined into one constituency in which 5 MPs were elected; municipalities mostly populated by minorities, Plav and Rozaje, were combined into one constituency in which 4 MPs were elected, while the seaside municipality of Ulcinj, populated mainly by Albanians, was a separate district. It was estimated by some analyst at the time that this change would allow the dominant party to win elections with just thirty percent of the votes (Kocan 1996).

As table 2 shows, upon further analysis it becomes clear that the electoral manipulation established a situation where the parties representing minorities had an incentive not to join opposition coalition as they could easily win seats in their own constituencies. Paradoxically, the two opposition parties, SDP and SRS, failed to win seats despite surpassing the 4% threshold on the national level. Compared with 1992 formula, the opposition People's Unity won two seats less while the dominant party secured two seats more.

Table 2. Seat distribution for 1996 elections

Party/Coalition	Votes		Seats	
	sum	%	PR with 14 const.	PR with single const.*
DPS	150,237	51.2	45	43
Narodna sloga	74,963	25.6	19	21
SDP	16,608	5.66	0	4
SRS	12,963	4.42	0	3
SDA	10,167	3.47	3	0
DSCG	5,289	1.80	2	0
DUA	3,849	1.31	2	0

Source: Republička izborna komisija (1996).

Note: *My calculations of seat distribution according to 1992 formula (PR, D'Hondt, *at large*, 4% threshold).

Much later, former president Bulatovic will reveal in his book *Pravila ćutanja* (The rules of silence) that this “legal maneuver” was officially proclaimed as a solution to protect minorities, but was really meant to give a starting advantage to the party as the result of the analyses available to the party at the time showed that there is a real chance of minorities supporting the broader opposition coalition (Bulatovic 2004, 245). This was especially worrying for the ruling party as minorities could have counted on ca. 24 percent of the votes (ibid).

3.3.2 Resource dominance

The black funds received from the smuggling operations during the sanctions proved especially useful for 1996 elections. Bieber (2003, 28) nicely sums up that DPS outspent on campaigns vis a vis People's Unity “in terms of money 10:1”. Observers at the time estimated that the

ruling party spent about 3 million deutschmarks; while People's Unity could count only on 300 000 DM (Djuranovic 1996). Although the country was in a disastrous state after the economic sanctions of 1992-1995, the ruling party decided to rent big screens for campaign purposes, bring music stars from Serbia and even abroad and organize gala banquets for the elite members of the party (Kocan 1996).

3.3.3 Heresthetics and delegitimation strategies

Most importantly, the ruling party remained silent on the issues of the past (war, economic sanctions, corruption) and instead focused on presenting voters a better future (Djuranovic 1996). It also employed delegitimization strategy, presenting the People's Unity as a "temporary, ridiculous and destructive alliance" made up with only one goal: destroying Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Cvijovic 1996; *Pobjeda* 1996b).

Apart from delegitimation strategy, the party made heresthetical moves on the Statehood issue. Observers note that the party officials presented different speeches in different areas of the country: then-President of the Parliament, Svetozar Marovic, spoke about "Montenegrin doors to Europe" in the seaside city of Bar; while in the North he concluded that any political option aiming to separate Serbia and Montenegro will be defeated in the elections (Djuranovic 1996).

As one observer notes, the campaign of "singing and dancing to the victory" proved effective for attracting the average hungry voter who believed that the defeat of the ruling party would indeed mark the collapse of the State and the social aid system on which ca. 60 percent of citizens were dependent upon (Djuranovic 1996c).

3.3.4 Firefighting success

Although it seemed that 1996 might be a critical year for DPS dominance, the challenge was successfully suppressed with the help of the above-mentioned strategies. Apart from dominant party's strategies, the People's Unity coalition itself faced several challenges. Although the two

leaders called for major opposition bloc to be formed (D. Sukovic 1996), the coalition was not joined by SDP and parties representing minorities (Bieber 2003, 28). The key issue seemed to be mathematical rather than ideological: the proposed allocation of the seats (to be counted based on 1992 election results) and the decision-making rules (2/3 majority when consensus is not possible) would give LSCG and NS too much dominance over smaller coalition partners (D. Sukovic 1996). Unable to solve this issue, the People's Unity remained without important support from SDP and parties representing minorities (Djuranovic 1996b). Apart from this, the coalition had troubles keeping away from the Statehood issue (Bulatovic 2004, 245). Despite these issues, the coalition presented a serious challenge to the dominant party – Bulatovic recalls that the coalition's first pre-election gathering appeared intimidating as it was attended by about 10 000 people shouting "Thieves, thieves" (Bulatovic 2004, 244).

In sum, the 1996 episode serves as a good indicator of what preserving dominance in three arenas means and to what extent can the dominant party manipulate electoral institutions to keep power. On the other side, it also shows that ethnic division was not something that kept political parties separated in two distinct blocs, hence determining the outcome even before the election day. Just six years after multi-party system was established, the two ideologically opposed parties opted for cooperation to overthrow the authoritarian incumbent. However, inability to form broader opposition bloc, combined with dominant party's manipulations of electoral institutions and repression prevented them in achieving this goal.

3.4 Culmination: The 1997 party split and Presidential Elections

Although the party secured another victory in 1996, the struggle for power did not stop and it culminated ahead of the 1997 Presidential elections. The party tore in two blocs: one was led by prime minister Djukanovic, who presented himself as a reform-oriented politician seeking support from the West; while the other was a more conservative wing lead by president

Bulatovic who advocated “Yugoslavia with no preconditions and no alternative” (Goati 2001, 138-140; Rastoder 2011, 258).

As a party president at the time, Bulatovic decided to put his legitimacy on check by organizing a meeting of the party’s Main Board in March 1997 to which he submitted a proposal to be voted on (Bulatovic 2004, 253-254). This proposal contained three main points: (a) DPS accepts Yugoslavia as an option with no alternative; (b) the party remains devoted to implementing its election agenda; and (c) the changes in the composition of the Government are necessary. In a sort of a confidence vote, Bulatovic won decisively: 64 members of the Board voted for, 7 against, and 22 were undecided (Bulatovic 2004, 254).

What happened next is that in just three months Djukanovic somehow managed to quickly persuade majority within the Main Board to join him. It remains puzzling how Djukanovic succeeded: whether it was his reformist agenda and the party’s new image he promised, or what Bulatovic claims to be pure vote-buying within the party, is not fully clear. On 11 July 1997, Bulatovic organized an extraordinary meeting of the Main Board during which Djukanovic’s faction managed to remove him from the position and elect a new party president (Bulatovic 2004, 259).

The split in the party caused the crisis of domination. It was not possible to win elections anymore by relying on vast resources or repression that were used before. Furthermore, the two former allies now had to face each other in presidential elections. From the theoretical perspective, in times of crisis the dominant party can chose either to re-invent its image or remain rigid. The 1997 Presidential elections saw the two strategies compete and an outcome that will confirm that the path of re-invention is essential for a survival of the eroded dominant party.

3.4.1 The 1997 Presidential Elections and its consequences

The presidential elections held in October 1997 were the first elections with an unknown outcome (Bieber 2003, 31) and with candidates on an almost equal footing.¹² For theoretical expectations, the choice of strategies matter here: Djukanovic chose to re-invent his and his party's image as a Western- and reform-oriented; while Bulatovic remained ideologically rigid, supporting Milosevic's internationally delegitimized regime and Yugoslavia as no alternative (Goati 2001, 139).

The result of the elections was very close: in the first round held on 5 October, Bulatovic won more votes than Djukanovic (47.45% compared to 46.72%); but lost to Djukanovic in the second round held on 19 October (Goati 2001, 221). According to Pavicevic (2007, 34-35), decisive factor was the turnout: more voters turned out to vote in the second round as the importance of elections stimulated more interest within the electorate. However, the elections were conducted amid an important legal controversy. As it was not clearly defined whether the two rounds of elections were considered part of the same process or not, it happened that the number of registered voters changed from 461 738 in the first round to 470 491 in the second round (Pavicevic 2007, 35). Bulatovic explains in his book that he did not want to accept the defeat as he considered this to be part of the so-called "Project 20 percent" which was allegedly created with a purpose of giving an advantage to Djukanovic by means of electoral manipulations (Bulatovic 2004, 268). Therefore, he had no intentions to accept the results and peacefully hand over the Presidency: members of his camp initiated street protests that emerged just ahead of Djukanovic inauguration, in the night of 13 January 1998 and ended in violent clash with the police (Scekic 2012, 161-162; Goati 2001, 144; Darmanovic 2003, 149). The protests were, however, unsuccessful.

¹² According to 1992 Constitution, Republic of Montenegro was modelled as a parliamentary republic; but with a President elected in general elections. This meant that although the President had only ceremonial functions he/she could rely on the important fact that he/she was chosen by the people (Goati 2001, 139).

According to the theory, the 1997 Presidential elections marked the phase of re-inventing the image of the party by breaking with old legacies (abandoning Milosevic's regime and his policies) and creating a new image (pro-Western, reform-oriented). Let me explain how this process developed further and lead to overcoming the crisis.

3.5 Post-crisis adaptation strategies

As the 1997 split also caused the Government to lose parliamentary majority, the dominant party had to adapt to newly established inter-party relations. According to the theory, the dominant party in times of crisis can either choose the path of innovation and accepting democratic means of solving the crisis, or it can backslide to autocracy and crush opponents. In 1997, DPS decided to go on the path of innovation, flexibility and accepting democratization.

To cope with the newly established situation in Parliament, DPS decided to form a coalition with the NS and two parties representing the Albanian minority (Goati 2015, 63). Additionally, the split forced the ruling party to accept requests of opposition parties to organize early elections and adopt several reforms of the laws governing the election process (ibid). These changes were preceded by negotiations that took place in August 1997 and resulted in the document called *Agreement on the Principles for the Development of Democratic Infrastructure in Montenegro*¹³ (Micunovic 1997; for text of the Agreement see "Država se brani demokratijom" 1997). The Agreement was signed on 1 September 1997 by the ruling party; the Government; and the opposition (NS, LSCG, SDPCG), including the parties representing minorities (SDACG, DSCG, DUA) (ibid). The Agreement was not signed only by Bulatovic's Socialist People's Party and Serb Radical Party (Pavicevic 2007, 46-47). Political parties that signed the document agreed that the ongoing crisis should be resolved by democratic means, preventing manipulations of national, regional, ethnic, ideological and historical

¹³ Original name in Montenegrin: *Sporazum o minimumu principa za razvoj demokratske infrastrukture u Crnoj Gori*.

differences (“Država se brani demokratijom” 1997). In addition, the signatories agreed to prepare next parliamentary elections by March 1998 and change electoral laws to establishing PR with a single constituency. Most importantly, the Government accepted in the Agreement to invite OSCE observers to monitor the elections (ibid). These changes had important implications for the regime type: 1998 parliamentary elections are considered by both experts and scholars as first mostly free and fair (OSCE 1998; Vukovic 2015, 75; Komar and Zivkovic 2016, 788).

For 1998 elections, the party had to rely on coalition arrangement in order to secure victory and maintain in power. Here it showed great flexibility and innovation: it decided to form a reformist coalition that would be based on democratic and economic reforms, named “For better life.” Five key goals of the “For better life” coalition were: (1) internationalization in the field of economy and society; (2) privatization; (3) the rule of law; (4) democratization; and (5) social justice and welfare (Goati 2015, 64). Interestingly enough, the ruling party included two coalition members that were ideologically opposed: NS, which promoted preserving joint state with Serbia; and SDP, which considered Montenegro’s position in FR Yugoslavia unequal and supported Independence (Goati 2015, 64). Decision of the People’s Party (NS) to support the DPS was justified with the goal of preserving the join state with Serbia and was described by party leader, Novak Kilibarda, as a “marriage out of interest” (Redzic 1998).¹⁴ However, marriages out of interest usually do not last long and this was the case with DPS-NS cooperation. As DPS further distanced from the federal government (see Goati 2015, 69-70) and asked for two countries to exist within a loose union of two independent states, NS decided

¹⁴ In an interview with Nebosja Redzic (1998), Kilibarda explained that party’s radical change towards supporting the DPS is a result of the new, reformed, policy strategy of the DPS, but also due to Djukanovic’s support for the union with Serbia.

to withdraw its support for the Government and with this had caused another early elections in 2001 (Bozovic 2001).

Two major opposition parties opted for “sectarian closure” strategy (Levite and Tarrow 1983) in the 1998 elections: the newly formed SNP and LSCG. SNP focused its election campaign on preserving FR Yugoslavia and blamed DPS for wanting to tear it apart. As Goati argues, although the defense of FRY from DPS was completely unnecessary given that the ruling party wanted the same, it still proved useful for gathering the pro-Serb votes and will benefit the party later, as the issue of Montenegrin Independence becomes more salient (Goati 2015, 64). On the other side, LSCG argued that leaders of DPS and SNP belong to the same “ideological matrix” and are ready to cooperate with Milosevic for their own interests (ibid). After the elections, SNP and LSCG became two most relevant opposition parties in the Parliament, with former winning 36.1 and latter 6.34 per cent of the votes (Goati 2015, 65).

Finally, the dominant party made heresthetical moves on the Statehood issue. Elections in 2001 saw a possibility of Liberal Alliance of Montenegro achieving better results given that Independence option received wider support and the dominant party started changing its stance towards Independent Montenegro. Although staunchly against each other in the first period, the two came closer in 2001 - at least on the “Montenegrin issue”. This resulted in LSCG adopting, on an extraordinary meeting of the party in March 2001, a Resolution with an offer to DPS for forming a pre-election coalition (Radio Televizija Crne Gore 2001).

For the ruling DPS, there was a need to secure the power, while for LSCG this was a chance to achieve its major goal: Montenegrin Independence. Former opponents brokered a deal for a minority Government, but this deal was short-lived: faced with international pressure, the dominant party eventually adopted a softer stance on Independence accepting to wait and first give a chance to what will later become a State Union of Serbia and Montenegro; while the Liberal Alliance wanted Independence Referendum right away.

Unsatisfied with the “softer stance” of DPS, LSCG withdrew support for the Government and caused new early elections in 2002. Before the 2002 elections, however, LSCG switched sides and joined forces with pro-Serb opposition coalition “Together for Yugoslavia” giving them necessary majority to make changes in laws governing the elections (Goati 2015, 72). Similar to Japanese scenario where seven parties managed to take power and implement extensive set of changes in electoral laws that would prevent the dominant party from returning to power (Pempel 2008, 119-120), the ideologically distant Montenegrin opposition parties put aside their differences in order to not only unseat the incumbent but also prevent it from winning again. During the summer, they proposed the set of legislative changes that would allow the Parliament to control the composition of state and local electoral commissions, secret service, and even private and public media outlets. However, the changes threatened the independence of the media and were scheduled in the year of elections causing OSCE to issue a warning that elections conducted under these laws would be considered illegitimate and possibly lead to sanctions (MINA 2002). Under international pressure, the opposition coalition decided to pull back from their radical legal maneuver (*Vijesti* 2002). This decision, according to the theory, was necessary for the legitimacy of opposition parties: organizing elections despite international pressure would deal significant harm in their effort to establish themselves as a legitimate alternative. On the other side, this proved beneficial for the dominant party.

After 2002 elections, the DPS secured a long-needed majority in the Parliament and after a series of early elections, the Government remained in office for the entire mandate of four years. President Djukanovic welcomed the preliminary election results on 21 October 2002 with the statement that Montenegro is entering a new phase of political stability (I. Vucinic and Koprivica 2002). It is interesting to note that DPS eventually secured the necessary parliamentary majority for the Agreement that established the Union State of Serbia and Montenegro in 2003 with pro-Yugoslav parties (Bieber 2003, 36-37). As in the case of Mexico

where PRI strategically positioned on the left-right issue depending on the situation (Greene 2008), so did DPS on the Statehood issue by switching from alliance with pro-Yugoslav to pro-Montenegrin parties and back to pro-Yugoslav option to preserve power.

The response of opposition to 2002 defeat was to leave the Parliament and organize a series of protests, gatherings and other forms of civil disobedience (Goati 2015, 78). It was LSCG that first decided to boycott the Parliament and it was later joined by the members of the coalition “Together for Changes” - SNP, SNS and NS (ibid). However, as that they did not manage to achieve much with boycott and protests, their voters became unsatisfied which was eventually reflected in the public opinion polls and influenced opposition parties’ decision to return to the Parliament in 2004 (Goati 2015, 78-79). In the struggle for legitimacy, then, the opposition parties failed. In sum, this nicely fits Greene’s (2007, 71) definition of equilibrium dominance: “the long-term continuous rule of a single party *with existing but ineffective challenger parties*” (italics added). The crisis was solved, and the system returned to the maintenance phase.

Chapter 4 – Cycle II: Dominant party adapts the political climate to its own liking

Although the key element for maintaining dominance during the first cycle was resource dominance combined with repression, the 1996-1997 crisis meant that the ruling party had to adapt its strategies to the new situation. As previously said, the dominant party decided to accept the process of democratization and re-invent its image. During the new maintenance phase, ideology, combined with resource dominance, became the most important factor for not only maintaining the dominance but also what Pempel (1990, 352) calls “recreating the nation’s society and politics to its [dominant party’s] own liking.”

The two key parts of this process were: (1) the party’s ideological shift, followed by (2) the adoption of a set of policies aimed at recreating the Montenegrin identity frame. The gradual ideological shift, or what Darmanovic calls (2003, 96) a “moderate step-by-step independence,” started after the party split and became more pronounced in 2000 when the Government adopted a new political platform promoting a union of two Independent states (Darmanovic 2007, 94-95). In 2001, the party adopted a new manifesto advocating Independent Montenegro and in 2004 began the process of changing the national symbols. This “step-by-step” process is important for theoretical expectations as it confirms that essential for dominant party’s success is its moderate position. In 2006, the gradual process culminated in renewal of Montenegrin independence which secured, in Wong’s (2008, 69) words, the dominant party’s new “reservoir of legitimacy.”

However, as the 2008 financial crisis emerged and the effect of “eternal dilemma” (Darmanovic 2003, 146)¹⁵ started fading away, the dynamics of the party system changed:

¹⁵ The term “eternal dilemma” is used in the domestic literature to refer to the historic ambiguities related to the Statehood issue - whether to become a sovereign state or opt for closer ties with Serbia (see Darmanovic 2003, 146).

opposition forces became devoted to the new set of issues such as corruption and economy; while the ruling party resorted to increased clientelism and vote-buying. Malpractices of the dominant party were partially unveiled in a leaked audio recording that appeared in 2013 and marked the beginning of political crisis.

4.1 From “A handful of Montenegrin nationalists” to “We will renew Montenegrin Independence”

As previously stated, during the first period, the ruling party never promoted Independent Montenegro and even referred to the supporters of the idea as “a handful of crazy Montenegrin nationalists” (Fatic 1990, translation mine). Until 2001, the ruling party remained committed to the idea of the joint state of Serbia and Montenegro. The major change occurred on party congress held in October 2001 when internationally recognized independent Montenegro was set as one of the most important goals (“Istorijat DPS” n.d.). It was during the election campaign in 2001 that the ruling party, for the first time, openly promoted Montenegrin Independence – for example, the media coverage of one of their first election gatherings was titled “We will renew Montenegrin Independence” (*Pobjeda* 2001). For 2002 elections, the ruling party promoted a campaign poster titled “I am Montenegrin” featuring an old man and a caption on what being Montenegrin means (*Pobjeda* 2002). The old man states that he is a member of one of the old tribes in Montenegro, that he always welcomes warmly his guests no matter their nationality or religion and that this type of custom is something that exists not only in his house and his country but also in the whole World (ibid). This poster itself, then, is an interesting example of what elements the dominant party wanted to incorporate in the new identity: the tribal history peculiar to Montenegro, traditional values, historic feeling of pride, and multiculturalism.

With this ideological shift, along with the adoption of the pro-European and pro-Western policy, the ruling party incorporated almost all key goals set by pro-Montenegrin LSCG back

in 1990. One of the scholars studying this period even claimed that this phenomena could be called “party plagiarism” (Goati 2015, 66).

From the theoretical perspective, with this ideological shift DPS, similarly to Taiwanese Kuomintang, broke with authoritarian past and built a new “reservoir of legitimacy” (Wong 2008, 69) as a party which introduced democracy and secured Montenegrin Independence.

4.2 Recreating the Montenegrin identity

Pempel’s (1990, 352) argument that one important commonality of the dominant parties is that, by being for so long in office, they have the unique opportunity to “shape the nation politics through public policy choices” is probably best shown in the case of Montenegro through the process Dzankic (2014, 366) calls “symbolizing the nation.”

The process of identity reconstruction in Montenegro is extensively studied by Jelena Dzankic who explains that throughout the history the “identity in Montenegro has been dualistic: Serb and Montenegrin had not been mutually exclusive categories, a situation referred to as the Montenegrin *homo duplex*” (Dzankic 2014, 353). The roots of this “homo duplex”, according to Dzankic (ibid), can be found centuries ago in Montenegrin society in which church and state rule were not divided and in which some of the prince-bishops that ruled the country referred to population as “Serb.” The same phenomena occurred in the 1990s when the new ruling elite kept relating itself to the Orthodox Christianity and changed only after the split within the ruling party (Dzankic 2014, 354).

The 1997 split of the ruling party, argues Dzankic (2014, 352), was followed by a disruption in the cognitive frame for understanding what it meant to be Montenegrin. As soon as Milosevic came under increased international pressure and lost local elections in 1996, Djukanovic’s wing within the ruling party decided that it was time to abandon the person who initiated their rise to power and present the voters fed up with war and sanctions a new alternative. This was done

through the separation from federal institutions as well as the ruling party in Serbia and was followed by a set of policies which were not aimed at achieving Montenegrin Independence (see above), but instead provide more autonomy – a process which Roberts (2002, 6; also 2007, 35) termed “creeping independence”. For Dzankic, this “creeping independence” was important as it provided a push for independence and allowed the ruling party to reinforce the Independence idea by associating it with the Montenegrin identity schema (Dzankic 2014, 355). From 2001, as Dzankic shows (2014, 356), ethnic elements were introduced into the identity schema which was reconstructed in such a manner as to align with the political programme of the ruling party. As a result, the 2002 elections showed that the ethnic division among the voters was more pronounced than in 2001 (Goati 2015, 75). The coalition led by the ruling party managed to secure 47.34 per cent of the voters and absolute majority in the Parliament (39 out of 75 seats) (ibid).

By adopting a set of policies on a new State Flag, Coat of Arms, National Anthem and finally, language, the ruling party not only re-created Montenegrin identity frame but, as previously mentioned, aligned it with its own party programme. This process was of great importance for establishing a new political climate.

4.3 The increasing importance of new issues and the change of inter-party dynamics

Although the 2006 elections proved to be a major victory for the ruling DPS, they also marked the beginning of new era in Montenegrin politics. As the major issue was formally closed, the political dynamics started to change. Opposition parties started dedicating their attention to new issues, out of which most prominent were: (1) corruption, (2) poverty; and (3) the status of Serb population within the State (Goati 2015, 80). Already in 2006, newly formed party called *Movement for Changes*, advocating social and economic issues and remaining silent on Independence dilemma became most successful opposition party winning 13.6 percent of the

seats in the Parliament (Vukicevic and Vujovic 2012, 68-69). In 2008, the emergence of global financial crisis and its adverse effects on the economy additionally influenced political dynamics in Montenegro.

Faced with an increasing number of economic challenges, and aware that problems might become even more complicated in the future, the ruling party decided to call early parliamentary elections in 2009 (Goati 2015, 81). Scholars and international observers note that the ruling party and opposition came close in terms of policy promises during these elections as both sides promoted EU integrations, economic reforms and fight against crime and corruption (Goati 2015, 81; Uljarevic 2009, 98-102; OSCE 2009, 13). Given the change of inter-party dynamics after the economic crisis, the dominant party, as one would expect according to the theory, resorted to increased patronage and clientelism politics, which eventually caused corruption affairs to emerge.

On the other side, as economic crisis shook the system in the period 2009-2012, the opposition forces sought to utilize the opportunity to defeat the incumbent by referring to rising importance of social and economic issues (Goati 2015, 81). In 2012, opposition parties NOVA¹⁶ and Movement for Changes along with several members of SNP, formed the *Democratic Front* (DF), a political alliance first led by Miodrag Lekic, a person then not affiliated with any political party (Goati 2015, 81-82),¹⁷ but with experience as a former Ambassador of the joint state and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Montenegro. Apart from DF, a new party, called *Positive Montenegro*¹⁸ joined the political scene, while SNP decided to contest elections alone.

¹⁶ NOVA was formed in 2009 and is the party representing Serbs in Montenegro (Vukicevic and Vujovic 2012, 67).

¹⁷ Now the leader of a new party *DEMOS*.

¹⁸ The party was formed in 2011 under the leadership of a biologist Darko Pajovic.

The decision of mainly pro-Serb opposition forces to form political alliance (DF) and introduce new issues into their campaign such as corruption and economy; as well as formation of Positive Montenegro, perceived as pro-Montenegrin and pro-Western opposition party, resembles what Dunleavy (2010, 16) presents as a situation in which dominant party's support is likely to be eroded. After the 2012 elections, the ruling coalition lost 9 seats (in a Parliament consisting of 81 seats) compared to the previous elections (Goati 2015, 82). In addition to the eroded electoral dominance, the dominant party had to face the 2013 corruption affair which caused the crisis in the system.

4.4 Manipulating resources and developing clientelist networks

As the theory shows, to maintain dominance the dominant party relies on diverting the public funds and state resources for the purpose of buying support as well as creating large public sector which becomes a source of patronage jobs. These, to use Pempel's notion, "symptoms" are present in Montenegrin case as well.

One of the most important clientelist resources of the dominant party is its ability to provide jobs in public service. The system functions similar to "*raccomandazione system*" (Golden 2003, 198) established during the rule of Italian dominant party Democrazia Cristiana. As Golden (2003) explains, jobs in public institutions served as an important patronage resource for dominant party's politicians to buy support in their constituencies and then claim credit during the elections. Employment was based on factional and partisan loyalty and was conducted by avoiding civil service regulation (Golden 2003, 198).

In Montenegro, staffing of public service with party loyalists ahead of the elections is a well-known phenomenon. In words of domestic experts, "jobs [in public service] buy votes, electoral victories and social peace" (Marovic, Milosevic, and Bajramspahic 2014, 22; translation mine). Despite continuous pressures from the EU to reform and limit the public sector, Government makes changes mainly on paper, while in reality non-transparent

employment procedures, wide discretionary powers and breaches of merit-based criteria leave a wide space for patronage appointments (Milosevic 2017). Although jobs in public service are less paid and provide less opportunities for career improvement, they are still more preferred to jobs in private and civil sector (see Marovic, Milosevic, and Bajramspahic 2014, 16), giving the dominant party an incentive to stall the reforms.

4.5 Entering the crisis: The “Tape Affair” and 2013 Presidential elections

In February 2013 an audio tape was published by daily newspaper “Dan” that caused a severe political crisis and is something still referred to in the official reports on Montenegro’s EU accession in which EU keeps calling for judicial resolution of the case.

The tape contains the audio recording of the ruling party’s official meeting before the 2012 parliamentary elections where the strategy for upcoming elections was discussed. The voices of three highly positioned ruling party’s officials, including current president Djukanovic, can be identified. The following statement by MP Ivan Jelic probably best describes how the previously mentioned Montenegrin “*raccomandazione*” system functions:

(...) preparing for the upcoming elections, we have initiated a couple of projects in the Employment Office. (...) through these projects we will aim to employ first and foremost the members of Democratic Party of Socialists. We have communication regarding this issue on daily basis with party presidents in each municipality because we want, first and foremost, to employ our people. (...) *And one more thing – one employed is equal to four votes.* If we manage to employ one of our own, we have managed to take them [opposition] one vote and increase one vote for us, and there is a part of one family. (in4snet 2013, 4:54 – 7:23; translation mine, emphasis added)

The audio recording was published in the year of Presidential elections and marked the beginning of a political crisis. It also provided a strong incentive for opposition forces to unite around the common issue and try to defeat the ruling party. Although the role of the President, according to the Constitution, is mainly ceremonial, the fact that the President is chosen directly gives him/her legitimacy from the people. Therefore, the 2013 Presidential elections were highly important. The crisis was further deepened given that coalition member, SDP, after a

series of disagreements with DPS, especially regarding the “Tape Affair,” decided not to support the ruling party’s candidate, Filip Vujanovic (Jankovic 2013). In addition, SDP appealed to the Constitutional Court challenging the legality of Vujanovic’s candidacy (Al Jazeera Balkans 2013). The opposition DF, SNP, PCG and DSS supported independent opposition candidate Miodrag Lekic (OSCE 2013, 11).

According to OSCE (2013, 2), the campaign for 2013 Presidential elections was highly personalized, marked with mutual accusations and frequent references to the “Tape Affair.” The result was close: 51.2% vs 48.8% in favour of the ruling party’s candidate, Filip Vujanovic (OSCE 2013, 25). Given a close result and a difference being less than 7 000 votes, Lekic questioned the results and asked for recounts in several cases - however, all of Lekic’s complaints were rejected (OSCE 2013, 20-21). At the end, Lekic decided not to accept the results of the Presidential elections.

4.6 Post-crisis adaptation

In 2015, the crisis was at its peak. After Montenegro was invited to join NATO in June, the only factor keeping the DPS and SDP coalition together, despite series of mutual accusations, was gone and it was only matter of time before the coalition would formally end. In addition, the opposition alliance Democratic Front organized in October 2015 mass protests in front of the Assembly with an aim to put pressure on the ruling party to form the caretaker government (Vujovic et al. 2016, 10). However, these protests ended in violent confrontation between protesters and the police (ibid). Faced with increasing pressures from the opposition and its coalition partner, DPS resorted to mixture of pragmatic and vote-buying strategies.

4.6.1 Pragmatic compromises

After the October protests, negotiations started between the ruling party and opposition on improving the public trust in electoral process and the results of the next elections (ibid). In addition, in order to solve increasing disputes within the ruling coalition PM Djukanovic

requested a vote of confidence at the end of 2015. The document submitted to the Assembly states that deteriorating relations between the DPS and SDP established a situation where it seemed that the Government lacked parliamentary majority and functioned as a “technical Government” (Government of Montenegro 2015). In a vote of confidence held in January 2016, SDP voted against thereby formally breaking the coalition. As Pempel (2008, 116-117) noted in the case of Japanese LDP, dominant parties faced with a prospect of losing their “oxygen”, i.e. power, are ready for any compromise - even with their opponents. It was the opposition Positive Montenegro, termed once by Djukanovic himself as a party “created by media mafia” (Portal Analitika 2013), that provided the crucial votes for the Government giving priority to country’s stability and then still awaiting formal ratification of the NATO accession treaty (rtcg.me 2016). The move caused Positive Montenegro to suffer harsh criticism by the public and was penalized in the 2016 elections when the party won just 1.32 percent of the votes, failing to reach the threshold (OSCE 2016, 25). However, its leader Darko Pajovic will be rewarded for his cooperation with DPS later – by becoming the Ambassador of Montenegro to PR China (Komnenic 2018).

With an aim to solve the political crisis, Positive Montenegro proposed forming the transition government, which would work on increasing the public trust in the electoral process. Although it was a further decline of dominance, the ruling party accepted this proposal as it eventually helped it prepare for the upcoming elections. After successful negotiations, opposition parties DEMOS, SDP, and URA took several key positions in the Government to monitor the election process (Vujovic et al. 2016, 10). The so-called *Agreement on creating the conditions for free and fair elections* was signed on 26 April 2016 (Radio Slobodna Evropa 2016) and a special law was designed to allow members of opposition to occupy positions within the Government, including head of four ministries (Internal Affairs; Finance; Labour and Social Welfare; and Agriculture and Rural Development) and positions within legal entities established by the

Government (Parliament of Montenegro 2016b). The law, at least on paper, allowed members of the opposition to scrutinize key ministries, firms and institutions established by the Government; their finances and the usage of State resources; with additional powers to prevent any employment or discontinuation of employment that could be considered as politically motivated (Article 7 of the Law).

The opposition parties, on the other side, committed themselves to accepting the results of the forthcoming elections as “an indisputable will of the citizens of Montenegro” (Parliament of Montenegro 2016a). However, as 2016 elections were held in a tense atmosphere of the alleged coup d’état attempt, this part of the agreement will become problematic for the opposition.

4.6.2 Vote-buying

The other strategy dominant party relied on is extensive vote-buying. Although reports by OSCE usually treat the allegations made by opposition regarding misuse of state resources, vote-buying and voter intimidation as “hard to substantiate” (see: OSCE 2006, 2009, 2012), I have conducted an analysis of vote-buying during the 2016 parliamentary elections using the Montenegrin National Election Study (MNES) 2016 dataset¹⁹ in order to explore the extent to which these electoral malpractices were present in post-crisis period.

For the purposes of my analysis, I will follow Bratton's (2008, 623-624) approach to analysing electoral malpractices using survey data. In the case of Nigerian elections, Bratton (2008, 623) operationalizes vote buying as something (money, food or a gift) received in return for vote, while intimidation is operationalized as a threat of negative consequences for not voting in a particular way. Following this approach, I operationalize vote-buying as being offered something (money, administrative service or job) in return for a vote; while voter intimidation is operationalized as an experience of being blackmailed to vote in a particular way (see items

¹⁹ The dataset is available at the following URL: <http://mnes.defacto.me/podaci/> (Accessed: 13 January 2019).

M19 and M20 from MNES 2016 questionnaire). Following Bratton (2008, 624), I also make a distinction between self-reported (personal experience) and assumed levels (what citizens know about their fellow citizens) of vote-buying and voter-intimidation. The results presented in table 3 reveal worrying level of vote-buying and voter intimidation. If I was to follow Bratton's approach, I would estimate the true level of vote-buying to be somewhere between 15 (underestimate) and 32 per cent (overestimate), while for voter intimidation the true level lies somewhere between 5 and 21 per cent. These are certainly wide margins, but still they are worse even compared to controversial 2007 Nigerian elections Bratton focused on.

Table 3. Vote-buying and voter intimidation data for the 2016 parliamentary elections

Type	Frequency of Vote-buying		Frequency of voter intimidation		Both happened	
	n	% in sample	n	% in sample	n	% in sample
Self-reported	189	15.58	62	5.11	46	3.79
Assumed	390	32.15	257	21.12	241	19.86

Source: Data from MNES 2016 dataset.

Note: Total sample size: 1213.

Another study on vote-buying by Bliznakovski, Gjuzelov, and Popovikj (2017) confirms these worrying findings for Montenegro. In this study, the question for vote-buying is similar yet differs in time-span: “Have you *ever* been offered money or a favour in exchange for your vote in elections?” (Bliznakovski, Gjuzelov, and Popovikj 2017, 9; emphasis added). The authors compare findings for the countries in Western Balkans and find that Montenegro ranks highest in the region with 22.5 percent (figure 5).

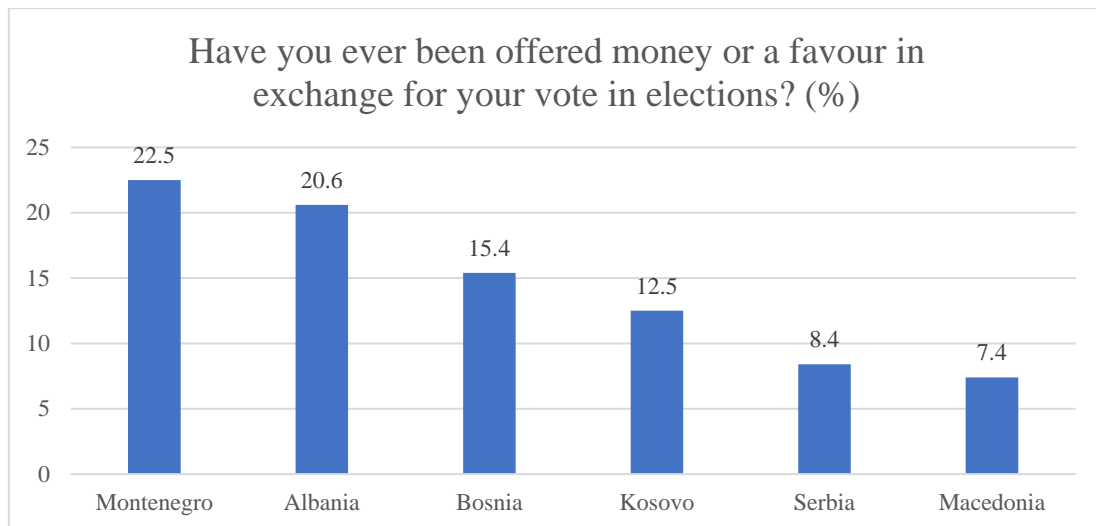


Figure 5. Vote-buying in the region of Western Balkans.

Source: Adapted graph from Bliznakovski, Gjuzelov, and Popovikj (2017, 9).

To better understand what these numbers mean, one can also refer to Bliznakovski, Gjuzelov, and Popovikj's (2017, 9-10) comparison of what they call the "pressured voters" (i.e. those experiencing vote-buying), the number of votes for the winning party and the total electorate: in case of Montenegro, out of 528 817 registered voters 118 984 are pressured and 158 490 vote the dominant party. When it comes to employer pressure, authors again find that Montenegro ranks highest in the region with 11.7 percent of positive responses to the question "Have you been requested by your manager / boss to vote for a certain party?" (Bliznakovski, Gjuzelov, and Popovikj's 2017, 11).

Having these findings in mind, one can conclude that although vote-buying itself might not influence the election outcome (see Bratton 2008; Greene 2016), it has the adverse effect on democratic accountability and trust in electoral process, especially when it is combined with high level of voter intimidation, such as that in Montenegro.

Chapter 5 – Cycle III: Backslide to autocracy

Experts studying the 2016 elections in Montenegro argue that “all indications suggest that the establishment of the temporary, transitional government had little impact on loosening the grip of the ruling DPS on the state, resources and consequently the electoral process” (Cvijic, Muk, and Vujovic 2016, 4). Head of ministries belonging to the opposition faced numerous obstacles in their work as they were not given key documents and access to relevant databases (Cvijic, Muk, and Vujovic 2016, 2). Minister of Internal Affairs, Goran Danilovic,²⁰ unsatisfied with the deficiencies found in the electoral register refused to sign it thereby formally preventing the organization of elections – however, the Government eventually found a legal solution that allowed an authorized person from the Ministry to sign the register and make elections possible (Vujovic et al. 2016, 8). The key institution for scrutinizing the financing of political parties, Agency for Prevention of Corruption, did not take a proactive role and remained under the political influence of the ruling party (Vujovic et al. 2016, 8). In addition, and for the first time since 1990 elections, the 2016 elections were held without the election spray being used, which, combined with the usage of ID cards that did not contain biometric information, provided even more space for electoral malpractices as compared to the 2013 elections (Cvijic, Muk, and Vujovic 2016, 2). This shows that in time of declining dominance, DPS relied heavily on both formal and informal sources of power.

On the day of elections, media broadcasted breaking news about a group of former members of the Serbian army being arrested due to the alleged attempt to assassinate the then-prime minister Djukanovic and violently take over the country (OSCE 2016, 19; Al Jazeera Balkans 2016). Social media applications, *Viber* and *WhatsApp*, were blocked on the request of Agency for Electronic Communications based on the need to prevent “malicious messages,” a move judged

²⁰ Then member of *DEMOS*, now leader of new party *United Montenegro*.

undemocratic by domestic experts and representatives of civil society (OSCE 2016, 19; Vujovic et al. 2016, 42). These measures contributed to the overall atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

Although the outcome of 2016 elections was return to the maintenance phase, the ruling party failed to secure a clear victory: it won 41.41 percent of the votes and could count only on 36 out of 81 seats (see table 4). On the other side, the opposition parties won 39 seats and needed only two more to form a Government. Among them, great success was achieved by the newly formed civic party *Democrats of Montenegro* that won alone 10 percent of the votes.

Table 4. Results of the 2016 parliamentary elections

Party (or coalition)	Votes (per cent)	Seats
DPS	41.41	36
DF	20.32	18
Big coalition “Key” *	11.05	9
Democratic Montenegro	10.01	8
SDP	5.23	4
Social Democrats	3.26	2
Bosniak Party	3.16	2
PCG	1.32	0
Albanians Determined coalition**	1.27	1***
Croatian Civic Initiative	0.47	1***

Source: Data from OSCE 2016, 25.

Notes: * *SNP*, *URA* and *DEMOS*; ** *Forza* and *DUA*, *** Reduced threshold for minorities.

Despite opposition parties planning to form wide post-election coalition (OSCE 2016, 12), the ruling DPS was rescued with the traditional support of parties representing minorities, and most importantly, the crucial two votes of the newly formed Social Democrats - a party created as a result of the split that occurred in former coalition member, SDP (Milic 2016). Although the new party comprised of former SDP members loyal to the cooperation with DPS barely reached the threshold, it was generously rewarded with a leading position in two ministries and a position formerly occupied by SDP – the President of the Parliament (ibid).

The reliance on formal and informal powers and rules before elections, undemocratic practices during the elections and finally, buying new support after the elections in order to preserve power confirm the theoretical expectation that the dominant party in times of crises employ a wide mix of adaptive strategies to survive. That the dominant party relied on undemocratic practices, which according to the theory are least preferred (as they can easily backfire), best shows the extent to which its dominance declined.

On the other side, not aware of what could happen before and on election day opposition parties were faced with their commitment, according to the Agreement, to accept the results of elections. However, the opposition forces refused to accept the results and similar to 2002, decided to boycott the Parliament. Again, the boycott and protests were unsuccessful which resulted in DF's decision to return to the Parliament at the end of 2017, later followed by similar decision of SDP and DEMOS (Muk 2018; rtcg.me 2018).

The 2018 Presidential and local elections, with DPS securing major victories in each, marked the stabilization of dominance. Long-lasting leader of DPS and several times Prime Minister, Milo Djukanovic, won a landslide victory in 2018 Presidential elections versus a fragmented opposition unable to field a joint candidate. Local elections held soon after the Presidential elections further solidified the ruling party's power. However, this time DPS maintained its dominance by resorting to authoritarian strategies.

5.1 Maintaining dominance by hijacking democracy²¹

As combination of democratic adaptive strategies, resources and ideology used during second cycle was not enough to preserve power, the only alternative left for the party was to crush its

²¹ The concept of dominant party's willingness to "hijack democracy" to preserve power was suggested by Friedman and Wong (2008, 5).

opponents. As the theory would predict in this case, period after 2016 elections was marked by continuous attacks of the ruling party on the basic principles of democracy.

The public broadcaster (RTCG) came under increased pressure of the dominant party during 2018 local and presidential elections: first, the parliamentary majority removed key members of the RTCG Council and then the recomposed Council dismissed the director of the Television and the General Director (Vujovic, Bojan, et al. 2018; Vujovic, Nikoleta, et al. 2018).

The election of Milo Djukanovic, 2015 OCCPR winner of the “Man of the Year in Organized Crime and Corruption” title for contributing to the development of “uncivil society”,²² as the new President marked the further centralization of power and was followed by an increase in undemocratic practices. As Freedom House notes:

Although the constitution provides for a parliamentary system of government, Parliament passed a new law after Đukanović’s April 2018 election that greatly expands presidential powers. The law allows the president to form councils, committees, and working groups. Critics claim that the changes could amount to a de facto move toward a semipresidential [sic] system of government. (Freedom House 2019)

2018 also marked a return to repressive measures from the 1990s. Soon after the end of parliamentary session initiated by the ruling coalition and with the purpose of adopting a resolution that would “dismiss” the decisions made by the 1918 Podgorica Assembly that formalized Montenegro’s incorporation as a part of Serbia, came the unexpected arrest of opposition MP Nebojsa Medojevic (DF/PzP). The move was condemned by all opposition parties and caused the EU delegation in Montenegro to raise concerns about the possible impact of this move on Montenegro’s accession to the EU. The arrest also appears in the newest Freedom House report in which it is stated that “the DPS-led government has relentlessly

²² See the extensive report on the following URL: <https://www.occrp.org/en/poy/2015/> (Accessed 2 May 2019).

worked to delegitimize political activity that deviates from its preferred policies, characterizing it as a threat to the state or public order” (Freedom House 2019).

Finally, investigative journalists and independent NGOs critical of the Government face smear campaign and intimidation. For example, independent NGOs that wrote a critical report on Government’s “make-believe statistics” for the EU accession progress and “ballot boxes full of lies” (“Montenegro Between Reform Leader And Reform Simulacrum” 2018) faced hate-speech campaign and attacks by the members of the dominant party (Vujovic, Bojan, et al. 2018, 16). In 2017, Prime Minister’s brother phoned a journalist from pro-opposition daily newspaper *Dan* to inform him that in case his statements are politically interpreted he should not wonder “why someone got killed later” (“Montenegro Between Reform Leader And Reform Simulacrum” 2018, 10). In 2018, President Djukanovic described media and NGOs investigating his son’s business as “having a fascist behavior” (Dusevic 2018). At the beginning of 2019, a freelance journalist investigating drug trafficking got convicted by Montenegrin authorities for being involved in what he was investigating despite evidence showing the contrary (Reporters Without Borders 2019).

5.2 An envelope that shook the system: 2019 crisis

Already during the 2015 crisis the dominant party started turning against even its closest allies to improve its own image by presenting itself as a party able to recognize own mistakes and fight organized crime and corruption. Back then, the former high-ranking official Svetozar Marovic was arrested and convicted in a major corruption investigation for inflicting more than 11 million euros financial damage to the seaside municipality of Budva (Dan online 2016). However, as some domestic NGOs note, the problematic aspect of the whole process was Marovic’s claim that his statement in front of the judicial authorities was given out of fear indicating that he was pressured to do so (MANS 2016).

The attempts of the dominant party to continue sidelining its corrupt allies in times of declining dominance backfired in 2019. Businessman Dusko Knezevic, known for his close ties with the ruling party elite, leaked a video tape on 12 January 2019 on which the former mayor of Podgorica Slavoljub Stijepovic can be seen putting an envelope with 97,500 euros in the pocket of his suit before heading to the field to join 2016 election campaign (IH4C 2019). The video appeared after a series of accusations made by Knezevic that Djukanovic's "octopus mafia" was trying to set him up the organization of the alleged coup d'etat attempt in 2016 and destroy his business (Vijesti Online 2019). Knezevic claims that the his relations with Djukanovic deteriorated at the moment he refused to stand behind certain transactions and real-estate projects (Kajosevic 2019).

Despite claiming that the tape was a planned hoax (rtcg.me 2019b), former mayor Stijepovic became a suspect in Special State Prosecutor's Office's investigation for the case of money laundering (CDM 2019a). The dominant party was also punished –Agency for Prevention of Corruption requested it to return 47,500 euros into the State budget and pay additional 20,000 euro fee (MINA 2019b).

The tape marked the beginning of a process that is still ongoing and by now Knezevic, who claims to be "the golden sponsor" of the dominant party has revealed additional audio tapes, documents and photographs involving high-level officials which point out to the devastating level of corruption, especially in state institutions and the Montenegrin Central Bank.²³ Knezevic is releasing his material from abroad and keeps escaping Montenegrin authorities as a holder of British, Serbian, Cypriot and Belarus passport (*Pobjeda* 2019).

²³ One of these tapes led to the arrest of the former Vice-Governor of Montenegrin Central Bank.

5.2.1 #Resist 97000²⁴ Movement

Probably the most important response to the “Envelope affair,” from the perspective of societal changes, is the formation of the first enduring mass civic resistance movement symbolically called “Resist 97000”. The movement, at the moment of writing, has initiated twelve protests and several civic disobedience actions.

The first gathering of the citizens provoked by the “envelope affair” occurred on 2 February 2019 in front of the State’s Prosecutor Office in the capital Podgorica (MINA 2019a). It was organized by a newly formed civic movement which symbolically had 97 members in the organizational board. Although the organizers had a modest aim of gathering at least 97 citizens in front of the State’s Prosecutor Office to hand 97 “envelopes” (Miladinovic 2019), they were surprised to see about a thousand of them arriving.

Already during the second protest, thousands of unsatisfied citizens gathered in Podgorica’s Liberty street with the signs reading “Resist collective aMNEsia,” “We are the State,” “Stop Mafia” and similar. The organizers started the second protest with a minute of silence dedicated to all the casualties of the ruling party’s regime during the last 30 years. The minute was followed by the sound of a war siren during which citizens raised the white envelopes on which it was symbolically written “1 000 EUR”. After the minute expired, citizens started chanting “Milo, you thief.” From then until now, no official data was released by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the number of citizens attending the protests, but the organizers estimated this number to be ca. 10 000 on 16 February and 19 700 on 2 March (Z. Vucinic 2019a; oduprise.me 2019a). The protests held on 2 March became the most massive protests organized in Montenegro since the introduction of multi-party system in 1990.

²⁴ Original: #97000dupri se (the letter “d” appears next to the last 0 so it mimics the word “Odupri”. *Odupri se* means “Resist”).

Since the first protests, many tactics changed and the “Resist 97000” movement showed an ability to innovate, adapt and accept citizens’ suggestions. However, the last two protests organized in May with each attracting less support compared to previous protests indicate that citizens are gradually becoming fatigued with the protests as they still have not resulted in any resignations or negotiations over the caretaker government. In addition, the movement is still struggling to attract more support from the EU which would significantly increase its legitimacy. Nevertheless, the fact that citizens are protesting for almost half a year replacing national and party banners with anti-corruption slogans is a strong indicator that Montenegrin society is going through an important change which will affect the future party system dynamics.

5.2.2 Change of opposition dynamics

The corruption scandal also stimulated cooperation of the whole opposition, for the first time in Montenegrin history. This coordination was facilitated by the “Resistance 97000” movement that focused during its first weeks of protests on uniting the opposition.

During the seventh protest at the end of March, MPs from all opposition parties went out to the stage to ceremonially sign the “Agreement for the Future” (oduprise.me 2019b; rtcg.me 2019a; Z. Vucinic 2019b). The Agreement states that the citizens of Montenegro, living in a society paralyzed by societal divisions and under conditions of unchanged autocratic government that lasts for 30 years decided to sign the agreement with the opposition and have “#Resistance” movement as their representative (“Sporazum o budućnosti” 2019). Signatories, according to the Agreement, demand resignations of the President, Prime Minister, Supreme State Prosecutor, Special State Prosecutor, President of the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption and the director of the public broadcaster RTCG (ibid). Most importantly, they commit themselves to achieving a common goal of holding first free and fair elections in the history of

the country and demanding the Government of national unity (ibid). Finally, all sides agreed on boycotting all types of elections until the goals of the Agreement are fulfilled (ibid).

However, whether we will witness the success of this unprecedented opposition coordination is yet to be seen as several important processes are developing at the moment of writing. From the theoretical perspective two seem of special importance. First, the conflict between SDP and Democrats that emerged in May over their local coalition in the seaside city of Kotor lead the two parties to cease coordination undermining the weekly opposition meetings established with the aid of “Resist97000” movement and adversely affecting the organization of the last two protests. Second, the decision of the Montenegrin judicial authorities to convict two members of DF for participating in the organization of 2016 terrorist attempt (CDM 2019b) and their promise of violent response²⁵ is certainly a setback for any attempt to present a credible alternative to the dominant party. If opposition parties fail to reconcile their particularistic goals and DF keeps its extremist course, return to the phase of “existing but ineffective challengers” (Greene 2007, 71) seems inevitable.

²⁵ One of the leaders of DF, Andrija Mandić, threatened during one parliamentary debate that “heads will go off” if they are found guilty.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I explored the case of Montenegro's lack of alternation in governance from the perspective of dominant party systems. I argued that current scholarship, by approaching the case from the individual-level and party-level perspectives still does not provide complete explanation of the "Montenegrin puzzle" and remains mostly focused on case-specific peculiarities. To answer the research question, I employed theory-testing process tracing method: first, I defined the key concepts and deduced the theory of the logic of dominant party systems by relying on three broader theoretical approaches (the cycle theory, resource-based theory, and the theory of legitimacy); second, I defined the causal mechanism according to which dominant party systems have clearly identifiable *establishment*, *maintenance*, *crisis* and *post-crisis* phases; and finally, I turned to the step-wise analysis of my empirical data. Throughout the analysis, I argued that the suggested logic of dominant party systems functions independently of regime type yet introducing regime type into the discussion is important for understanding how different strategies can be used for specific phases such as maintaining dominance or solving crises.

Before I summarize the main findings, I would like to point out two important limitations in my work. First, the limited space available prevented me from elaborating extensively on each historical event and from adding additional evidence which might have illuminated certain periods better from the perspective of the theory. Second, given that I analyzed one case, the generalizations of my findings are limited. Nevertheless, further research could build upon my effort and test the suggested mechanism in a wider comparative setting.

The empirical analysis showed that Montenegrin dominant party system indeed behaves according to the suggested mechanism presented in Chapter 2. In line with theoretical expectations, the cycle of dominance was established after a major change in the society (the 1989 revolution) with future dominant party adopting a moderate ideological position. During

the first cycle, the dominant party relied heavily on authoritarian measures and resource dominance to maintain power but switched pragmatically to democratic strategies after the 1996-1997 crisis period, while marginalized opposition forces failed to win the struggle for legitimacy. During the second cycle, the dominant party in democratic setting relied on newly adopted ideology and developing clientelist networks, while opposition parties gradually focused more on social and economic issues seeking to utilize the 2008 economic crisis and closing of “Montenegrin dilemma.” As theory predicted, faced with increasing pressure and insufficient effect of symbolic appeals, the party resorted to increased clientelism which culminated in a major corruption scandal in 2013. To solve the crisis, the dominant party adopted a mix of pragmatic and clientelist strategies. However, further decline of dominance and change of inter-party dynamics left the dominant party with no alternative but to maintain its power by relying on repressive strategies during the most recent period for which I argued to be of authoritarian nature. The repressive measures, as theory would predict, soon backfired and the system entered another crisis in 2019 for which the outcome is yet to be seen.

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