

EXTERNAL VETO ACTORS, PUBLIC OPINION, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF EU-SKEPTIC PARTIES IN CROATIA AND SERBIA

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Executive Summary

In order to explain the creation of pro-European Union party consensus in former Yugoslav states, this paper presents a rational model of party change whereby public attitudes toward the European Union, combined with the use of external vetoes by European actors induce a conflict between party extroverts and introverts in EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties which leads either to a split in these parties or to a change to more pro-EU rhetoric. The model is applied to the cases of the Croatian Democratic Union, the Serbian Socialist Party and the Serbian Radical Party to account for changes in party rhetoric in these formerly Euro-skeptic and EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties.

Introduction

In the aftermath of the European Union's (EU) 2004 and 2007 eastward expansions, scholars are focusing increased attention on the question of EU integration and conditionality in the Western Balkans. This growing number of studies not only contributes to the existing body of more generalized work on conditionality, but it also serves to close critical gaps in our knowledge about the EU integration process in the region. Another fruitful development in this growing literature is its increasing tendency to focus more directly on conditionality as a cross-level issue, taking into account both international and domestic factors as a means to determine the likelihood of state compliance.

However, while many of these studies claim to break new ground by focusing more closely on how domestic political factors shape national leaders' interests, a more critical examination of this literature suggests that the studies still provide a rather limited view of the various cases' domestic political arenas. Popular and academic accounts of Croatian and Serbian reactions to conditionality in the aftermath of their respective 2000 "revolutions" focus almost exclusively on the behavior of pro-European elites. These elites negotiate with conditionality-wielding European actors, while simultaneously facing off against EU-skeptic/anti-EU opposition parties backed by a vaguely-quantified "nationalist" public.¹

The nature of this opposition is under-explored. Its leadership seems driven by unchanging extremism, and one is left to believe either that the case countries have a sufficient

¹ Recognizing that the parties under examination varied in their critical attitudes towards the EU, the term EU-skeptic/anti-EU will be used throughout this paper. The Tudman-era HDZ was never outwardly anti-EU (although certain members perhaps were), but openly pursued policies which put it at odds with the European Union and occasionally made it clear that national interests, as defined by the HDZ, would always take precedent. Serbia's SPS and SRS showed a rather higher degree of EU-skepticism. While the SPS made occasional mention of support for eventual EU membership, its policies towards the Hague and occasional anti-EU statements placed it squarely in the EU-skeptic or even anti-EU camp. The SRS frequently made openly anti-EU statements while advocating closer ties with Russia as an alternative to closer relations with the Union. One member of the party also published at least two monographs presenting arguments against EU membership and/or closer ties with Russia.

pool of extremism within the voting public to sustain these parties or that members of these parties are somehow immune to the desire to win elections and retain office. Occasional flukes occur, such as the HDZ's transformation, which are offhandedly treated as spontaneous and opportunistic reactions to changes in electoral fortunes.²

Considering that the EU conditionality literature has largely reached an accord around the idea that a broad party-based EU consensus is a necessary requisite for meaningful compliance with EU conditionality, the above approach to exploring conditionality in the Western Balkans poses some potential problems. Unless EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties are simply destroyed and replaced by more pro-European actors, then the creation of pro-EU consensus is most likely to occur through change in less pro-European parties. While studies have necessarily dealt with this in the context of the HDZ's return to power in 2003, their treatment of the party's transformation contradicts much of what we understand about party change. In the Serbian cases, transformation has been largely ignored. Furthermore, in focusing largely on the success or failure of ostensibly pro-EU governments to comply with EU conditionality, many existing studies miss a larger and currently rather positive (at least from the perspective of pro-integrationists) trend of EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties exchanging more nationally-oriented policies for at least cosmetically pro-European ones. In simple terms, the existing literature limits considerations of "change" to either the revolutions of 2000 (in the Croatian and Serbian cases) or to electoral outcomes—changes in parties and public attitudes are largely ignored outside of these limited contexts.

This report attempts to address this gap in the literature by explicitly examining the nexus between changes in public opinion resulting from attitudes towards conditionality-wielding

² Pond, E. (2006) *Endgame in the Balkans*, (Washington DC, Brookings). Fisher, S. (2006) *Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: From Nationalist to Europeanist*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan). Peskin, V. *International Justice in Rwanda and the Balkans: Virtual Trials and the Struggle for State Cooperation*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

organizations, external veto-actors, and decisions by party elites in EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties to introduce pro-European programmatic changes. Drawing on a model which specifies a linkage between conditionality and public attitudes, it demonstrates how the popular attraction of EU membership in the former Yugoslavia, combined with the effort of international veto-actors to “ban” certain parties from government, resulted in changes in public attitudes which, over a series of elections, created incentives for elites in EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties to push for changes in their party platforms.³ More than simply an effort to fill out the minutia of domestic politics, this study bears important implications for the literature by providing some insights into the trends which ultimately produce the conditionality literature’s coveted pro-EU party consensus.

A Focus on Change in EU-Skeptic/Anti-EU Parties

While a number of recent studies of the post-2000 EU integration process in the Western Balkans claim to bring domestic factors into the analysis, empirical studies still tend to privilege the international level either explicitly or through asymmetrical cross-level approaches which under-specify domestic developments. In turn, this under-specification leads to the additional problem of limiting the treatment given to domestic factors to the actions of democratic, pro-European elites.⁴ These elites negotiate with various conditionality-wielding organizations, which attempt to influence elite decisions through the selective offering of benefits and selective

³ In anticipation of any debates regarding the legitimacy of the tribunal’s actions, the culpability of different participants in the Yugoslav Wars or the objective value of EU membership, I wish to stress at this point that, as much as possible, the term “cooperation” is used in the neutral sense of at least one actor in a multi-actor relationship changing his or her behavior in a way that results in a reduction of conflict between the actors. Within the context of this study there is no need to attribute any normative content to the terms cooperation or non-cooperation. I would also state that, while change in domestic political attitudes and actors is the subject of this study, I also recognize the possibility that changes in the prosecutor’s or tribunal’s behavior could also result in a reduction of conflict, and thus, greater cooperation.

⁴ In making this statement, I include Vojislav Koštunica and the DSS in this group of “democratic, pro-European elites”—at least for the period in which it led the Serbian government from 2003-2007. Koštunica’s subsequent shift to the right in the run up to the 2008 elections would further call into question his already shaky pro-European credentials.

imposition of costs. What is oftentimes either missing or inadequately developed in these studies is a careful treatment of key aspects of the broader political milieu in which these elites operate – particularly with regard to the nature of the pro-EU elite-in-powers’ EU-skeptic/anti-EU opposition.

With the EU conditionality literature largely in agreement regarding the assertion that a broad consensus on membership in the EU is a critical precondition of long term compliance,⁵ the issue of EU-skeptic/anti-EU party behavior has only increased in importance. Although the creation of a pro-EU party consensus could theoretically arise from the destruction of EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties and the creation of new pro-EU political organizations, the institutional endurance of parties, along with the empirical record of many of the case countries, suggest that changes in platforms, or major splits resulting from failed attempts at party adaptation, are a more frequent path to the establishment of pro-EU consensuses. However, as the literature on party change and adaptation suggests, these changes are not the result of split-second decisions taken around election periods by unitary rational parties.⁶ Parties consist of different, often conflicting, leaders and factions who stand to incur costs or reap benefits of changes in the party. The parties also survive in part due to a core electorate which may prove unwilling to “follow” their party organization as it changes positions on a particular policy scale. Therefore, the

⁵ Schimmelfennig, F. (2005) “Strategic Calculation and International Socialization: Membership Incentives, Party Constellations, and Sustained Compliance in Central and Eastern Europe.” *International Organization* 59 (Fall 2005); Schimmelfennig, F. (2007) “European Regional Organizations, Political Conditionality, and Democratic Transformation in Eastern Europe.” *Eastern European Politics & Societies* 21, no. 1. Pridham, J. (2002) “EU Enlargement and Consolidating Democracy in Post-Communist States—Formality and Reality,” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40:3; Vachudova, M. (2008) “Tempered by the EU? Political Parties and Party Systems Before and After Accession,” *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15:8.

⁶ See Panebianco, A. (1988) *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, (New York, Cambridge University Press); Harmel, R. and Janda, K. (1994) “An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 6:3; Van Biezen, I. (2005) “On the Theory and Practice of Party Formation and Adaptation in New Democracies,” *European Journal of Political Research*, 44; Levitsky, S. (2001) “Organization and Labor-Based Party Adaptation: The Transformation of Argentine Peronism in Comparative Perspective,” *World Politics*, 54:1; Rose, R. and Mackie, T. (1988) “Do Parties Persist or Fail? The Big Trade-Off Facing Organizations,” in Lawson, K. and Merkl, P. (eds.), (1988).

process of party program change is a complex and longer-term factor which warrants greater attention. This paper is a first step in this direction.

Shifting the focus to EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties also fills an important gap in the empirical record of the EU integration process in this critical region. The literature's focus on pro-EU elites-in-power, with only periodic "background" references to the opposition as an under-defined and sometimes misconstrued threat, raises a number of potential problems for our understanding of the processes in this region. First, with attention fixed on the intermittent steps and (more often) missteps of pro-EU elites-in-power towards integration, researchers tend to paint a rather limited and sometimes overly pessimistic picture of the impact of conditionality on state behavior.

Much of this is purely circumstantial. The results of elections in the immediate post-2000 era in Croatia and Serbia created pro-EU governments with unrealistically high expectations. In light of these expectations it is perhaps inevitable that pro-European elites-in-power would disappoint EU-enthusiasts and suffer losses during the next election process. However, while Croatia's first enthusiastically pro-European government fell to a more nationally oriented alternative, this alternative had already undergone a major transformation towards more EU-compliant policies.

At the same time, in the Serbian case, more nationally-oriented alternatives enjoyed a relatively brief (2003-2008) heyday during which a number of these parties also experienced intense pressure to undertake actual or *de facto* programmatic changes which are now becoming more evident in the aftermath of Serbia's 2008 elections. The upshot of this brief account is that, while studies continue to focus on the resistance or failures of elites-in-power, they miss a broader trend of changes to EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties which hold the promise of establishing

the very political party consensus that the literature indicates are critical to the long term compliance necessary for full EU integration. This trend demands more detailed examination.

Second, in focusing on pro-EU elites-in-power, researchers allow these elites to dictate the historical narrative of this period. At times this leads to an incomplete and biased account of the actual restraints facing the decision makers during these critical periods. When viewed as rational-office seekers, pro-EU elites-in-power clearly have an incentive to overstate the degree to which their hands are tied on sensitive issues. This allows them to put the brakes on compliance with certain conditions while explaining to the international community that undue pressure could result in the coming to power of far worse alternatives.

While this dynamic has been at least articulated by some analysts (Peskin, for instance), there is a general failure to carefully assess the actual degree of restraints on government posed by mobilized publics and political challengers. Either pro-Western elites' versions of the domestic balance of forces are taken at face value, or regionally-knowledgeable researchers make sometimes poorly supported assertions about the actual strength and direction of public opinion and domestic challengers.⁷ The model presented in this paper seeks to partially resolve these problems by refocusing on public opinion and its impact on opposition parties—two factors which receive too little attention in existing accounts.

⁷ As one example of the latter, Jelena Obradovic Wochnik states that “the Serbian public has overwhelmingly opposed cooperation with the tribunal, ever since its founding. For example, a study which surveyed the population’s attitudes towards war crimes tribunals between 2001 and 2005, has found that two thirds of the general public do not know the extent and nature of ICTY operations and moreover, do not trust them.” However, in their entirety, the surveys that Obradovic Wolchik refers to provide a far more complex picture of Serbian opinion which fails to support either overly pessimistic or overly optimistic assessments. Furthermore, the particular survey item that she cites says more about the level to which the Serbian public is informed about the Tribunal than about its actual assessment of the Tribunal’s activities. In fact, in response to a general question about whether Serbia should cooperate with the Tribunal, as many as 85% of the respondents indicated that the government *should* cooperate. Obradovic-Wochnik, J. and Batt, J. (2009) “War Crimes, Conditionality, and EU Integration of the Western Balkans,” *Chaillot Paper*, 116.

Another consequence of shifting focus to changes in opposition party strategies is that such an exploration casts a different light on the role of publics in the conditionality literature. The current literature treats public opinion as an essentially random, or even irrelevant, factor. It backs this assertion by sighting the academic “consensus” regarding elite-driven politics in the region.⁸ Certainly, post-Communist European politics falls short of the unrealistic expectations of liberal democracy prevalent following the collapse of their respective communist regimes, but the literature has perhaps swung too far in the elite direction.

A careful assessment of the decisions by specific members of opposition party elites at critical times in this study clearly points to the pressure of public opinion—properly construed—on these elites’ decision-making. Elites within the three parties under examination (HDZ, SPS, and SRS/SNS) were all identified at some point in time with statements and policies which they later rejected in response to clear signals from polls and election results indicating that these policies were beginning to threaten the party’s prospects for office or even survival. While public opinion did not provide clear and consistent signals on the minutia of specific policies, its general support for EU integration and willingness to trade broadly specified “national interests” for this goal sent signals to all parties in the system that compliance with specific EU conditions could yield electoral dividends.

Public Attitudes, Electoral Shocks, and Party Change

In its effort to account for changes in EU-skeptic/anti-EU opposition party policies, this paper proposes a general strategic behavior-based model of conditionality working through voting publics and interventions by Western veto actors which in turn catalyze changes in office-

⁸ Schimmelfennig, F. (2007) “European Regional Organizations, Political Conditionality, and Democratic Transformation in Eastern Europe.” *East European Politics & Societies* 21, no. 1.

seeking political parties by changing the incentives of key actors within party organizations. In this model the European Union establishes conditions which it imposes on states seeking membership in the organization. At this point elites within target state political parties may decide to comply or not depending in part on the expected reactions of publics which may or may not support the conditionality in question. If political actors in governing parties choose not to comply, international actors respond by withholding the benefits upon which compliance is conditional.

The costs imposed by withholding benefits will generally not fall directly on the ruling political elites which, as starkly demonstrated during times of sanctions and other forms of international isolation, are frequently able to maintain their privileged access to goods and resources regardless. However, continued withholding of benefits may produce indirect negative costs on these elites by reducing their abilities to attract votes and thereby maintain or attain office. Over time, if voting publics see that the benefits of membership in the EU outweigh the costs of membership and that membership is preferable to non-membership, they will show increasing levels of support for political actors which support compliance. For the cases under examination, this shift in attitude will be most evident when parties which maintain a non-compliant stance see deterioration in their public support and/or voting base.⁹

To facilitate this process, and to undermine those EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties that enjoy sufficient support to otherwise constitute tempting and powerful coalition partners, conditionality-wielding international actors may also signal their opposition to certain EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties as viable options for future governments or governing coalitions either

⁹ It should be noted that a shift in public mood against the conditionality-wielding organization will have the opposite effect of raising the risk for cooperative parties or at least lowering the risk of non-cooperation. The implications of this for contemporary Croatia, where support for the EU is currently at a historical low point, will be discussed in the conclusions of the paper.

through public statements or actual boycotts of meetings with disfavored parties and the offices that they hold.¹⁰ Parties which otherwise maintain favorable relations with conditionality-wielding actors may be warned, explicitly or otherwise, about the costs of association with certain EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties in governing coalitions. In terms of voters, conditionality-wielding actors may overtly or implicitly threaten to impose costs on the entire state in the event that a specific EU-skeptic/anti-EU party gathers sufficient votes to win an election.

While the true effectiveness of such broad-based threats against voters is difficult to precisely ascertain, evidence suggests that the practice of “banning” certain parties as legitimate coalition partners impacted at least two of the cases examined in this study.¹¹ Consistently applied under conditions when the public desires membership or other benefits from the conditionality-wielding organization, this practice can effectively eliminate the possibility of an otherwise strongly supported EU-skeptic/anti-EU party gaining access to government. Over time, this condition threatens to produce a sense of disenfranchisement among the party’s voters as the organization continues to perform well in elections, but nonetheless fails to make any significant impact, other than occasional obstructionism, on the working of the government.

If a majority of the public favors membership in conditionality-wielding organizations and international actors have effectively “banned” their party (in its current form) from participation in coalitions with pro-European parties, actors within compliance-resistant parties must decide whether to opt for a change in rhetoric in favor of membership and conditionality or essentially “hold the course” in the hope that either attitudes shift or the conditionality-wielding

¹⁰ See for example the international community’s handling of Maja Gojković while she was part of SRS. Srđan Cvijić, “Blocked Political System: Serbia 2000-2008,” *Balkanologie*, Vol 9, No 1-2 (December 2008).

¹¹ As suggested by the example of the Serbian Socialist Party following the 2003 elections, bans only apply to actual participation in the government. DSS’s Vojislav Koštunića cooperated with SPS in the aftermath of the December 2003 elections without suffering stronger international repercussions by arranging the socialists’ support for his minority government without actually including them in it.

actor modifies its stance. Borrowing from the work of Richard Rose and Thomas Mackie, this choice creates a split within the party between so-called party extroverts and party introverts.

Party extroverts are those within the party who see support for the existing platforms decreasing and advocate change in the platform in order to boost the party's chances of winning or maintaining office. In keeping with the dual logics of public support and coalition formation discussed above, these actors may seek not only to "follow the median voter," but to also "launder" the party in such a way as to make it a potential viable coalition partner for more established pro-European parties. Introverts are those who, either through strongly held beliefs in existing platforms or fears of losing party cohesion and existing voter bases, resist changes to the party platform.¹² In a clash between introverts and extroverts, the party's future programmatic direction will be determined by the victory of one group over another. However, these clashes can also result in a party split whereby either extroverts or introverts opt to leave the organization in order to realize their goals under another party label.

It is important to note that the terms "extrovert" and "introvert" do *not* imply support for any particular ideology or political program, but simply support for a program or brand different from the party's current ones. In this respect, Milorad Vučelić provides a particularly interesting example of an "extrovert" who briefly left the Serbian Socialist Party (see below) in the immediate aftermath of the October 2000 anti-Milosevic "revolution." Vučelić's frequent political transformations seem "pragmatic" at best and this move was most likely attributable to his assessment that the SPS party label, in the immediate aftermath of the October events, could cause him more political harm than good. The Vučelić case is particularly interesting in that his later return to the pro-Milosevic fold would qualify him as an "introvert" in the 2004 conflict

¹² Rose, R. and Mackie, T. (1988) "Do Parties Persist or Fail? The Big Trade-Off Facing Organizations," in Lawson, K. and Merkl, P. (eds.), (1988).

between party introverts and Ivica Dačić.

Overall, this model improves upon and complements the existing literature in at least three different ways. First, it opens up the question as to how and why EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties undergo programmatic changes which may ultimately contribute to the establishment of pro-EU party consensuses. By unpacking the black box of political parties it provides an explanation as to when one might expect these critical changes to take place and to understand the conditions under which party extroverts succeed or fail to institute changes and reestablish a party as a viable political actor.

Second, it also moves elite consideration of public opinion into the center of the domestic conditionality equation. This improves upon and complements studies which alternately ignore public opinion entirely, treat it as an essentially random factor, or misconstrue the nature of public opinion through broad, under-researched generalizations. In contrast to the elite-focused tendency in the cross-level or domestic conditionality literature, this study explicitly treats public attitudes as a conduit for conditionality through which conditionality-wielding international actors can influence party elites.

Third, in applying this model to cases like Croatia and Serbia, this focus brings to light key facts about these important cases which have been heretofore ignored given the literature's focus on elites-in-power. Although the behavior of Croatia's SDP-led coalition from 2000-2003 and Serbia's various "democratic" coalitions from 2000-2008 tell a significant portion of the conditionality and integration stories in these countries, it says little about the gradual creation of the all-important pro-EU party consensus (at least in the rhetorical sense) that was achieved among all major parties in Croatia by 2003 and in Serbia by 2008-9. In order to understand these important developments one must refocus attention on the opposition parties during whose

transformation or fragmentation created the conditions for the establishment such consensuses.

While existing studies recognize programmatic changes in EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties (particularly in the case of Croatia's HDZ), they tend to treat these changes as relatively spontaneous opportunistic response to elections and/or post-election coalition bargaining.¹³ As indicated above and also in the following case sections, these “spontaneous adaptation theses” implicit in existing studies tend to contradict both existing theories of party adaptation and the actual empirical records in question. From the standpoint of the party adaptation literature, major changes in party core principles are highly uncommon events which rarely occur in an instantaneous and smooth manner. In empirical terms, for each of the case parties below, the more open “debut” of the transforming party occurred at the end of a period of internal ferment which varied from a matter of a few years (the HDZ and SRS) to nearly a decade (the SPS). Both these considerations thus warrant a greater focus on the internal dynamics of these parties-in-transformation.

¹³ For example, Elizabeth Pond writes in very vague terms of Sanader “quietly sidelining” the ultranationalist opposition and that “after the [presumably 2003] election, he [Sanader] won an important victory at a HDZ party convention that confirmed his moderate course. It’s not clear which “important convention” Pond is referring to as Sanader’s course was largely confirmed at the 7th Congress held a year before the 2003 elections. In Sharon Fisher’s account of the Europeanization process in Croatia and Slovakia, the author devotes less than a page to the issue of the HDZ’s transformation and focuses primarily on “reformed HDZ’s” participation in the 2003 elections with one or two references to Sanader as a pre-2003 reformer and his efforts to marginalize Pašalić. Almost no mention is made of the party’s internal ferment from 2000-2003 nor how the “reformed HDZ” circa 2003 relates to the HDZ that helped organize nationalist protests which ostensibly almost brought down Racan’s government Jelena Subotic’s treatment of compliance with ICTY in Croatia and Serbia offers even less treatment of the HDZ’s transformation. In her account, the post-2003 HDZ government simply begins cooperating with the Hague after the party underwent a “slow transformation” under an enlightened nationalist Sanader. In Victor Peskin’s account of state compliance with ICTY and ICTR, “The HDZ party that came to power in late 2003 had undergone substantial changes since Tudjman’s death...including a shift to a more conciliatory policy toward the tribunal.” Peskin offers no other details regarding the nature of this change nor, once again, how “HDZ-2003” related to the party organization that helped organize the nationalist protests of previous years. Jelena Elizabeth Pond, *Endgame in the Balkans*, Washington DC: Brookings, 2006, 134; Sharon Fisher, *Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: From Nationalist to Europeanist*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 149-166; Subotic, *Hijacked Justice: Dealing with the Past in the Balkans*, Cornell University Press, 2009; Victor Peskin, *International Justice in Rwanda and the Balkans: Virtual Trials and the Struggle for State Cooperation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Two notable exceptions to this generalization are studies focused on the HDZ by Pickering and Baskin and Longo. Paula Pickering and Mark Baskin, “What is to be One? Succession from the League of Communists of Croatia,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 41 (2008) 521-540; M. Longo, “The HDZ’s Embattled Mandate: Divergent Leadership, Divided Electorate,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, May/June 2006, 36-43.

At this point, it should be stressed that this approach says little about what I would refer to as the normative content and meaning of conditionality. The study focuses exclusively on the mechanical and instrumental aspect of EU conditionality and its effect on party rhetoric—not on whether societies, governments, and opposition parties comply for the *appropriate* reasons (or even what *appropriate* reasons are). In this respect it focuses on party platform change as being driven strictly by a logic of consequence rather than a logic of appropriateness.¹⁴

This is in part warranted by the observation that, throughout the process of EU integration in the Balkans, the European Union has demonstrated a rather consistent willingness to ignore the normative content of highly normative conditions such as the arrest and extradition of war criminals and the return of refugees, thus transforming these issues into instrumental preconditions rather than their otherwise intended processes of establishing justice, reconciliation and “coming to terms with the past.” Evidence for the rational instrumentalization of compliance can also be found in the numerous pronouncements of pro-European governing elites who publicly frame conditions such as cooperation with the Hague as “necessary steps” in the EU integration process. A number of accounts focus more squarely on the more normative human rights aspect of conditionality provide insightful treatments of these issues.¹⁵

The Transformation of Croatia’s HDZ

Any discussion of the HDZ’s post-2000 transformation must begin with a fuller understanding of the factors which maintained the HDZ’s grip on power during the 1990s, a clear recognition of the regime’s increasingly tenuous existence during the latter half of the decade

¹⁴ James March and Johan Olson, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organization Basis of Politics*, New York: Free Press, 1989.

¹⁵ Subotic, J. (2009) *Hijacked Justice: Dealing with the Past in the Balkans*, Cornell University Press, 2009; Victor Peskin, *International Justice in Rwanda and the Balkans: Virtual Trials and the Struggle for State Cooperation*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press); Florence Hartmann, F. (2007) *Peace and Punishment: The Secret Wars of Politics and International Justice*,

and a sense of the population's increasing desire for EU membership in the run up to the fateful January 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections. The HDZ initially came to power on a heady wave of opposition to the existing Yugoslav political order and fears raised by increasing tension between Croats and the Serbian minority in the Dalmatian hinterland and Slavonija. With the onset of war and the subsequent loss of 1/3 of Croatia's territory to the Serbian revolt, Tuđman's HDZ enjoyed the mantle of defender of Croatia along with the limited consensus that all political parties held to under wartime conditions. However, the regime's support for Croatian military and paramilitary forces in Bosnia Herzegovina and the exit of major parties such as the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLs) from the government of "democratic consensus" marked the beginning of an uneven decline in HDZ support which became increasingly evident by the mid-1990s.

The holding of extraordinary elections immediately following Operation *Oluja* with its accompanying atmosphere of euphoria actually said more about the weakness of the HDZ in the mid-1990s, than about its strength. Decisions to hold early elections in any parliamentary system are oftentimes implicit recognitions that the current level of perceived support is expected to decline during future periods. Therefore, the HDZ's decision to "capitalize on its popularity" also implied the corollary expectation of decreasing future support. It should also be noted that these elections coincided with two institutional changes which also tilted the electoral field in favor of the HDZ: The establishment of Diaspora districts (where Bosnia-Herzegovina's grateful Croatian voters handed all the seats to the HDZ) and a redistricting based upon the 1991 census which undoubtedly overestimated the number of individuals now living in the post-*Oluja* Dalmatian Hinterland.

During the second half of the 1990s, the party's popularity steadily deteriorated as it resorted to increased clientelism—itsself a reaction to the party's inability to maintain support based solely on symbolic attraction. Ever-growing evidence of corruption and overtly anti-democratic moves such as the HDZ's refusal to recognize an opposition party mayor for Zagreb following the HDZ's loss in the 1995 municipal elections (the 'Zagreb crisis') and the government's efforts to silence Radio 101, added to the party's declining popularity. Finally policies towards ICTY, refugee return and other issues increased the regime's international isolation. Surveys on the eve of the 1999 elections indicate public dissatisfaction with economic performance, corruption and international isolation. With attitudes towards EU membership closely tied to expectations of increased economic performance, many respondents undoubtedly saw integration as a means to achieve their economic goals.

The late Tuđman regime's isolationist policies played a large role in its loss of the 1999 elections and subsequent replacement by a more pro-EU government. In November of 1999 a nationally representative survey of Croatian attitudes indicated that fully 67% of respondents felt that "things in Croatia were not moving in the right direction." Economic issues topped open ended questions about major problems facing Croatia with 47% of respondents citing unemployment, 15% citing the economy/standard of living and 7% citing pensions. In another survey, when respondents were asked, "For Croatia, is it more important to preserve full sovereignty or is it more important to create ties with the European Union, which would indicate a certain limitations on state independence?", 48% answered that it is more important to create ties with the European Union while 30.4% responded that it was more important to preserve full sovereignty (20.4% were undecided).¹⁶ In terms of the HDZ's rating, the survey found 30% of

¹⁶ *The 2000 Elections*, Public Opinion Survey, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Political Science.

the respondents expressing support for the party.¹⁷

Thus, while analysts are justified in noting how continuing strong “nationalist” (however defined) feelings in the Croatian population at the end of the 1990s worked to the advantage of the HDZ, it should also be (re)emphasized that, by the end of this period, a growing number of Croatians also displayed high levels of support for democratization and integration into the international community. While this was most apparently driven by economic interests and concern over existing living standards, the desire to join the European Union nonetheless exposed the public—and thereby the regime—to conditionality imposed by the international community in general and the EU in particular. Had the public remained far more EU-skeptical/anti-EU, it is less likely that any regime in post-1999 Croatia would have been as susceptible to such pressures.

2000-2003: Recasting and Renewal

Treatments of Croatia’s first post-Tuđman government have understandably focused primarily on the actions of Račan and the governing coalition to maintain cohesion within an oversized-coalition government and achieve some retrospectively ambitious goals with regard to Croatia’s integration into the international community. To briefly summarize the most common points in this narrative, the ardently pro-European Račan government was hindered by latent Croatian nationalists most frequently embodied by veterans and other right wing organizations with some form of assistance from the HDZ. Račan’s government struggled on two fronts: first, against the nationalist forces which at times pushed their tactics to the edge of state-overthrow and second against the sources of division within the coalition government. In the end, the government survived a split in 2002, but went on to lose the 2003 parliamentary elections to a

¹⁷ Williams and Associates, IRI and PULS, *National Public Opinion Survey: Results and Analysis*, February 2001.

recently reformed HDZ. In what I previously referred to as the “spontaneous adaptation thesis,” Sanader’s HDZ then performed a surprise turnaround on policies such as ICTY cooperation, refugee returns and other key issues and went on to bring Croatia to the EU’s very doorstep.¹⁸

While this narrative provides useful insights into the trials facing the Račan regime during this period, the offhanded treatment of the HDZ in opposition and its allies not only contradicts much of our understanding of the process of party programmatic change, but it oftentimes conflicts with the actual empirical record from this period. Citing the outbreak of protests in early 2001, frequent rumors of a right-wing coup d’état and other factors as evidence of nationalist ferment during this period, these studies tend to ignore or under-emphasize the parallel story of steady, and even rising, levels of popular support for EU integration and the impact that these developments had on the policies of the Euro-skeptic HDZ.¹⁹ Lacking this parallel story, the HDZ’s behavior from 2000-2003 looks like a series of erratic and even illogical course changes that would have fractured most normal parties. Therefore, this section retells the story of Croatia’s political development in 2000-2003 by focusing on the HDZ’s internal struggles.

Before examining these struggles, it is first important to provide some background information about contemporary public attitudes towards the EU and key conditions for eventual membership. As mentioned previously, this period is oftentimes framed in terms of a major popular nationalist backlash against a fragile pro-EU government. However, survey data from

¹⁸ Of course Croatia is currently sitting on this threshold having its membership process officially frozen by the border dispute with Slovenia, but also, as some analysts speculate, as a result both of EU expansion fatigue as well as uncertainty regarding Croatia’s continued problems with corruption and organized crime. However, with these issues stand beyond the scope of this paper’s focus on party change.

¹⁹ Paula Pickering and Mark Baskin’s study of the heirs to the League of Communists of Croatia once again provides an exception with its focus on the HDZ’s transformation and the international community’s impact on the changes within the party. Pickering, P. and Baskin, M. (2008) “What is to be One? Succession from the League of Communists of Croatia,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 41.

this period paints a decidedly different picture. As indicated by polls conducted by the Croatian Office for European Integration and the Center for Market research, public support of the European Union during the period from July 2000 through June 2003 ranged from a maximum of 79.4% to a minimum of 73.6%. As described later in the section dealing with the nationalist unrest of 2001, even during a period when Račan's government ostensibly feared a nationalist coup, support for the European Union and even some of its most contentious conditions remained remarkably high.

Against this background, it becomes clear that any party seeking to play a major role in future Croatian governments had to convince voters that its rule would bring Croatia closer to its goal of European integration. Hence, while the arrest or extradition of war criminals would bring out significant numbers of protesters onto the nation's streets, roadways, and public spaces, it remains difficult to believe that any party with poor EU credentials could realistically compete for the crown of government. With this critical piece of background information in focus, I begin my examination of the HDZ's difficult internal transformation.

Tuđman's death in December 1999 left a major void at the top of the ruling regime and marked a new stage in the internal squabbles between different factions and personalities which had already intensified as the gravity of Tuđman's illness became clearer. Though analysts would later place the dates for HDZ's "spontaneous Europeanization" as the 2003 elections or at the earliest, the party's 2002 7th party congress, interviews and media reports from the time indicate that the party was already undergoing significant programmatic and political ferment in the run up to the 2000 elections. However, while ideological differences between extroverted liberals and more introverted "Tuđmanist" conservatives certainly constituted a key cleavage within the party, it should be noted that sharp divisions also occurred between like-minded, yet

politically ambitious individuals thus making the struggles within the party a combination of the clash of ideas and strong personalities.²⁰ As a result, temporary alliances between ideologically opposed individuals and splits between like minded leaders frequently confused the lines between different camps.²¹

Starting first with the ideological divisions, the more liberal camp, personified in the figure of Mate Granić, took the most extroverted approach—even going do far as to suggest that a new HDZ should be willing to work with Europe even on issues as sensitive as cooperation with the Hague.²² Opposed to this camp was a more introverted group of HDZ hardliners who, while acknowledging Croatia’s European goals, also sought to maintain the party’s existing core platforms and most importantly “protect the dignity of the Homeland War.” This group also featured the greatest personality-driven internal divisions particularly between HDZ Old Guard (*Barakaši*) and newer, but still conservative, party members such as Ivić Pašalić whose close ties with Tuđman during the latter half of the 1990s and association with the Herzegovina lobby had gained him enemies on both sides of the ideological divide. Another highly influential, and ideologically obscure, actor was Vladimir Šeks, whose biography suggested a conservative Old Guard ideological bent, but who would later display a degree of flexibility which would more than earn his reputation as a “political fox.”²³

²⁰ Interview with Goran Čular, Zagreb, June 18, 2009; Interview with Ivić Pašalić, Zagreb, June 22, 2009.

²¹ Throughout its existence, the HDZ presented a rather broad tent which included both moderate and extremist wings. Factions and splinters had also occurred during the 1990s—perhaps the most notable being future Croatian president Stipe Mesić’s departure to form the Croatian Independent Democrats party (HND) in 1994.

²² Galić, M. (2000) “Granić: Nema Tuđmana nakon Tuđman: U Zabludi je Svatko tko Drukčije Misli!”, *Globus*, December 3. As Foreign Minister, Granić had actually supported trials for crimes committed in the aftermath of Operation Storm. See Malović, S. and Selnow, G. (2001) *The People Press and Politics of Croatia*, (Westport, Praeger).

²³ Interviews with Miomir Žužul, Zagreb, June 29, 2009; Goran Čular, Zagreb, June 18, 2009; and Ivić Pašalić, Zagreb, June 22, 2009.

In addition to the growing discontent with the HDZ evidenced in public opinion polls, the struggles between and within the extrovert and introvert camps unfolding within the general succession crisis following Tuđman's death likely contributed significantly to the HDZ's poor showing during the 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections by paralyzing the party structures and forcing it to travel through the parliamentary electoral campaign on "autopilot." Instead of presenting a clear, updated program to voters, the HDZ's campaign focused primarily on its association with the now-deceased Tuđman.

The presidential campaign of Mate Granić was even more negatively affected by party infighting. Internal struggles became very public ones regarding Granić's candidacy, and at times, a serious threat appeared that Vladimir Šeks might also run in the party's name. Granić's presidential bid aggravated the party's ideological divisions and ambitious personalities. Šeks' ambiguity regarding Granić's candidacy reflected his ideological differences with his liberal extrovert party colleague but also may have been a bid to position himself for the perhaps more important position of the HDZ's acting president. Hardliner introvert Pašalić's decision to back Granić (a previous rival) appears to have been driven mostly by tactical considerations related to his personal differences with Šeks and other Old Guard party officials.

After its defeat in the parliamentary and presidential elections, the threat of a major split within the HDZ loomed ever larger and extrovert Mate Granić left the party to form his more centrist Democratic Center (DC). On the eve of a party congress which, among other things, was to decide who the next president of the party would be, much speculation abounded as to how the warring party elites could select a leader without incurring further defections. With Šeks, Pašalić, and the Old Guard each enjoying substantial support in the party, the exit of another leader or faction could spell the end of the HDZ as the dominant actor on Croatia's political right.

At the same time, the various party actors also seemed to be aware that their political futures outside of the organization would be challenging at best.²⁴ With these considerations, Ivo Sanader, a previously rather insignificant player in the HDZ hierarchy, was selected as party president during the party's April 2000 Fifth Party Congress. Most observers and participants viewed the choice as a compromise between warring factions who felt that Sanader would be a controllable actor whose international credentials would simultaneously help the party remake its image in the international community.²⁵

Sanader's initial steps as HDZ president quickly revealed that this previously minor party actor was in fact a politically savvy, ambitious, and pragmatic (some would say unprincipled) politician who would soon free himself from his sponsors' control. In his first interview as HDZ President to the weekly *Globus*, Sanader spoke to the HDZ's traditional base by emphasizing the HDZ's role as "a loudspeaker for veterans." However, he also approved of the Račan government's progress towards EU integration and joining the Partnership for Peace. Furthermore the new party president spoke of establishing the conditions to work successfully with other parties in Croatia—a very practical measure at a time when the most the HDZ could hope for was to be the major actor in a future coalition government.²⁶ Finally, his open talk about "mistakes" made by the previous regime constituted another important innovation for a HDZ president.

²⁴ The fate of Pašalić's Croatian Bloc and even Granić's center right Democratic Center provided examples of the poor prospects for new right of center party on Croatia's HDZ-dominated right.

²⁵ Hudelist, D. (2000) "Pašalić: Pobjede li Hebrang i Barakasi, bit Ce to Zadnji čavao u Mrtvačkom Sanduku HDZ-a," *Globus*, 29, April. Interviews with Ivić Pašalić, Zagreb, June 22, 2009; Goran Čular, Zagreb, June 18, 2009; Miomir Žužul, Zagreb, June 29, 2009. It should also be noted that this account differs from Longo's study which incorrectly identifies the vote at the 2002 General Congress as the one that invested Sanader in the HDZ presidency. Longo, M. (2006) "The HDZ's Embattled Mandate: Divergent Leadership, Divided Electorate," *Problems of Post-Communism*, May/June.

²⁶ Grakalić, D. and Butković, D. (2000) "Logicno je da se HDZ smatra Glasnogovornikom Branitelja," *Globus*, May 26.

Nonetheless, 2001 marked a “pragmatic pause” in the leader’s and his allies’ efforts to remake the party. The HDZ’s role in the organization of that year’s national protests against cooperation with ICTY, which sparked rumors and fears of a pending “coup,” likely reflected a combination of the continuing strength of nationalists within the HDZ and also Sanader’s own strategic reckoning that a timely show of public dissatisfaction with the SDP could yield strong political benefits for his recovering party. This observation is particularly important for a more complete understanding of the threats and constraints facing the SDP-led coalition during its term in office.

Frequent mention has been made of the “nationalist backlash” against the tribunal which became increasingly evident during the SDP-led coalition governments of 2000-2003. This reached a crescendo with massive protests held throughout Croatia during February 2001 in places like Split, Zagreb and elsewhere. At the time of their occurrence, not only did these events raise fears of a nationalist coup but they seemed to support the contention of ICTY critics that arrests could undermine nascent democratic institutions in places such as Croatia and Serbia. Nonetheless, two points should be emphasized which once again indicate the importance of broadening analyses of domestic political arenas to include more careful assessments of public attitudes and EU-skeptic/anti-EU opposition party tactics.

First, it warrants reemphasizing that no coup actually occurred. This was due in large part to the fact that, for the majority of Croatians at the time, the implications of cooperation with ICTY for Croatian national identity and sovereignty were less important than international isolation which could potentially stall what little economic progress had been made since the end of the Tuđman regime. Results of an IRI survey taken during the month of January indicated that 11% of the polled respondents indicated that the government should show maximal and

unconditional cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. 59% also supported cooperation but on the condition that responsibility for war crimes was treated as an individual manner (i.e. no sense of collective guilt.) Only 25% of respondents indicated that no generals or politicians should be arrested.²⁷

Another IRI survey taken between the end of January and beginning of February indicated remarkably high levels of support for state officials on the eve of the protests. 73% of respondents had “positive feelings” about Sabor president Zlatko Tomčić, 73% felt positively about Ivica Račan and 71% felt positively about President Stjepan Mesić. The survey also once again indicated that the overwhelming majority of respondents were concerned with economic issues like employment, living standards and pensions rather than cooperation with the Tribunal.²⁸

Secondly, there are good reasons to suggest that these protests were not so much a spontaneous expression of massive public dissatisfaction, as a carefully organized effort by the HDZ and other right-wing organizations to weaken the existing government. As suggested above, motives for this likely ranged from actual nationalistic reaction to the betrayal of Croatia’s heroes to a carefully calculated effort to both destabilize the SDP and lay the groundwork for the HDZ’s political renewal.²⁹ In light of the HDZ’s role in setting up and funding a highly clientelistic network of civil society organizations in the 1990s, the party had

²⁷ Butković, D. (2001) “Čak 70 posto Branitelja Podržava suradnju Vlade s Haškim sudom!” *Globus*, February 23. It should also be noted that this article also presented a subset of responses from veterans which found that the breakdown of responses to these options was nearly identical to the general population. As the article’s title indicated, 70% of veterans supported either unconditional or individualized cooperation.

²⁸ Vlahović, E. (2001) “Hrvatske Građane najviše Muče Nayaposlenost, niski Standard i Male Mirovine,” *Jutarnji List*, February 21.

²⁹ In a February 15th article, the head of one veterans’ organization (UHDDR) complained that the HDZ was using veterans’ organizations for its own political gain and was not really concerned with their plight. Despot, S. (2001) “Merčep u Zagrebu očekuje 200,000 Provjednika,” *Jutarni List*, February 15.

the means to control and direct a highly disciplined and very vocal minority whose actions, while not necessarily representing a public majority, could give the impression of “massive unrest” and even the threat of state overthrow.³⁰

Furthermore it should also be noted that different actors stood to gain from alternative interpretations of the protests. The HDZ, of course, could spin the protests as a legal expression of deep public dissatisfaction with the governing regime’s attempts to “dishonor” the Homeland War and its heroes. For the SDP and its coalition partners, fears of a possible coup served the purpose of relieving pressure from the international community while also solidifying domestic support by portraying the protests as a politically motivated and illegal effort to undermine the institutions of the nascent independent Croatia.

In any event, the protests served to mobilize potential HDZ supporters, reestablish the image of the party as a tightly organized and energetic actor on the Croatian political scene and also raise doubts among domestic and international actors about the ability of the Račan government to deliver on its promises of rapid EU integration. Internally, the tactical appeal to the party’s supporters helped shore up the party’s crumbling base, burnish Sanader’s nationalist credentials and also delay the upcoming showdown (see below) with Ivić Pašalić and his supporters until a more advantageous time. Here again, Sanader showed his qualities as a quintessential, and highly capable, extrovert who could change tack under rapidly evolving conditions. Ideology and programmatic consistency was seconded to expediency.

With the protests behind them, Sanader and other members of the HDZ looked ahead to the possibility of (early) elections. The party had now proven itself adept at mounting effective blows against the ruling regime’s reputation (if not its actual performance) but the next elections

³⁰ Kasapović M. (ed) (2001) *Hrvatska Politika 1990-2000: Izbori, Stranke, i Parlament u Hrvatskoj*, (Zagreb: Fakultet

would be won not only on a negative popular reaction to the incumbent government but with new voters drawn to a transformed HDZ party platform. Furthermore, party extroverts like Sanader needed to focus on improving the party's international image. Failure to do so risked incurring the opposition of European veto actors who could scare off potential coalition partners at a time when few expected that the HDZ could gain sufficient seats to form the government alone.³¹ Thus, party extroverts were challenged with continuing to build strength among the HDZ's traditional core while also burnishing the party's reform credentials to the extent that it could avoid an external veto and enter into coalition with more centrist parties.

In order to accomplish both of these goals, Sanader and his supporters would have to quickly dispatch hard line elements organized around Ivić Pašalić while still leaving sufficient time to build the party's pre-election program and secure the support—or at least indifference—of veto actors within the Western international community. A multi-dimensional rivalry between Pašalić and Sanader had steadily evolved since Sanader's selection as HDZ president. Press reports and interviews with HDZ party officials (including Pašalić himself) indicated that a mixture of political ambitions, ideological differences and even conflicting personalities fueled the zero-sum competition between the two HDZ heavyweights. It is likely that Pašalić, despite his unpopularity at the time, desired to control the HDZ either by taking the presidency himself or placing one of his loyalists in the position.

Sanader, in turn, was showing himself to be a particularly ambitious party leader who quickly grew into the post of party president. In terms of ideology, Pašalić would later argue that while he himself was in favor of EU integration, there was a "bottom line" of national interest and protection of the dignity and legality of the Homeland War which could not be

Političkih Znanosti Sveučilišta u Zagrebu).

compromised. According to Pašalić, Sanader's unprincipled ambition and fundamental lack of character meant that, for the HDZ president, even Croatia's most cherished symbols could be traded for EU membership. With the benefit of a more sympathetic media and from the pulpit of the HDZ presidency, Sanader portrayed Pašalić as a devious master of various dark political arts and an atavistic hard-line nationalist who would lead Croatia back to the past. Thus, the popular image of the rivalry became that of the uncompromising nationalist Pašalić versus the pragmatic, pro-EU Sanader.

The 7th party Congress held on April 21-22, 2002 was a political coup for Sanader which featured the leader employing both fair means and foul in an effort to decisively defeat Ivić Pašalić. Sanader won the 7th party congress election by a very slim margin: 1005 delegates voted for Sanader, 912 for Pašalić and 40 for nationalist ideologue Maja Freundlich.³² Conditions surrounding the election provided grounds for suspicion. With preparatory elections and other party branch meetings in different parts of the country marked by increased tension and even physical confrontation between representatives of Sanader's reform wing and Pašalić's conservative wing, the Congress was held in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Having made a pact with Vladimir Glavaš and other *barakaši* hardliners, Sanader secured the services of an inordinately large security force which controlled access to the Congress and also "protected" the suspiciously protracted vote tallying process. Later, it was claimed that "hundreds" of ballots were discovered discarded in a trash receptacle outside of the event. Six years later, following his flight into Bosnia Herzegovina to escape war crimes charges, Glavaš himself made very candid statements about his alleged role in carrying the 7th party Congress for Sanader stating that

³¹ Grakali, D. (2002) "Izbori u HDZ-u: Pašalić vs. Sanader" *Globus*, March 1.

³² Đuretek, D. (2002) "Sanader Pobijedio Pašalića," *Večernji List*, April 22.

“Sanader’s victory was never in question because all the dice were loaded and the cards fixed so that Sanader had to win. There was only a question as to how many votes he would have, in any case not too much.”³³

Regardless of the means employed to secure Sanader’s reelection, in the weeks and months following Sander’s victory at the Congress, the HDZ president completed the political destruction of Pašalić by removing him as head of Croatia’s State Promise Foundation (an organization designed to establish new cadres of talented youth), dismantling party organs in counties which still served as pro-Pašalić bastions, purging his “Youth-HDZ,” removing or co-opting his closest followers and finally expelling Pašalić himself.³⁴ By August of 2002, Sanader’s opponent had ceased to pose any major threat and a new era of apparent intra-party consensus began.

The 2003 Elections: Sanader’s “New” HDZ makes its Debut

With Pašalić’s faction now eliminated, Sanader set out to further consolidate his power within the HDZ as the party prepared for its much-awaited opportunity to defeat the SDP-led coalition and return to power. In addition to tightening his control over the party, Sanader and the party leadership could spare little time in their effort to further mold and consolidate the party’s new image.

The party’s 8th general congress held in late July 2003 constituted a major development in this repackaging. In a somewhat contrived attempt by the leadership to establish the “new”

³³ (2009) “Branimir Glavaš: Sanader mi šalje Tekliće s Ponudama u BiH” Javno.hr, May 25.

³⁴ Sanader’s co-opting of nationalists within the party is a critical but thus far largely overlooked aspect of this story. While Fisher states that, under Sanader, “radicals such as Ivić Pašalić were pushed out the party,” this actually only applies to Pašalić and one or two of his closes supporters. Other “radicals,” some of whom had been staunch supporters of Pašalić and his ideas, remained within the party having been temporarily bought off or cowed by Sanader. The continued presence of these individuals in the HDZ would pose occasional problems for the party and also imposed a high political and financial burden. Fisher, S. (2006) *Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: From Nationalist to Europeanist*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan).

HDZ's international credentials among voters and head off any effort by the Western international community to "ban" the HDZ from a future government, the party invited international guests including President of the Council for Southeastern Europe in the European Parliament, Doris Pack, former U.S. Republican Congressman Guy Vander Jagt and "hundreds" of other foreign diplomats and party members.

Cooperation with the Hague Tribunal featured prominently in the event. In his own statement to the assembly, Sanader indicated that the HDZ was prepared to cooperate with the Hague but would never allow operations *Bljesk* and *Oluja* to be labeled ethnic cleansing or genocide and that "every crime should be judged, but we will not accept collective or political guilt."³⁵ While Sanader said nothing about the case of Ante Gotovina, Doris Pack bluntly stated that she hoped "Gotovina will go to the Hague and face the court so that, by doing this, he will serve Croatia and peace." In an embarrassing turn for party extroverts which underlined the continuing strength of hard line introverts within the party, Pack's statement was met with heckling from the audience.³⁶

Despite the presence of international visitors and speakers at the party's 8th Congress, relations with the EU and other members of the Western international community remained a potential sticking point for the HDZ right up through the eve of the November 2003 parliamentary elections. During the first half of 2003, the Račan government had crossed two important thresholds towards EU membership when it officially applied for membership in February and submitted responses to the EU accession questionnaire in June. However, with the Stabilization and Association Agreement still to be ratified by the United Kingdom and

³⁵ Note that these statements repeated nearly verbatim the response in the previously-cited IRI survey that was backed by 59% of respondents in the 2001 surveys.

³⁶ Plišić, A. (2003) "Glavaš: Slučaj Gotovina može se Riješiti Samo u Dogovoru s Haagom," *Jutarnji List*, June 23.

Netherlands, the incumbent government's defeat to the "old regime" HDZ in the elections could still be spun as a bad omen for Croatia's future relationship to European institutions. In the course of the campaign, HDZ opponents made frequent mention about the Western international community's support for their government while warning, subtly or otherwise, about the possible diplomatic fallout of a victory by the "reformed" HDZ.³⁷

Sanader thus faced a dilemma. He was well aware that a significant proportion of the HDZ's supporters were opposed to the arrest and extradition of generals, rejected initiatives that would "dishonor" the Homeland War and were suspicious of, or outright opposed to, policies which would assist in the return of Serbian refugees. At the same time, failing to take some stand on the issue of the Hague and the return of Serbian refugees could turn the Western international community against the HDZ and result in a ban on coalition formation with the party. Without a clear stance on issues tied to EU membership, even a strong HDZ might find it difficult to gain the additional coalition partners necessary to form a government.

In the event, extrovert Sanader's clever pragmatism again worked to his advantage. Throughout the campaign, the HDZ leader played a careful game of emphasizing pro-European but patriotic messages to domestic audiences while reserving for foreign media outlets stronger statements about domestically sensitive issues like cooperation with the Hague and returnees. As pointed out by *Jutarnji List*, the few instances in the course of the campaign in which Sanader made clear and bold statements about cooperation with the Hague and "calling the Serbs to return to Croatia" occurred during interviews with French newspapers, the Associated Press and Reuters. When asked in an interview why he'd only made these announcements in foreign press sources, Sanader said that he'd already clarified his stance before the Croatian people during the

³⁷ Popović, J. (2003) "Ivica Račan: Ako Pobjedi na Sljedećim Izborima, HDZ će Napraviti čistku," *Večernji List*, November 18.

party's 8th party congress in June of 2003.³⁸

In the elections on November 25, 2003, the HDZ took the largest portion of votes and went on to receive the mandate to form the next government. While a detailed analysis of the reasons behind the HDZ's victory lies beyond the scope of this study, developments in the post-election coalition process warrant some mention for the additional insights they reveal about the HDZ's transformation and the role that the international community could play in shaping party platforms and coalition negotiation outcomes.

Post-election coalition negotiations started first between HDZ, Croatian Peasants Party (HSS), Croatian Party of Right (HSP), and the Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLs) and Democratic Center (DC). Negotiations with HSS and HSLs ended sooner (HSS) or later (HSLs) as a result of the small parties' dissatisfaction with the proposed distribution of seats in the government and a general fear of being "swallowed up" by the much larger and programmatically diverse HDZ.³⁹ The case of the HSP, however, provides a telling illustration of the importance of international actors in the HDZ's adaptation process.

On November 26, European Parliamentarian Doris Pack warned Sanader and the HDZ against considering an alliance with the right-wing Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), encouraged the HDZ to work with the liberal HSS or DC and also indicated that it would be a "very good idea" to include other parties, particularly the party representing the Serbian minority. Around the same time, the speaker of the European Commission recalled Austria's isolation by the 14 EU members following the entrance of Austrian nationalist Jörg Haider's Freedom Party in the

³⁸ Butković, D. (2003) "Intervju Dr. Ivo Sanader: Poslije Izborâ ponudit ćemo Koaliciju i HSS-u," *Jutarnji List*, November 21. It should also be noted that reports on the congress actually carried no statements about the issue of returnees. For statements during the 8th General Congress, see: Plišić, A. (2003) "Glavaš: Slučaj Gotovina Može se Riješiti Samo u Dogovoru s Haagom," *Jutarnji List*, June 23.

³⁹ Kasapović, M. (2005) "Koalicijske vlade u Hrvatskoj: Prva Iskustva u Komparativnoj Perspektivi," in Goran Čular, G. (ed) (2005).

Austrian government. NATO's George Robertson announced that "NATO expects from the new government, the same things that it expected from the current one—cooperation with the Hague, belief in democratic institutions, the creating of a market economy and the acceleration of economic and military reforms."⁴⁰ Anonymous "European diplomatic sources" also appeared in Croatian media outlets warning that Croatia's progress towards the EU would be halted if the HDZ formed a coalition with the HSP.⁴¹

As a result, "HSP was practically excluded from the negotiations because of the negative reaction from the international community."⁴² Sanader denied that foreign pressure was a factor in rejecting HSP as a coalition partner. However, it should be noted that in pre-election statements, the new premier responded positively to the possibility of forming a coalition with HSP. In one interview he stated, "The Croatian Party of Rights, in principle could become a part of a center-right coalition. HSP and Ante Đapić have given enough evidence that they have rejected any kind of extremism and radicalism, and for me that's a key criteria."⁴³ In the end, only DC and the Serbian minority representatives entered into the coalition.

As is well documented elsewhere, in the aftermath of the 2003 elections and having formed another HDZ-led government following the 2007 contest, the HDZ governments made great strides in bringing Croatia closer to EU membership. Among other accomplishments, the country gained official candidate status in 2004, started entry negotiations in 2005, assisted in the arrest of its last ICTY war crimes suspect (Ante Gotovina) in the same year and joined NATO in 2009. Of course 2009 also brought another setback for Croatia's membership prospects when

⁴⁰ Stipičić-Niseteo, L. (2003) "Doris Pack Upozorila Sanadera da Vladu ne Sastavlja s HSP-om," *Vjesnik*, November 27.

⁴¹ (2003) "HSP Europi Neprihvatljiv čak i Kao Parlamentarna Porpora HDZ-u," *Vjesnik*, November 30.

⁴² Kasapović, M. (2005) "Koalicijske vlade u Hrvatskoj: Prva Iskustva u Komparativnoj Perspektivi," in Goran Čular, G. (ed.) (2005).

⁴³ Butković, D. (2003) "Poslije Izboru Ponudit ćemo Koaliciju I HSS-u," *Jutarnji List*, November 21.

negotiations were suspended because of a border dispute with Slovenia. The summer of 2009 was also marked by the sudden resignation of Sanader and some speculation about a possible hardliner resurgence within the HDZ ranks. Nonetheless, the party's transformation during the period from 2000-2003 stands as a remarkable development both in terms of Croatia's EU prospects and as a successful example of party adaptation.

The case of the HDZ's transformation very clearly points to the ability of conditionality-induced changes in public opinion combined with interventions by Western veto actors to spark adaptation efforts by extroverts within political parties. After his selection as a compromise candidate within the HDZ's ranks, Sanader quickly became the quintessential pragmatic extrovert seeking to recast his party's platform in an effort to save the organization from political obscurity and collapse. His apparent ability to put principles aside in the pursuit of his goals—best exemplified by his statements at Split and elsewhere about cooperation with ICTY and his ruthless handling of internal rivals—also provides further support for approaches which see the conditionality issue primarily in rational terms. While Sanader carried certain “internationalist” credentials and could articulate liberal democratic values fairly well, there is little evidence that his or the party's change in attitude towards ICTY or other conditions was any more than an instrumental response to expected domestic and international benefits.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ It should be noted that, following HDZ's victory in 2003 and with the prospects for EU membership becoming more tangible, support for EU integration in Croatia began a steady decline to the point that the Croatian public is now the most EU-skeptic in the region. While this development lies beyond the scope of the current study, a few comments are warranted. First, it should be noted that Croatia is following a pattern evident in various recent EU membership whereby public support for membership drops as the state enters further into the accession process. This has been largely explained as resulting from the collision between the abstract vision of EU membership and the reality of a process which demands sometimes difficult changes and inevitably produces results that fall short of unrealistic expectations (partly raised by the EU and local political elites themselves.) Secondly, while it is still early to draw any solid conclusions, the now steadily-weak support for EU membership may account for a number of recent political developments in Croatia including the possible resurgence of the right wing of the HDZ following Sanader's resignation, the disappearance of critical artillery logs requested by ICTY as evidence in the Gotovina case, and Croatia's uncompromising stance on the territorial row with Slovenia which led to the freezing of the EU accession talks in Spring of 2009. According to the logic of the model, one would expect that the weakening of popular support would lead to less willingness of the part of political leaders to take whatever steps necessary to smooth the accession process.

Serbia's Post 2008 Transformations: The SPS and the Radical Split

There is certainly no gainsaying the fact that issues such as cooperation with ICTY, the status of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro and the future status of Kosovo remained highly controversial within Serbia during the period from 2000 to the present and continue to complicate the country's relations with the EU. While certain issues like cooperation with ICTY became explicit conditions for progress through different steps in the EU accession process, all of these issues affected the process by providing focal points for EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties to mobilize their voting base against more pro-European options.

However, while academic and popular accounts demonstrate a marked tendency to focus entirely on negative developments in public opinion and to dwell on public demonstrations as marks of strong inward-looking tendencies in the Serbian body politic, there also exists ample evidence for an alternative narrative which sees these issues as having some consequence during the earlier post-Milošević years, but for this importance to gradually fade as the population became increasingly aware that the expected economic benefits of EU membership and the possibility of travel were being "hijacked" by war crimes indictees, Kosovo Serbs, and other particularistic interests. This in turn resulted in stronger support for more pro-European options and the concomitant drop in support for EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties. Extroverts in these latter parties were keenly aware of these developments and as the "writing on the wall" became more clearly defined, they sought to transform their parties.

The 2008 election campaign vividly illustrated this dynamic when Vojislav Koštunica and his DSS opted to focus their campaign strategy almost exclusively on opposing an EU Stabilization and Association Agreement which it felt was a de facto threat to Serbia's territorial integrity. While Serbia's acceptance of the Kosovo issue is not officially a condition for EU

integration, DSS apparently saw this as an opportunity to present Serbia's voters with a choice—Kosovo or European integration.⁴⁵ Public opinion data in the months leading up to the election provides a clear rationale for Koštunica's decision. In response to a question about the most important issue facing Serbia, “Kosovo” rapidly rose through the ranks of other options to peak at first place in February when Kosovo declared its independence. Koštunica announced the end of the government and new elections on March 8.

However, another round of the survey taken later in March showed the Kosovo issue plummeting past issues such as unemployment and living standards, until it sat in third place, just ahead of corruption and crime in May.⁴⁶ Koštunica and DSS went on to suffer a major electoral defeat which has called into question the future of both Koštunica and the party. In an interview with the author of this paper, Marijana Simić, an analyst from the Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID), summarized Koštunica's defeat by saying that Serbs were unwilling to be held hostage by their co-nationals in Kosovo.⁴⁷

More generally, while analysts can certainly select public opinion indicators which show negative attitudes towards the Hague, staunch resistance to Kosovo's independence, and opposition to arresting and handing over specific war crimes suspects, a broader view of these surveys also reveals a strong amount of variance in attitudes on these issues, and a rather consistent positive stance on EU integration and other Europe-related items. A complete analysis of these trends lies beyond the scope of this manuscript; however, a few examples are warranted.

⁴⁵ In response to Koštunica's strategy, DS and the coalition “For a European Serbia” argued that there was no such dilemma—Serbia could sign the SAA and keep Kosovo. While a detailed discussion of the relationship between Kosovo's status and EU membership lies beyond the scope of this article, it warrants mentioning that, as of February 2010, 22 of the EU's current 27 members have recognized Kosovo's independence and that a final requirement for the admission of new members to the EU is approval by the parliaments of all existing member states. Therefore, regardless of the EU's official stance (or lack thereof) on the independence issue, there remains sufficient doubt that Serbia can successfully join the European Union without losing a portion of its territory.

⁴⁶ Srđan Bogosavljević, “Demokrate Prve, Naprednjaci Drugi,” *Politika*, February 8, 2010.

With regard to cooperation with ICTY, between 2003 and 2006, support for cooperation with war crimes tribunals ranged from a low of 68% to a high of 89%.⁴⁸ When Radovan Karadzic was arrested in the summer of 2008, Strategic Marketing's public opinion research indicated that only about one-third of respondents felt that Karadzic was a "hero." The remainder either saw Karadzic as a war criminal (17%) or as "neither a criminal nor a hero."⁴⁹ Furthermore while observers and political actors had warned for years that Karadzic's arrest would stir massive public unrest, the demonstrations organized by DSS and SRS following his arrest were widely seen as a public relations failure for both parties.

An objective look at public attitudes towards territorial issues reveals a sense of resignation rather than vehement opposition. The 2006 referendum which ended the Union of Serbia and Montenegro yielded little more than public hand-wringing and a cluster of media reports complaining of election manipulation such as the busing in of Albanians and other anti-Serb elements. With regard to Kosovo, while 70.4% of respondents agreed with the statement that "Kosovo should remain part of Serbia," only 21.6% agreed that the province's secession should be prevented by force of arms. Even more telling, only 25.4% of the population disagreed with the statement that "no matter what we do, Kosovo will be independent one day."⁵⁰ Against this inconsistent backdrop, support for EU succession appears to send a rather clear message to rational, office-seeking party actors. During the period from 2002-2009, the percentage of Serbs who claimed that they would vote "yes" in a referendum for the European Union ranged from

⁴⁷ Interview with Marijana Simić, Belgrade, June 2008.

⁴⁸ Belgrade Center for Human Rights survey data.

⁴⁹ (2008) "Većina Građana ne Misli da je Radovan Karadžić Heroj," *Blic*, July 26. It should be noted, however that the survey indicated that 86% of respondents felt that ICTY is anti-Serb, and 54% opposed the extradition to the ICTY of Karadžić.

⁵⁰ Balkan Monitor, 2008. <http://www.balkan-monitor.eu/index.php/dashboard/>.

61% to 72%.⁵¹

The upshot of this brief sketch is that the Serbian public, like its Croatian counterpart held strong and consistent pro-EU views alongside less stable attitudes towards key EU conditions and the Kosovo issue. As rational actors with an eye on electoral outcomes, extroverts in various political parties would find their interests better served by focusing on the more stable element in these observations. Furthermore, the stagnating electoral performance of EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties, combined with the external veto of the Western international community, would increasingly send the message that strong stances on “old” nationalist issues were no longer a winning strategy—especially if voters were given the choice of sacrificing either these specific issues or the prospect for greater integration.

The SPS’ Troubled Transformation

After SPS entered into a coalition with the DS-led “For a European Serbia” (ZES) coalition in 2008, many observers expressed surprise and skepticism about the SPS’ “spontaneous adaptation” into a modern, European-type social-democratic party. However, an exploration of the party’s post-2000 history indicates that this change, like that of Croatia’s HDZ, was actually another step in a long transformative process which in this case received a recent stimulus from the SPS’ largely serendipitous position as “kingmaker” in May 2008.

The story of the SPS’ development from 2000-2009 centers primarily on tensions between “introvert” Milošević and his supporters within the party and various “extrovert” reform factions. In most respects the SPS’ struggle also presents a case of still-unresolved adaptation due in large part to the inability of party extroverts to either decisively defeat their introvert rivals or to successfully break from the old party and form a new, politically successful party

⁵¹ European Integration Office, “Evropska Orijentacija Građana Srbije Trendovi,” May 2009. Available at http://seio.gov.rs/upload/documents/prezentacije/maj_09_final_srpski.pdf.

vehicle. By the time party extroverts made a decisive break with its past identity in 2008, its “new brand” had already been usurped by other actors and the party faced an uphill battle carving out a new base.

Having suffered a staggering defeat in the 2000 electoral revolution, SPS found itself at a crossroads. As Vladimir Goati indicates, the context of the post-October 2000 era forced the SPS to resort to an entirely new means of drawing popular support. In losing control over the government, it effectively lost the means to maintain electoral support through clientilistic mechanisms. At the same time, the party’s erratic policy course during the previous era left it little hope of relying on the programmatic cohesion of its members. The “true believers” in the SPS supported the figure of Slobodan Milošević rather than any particular set of ideas. This left party functionaries with little choice in the immediate post-October era but to rely on those remaining voters who were still drawn to Milošević’s now much-depleted charisma.⁵² At the same time, other analysts pointed out that, while Milošević’s brand might maintain a dwindling base of those supporters still attracted to the discredited leader, this could hardly constitute a sustainable long-term strategy.⁵³

Thus, the continued presence of Milošević in the party’s affairs, even after his arrest and extradition, complicated any attempts to reshape the party and set it on a new course. One could summarize the challenges facing reformist elements in the SPS from 2001 until the death of Milošević in 2006 as a difficult balancing act between reform and proper support and respect for its detained leader. On the one hand, extrovert reformist elements recognized the need to establish a new party platform which would allow the party to transform itself into a strong opposition based upon a modern social democratic party brand.

⁵² Goati, V. (2004) *Partije i Partijski System u Srbiji*, (Niš, Spektar-Niš).

This would involve not only new policy directions, but also a critical stance towards at least some of the policies of the Milošević regime. On the other hand, the leadership was aware that their remaining electoral support consisted largely of voters who for various reasons remained loyal to Milošević. This factor increased the leverage of introvert elements within the SPS establishment who either manipulated the tenuous relationship between the party and Milošević or tacitly benefited from conflicts between the reformist leadership and the leader in the Hague. Over time, extrovert elements developed a strategy of spinning conflicts with Milošević as the work of hard line elements who were either sending false information about the party's activities to the leader or manipulating/fabricating Milošević's periodic messages to the party. In doing so, reformers hoped to demonstrate their continued respect for their "misinformed" leader while making at least limited progress towards transforming the party. While this strategy seemed to stem the outflow of the party's sympathizers, it slowed the progress of party transformation.

As in the case of the HDZ, but perhaps even more so given the recent history of relations between the West and the Milosevic regime, the international community would act throughout this period as an external veto actor discouraging Serbia's more democratic parties from considering outright coalitions with the SPS. Between 2000 and 2003, this opposition was essentially implicit and not the subject of public statements as none of the participants in the October 5, 2000 events expressed any desire to work with the socialists at the national level. However, the 2003 elections and subsequent DSS-led minority government placed the issue of coalition formation with the SPS squarely on the table. In this instance, a sharp domestic and international political reaction was avoided by the Kostunica government by not formally

⁵³ Stefanović, N. (2003) "Zatočnici Haškog pritvo Renika," *Vreme*, July 17.

including the SPS in the governing coalition. This appeared to be a compromise that all sides were willing to accept, but it nonetheless emphasized the fact that the SPS would have to significantly “launder” itself before Serbia’s pro-Western parties could enter into coalitions without incurring the wrath of Western veto actors.

Turning to the history of the SPS’ troubled transformation, potential SPS factions and splinters first appeared in the immediate aftermath of the October 5, 2000 elections. Following the decision to reelect Milošević as party president during the party’s 5th party congress (held on November 25) Milorad Vučelić left the party to form the Democratic Socialist Party.⁵⁴ Going into the December 2000 elections former Yugoslav president and SPS-member Zoran Lilić also established a social democratic party. While Goati briefly summarizes the causes for these two breaks as the respective leaders’ dissatisfaction with the reelection of Milosevic and the party’s inability to reassess its political history, the few pieces of information available indicate otherwise. Zoran Lilić was actually expelled from the SPS on the eve of first round of the 2000 presidential election after a falling out with the party leadership and possible confrontation with Mirjana Marković and the Yugoslav Left (JUL) party. Hence, his establishing a new social-democratic party was not a “break” in any real sense—he was no longer a party member at the time. Milorad Vučelić, who also had an on-again off-again relationship with Milosevic and his inner circle, was a more likely candidate as a party “extrovert” but one whose choice was meant more to attract voters with a new party label than to establish a substantively new programmatic trajectory.

In any event, Vučelić and Lilić’s attempts to distance themselves from the SPS proved unsuccessful and both parties suffered fiascos in the December 2000 parliamentary elections.

⁵⁴ It bears repeating that an “extrovert” is defined as someone seeking to alter the party’s trajectory in response to a loss (or anticipated loss) of popular support. It in no way suggests a particular programmatic or ideological profile.

Vučelić would later return to the fold and reappears in this narrative as a defender of Milosevic against substantive reformer and extrovert Ivica Dačić. Lilić also eventually returned (after testifying against Slobodan Milosevic in the Hague) to the SPS' orbit becoming president of the board for the public enterprise "Serbian Roadways" following SPS' inclusion in the post-May 2008 election government. In the broader picture of SPS' transformational struggles, both of these events proved largely irrelevant.

During the spring of 2002, SPS vice-president Branislav Ivković more seriously took up the cause of critically analyzing the party's past and pushed for an extraordinary party congress with the extroverted goal of remaking the party. The now-incarcerated Milošević along with his supporters on the Central Committee vehemently opposed Ivković's efforts and the renegade vice-president was excluded from the party in April 2002. Ivković and his supporters responded by calling an extraordinary 6th party congress on June 23. With 1/3 of the county committee's supporting the conference, the extraordinary 6th Congress could claim quorum for the meeting. After electing new leadership and establishing Ivković as party president, the "renegade" SPS made the claim of representing the "actual" SPS. However, because the old leadership was still listed in the Ministry of Justice's party registry, the party was forced to adopt a new name—the Socialist People's Party (SNS)—and Ivković ran as the SNS presidential candidate in the September 2002 elections. The SNS enjoyed little success in elections, but it further weakened the SPS both by splitting the party's already shrinking electoral support and drawing off party leaders and representatives from the SPS' parliamentary bloc.⁵⁵

In the immediate aftermath of Ivković's split with the party, a new conflict occurred within the SPS in mid-August 2002 when Milošević ordered the party to support SRS President

⁵⁵ Goati, V. (2004) *Partije i Partijski System u Srbiji*, (Niš, Spektar-Niš).

Vojislav Šešelj in the September 2002 presidential elections.⁵⁶ In reaction to party opposition, Slobodan Milošević then replaced acting head of party Mirko Marjanović with Bogoljub Bjelica. At the same time, Milošević ordered the establishment of a new organizational-political committee with the task of “authentically transmitting” Milošević’s stances on policy issues and also transferring information back to the leader.⁵⁷ This series of events opened a new split within the party as party functionaries Ivica Dačić, Milomir Minić, Branko Ružić, Zoran Anđelković, and Dušan Bajatović had sought to put their own candidate forward in the elections.⁵⁸

Looking back from the lively discussions regarding the SPS’ 2008 transformation, it is interesting to note that, even at the beginning of 2003, this group of “reformers” was seen by analyst Ljiljana Baćeović and others as attempting to break the SPS out of its anti-system opposition mode and reformulate it as a true, left-socialist party thus occupying a position on Serbia's party spectrum which was estimated at the time to attract at least 10% of voters.⁵⁹ This observation once again challenges the “spontaneous transformation thesis” which has been applied to the HDZ in 2003 and the SPS in 2008.

A major showdown between the above-mentioned reformers on one hand, and Milošević and his supporters on the other, developed when the reformers called the party's next official Congress. In the months prior to the Congress, surveys placed the Socialists’ popularity in the range of 4-5%, thus raising the possibility that the SPS could fail to cross the 5% parliamentary threshold during an upcoming election.⁶⁰ Held on January 18, 2003 despite opposition from

⁵⁶ (2002) “Milošević odbio Kandidaturu i Predložio Šešelja,” *B92*, August 13, http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2002&mm=08&dd=13&nav_id=62530&nav_category=11.

⁵⁷ (2002) “Marjanović oslobođen Duznosti Predsednika SPS-a,” *B92*, August 25, http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2002&mm=08&dd=25&nav_category=11&nav_id=68155.

⁵⁸ (2003) “Odluka o Opstanku Socijalista,” *Politika*, January 15.

⁵⁹ (2003) “Odluka o Opstanku Socijalista,” *Politika*, January 15.

⁶⁰ IRI Surveys, November 2002, January 2003.

Milošević and his backers, the 6th Congress constituted a critical moment in the development of the post-2000 SPS.

In the run-up to the Congress, introvert Milošević loyalists accused Ivica Dačić and Milomir Minić of attempting to change the character of the party “according to the will of Western Powers,” of trying to adopt a “DOS model of the economy” and “become a “constructive” opposition.”⁶¹ Amid calls by Milošević and his supporters for the immediate resignation or expulsion of Dačić and Minić and the cancellation of the Congress, the meeting went ahead with a majority of party support. The two most significant outcomes of the Congress were decisions to maintain Milošević as official party President, but to also establish a new position of President of the Central Committee which would run the party’s daily affairs. The effect of these changes was to reduce Milošević to a figurehead and transform real power within the party to the Central Committee President. In another major development Ivica Dačić was selected to occupy the new Central Committee Presidency thus establishing one of the main extrovert reformers in the party as the de facto party leader. Furthermore, key party organs also underwent a major renewal with 2/3rds of the seats in the 300-member Central Committee going to new candidates.⁶²

Analysts viewed the Congress as a major step forward in the SPS’ efforts to put aside its Milošević-era past and begin the process of establishing a new program and voter base—clear extrovert goals. SPS General Secretary Zoran Anđelković's report to the 6th congress offered a useful summary of the “new” SPS’ objectives. The future party would support a market economy and social rights, privatization with worker shareholders, democratization, and entrance into the European Union. According to Anđelković, “the Socialists see that it is in the national and state

⁶¹ (2003) “Kršljanin Optužuje Dačića i Minića za Izdaju Stranke,” *Danas*, January 9.

interests of Serbia that our country in the foreseeable future will become a member of the EU (but) with a commitment to preserve vital state and national interests.”⁶³ In another notable development, Anđelković indicated that “our loss in the 5th of October Revolution was not only the result of the unfavorable impact of international and domestic conditions, but also the result of a trend over many years of negative processes in the party and society.”⁶⁴ With these points in view, the immediate aftermath of the conference seemed to suggest a decisive victory for extrovert reformists and a new era for the SPS.

Nevertheless, the following months witnessed only erratic changes in the SPS’ actual political behavior. While Anđelković had clearly articulated a pro-EU stance for the party, its actual program and the activities of its members often remained at odds with the “spirit” of the EU and the “letter” of its conditionality. In May, the Socialists voted in favor of Serbia’s entrance into the Council of Europe stating that they would also support all other forms of civil integration, but would not support military integration (i.e. NATO).⁶⁵ At the same time, the SPS remained acutely resistant to cooperation with ICTY. A little over a month after the 6th party congress, Ivica Dačić called on the party to join the SRS demonstration accompanying the SRS’ Vojislav Šešelj’s voluntary departure to the Hague.⁶⁶

In mid-March, the party opposed a proposal which would allow for the extradition of citizens indicted after the existing law on cooperation with ICTY went into effect in April of the previous year.⁶⁷ In June of the same year, two members of the SPS Central Committee were arrested during their participation in the public disorder which accompanied the capture of

⁶² G.P. (2003) “Milošević opet Predsednik SPS-a”, *Glas Javnosti*, January 19.

⁶³ (2003) “Ivica Dačić Predsednik Glavnog Odbora,” *Politika*, January 19.

⁶⁴ (2003) “Ivica Dačić Predsednik Glavnog Odbora,” *Politika*, January 19.

⁶⁵ (2003) “Nova Obaveze,” *Politika*, March 1.

⁶⁶ (2003) “SPS Poziva na Ispraćaj,” *Blic*, February 21.

Veselin Šljivančanin, one of the so-called “Vukovar three.”⁶⁸ The SPS officially condemned the government for “selling” Šljivančanin for “American money.”⁶⁹ At various times during the year, the SPS organized protests demanding the freeing of Milošević and accusing the Hague of obstructing Milošević’s defense; threatening his life; and isolating him from his family and colleagues.⁷⁰ Following the October 2003 indictments of four generals for crimes committed in Kosovo, the SPS referred to the suspects as “heroes of our land and peoples’ resistance to NATO aggression and referred to the “illegal Hague Tribunal” as a continuation of aggression against Serbia.⁷¹ In the run-up to the December 2003 elections, the SPS Vice president and so-called “reformer” Dušan Bajatović stated that if the SPS came to power there would be no more extraditions to the Hague.⁷² Yet at the same time, there was still evidence of an effort to usher out the extremist pro-Milošević wing of the new SPS. In the aftermath of the 2003 elections, members of the organization “Sloboda,” which was responsible for organizing many of the protests in the previous year were excluded from taking SPS seats in the new parliament.⁷³

The 2003 elections once again faced the party and its ongoing dilemmas. While Milošević and his supporters constituted a major barrier to real reform within the party, the Milošević brand was still largely responsible for carrying the party over the 5% threshold and positioning it to play a key role in the new government.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, a number of commentators assessed the SPS decision to publicly support the DSS-minority government in

⁶⁷ (2003) “Opet o Hagu,” *Glas javnosti*, March 14.

⁶⁸ (2003) “Vesna Gojković štrajkuje Gladu,” *Vječernje novosti*, June 22.

⁶⁹ (2003) “Uhapšen na Rođendan Projavio ga Komšija,” *Glas javnosti*, June 14.

⁷⁰ (2003) “Ne Ubijajte Miloševića!” *Vječernje novosti*, October 21; (2003) “Sloboda za Miloševića,” *Politika*, September 21; (2003) “Miting pred Tribunalom,” *Vječernje novosti*, June 28.

⁷¹ (2003) “Reagovanja na Optužnice,” *Blic*, October 22.

⁷² (2003) “Ako vec Mora, Suđenje kod Kuće,” *Dnevnik*, December 21.

⁷³ (2004) “Oslobađanje od “Slobode,”” *Politika*, January 13.

terms very similar to other observers' assessment of its "change in direction" in 2008. As it became clear that SPS would support the new DSS-led government, Zoran Vačić of the Center for Liberal-Democratic Studies stated that the SPS was the "biggest winner" and that, "the SPS gained survival, the possibility to break with its past, and on the next election, in about two years, to appear as a modern party."⁷⁵ At the same time the "furtive" nature of SPS' support for the DSS minority government was a reminder that Western veto actors still hovered ready to possibly punish pro-EU parties for cooperating with what they viewed as the still largely unreformed party. Hence, even if SPS could find itself in the "kingmaker" position, external veto actors were still likely to prevent it from openly playing this role.

After the SPS gave its support for Koštunica's post-2003 election minority coalition, Goati characterized the period from 2004 to the end of 2005 as one in which the "internal conflict was...pacified...through mutual compromise in which both sides partially achieved their goals. The leadership received a green light for autonomous activity including the discrete relinquishment of the remaining pre-October neo-communist postulates. In exchange, Milošević secured energetic support to secure his property, financial help for his defense at the Hague, access to necessary documents for preparing his defense and help for his family."⁷⁶

However, a careful review of media reports from the period indicates that this "period of pacification" was a stormy one at best. In the most general terms, as a pillar of the minority government, the SPS found itself in a difficult situation when foreign pressure contributed to what, by the measure of the number of arrests and extraditions, ironically became one of the most successful periods of Serbian cooperation with the Hague Tribunal to date. With each

⁷⁴ Preradović, S. (2004) "SA DSS protiv Novih Izborâ," *Reporter*, February 10; (2004) "Miloševićevi taoci," *Politika*, June 27.

⁷⁵ (2004) "Greška u Koracima Demokrata," *Kurir*, February 4. It is also interesting to note that, at the time, a number of Serbian liberal democrats accused DSS of betraying the principles of October 5, 2000 by joining with the Socialists.

arrest, the SPS made noises about withdrawing its support from the government, but the realization that new elections could spell disaster for the party likely kept the SPS on board.⁷⁷

Furthermore, the struggle between the SPS reformers and the pro-Milošević wing continued largely unabated. Following Ivica Dačić's poor showing in the June 2004 presidential elections (Dačić won just under 126,000 votes out of 3 million cast in the first round) his introvert rivals, Milorad Vučelić, Milutin Mrkonjić, and Aleksandar Vulin, took the opportunity to once again challenge his leadership of the party by focusing their criticism on Dacic's failure to gain Milošević's support for his campaign.⁷⁸ This started a struggle within the party which continued at various levels of intensity throughout the remainder of 2004. The party's 15th anniversary in July of 2005 became a natural focal point for analyses about SPS' current situation and a moment when leaders of the party were obliged to make public pronouncements about the party's past and future. In one of these pronouncements Dušan Bajatović commented that Milošević was a "hand brake" on the development of the party.⁷⁹ This statement sparked another round of conflict within the party between the extrovert reformist wing and introvert hardliners which extended well into the autumn of 2005. Here again, the party remained torn between an extrovert current which looked to break with the Milošević past and redefine the party and those introverts who staunchly defended Milošević and his legacy.

The death of Slobodan Milošević on March 11, 2006 offered a possible opening to break the party out of its deadlock. At the time of Milošević's death, Aleks Grigorev summarized the SPS' challenge as such: "...the socialists should think about the next election and whether they want to remain in the parliament or become toadies for the radicals and thus end their existence.

⁷⁶ Goati, V. (2004) *Partije i Partijski Sistem u Srbiji*, (Niš: "Spektar- Niš").

⁷⁷ (2004) "SPS preti Koštunici praznom Puškom," *Balkan*, July 6.

⁷⁸ Cvejić, M. (2004) "Mrkonjić: Dačić je Vodio Prgrešnu Kampanju," *Danas*, June 22.

It's time for the socialists to finally bid farewell to Milošević and become a reformed post-socialist, post-communist party. This is their last chance.”⁸⁰ Following an appropriate outpouring of party emotions to pacify Milošević supporters, extroverts might have capitalized on Milošević's passing to deal a final blow to his supporters in the party.

However, exogenous political events, combined with the party's continued dependence on its pro-Milosevic voters, prevented any major changes during the last months of the DSS-led minority government. Soon after Milosevic's funeral, Serbia suffered the double blows of the freezing of its Stabilization and Association negotiations and a pro-independence victory in Montenegro's referendum. Following these misfortunes, a new impetus was given to the long-suffering effort to ratify a new constitution which in turn resulted in new elections being called for January of 2007. With these major events unfolding and elections looming on the horizon, any attempt to radically rearticulate the party's platform would risk alienating the party's critical pro-Milosevic base while failing to attract new voters in sufficient numbers to surpass the parliament's 5% threshold.

The January 2007 parliamentary elections stripped the SPS of its function as pillar of a minority government, removed it from its public platform and relegated it to the role of vocal critic of a pro-European government. The election results also indicated that, if the SPS had indeed calculated that its role as pillar of the Koštunica government would provide an opportunity to rebuild its electorate, this opportunity had been squandered by the party's two-track approach of appeasing Milošević supporters while making vaguely articulated reformist statements. Throughout its alliance with DSS, polls indicated that the party steadily maintained a

⁷⁹ (2005) “S Miloševićem kao “pod ručnom,” *Glas javnosti*, July 26.

⁸⁰ Draker, M. (2006) “Grigorev: Posle Smrti Miloševića SPS da Završi svoje Postojanje kao Prirepak SRS?” *VOAnews.com*, March 15. <http://www.voanews.com/Serbian/archive/2006-03/2006-03-15-voa11.cfm>.

threshold-straddling rating of between 3-6%. In the 2007 race it just cleared the threshold with 5.6% of the popular vote.

Both as a result of the continuing sway of hardliners within the party and the necessity of maintaining a distinct political identity, the SPS now fell perhaps too easily into the role of vocal opposition—frequently finding itself aligned with the anti-system, international pariah, Serbian Radical Party. Given its performance during this period, analysts and pundits could be forgiven for forgetting the party’s ostensible goals of reforming itself as a modern party. At the same time, the SPS seemed doomed to obscurity as it remained chained to an opposition rhetoric that on most issues did little to distinguish it from its old-regime past while simultaneously being deprived of any opening to redefine itself. Any substantial redefinition of the SPS platform might render it largely indistinguishable from certain members of the governing coalition—a poor prospect for an opposition party still reliant on its hard line voters.

In 2008, fortune would shine once more on the otherwise luckless SPS. Following another weak showing in the May 2008 elections, the SPS nonetheless found itself again in the advantageous role of “kingmaker.” In retrospect the SPS provided a number of signs indicating that the party was charting a more substantively pro-European course. The decision to join in a coalition with the highly pragmatic and pro-EU Dragan Marković Palma’s United Serbia (JS) provided one indication. Palma’s political center in Jagodina was clearly benefiting from the largesse of the EU and EU-based donors and his political stance regarding the “Kosovo or EU” question was neatly summarized by his statement that “Patriotism won’t put fuel in your tractor.”⁸¹ Other signs included campaign statements which largely avoided questions regarding Kosovo, the Tribunal, and other related issues in favor of a focus on socio-economic messages.

⁸¹ (2008) “Blic: Dogovor DSS-SRS o Novoj Vladi,” *B92*, March 11, http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2008&mm=03&dd=11&nav_id=288614.

Following the vote, and in light of Koštunića's categorical refusal to enter any coalition which included DS, the Socialists' 20 seats become critical for the formation of either a ZES-led coalition or a coalition including the nationalist and national-democratic SRS and DSS-NS. Seizing an opportunity to enter government, return to the public eye and stem the party's continuing decline, SPS took a decisive step towards reconfiguring its policy platform by recasting itself as a "European" Social Democratic party, joining Serbia's post-election pro-European government and concluding a pact of reconciliation with its old DS rival.

In analyzing the SPS' actions following the elections, it is critical to again note the role played by the Western international community. While the US and various European actors had frequently expressed strong opposition to any government including the Radical party, opposition to SPS participation was largely muted following the party's 2000 electoral defeat and subsequent decline. Media reports covering the Socialists support for Koštunica's 2003-2007 government made some mention of international discomfort with the socialists' "return to power," but given the party's withering strength, these claims seem exaggerated. However, when faced with the threat of a coalition consisting of SPS-DSS-SRS after the 2008 elections, Western diplomatic interest in the SPS increased and the Western international community gave its blessing to a new government including both the pro-European ZES and the SPS. In taking this pragmatic approach, international actors thus opened the way for a (perhaps cosmetic) pro-European party change without "banning" the party.

However, the Western international community's accommodation would neither save the SPS from its perennial post-2000 internal weaknesses nor from the logic of the Serbian party system. In 2006, Vladimir Goati stated that the SPS was at a "fateful crossroads" where it needed to decide between retaining its "ultra-national component" or making the turn towards a more

social-democratic direction. Prophetically, Goati argued that “this isn’t just a question about whether and when it will do this, for time is a critical resource and it may be the deciding factor for which actor...is the first to successfully establish itself on the relatively empty social democratic space.”⁸²

During the period between the 2003 6th Party Congress and the 2008 elections, the split between extrovert reformers and introvert hardliners bogged down efforts to decisively recast the party in the eyes of the only audience that ultimately counted: voters. While the party spun its wheels, other actors, most significantly DS, established themselves in the “relatively empty social democratic space.” Milošević’s death and the 2008 elections brought together two conditions that opened the possibility for a decisive shift to its new programmatic location. However, in a bit of irony, this space was already occupied by the very coalition partner that enabled SPS’ return to government.

Nonetheless, with its previous efforts largely failing to reverse the decline in its voter base, the party’s best hope for renewal was to join the ZES-led government in 2008. Subsequent polling and results of local elections provide some indication that the party may be succeeding in attracting new, younger voters and some political analysts have begun to speak of the SPS’ successful adaptation.⁸³ Nonetheless, while the SPS is likely to continue to be a small but important player in Serbia's political scene, in comparison to the appearance of the pro-European Serbian Progressive Party (below) its transformation actually contributes little towards establishing a Serbian pro-EU party consensus. Instead, it seems set to become another of Serbia's growing number of small Social-democratic parties.⁸⁴

⁸² Goati, V. (2006) *Partijske Borbe u Srbiji u Postoktobarskom Razdoblju*, (Belgrade: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung).

⁸³ Vasić, M. (2009) “Od Lipe do Evrope,” *Vreme*, March 19.

⁸⁴ Petrović, M. (2009) “Gužva na Političkoj Levici,” *Politika*, August 24.

The SRS-SNS Split

The story of the SRS' post-2000 trajectory provides another telling story about the indirect impact of conditionality on party programs and the creation of pro-EU consensus. After seeing its share of the vote in parliamentary elections drop from 28.1% in 1997 to 8.5% during the “revolutionary” election of 2000, the Radicals' electoral fortunes sprung back to near 1997 levels in the 2003 parliamentary contest. At the time, this showing alarmed commentators who spoke of a “shift to the right,” and a “nationalist backlash.” However, the party's subsequent showings in the 2007 and 2008 parliamentary election contests instead suggested a party whose base of support had essentially peaked at just under 30% of the voting population.

Under normal conditions, such a level of support would have proven sufficient for the SRS to take the leading position in government formation. However, the SRS was not a “normal” party. Its extremist antics, along with policies including uncompromising opposition to the ICTY, the establishment of a “Greater Serbia,” further centralization of the republic, and a rejection of Western states and organizations in favor of closer relations with Serbia's “traditional ally” Russia earned it pariah status—and thereby a “ban”—in the Western international community. Hence, any flirtation by a Serbian party with the SRS was immediately greeted with threats of international isolation from the EU and the United States.⁸⁵ This ban would keep “Serbia's strongest party” from grasping the reins of political power despite its taking the most votes of any single party during the 2003, 2007, and 2008 elections.⁸⁶ Over time, this would weigh heavily on individually popular party members like Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar

⁸⁵ Nonetheless, Vojislav Koštunica was able to turn the SRS ban to his advantage in the aftermath of the 2007 parliamentary elections. His decision to support the candidacy of SRS Vice President Nikolić for the parliamentary president, likely forced the Democratic Party to concede to his coalition demands and allow him to maintain his post as Prime Minister in the new government.

⁸⁶ While the SRS did take a smaller share of the votes in 2008 than the coalition “For a European Serbia” (ZES), it should be noted that the SRS contested the election along, while ZES was a coalition of several parties plus the larger

Vučić, who saw their political futures dwindling as public opinion continued to support integration in the European Union and broader international community.

In another vivid example of a battle between party extroverts and party introverts, a major schism occurred within the party in the aftermath of SRS' 2008 electoral "defeat", which resulted in Tomislav Nikolić leaving/being expelled from the party. While a well publicized disagreement between party president Vojislav Šešelj and Tomislav Nikolić over the decision to back a vote for the Stabilization and Association Agreement in September of 2008 provided the actual catalyst for the split, evidence of disagreements could be found as early as 2003 when Nikolić introduced statements about EU integration into the party's parliamentary campaign and Nikolić's own presidential election.⁸⁷ At the time, Nikolić's statements were generally interpreted as the SRS leadership's attempt to tactically broaden the party's appeal, especially since pro-EU statements by Nikolić, Vučić, and others were oftentimes accompanied or soon followed by extremist statements or antics by Šešelj in the Hague. In the aftermath of this split, these dynamics would be reinterpreted as real efforts by Nikolić and Vučić to quietly tweak the SRS' more extreme statements that were then sabotaged by Vojislav Šešelj and his hard line supporters within the party.⁸⁸

Tensions within the party became increasingly evident in early 2008 following Novi Sad mayor Maja Gojković's (another party extrovert) exit from the SRS and a series of interviews

Democratic Party (DS).

⁸⁷ In the aftermath of the split, it was also pointed out that Tomislav Nikolić had supposedly backed a plan to remove references to "Greater Serbia" from the Radical party's platform as early as 1996-1997. However, he dropped his support for the proposal after Vojislav Šešelj threatened to leave the party over the change.

⁸⁸ Examples of this dynamic included Šešelj's drawing a parallel between Zoran Đinđić's assassin and Gavrilo Princip during the 2008 parliamentary elections, the SRS president's hunger strike on the eve of the 2007 parliamentary campaign, and his political testament released during the 2008 campaign which prohibited the party's support for European integration and cooperation with certain parties. Didanović, V. (2008) "Politika iz Haške ćelije," *Vreme*, June 28, 2008. Interviews in Belgrade, June 2009.

that Gojković gave detailing the SRS' growing internal problems.⁸⁹ Following the SRS' comparatively weak showing in the 2008 elections and disappointing outcomes in coalition negotiations both at the Republican level and in the Belgrade city council, the party entered a period of increasing ferment which exploded in outright conflict following the parliament's return from the summer holidays. The groundwork for the upcoming split was laid in mid-June when a number of papers ran interviews in which Nikolić complained of being "shackled" by Vojislav Šešelj, who made secret deals with Vojislav Koštunica's DSS in the aftermath of the 2008 elections. He also complained about "multiple channels" of communication between the party and Šešelj that produced various misunderstandings. Among these misunderstandings was a rumor that Nikolić saw himself as the "Serbian Sanader." Nikolić also mentioned differing views about the EU integration question.⁹⁰

The Serbian media's coverage of tensions in the Radical Party was soon overshadowed by the capture and extradition of Radovan Karadžić, the rather feeble SRS and DSS-led street protests following the arrests, and the Radical's subsequent blockade of the new Parliament. However, when deputies returned to the parliament following a several-week recess, they were immediately confronted with rapidly spiraling conflict in the SRS. Events leading up to the SAA vote suggested a conscious effort to escalate the internal crisis. During initial debates, SRS hardliners placed curses on Serbian "traitors" like Boris Tadić "and all Radicals who are in contact with him." In retrospect, this move appears to have been an effort to rein-in Nikolić both by forcing him to take a position on the embarrassing antics of his harder-line colleagues and also warning him about rumored meetings with the DS president.

⁸⁹ Biljana, B. (2008) "Suviše Liberalna za Radikale", *Politika*, March 21.

Developments reached a crescendo on September 4 when Nikolić called upon members of the SRS to vote for an amended version of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. This caused a stir within the party and a phone call by hardliners to the Hague. The next day, the vote for the SAA failed, clearly indicating that members of the SRS had rejected Nikolić's order. The Monday following the weekend recess, Nikolić announced his resignation from the party. Nikolić was immediately followed by 13 SRS MPs who together formed the parliamentary club "Napred Srbijo" ("Forward, Serbia"). Days later, Nikolić announced the creation of the new "Serbian Progressive Party."

The coming days and weeks witnessed a veritable political theatre played out in the halls of the parliament and in the Serbian media. Šešelj's supporters, centered around the introvert figure of Dragan Todorović, predictably roared about traitors, agents of the West, and secret meetings with Boris Tadić and other democrats. Tomislav Nikolić presented himself as the introspective, experienced, and wise politician who, upon reaching a critical crossroads in his political development, had fallen afoul of his domineering, extremist friend and *kum*, Vojislav Šešelj. Aleksandar Vučić played the role of the young, ambitious, but uncertain politician torn between his loyalty to his political benefactor and *kum*, Tomislav Nikolić, and his colleagues in the Radical Party.

Vučić, apparently wracked by existential turmoil, delayed his decision to leave the party for days—even announcing at one point that he was leaving politics altogether. The question remains as to whether this existential turmoil was real or whether Vučić was simply delaying his decision until he could better gauge the risks of staying with the Radicals, joining Nikolić, or even striking out on his own.

⁹⁰ Vojinović, S. (2008) "Velika Frka kod Radikala," *Press*, June 19.

In many respects this political drama played an important role in defining the new party and gaining sympathy for Nikolić—even among his past opponents.⁹¹ When contrasted with the ravings of his former colleagues, Nikolić’s composed message of renewal, Europeanization, and modernization served to erase, or at least revise, the memory of his radical past and build a new image of the wizened politician who had reached this stage in his political development through a contemplative journey of trial and error—the “Radical made good.” The lengthy period of seeming uncertainty, where Nikolić and the fate of his defectors appeared to hang in the balance, also perhaps served to gain the sympathy and support of his democratic opponents and actors in the international community. The temptation to tear Serbia’s strongest opposition party in two, combined with the urge to assist the rehabilitated radicals against their extremist tormentors brought a breathing space for Nikolić and likely opened the window for his first ties with new domestic and international allies. Finally, the very public nature of the split provided excellent public exposure for the new party allowing it to clearly define itself against the foil of the rump SRS and convey its new message to a maximum number of potential voters. In this respect, the SNS gained near-campaign period coverage without the risk of actually competing in an election.

As the dispute with the Radicals slowly faded, initial public opinion surveys offered the first insights into the party’s political viability. Results showed that the Progressives had already far surpassed their former Radical colleagues and it was commonly estimated that as much as 2/3rds of the Radical’s former voter base had changed loyalties to the new party. Going into 2009, the party’s ratings began to match levels of support for the Democratic Party suggesting that Nikolić and Vučić’s new party vehicle was now one of the strongest political forces in Serbia. Results of several extraordinary local elections seemed to confirm these polling results.

⁹¹ This coincidence led some observers to casually suggest in informal interviews that the entire drama was in fact staged for this very purpose.

The new party's platform exhibited a substantial amount of drift from "near Radical" stances at the party's inception to a set of policies that some analysts claim make it increasingly indistinguishable from its main DS rival.⁹² In the weeks immediately following the split with the Radicals, Nikolić defined the party as a vaguely pro-European, right-of-center organization. However, in terms of concrete policies, the only clear difference with the SRS was an outright rejection of the Radicals' "Greater Serbia" plank.⁹³ Gradually, party pronouncements indicated more substantial moderation with political commentators increasingly referring to the new party as a "center-right" organization. Media statements, presentations and interviews with SNS officials indicated that the party's stances on critical issues such as cooperation with ICTY and Kosovo's future status were even converging on those of the Democrats. An interview with party functionary Nebojša Stefanović indicated that the party was adopting the same non-assertive stance towards Kosovo's independence as the coalition government—no recognition of Kosovo, but no apparent effort to reintegrate the territory. In response to a question about the Tribunal, Stefanović repeated almost verbatim the phrases employed by Croatia's Ivo Sanader in the run-up to Croatia's 2003 Parliamentary elections—cooperation with the Hague but in the sense of working with the defense as well as the prosecution.

Both Stefanović and Aleksandar Vučić echoed statements of the coalition government with regard to the issue of Mladić's capture—the general could not be located. While this later response could certainly be seen as a policy of not-so-subtle obstruction, even this is a major policy change considering that, just a few years prior, Aleksandar Vučić was photographed covering street signs on "Zoran Đinđić Boulevard" with imitation signs bearing the words

⁹² Anojčić, I. (2009) "Opasno Približivanje", *Politika*, October 4.

⁹³ It is interesting to note that around this time, the Radicals also publicly reaffirmed their commitment to this largely dormant plank in their party platform. This was interpreted as an effort to distinguish themselves from the new Progressives and rally their remaining hardline supporters.

“Ratko Mladić Boulevard.” Furthermore, it once again bears emphasizing that this response differs little from the current pro-European coalition’s statements on the Mladić issue. In other areas, the SNS’ public statements and actions bordered on the fantastic. SNS representatives attended the US embassy’s 4th of July celebration in 2009, and during an unprecedented visit to the United States, Vučić appeared at the State Department and Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars where he spoke of an “EU consensus” in Serbia and referred to the United States as a “priority international partner.”

As in the case of Croatia’s HDZ and the Serbian Socialist Party, international actors came to play an important role in Nikolić and Vučić’s break from the party. Perhaps in the course of their personal deliberations regarding the decision to break with their Radical colleagues, but certainly in the aftermath of their decision to do so, both party leaders benefited from key actors’ in the international community’s guarded acceptance of the SNS as a new “constructive” center-right party. While this process is by no means complete, personal interviews and the very fact that Vučić made a presentation at the State Department suggest that Nikolić and Vučić’s “escape” from the Radicals has also removed the de facto international ban that hung over their heads during their time under Šešelj.

The Progressives’ story remains a work in progress and more substantiated claims about the significance of this phenomenon are perhaps best left until after the next republican parliamentary elections. Nonetheless, the events to date warrant at least a few speculative conclusions. First, interviews with party functionaries and media accounts all support the contention that strong support for EU integration among the Serbian public played a major role in driving party extroverts Nikolić and Vučić to attempt to shift the SRS platform in a more pro-EU direction. In the face of Šešelj’s obstructionism, this eventually led to a break within the

party once Vučić and Nikolić had determined that they were likely to survive such a divorce. Free of the institutional restraints of the old party, these two committed extroverts are currently steering their party towards the political center in order to capture Serbia's "medium voter."

Second, the SNS case once again demonstrates that pro-EU consensus in the Western Balkans are most likely to be built by pragmatic politicians driven by a logic of consequences. While post-split reports sometimes sift through the historical record to find evidence of Nikolić and Vučić's hidden reformist agendas, a review of their political tactics even months before the split seems to contradict the image of aspiring reformers cowed by their master in the Hague. A more plausible interpretation is that Nikolić and Vučić utilized the Radical party vehicle until changes in public attitudes rendered it unlikely to ever yield the desired dividend of attaining office. After some efforts to change course, they abandoned the party, along with much of its domestic and international political baggage, and founded a new "laundered" center-right organization which better reflected the contemporary balance of public attitudes. Whether or not this newly laundered collection of political actors will back their pro-EU rhetoric with substantive policy is a question which can only truly be answered in the event that the Progressives enter a future government.

Conclusions

This overview of changes within Croatia's and Serbia's major EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties points to the danger of treating the conditionality issue as an essentially elite driven process. As emphasized in this analysis, the attraction of conditionality-wielding institutions made a substantial impact on public opinion which, combined with the intervention of Western veto actors, gradually lowered the electoral appeal of these parties. With electoral support either

“stuck” at a plateau (SRS), or dwindling rapidly (HDZ) or slowly (SPS), splits emerged within the party between party extroverts seeking to reverse the party’s sagging fortunes through pragmatic (or unprincipled) programmatic change, and introverts seeking to hold the party’s course at the risk of continuing to lose elections. The resulting changes made for major structural transformations in both countries’ party systems.

The cases in this study reveal a number of possible implications for the further development of the EU integration process in the Western Balkans and other regions. First, in terms of predicting the success or failure of adaptation attempts, these cases clearly demonstrate that the removal of a stigmatized charismatic leader is a critical prerequisite for meaningful programmatic change. Tuđman's death in 1999 removed a major obstacle to any extrovert attempts to remake that party in the aftermath. While “Tuđmanist elements“ would constitute the main body of party introverts working against Sanader's reforms, the absence of the original leader both lowered their power and also opened up the room for followers to reinterpret the meaning of “Tuđmanism“ (if indeed this warrants such a term). Those who held to fundamentalism lost power and were expelled from the party. Those who opted for reinterpretation could make the changes in belief necessary to compromise—at least in the short-term—with HDZ extroverts.

The same dynamic held within Serbia’s SPS. Until Milošević’s death, the party could make little meaningful progress in the face of constant meddling from the leader in the Hague. With the leader’s death, Dačić and others were given more room for programmatic maneuver—even to the point of making a pact with their October 5th arch-rivals, the Democratic Party. Unfortunately for the SPS, by the time this window opened, the party found itself in a new political environment facing numerous social-democratic competitors.

The SRS case is more complicated, yet even more illustrative of this dynamic. Until Vojislav Šešelj was removed from the scene, Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić were highly constrained in their effort to tweak the party's message. A timely and well-orchestrated break with Šešelj had a similar effect to the leader's "death." Furthermore, the near-theatrical drama accompanying the split raised Nikolić's capital with international actors and other observers while the creation of a new party culled from moderates in the SRS solved the problem of balancing moderate and extremist interests. In this respect, the Serbian Progressive Party could actually find its future role in the EU integration context to be less complicated than that of the HDZ which still maintains a core of co-opted hardliners.

Second, these cases once again point to the contention that instrumental rationality, rather than socialization towards European ideals, is the strongest factor driving Europeanization in these cases. The bases for major shifts in policies were laid following electoral shocks either in the form of outright defeats (the HDZ and SPS) or in disappointed expectations (the SRS-SNS split). Party extroverts demonstrated an amazing knack for changing policy tack to match changes in the political winds which belies any reasonable sense of strongly held ideologies or world views beyond the most general placements along an ideological scale. In many respects, the nature of EU conditionality could even be faulted for rewarding less principled extroverts in favor of introverts who, regardless of the content of their policies, could at least be lauded for presenting stable and genuine policy alternatives.

Beyond the uncertainty that extroverts add to political processes, the compromises that party extroverts make in the course of changing the party's course can oftentimes create conditions that will later undermine the integration process. Sanader's deals with party hardliners and other unsavory elements have been construed as a basis for Croatia's current problems with

corruption and organized crime. Furthermore, by co-opting, rather than driving out more extreme elements within the HDZ, these forces continue to pose a latent threat to the integration process—a factor which may have manifested itself in the sudden departure of Sanader himself in the summer of 2009.

Third, these cases demonstrate the impact that the international community can have on the adaptation process within EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties. In each of the cases explored, decisions by key international actors to ban certain parties as acceptable coalition partners forced party extroverts to pursue platform changes that would launder the party—or at least the actors themselves—in the eyes of the Western international community. With regard to the HDZ and SRS, these moves likely circumvented the possibility that a strongly-supported EU-skeptic/anti-EU party would gain control of the government in coalition with a smaller party or set of parties and thus forced self-interested extroverts in both parties to seek out means to lift these bans either on themselves (Nikolić and Vučić) or the party as a whole (the HDZ). Applied in a crude, haphazard manner under conditions in which public opinion is largely balanced with regard to membership, such bans could have the opposite effect of further radicalizing EU-skeptic/anti-EU parties and further souring public opinion. However, for the period under investigation, a combination of pro-EU public majorities and the careful, but consistent, application of these coalition bans appears to have yielded the Western international community's desired outcomes.

Finally, as demonstrated by the SPS, the decision to take on a new party label or programmatic profile is not a guarantee of successful adaptation. As Levitsky states, the last stage of successful party adaptation is the establishment of a new voting base. If, either by choice or as the result of delayed transformation, a party adopts a party label or set of policies which makes it virtually indistinguishable from a larger, more established party rival, then the

transformation process risks ending in political obscurity. Parties do not operate in a political void and any movement along a policy spectrum runs the risk of placing them into competition for a finite number of voters in a crowded programmatic space.