Political Clientelism in the Western Balkans

Collection of papers

Jovan Bliznakovski • Dragan Stanojević and Jelisaveta Petrović • Arianna Piacentini • Elvisa Drishti and Bresena Kopliku Dema • Marjan I. Bojadjiev, Miodraga Stefanovska – Petkovska and Ivona Mileva • Jelena Pešić and Marko Milošević • Liljana Cvetanoska • Nedim Hogić • Maja Markovic • Milena Muk • Dardan Beqiri • Elira Luli

International Scientific Conference

Political Clientelism in the Western Balkans

9-11 December 2020

Collection of papers

Skopje, June 2021

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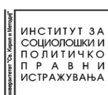

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Contents

Foreword.. 1

Jovan Bliznakovski
Political Clientelism in the Western Balkans:
Conference Report.. 3

Dragan Stanojević and Jelisaveta Petrović
"The Balkan Paradox" Young People in Conventional Politics:
Between Ideals and Instrumental Goals.. 13

Arianna Piacentini
Everyday State-capture: Clientelism and the Masses-'clients' Role.
Evidence from the Balkans... 37

Elvisa Drishti and Bresena Kopliku Dema
Active Political Engagement, Political Patronage,
and Local Labour Markets – the Example of Shkoder........................ 59

Marjan I. Bojadjiev, Miodraga Stefanovska – Petkovska and Ivona Mileva
Investigation into the Potential for
Clientelistic and Corruptive Behavior of Students of
Private and Public Universities in R.N. Macedonia............................ 85

Jelena Pešić and Marko Milošević
Political Clientelism and Private Security Sector in Serbia............... 109

Liljana Cvetanoska
Corruption and Women's Access to Politics:
Comparative Perspectives on Quotas and Party Funding
in Kosovo* and North Macedonia.. 135

Nedim Hogić
Electoral Rules and Corruption as Drivers of Political Fragmentation
in Bosnia and Herzegovina... 157

Maja Markovic
Clientelism in the Process of Public Sector Employment:
the Case of Montenegrin Municipalities.. 179

Milena Muk
Public Administration Reform Against Clientelism:
Montenegro's Missed Expectations.. 203

Dardan Beqiri
Neopatrimonialist Practice as a Soft Strategy of State Capture:
The case of Western Balkans.. 217

Elira Luli
Political clientelism in Western Balkans -
A Mechanism to Amplify
Power Gain- The Case of Albania.. 243

Jovan Bliznakovski
Varieties of Political Clientelism: A Typology of Clientelist Exchanges
in the Western Balkans and Beyond... 269

Foreword

This Collection of Papers was produced following the international scientific conference "Political Clientelism in the Western Balkans", which was held online in the period 9-11 December 2020. The Collection showcases part of the recent research undertook in the region on political clientelism and reveals the multifacetedness of the phenomenon as practiced in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia). The authors who prepared the papers for this Collection are affiliated to universities and think-tanks coming from the Western Balkans, the EU and the UK, and have studied clientelism in the background of different scientific disciplines and methodologies.

The Collection is opened with a Conference Report which offers information on the main themes discussed during the three days of conference work. The Report is intended to assist the reader in approaching the twelve papers that follow. The twelve papers included in the Collection reveal different aspects of political clientelism in the region: some of them focus on the way clientelism is practiced, others focus on the perspective of actors that engage in political clientelism, while a third group focuses more directly on the consequences of clientelism for the Western Balkans. Taken as a whole, the Collection reveals a vibrant corpus of research on political clientelism in the Western Balkans which should not be overlooked by both academics and policy makers.

We hope that this Collection will contribute to greater interest on the topic and that it will be an important reference point for both academics and practitioners in the years to come.

The Academic Committee organizing the conference
"Political Clientelism in the Western Balkans"
June 2021

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Political Clientelism in the Western Balkans: Conference Report

Jovan Bliznakovski
(Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje)

Political clientelism is a phenomenon attracting significant cross-disciplinary scientific interest in recent decades, as well as a practice that represents a "puzzle" for policy intervention worldwide. Broadly understood as the particularistic exchange of material benefits (distributed by patrons) for political services (performed by clients), political clientelism is an important ingredient in the mobilization strategies of political parties (e.g. Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Stokes 2007; Gans-Morse et al. 2014), as well as a possible channel through which citizens may fulfil their interests and needs (Piattoni 2001; Nichter 2018). There is a certain consensus that, when practiced, clientelism holds severe negative consequences towards the quality of democracy, economic performance, and the functioning of the public sector (see Hicken 2011, 302-303).

Political clientelism is widely present in the Western Balkans, remains resilient to decades of liberal-democratic reforms, and contributes to the overall democratic deficit, the weak economic performance, as well as to the establishment of arbitrary redistribution policies. Despite this state of affairs, there has been a little systematic attempt to study clientelism scientifically across the region. The conference "Political Clientelism in the Western Balkans", which took place between 9 and 11 December 2020, aspired to fill this gap, as well as to create a platform for the cooperation and networking of researchers working on the topic. The conference featured a total of 29 researchers (authors and co-authors), coming from Western Balkans, EU and UK universities, research institutes, and independent think tanks, who presented 20 papers on different aspects of political clientelism during the three-day program. All research presented was contextually focused on the six Western Balkan Fund contracting parties (WBF CPs: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia), with scholars most commonly opting to study one of the WBF CPs and several papers adopting a comparative/regional perspective. The conference joined research conducted using various methodologies and based on the background of different scientific disciplines, signalling that (as elsewhere), the study of political clientelism

in the Western Balkans can be accommodated within different research traditions. In addition to the presented research, the conference included an open round table dedicated to the prospects for scientific cooperation in the study of political clientelism in the region.

This report summarizes the main findings and conclusions from the presented research and the subsequent discussions. The report is structured in five thematic blocks, with each focusing on one specific aspect related to the practice of political clientelism in the Western Balkans: 1) the variety of clientelist exchanges (i.e. the many faces of political clientelism in the Western Balkans); the perspectives of 2) political patrons and 3) political clients; 4) the consequences of political clientelism, and 5) the possible further avenues of research.

Many faces of political clientelism in the Western Balkans

Political clientelism has often been credited for multifacetedness (e.g. see Hilgers 2012, 8-12), and the themes covered during the conference confirmed that this is also inherent to clientelism as practiced in the Western Balkans. The conference papers examined different applications of the clientelist exchange: in political mobilization and elections (e.g. Komar and Batrićević; Drishti and Kopliku; Bliznakovski); in building, maintaining, and breaking party organizations (Stanojević; Vuković and Spasojević; Hogic; Cvetanoska); in the management of public administration (Marovic and Markovic; Muk; Dhoga); to its use in structuring the relations between political and judicial elites (Gjuzelov), political elites and private companies (Imami; Pešić and Milošević; Krstić), and political and religious elites (Obućina and Krpan). Despite this multidimensionality (and different disciplinary backgrounds), the conference presenters implicitly concurred that political clientelism represents a dyadic relationship based on asymmetry of power and contingency (in line with the traditional definitions in the literature, e.g. Scott 1972) where the role of patrons is assumed by political parties, their members, and most broadly, the political elite, while the role of clients by a variety of social actors, including (but not limited to) citizens/voters, civil servants, judges, private companies and religious leaders.

The conference presentations also charted a variety of benefits and services which are exchanged through political clientelism in the contemporary Western Balkan context. Political patrons across the region offer election handouts consisted of money and other benefits (Komar and Batrićević; Bliznakovski), employment positions (Drishti and Kopliku;

Stanojević; Marovic and Markovic), procurement contracts (Pešić and Milošević); state property (Obućina and Krpan), construction and mining permits (Imami), and advancement in employment (Gjuzelov). Political clients reply in different ways: by voting in elections (Komar and Batrićević), through active engagement in party organizations (Bliznakovski; Drishti and Kopliku), by paying out political parties or their members (specifically in the case of private companies: Pešić and Milošević; Krstić), by publicly offering political support (e.g. in the case of religious organizations: Obućina and Krpan), as well as through favours connected to decisions in the scope of the client's public authority (specifically in the case of judges: Gjuzelov, and civil servants). Some of the presentations also highlighted that political patrons often turn to threats and sanctions to induce favourable behaviour of their clients (e.g. Krstić; Gjuzelov; Bliznakovski), with these "negative inducements" (Mares and Young 2016) being manifested as cutting one's access to ongoing benefits or employment, relegation in employment rank, arbitrary inspections, and investigations directed at private companies, etc.

The perspective of patrons

The conference presentations also offered insights into the motivations and calculus of the actors involved in clientelist exchanges. Across the region, political parties rise to clientelist prominence from ruling positions, as the bulk of resources used for clientelism come from public sources which are made available by the parties' control of state institutions. A simple conclusion derived from the conference presentations is that political parties in the Western Balkans less frequently employ private sources for clientelist dealings, though vote-buying with party/private money and employment in the private sector is part of the "arsenal" of clientelist benefits which are being distributed across the region, as well.

Political clientelism is useful from the point of view of political parties because it is one of the available strategies through which formal power can be obtained, and, more commonly - consolidated (given the above-explained predominance of public resources in clientelist exchanges). Two conference presentations (Beqiri; Luli) explicitly focused on the connection between political clientelism and the consolidation of power of incumbent parties, emphasizing the use of the state apparatus as an important mechanism in this setup.

Clientelist exchanges are not only used for the consolidation of power but also for the economic and social advancement of members of the political and economic elites. The findings presented by Mirkov and Manić, based on surveys of Serbian political and economic elites, state that affiliations to interpersonal and political networks have significant effects on the incomes of their members. These findings suggest that quid-pro-quo exchanges are not only used for the consolidation of political power but also the socio-economic advancement of individuals located at the higher hierarchical levels within the patronage networks.

Two conference presentations specifically focused on the dynamics within already established patronage networks (Vuković and Spasojević; Krstić), and despite being both contextually focused on Serbia they seem to offer valuable hypotheses that can be applied when studying the other WBF CPs as well. In their presentation, Vuković and Spasojević untangled the relationship between long-standing smaller-scale local patronage networks and the clientelist-minded central government, showing how local networks enjoy certain independence and the ability to adapt to the changing political circumstances. Motivated by self-interest (e.g. continued extraction of clientelist benefits), these local patronage networks often change party "colours" and are favoured participants in the coalitions of the largest parties because of their ability to mobilize political support at the localities. Vuković and Spasojević claim that these local networks predate contemporary clientelist networks in Serbia and that, in this sense, they represent an important bottom-up push for the perpetuation of clientelist exchanges. Some of these arguments are common with the findings from Krstić's ethnographic study on Serbian "local sheriffs" - individuals who possess almost total control over political, social, and economic life within given localities, which is established by their simultaneous hold of local public office, significant informal influence and good relations with the central government. According to Krstić, this governance style (branded as "neopatrimonialism") involves monopolization of the local public resources and exclusion of broader social groups, appropriation of the local administration and the local media, as well as strong informal management of social life.

The perspective of clients

Several conference presentations delivered insights on the motivations of clients involved in clientelist exchanges (e.g. Drishti and Kopliku; Stanojević; Bliznakovski; Gjuzelov; Bojadjiev, Stefanovska - Petkovska and Mileva; Obućina and Krpan). The presentation of Drishti and Kopliku

offered findings from a longitudinal survey of students implemented in Albania, showing what is commonly known across the Western Balkans - that political clientelism represents a viable path towards gaining secure employment, and that, from this perspective, it can be attractive to young social groups. The qualitative study of Stanojević, on the other hand, offered additional insights into the perspective of young party members in Serbia. According to Stanojević, young party members use several discursive strategies to "normalize" clientelist practices, including the assessment that clientelism is a common phenomenon ("everyone does it") and thus it is considered as a rule rather than an exception ("this is how things are done"); that it has merits, i.e. it is a way for parties to "help out" people; and that parties are pressured into clientelist dealings because people themselves "demand" clientelist favours. There is certainly a vibrant clientelist demand across the region: according to the survey of the project INFORM (presented by Bliznakovski during the conference), close to 10% of respondents in the region reported that they have turned to a political official/influential for help in the past, a manifestation of a phenomenon which Bliznakovski denotes as "clientelist benefit-seeking". Still, not all citizens are in an equal position to extract clientelist resources: Bliznakovski claimed that loyal and pro-active party members are in the best position to extract the most valuable clientelist benefits (such as stable employment), while Komar and Batrićević infer (through field list experiment data) that political parties in Montenegro have targeted men significantly more often than women with vote-buying offers during the 2018 local elections. These findings suggested that different types of clients hold divergent possibilities and motivations to successfully extract clientelist benefits.

A group of presentations offered findings on the motivations and calculus on other types of clients (apart from regular citizens/voters), e.g. judges and prosecutors (Gjuzelov), religious organizations and leaders (Obućina and Krpan), private security companies (Pešić and Milošević) and private entrepreneurs working in localities controlled by "local sheriffs" (Krstić). In his presentation, Gjuzelov argued (based on qualitative primary data) that judges and prosecutors in North Macedonia operate under a parallel incentive structure: on the one hand they are tasked to follow formal legislation, while on the other they are requested to follow the informally shared expectations of the personal and political networks they belong to. Non-compliance with these informal expectations (which are often in contradiction with formal legislation) may have severe consequences for the careers of judges and prosecutors since the political

power centres have means to block career advancement and to demote "unfavourable" individuals. The religious organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, studied by Obućina and Krpan, are, similarly, incentivized to politically align to gain control of their property nationalized during socialism and now in control of the state. The private security companies studied by Pešić and Milošević and the local entrepreneurs studied by Krstić are incentivized to enter clientelist dealings to protect their businesses, as public procurements and market inspection offices are firmly in the hands of the political centres of power and their proxies within the public institutions.

Consequences of political clientelism

Several presentations raised alarm on the consequences of clientelism and other particularistic practices (e.g. corruption, nepotism, and cronyism) towards the Western Balkan region. In some of the conference presentations, political clientelism was explicitly or implicitly associated with authoritarian tendencies in political elites (Krstić; Beqiri; Luli), deficits in implementation of elections (Komar and Batrićević) and rule of law (Gjuzelov); fragmentation of the party system (in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Hogic); while in others with suboptimal economic performances (Imami; Pešić and Milošević) and socio-economic inequality (Mirkov and Manić). A group of presentations underlined that clientelism represents an obstacle for meaningful reform in the public administration (on Montenegro: Marovic and Markovic, and Muk; and, on Albania: Dhoga), suggesting that political elites strategically adopt reforms which would still permit party favouritism in the recruitment of public administration. There seems to be a consensus that (as elsewhere) clientelism in the Western Balkans negatively affects political and economic development, as well as state efficiency and the quality of public services.

Several presentations pointed out even more peculiar effects. The studies by Komar and Batrićević and Cvetanoska show that clientelism perpetuates gender inequality in the Western Balkans. Cvetanovska's research on women's participation in politics in Kosovo* and North Macedonia suggests that the already established male-dominated patronage networks tend to resist outsiders and, thus, represent a significant obstacle for substantial women participation. These networks are still active despite the adoption of substantial legislation intended to improve women's participation (i.e. the gender quotas). Milosav's regional study on the relationship between individual corruption perceptions

and the desire to migrate offers findings in support of the thesis that particularism is one of the important factors that contribute to the "brain drain" phenomenon in the Western Balkans. Taken as a whole, the findings presented regarding the consequences of clientelism paint a largely negative picture of clientelism's effect on the society, economy, and politics of the WBF CPs.

Further avenues of research?

The findings from the conference presentations suggest that political clientelism in the Western Balkans adopts many faces and cloaks, and this is visible in the variety of relationships observed, the benefits and services exchanged, as well as in the divergent motivations for clientelist engagements of different social actors. Therefore, further scientific work will be needed to untangle this variety, as well as to examine how different exchanges and transactions are connected within larger national patronage networks.

The motivations of social actors to engage in clientelism raise an additional important research question that should be tackled while further studying this phenomenon in the Western Balkan region. Relying on the findings from the conference presentations, one may conclude that different types of actors on the supply side (political parties and elites) and on the demand side (citizens/voters, private companies, religious organizations, judges, etc.) hold divergent calculations when engaging in political clientelism. Studying the motivations of different social actors may bring us closer to answering the question of why political clientelism is practiced in the Western Balkans to such an extent.

Finally, it seems that the consequences of clientelism are overreaching in the region, and that clientelism can be viewed as one of the culprits for the weakened democratic and economic performance of the WBF CPs. Also, it seems that clientelism contributes to serious social distortions, as it can facilitate social exclusion, untransparent and arbitrary distribution of resources, and even provide an additional basis for "brain drain" in the Western Balkans. Studying the effects of political clientelism will likely lead us to grow awareness of the negative effects of this phenomenon, which, in turn, can provide us with a foundation for more decisive policy action.

These three broad themes that could be targeted in future research may be summarized as: "description-explanation-impetus for policy intervention". Further meaningful scientific work should equip us

to describe the political clientelism in the Western Balkans more comprehensively ("description") and a necessary first step which should allow us to establish more credible arguments on why this phenomenon remains resilient ("explanation"). A venture into the consequences of clientelism in the region will provide us with arguments why meaningful policy intervention is needed ("impetus for policy intervention"). Within this triad of research themes, researchers and scholars working on political clientelism in the Western Balkans, would not only contribute to the global study of political clientelism but also to the efforts to curb this phenomenon in the region. The conference "Political Clientelism in the Western Balkans" made steps in advancing this research agenda, though certainly much more work will be needed before we fully understand how and why political clientelism operates in the region, as well as how it can be suppressed.

Conference presentations

Beqiri, Dardan (Independent researcher). *Neopatrimonialist Practice as a Soft Strategy of State Capture: The Case of Western Balkans*

Bliznakovski, Jovan (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje). *Varieties of Political Clientelism: A Typology of Patron- Client Linkages and Exchanges in the Western Balkans*

Cvetanoska, Liljana (University of Sussex). *Corruption and Women's Access to Politics: Quotas and Party Funding in Kosovo* and North Macedonia*

Dhoga, Nysjola (University of Tirana). *Civil Service's Reforms in Albania: Politicized and then Politicized*

Drishti, Elvisa and Kopliku, Bresena (University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi"). *Active Political Engagement, Political Patronage and Local Labour Markets – The Example of Shkoder*

Gjuzelov, Borjan (Queen Mary University of London). *Between Public and Private Interest: Clientelism in the North Macedonia's Judiciary*

Hogic, Nedim (Sant' Anna School of Advanced Studies). *Electoral Rules and Corruption as Drivers of Political Fragmentation in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Imami, Drini (Agricultural University of Tirana and Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education – Economics Institute Prague). *Corruption, Clientelism, Informality and Elections in the Context of a Transition Economy*

Komar, Olivera (University of Montenegro) and Batrićević, Nemanja (Central European University). *'Buy One Get One Free': Gender and Vote-buying in Montenegro*

Krstić, Nemanja (University of Niš). *The Characteristics of the Neo-patrimonial Form of Governance in Serbia –The Status and Relationships Between the Chief and Local Sheriffs*

Luli, Elira (Albanian University). *Political Clientelism in Western Balkans - A Mechanism to Amplify Power Gain. Albanian Case.*

Marovic, Jovana (Politikon Network) and Markovic, Maja (Open Dialogue Network). *Human Resources Management in Montenegrin Municipalities: A Tool for Generating Votes?*

Mileva, Ivona; Bojadjiev, Marjan; and Stefanovska - Petkovska, Miodraga (University American College Skopje). *Investigation into the Potential for Clientelistic and Corruptive Behavior of Students of Private and Public Universities in R.N. Macedonia*

Milosav, Đorđe (Trinity College Dublin). *Party Membership Card or Passport? The Effects of Corruption on Migrating Motivation: The Case of the Balkans*

Mirkov, Anđelka and Manić, Željka (University of Belgrade). *The Interplay of the Economic and Political Elites in Serbia: Factors of Intragroup Economic Differentiation*

Muk, Milena (Institute Alternative Podgorica). *Public Administration Reform against Clientelism: Montenegro's Missed Expectations*

Obućina, Vedran (University of Regensburg) and Krpan, Domagoj (University of Rijeka). *How to Keep Religious Actors Loyal: Case of Law on Restitution of Religious Property in Bosnia And Herzegovina*

Pešić, Jelena (University of Belgrade) and Milošević, Marko (Freelance researcher). *Political Clientelism and Private Security in Serbia*

Stanojević, Dragan (University of Belgrade). *Discursive Strategies of "Normalisation" of Clientelism among Young Members of Political Parties in Serbia*

Vuković, Danilo and Spasojević, Dušan (University of Belgrade). *Prêt-à-porter Clientelistic Networks: Do They Exist Before or Independently of Parties in Contemporary Serbia?*

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“The Balkan Paradox” Young People in Conventional Politics: Between Ideals and Instrumental Goals

Dragan Stanojević and Jelisaveta Petrović
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Abstract

Authors in the paper try to show what it means for young people in Serbia to be active within political parties, by observing the motivation and aspirations of young party members. The paper has two specific objectives. The first, empirically, is the description and interpretation of a specific way of conventional political engagement of young people in the context of Serbia. The second, theoretically, is the contribution to the debates on the political participation of young people, where authors found important to closely examine socio-political context that largely determines the motivation, manner, and role of young people as political actors. Constellations within the political field, characterised by the dominance of informal ties, clientelism, and corruption, influence the motivation and strategies of young members of political parties. Although the research findings indicate that the reasons for joining and remaining in the party can be various, instrumental reasons are dominant, as well as the open admission that one enters politics out of personal (usually economic) interest. In addition to finding a job, the dominant reasons for joining the party are to meet other people, especially those in senior positions who could be helpful when needed. Young people who are members of opposition parties that do not have direct access to social resources more often state non-instrumental reasons for joining the party, such as the attractiveness of the party programme and ideology, the possibility of socialising and making friends, as well as gaining internships for political science students.

Keywords: young people, clientelism, motivations, informality

Introduction

In social theory as well as in the public policy domain, there is a widespread opinion that political participation is not only desirable but also necessary for the vitality of democracy, mostly because it ensures broad legitimacy of the system (Pateman, 1970; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba *et al*., 1995; Van Deth, 2014). Although there are disagreements among democracy theorists about how much participation is necessary, everyone considers it an essential element of a democratic order (see Pateman, 1970; Sartori, 1987). This understanding can be represented by a simple formula according to which more participation also means more democracy. However, is that always the case? What happens in situations when participation is exclusive and is not based on clear norms but on informal networks of power, cliques, clientelism, or party patronage? What meanings and motivations are behind membership in political parties in semi-democratic or authoritarian societies? What we want in this article is to use the example of political practices of young people in Serbia to reconsider whether engagement in political life and engagement in democratic processes can be considered synonymous, or is it necessary to distinguish them? Can more participation mean less democracy? Specifically, we will address the following questions: Why do young people in Serbia enter conventional politics and engage in party politics? How do they see politics and their place in the political field? In the discussion section, this leads us to re-examine some of the starting assumptions of theories of political participation created for the purpose of interpreting civic practices in developed Western democracies, and contextualising the concept of participation in semi-democratic environments, and considering what it means to be politically active in different social contexts.

Theoretical background

Previous research on youth political participation revolved around two opposite ends: conventional and unconventional forms of participation (Pilkington, Pollock, 2015). At one end, questions are crystallised as to whether young people's interest in political issues is declining, whether they are involved in activities related to conventional politics, such as voting, membership in political parties, campaign activities, etc., while the other end questions whether there is an increase in the importance of unconventional forms of politics, through civic associations, protests, petitions, boycotts, etc.

The data show that as part of a broader process of the crisis of democracy and increasing democratic deficit (Norris, 2003; 2011), new generations are changing patterns of political action. They are leaving conventional channels faster than older people, such as membership in political parties, voting in elections, participating in campaigns, etc. (Dalton, Wattenberg, 2000; Norris, 2003; Wattenberg, 2006). They also enter faster and make greater use of new, less formal forms of politics (Stolle et al., 2005; Vukelic, Stanojevic, 2012). The reasons for the lower political engagement of young people are seen in the insufficient responsiveness of institutions and modern forms of political representation as well as insufficient sensitivity of parties to the specific interests of young people, which can lead to alienation from them (Marsh et al., 2007). The reason is the change in the party functioning paradigm in the last decades. Mass parties are no longer dominant form, and we are witnessing the rise of the cartel parties (Katz, Mair, 1995), which no longer need mass support and large and well-organized membership, but a higher degree of professionalisation. Voters are reached through professional campaigns and the mass media (von Beyme, 1996, 2001). The role of certain structures within the party, such as the youth sector, no longer has the dynamic significance it once had.

Norris (2003) points out that social circumstances have changed, forms of communication have transformed, and that younger generations (who are better educated than older ones) are increasingly using goal-oriented repertoires dominated by "consumer activism" (boycott and/or buycott) and "lifestyle" politics (such as LGBT rights, environmental protection/veganism, etc.) in which the boundaries between the social and the political disappear. She points out that these repertoires are less focused on the political field in the narrow sense (politicians) but rather on various actors in the economy (companies), the media, or special interest groups. In this sense, young people do not leave the political arena, but mostly change the focus and way of action, so the new generations are referred to as "engaged skeptics" who are interested in political events but do not trust in those elected to lead politics (Henn et al., 2002: 187) and see political parties as a "necessary evil" of the democratic system (Dalton, Weldon, 2005). Research in this and similar political systems already shows that young people adapt to circumstances and make certain strategies in response to structural living conditions. Our idea is that young people in the Balkans are not just 'engaged skeptics' (Henn, Foard, 2014: 362), but they are often 'engaged opportunists' as well.

Motivation to participate in political life is often analysed through the prism of rational choice theory. On the one hand, potential members think about the time, money, and energy they need to invest, and on the other hand, about the benefits that can come from party membership. When it comes to the benefits of membership in political parties, they can be divided into individual and collective. Another distinction that appears in the literature is that of the so-called outcome incentives - such as the possibility of finding a job, obtaining a parliamentary mandate, or developing a professional political career (Seyd, Whiteley, 1992). On the other side are the so-called process incentives related to experiences gained through engaging in politics as well as making new acquaintances and developing social capital (Seyd, Whiteley, 1992). The third division is into goal/value-driven and instrumental motives (Omoto et al., 2010; Geiser et al., 2014; Ballard et al., 2015; Verba et al., 1995). Goal-driven motives mean engaging in politics with the aim of influencing public policies and thus making a certain collective contribution. These motives would also include various ideological reasons for entering formal politics. Then it is a question of motivation for certain social values and ideologies which they want to represent or defend through active participation in the political field (Simon et al., 1998). On the other hand, political participation can be motivated by a whole range of individual instrumental reasons such as gaining power, earning money, enhancing one's human capital (developing new skill-sets, acquiring knowledge, etc.), and social capital (making contacts as a means of improving job prospects), while party membership is seen only as a means to an end (Cappellar, Turati, 2004; Bruter, Harrison, 2009).

Research on young members of political parties has shown that they most often have a heterogeneous motivation to participate in politics, although usually, one motive among carries the most weight (instrumental, ideological, etc.) (Weber, 2018). Young people are still in the phase of forming a political orientation, and as such, are often strongly influenced by friends and family (Dostie-Goulet, 2009). On the other hand, they are just entering the labour market, and party membership is closely linked to this - either through finding a job in the public sector (Bruter, Harrison, 2009) or as an opportunity to gain practical experience for political science students (Dominguez et al., 2017).

Clientelism and political field: context of political participation in Serbia - the (post) socialist legacy

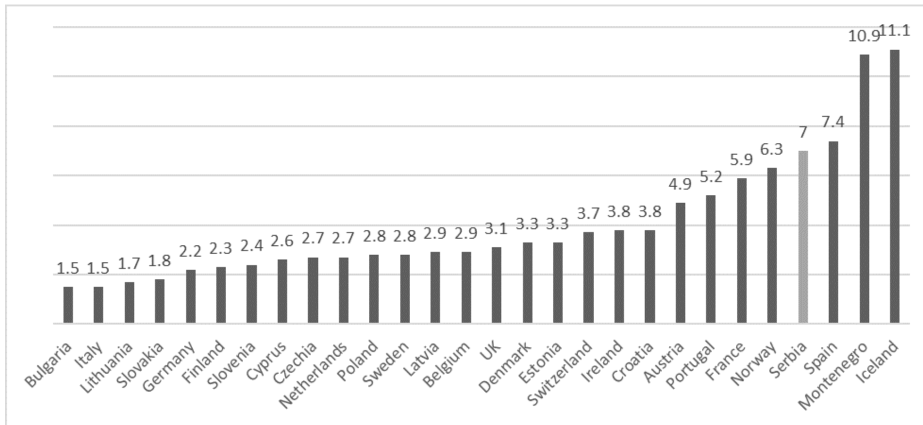
Previous studies (Lazić, Pešić, 2012; Stanojević, Stokanić, 2015; Stanojević et al., 2016; Cvejić, et. al., 2015) of the functioning of the political field in Serbia show the existence of (party) clientelism. Clientelism is an interest-based exchange of resources that takes place for the sake of political support, and that includes long-term, diffuse, personal contacts and inequality of actors in terms of status and power (Hilgers, 2012: 168). Party clientelism refers to "a form of representation based on the selective allocation of public (material) resources - contracts, apartments, subsidies, pork-barrel legislation, etc. - to ensure the electoral support of individuals or certain parts of society" (van Biezen, Kopecky, 2007: 241). As in most post-socialist democracies (and developing countries), a low level of economic development goes hand in hand with a high level of distribution by the state, which opens up the possibility of clientelism (van Biezen, 2004). Political parties in these societies are largely financially dependent on direct state funding. van Biezen and Kopecky (2014) estimate that between 70% and 80% of party funding in Serbia comes from the state budget, which places the country at the top of European dependence on state funds. It should be added that a significant part of the funding is provided through informal arrangements with the businesses, public enterprises, and public funds (Cvejić, et. al., 2015), which has led to cartel parties dominating institutions (Katz, Mair, 1995; van Biezen, Kopecky 2014). The party structure is formed around a party elite that occupies key positions in administration, politics, and public enterprises and that dominates other party structures and members. Its key role is to occupy and distribute public resources for the benefit of the party, members, and potential voters (van Biezen, Kopecky, 2014: 117).

Contemporary debates see clientelism as a form of rational decisions by the actors (Cornelius, 1975; Scott, 1977; Piattoni, 2001; Stokes, 2005; Geddes, 2012; Kitschelt and Wiklinson, 2007) or as part of normative obligations based on personal relationships and a sense of reciprocity (Lawson and Greene, 2014), or emphasize the importance of habitus, i.e., dispositions formed on the basis of life practices in society and culture deeply imbued with informal forms of exchange and power asymmetry (Auyero and Benzecry, 2017; Auyero, 1999). Without going into the details of the debate, we believe that it is very important to keep in mind the last aspect of clientelism because it is most closely related to young people. Young people enter the world of politics with a certain motivation, but

within politics, they form their expectations, practices, norms, values. Depending on how this field shapes them, they will form their attitudes towards politics, but also the attitude of young people in general towards political parties and democracy.

The importance of political parties for the reproduction of social and economic life through informal mechanisms in this area has its roots almost from the establishment of modern statehood. During socialism, the top party officials controlled the reproduction of key subsystems of society through the Communist Party. During the first decade of post-socialist transformation, the higher echelons of the party officials managed to transform the political into economic capital and to position themselves as the capitalist class in the new political framework (Lazic, 2011). This decade was dominated by the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). In order to maintain a privileged position, as well as to increase their chances at the elections, three resources become crucial: the electoral base, the party's organisational capacity, and funds. With a legacy in which the party is funded by public funds, where there is neither a tradition of donations nor a sufficiently broad and solvent base to support the parties, and in a deep and prolonged crisis, state resources remain key to political survival scene. This will become even more visible after the political changes in 2000 when foreign financial aid also stopped. Political parties continued to monopolise public resources (positions in the state administration, public companies, etc.) in order to finance the work of the party and provide a clientelistic network of exchange with (potential) voters (Stanojevic et al., 2016; Cvejić, et al., 2015). That could be the reason why party membership (among young people) in Serbia is among the highest in Europe (Graph 1).

That young people are aware of these options is evidenced by research in which young people recognise patterns of social promotion, so they see personal connections, political connections, and happiness as key factors of promotion in Serbia (Tomanović, Stanojević, 2015). Given the trends of labour market flexibility, which in the private sector, in particular, mean lower share of permanent jobs, lower employment security, but also a lack of labour rights, most young people, if given a choice, would prefer to work in public sector (Mojić, 2012). Such conditions make their transition to employment more difficult and uncertain, and they recognise as one of the options the possibility of party engagement, but not from political or ideological, but from instrumental motives - primarily employment.



Graph 1. Share of young people who are active in political parties or similar action group (source: ESS (2018) Round IX)

Aims and objectives

In this paper, we try to show what it means for young people in Serbia to be active within political parties. We will do this by observing the motivation and aspirations of young people who are active within political parties. We start from the fact that there is a kind of "paradox" of political engagement that characterises the youth of the Balkan countries. By "paradox," we mean that young people in the Western Balkans dominantly engage in political parties in a different way than their peers in other European countries. The need for contextualisation of political action in most features of conventional and unconventional participation, Serbia belongs to the group of post-socialist countries except for one - involvement in the work of political parties.[1] The paradox is that despite high political engagement (measured by membership in political parties), there is no development of democracy or citizenship. How to explain this? Party membership in Serbia does not have the same role as in developed democratic systems. The country is characterised by the weak democratic potential of society, high level of distrust in institutions, high level of general distrust, conflicting past, underdeveloped civil sector, low participation in all forms of unconventional youth policy, but youth membership in political parties, contrary to all global and European trends, has persisted at a high level for a quarter of a century. Bearing

1 A high degree of membership in political parties usually goes along with a high degree of trust in institutions and the development of democratic procedures, which is the case with more economically developed societies such as Norway, France and Spain.

in mind that young people do not differ from the rest of the population according to this type of engagement, we set ourselves the basic goal to explain this paradox. The paper has two specific objectives. The first, empirically, is the description and interpretation of a specific way of conventional political engagement of young people in a specific context. The second, theoretically, is the contribution to the debates on the political participation of young people, where it is very important to keep in mind the socio-political context that largely determines the motivation, manner, and role of young people as political actors.

Research design

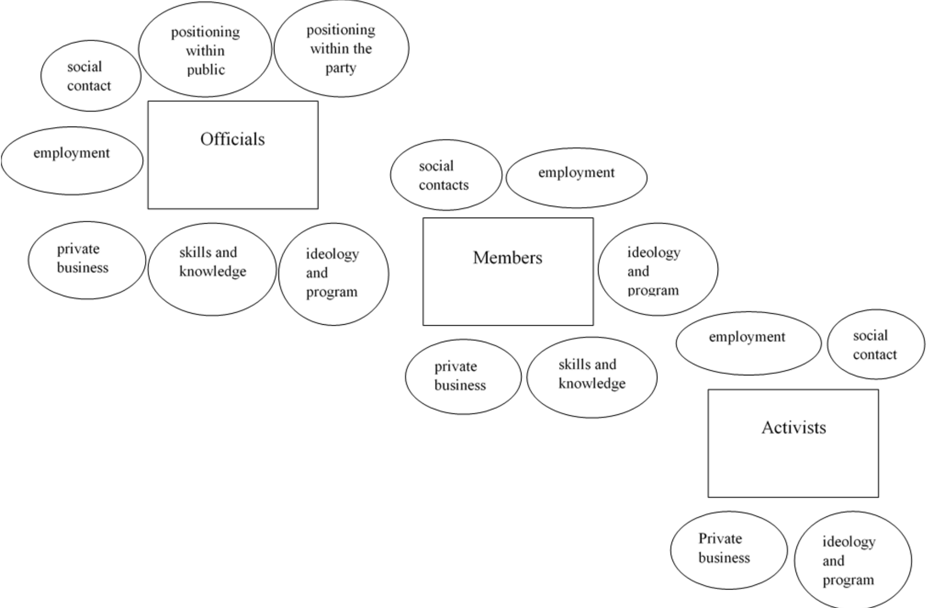
In order to examine the above-mentioned questions, we conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with young party members and activists. The sample was theoretically designed so that the research was set up to recognise the different stages of young people's political careers, their motivation to enter politics, their agency in political space, and their future aspirations. The basic criteria of the research were that respondents aged 18-34 are engaged in parliamentary parties that are currently in power or in opposition and that they belong to one of the three groups of party activists: 1. to hold party functions, 2. to be active members for many years, or 3. to be occasional activists. The first group is composed of young people who hold certain positions within the party. The second group consists of young people who are regularly active in the party, regularly attend board meetings, and participate in most activities. The third group included young people who may or may not be members of political parties but whose engagement in the last elections was either their first experience of working in the party or only occasionally get involved in politics. All three groups of respondents were equally represented in the survey. Interviews were conducted with respondents from seven different political parties. The gender structure of the respondents is slightly distorted in favour of men, which corresponds to the real situation. The obligatory condition for participation in the research was the active participation of the respondents in the work of the party immediately before or during the last election campaign, elections that took place two months before the research. The research was conducted during May and June 2017. Due to the *sensitivity* of the topic, the respondents were offered to be interviewed with or without recording, and during the data analysis, the interviews were anonymised so that it was not possible to identify the respondents.

We used a qualitative methodology to gain deeper insights into the attitudes of young people about how politics work and how they act within this field.

Research findings

Motivation to enter, stay or exit the party?

Given that they believe that the political field is marked by informal loyalty networks and instrumental transactions, entering and remaining in politics is significantly motivated by what they can gain in this field. The analysis of the narratives of our respondents shows that the higher the positions within the party, the more diverse their motivation for participation in political life is, and the opportunities available to them are multiple. The way in which young people belonging to different levels of the party structure see themselves within that field is shown in the following chart.



Graph 2. Different motives for party participation

Social Capital

Among the motives for entering politics and the most important reasons why the respondents remain within this field, they most often cite contacts with people who can be useful to them in different situations. The position they occupy in the party determines the branching of social capital, as well as the possibility of its conversion into other forms of capital. The higher the position they hold within the party, the more social capital young people have and a clearer view of how to use it in different situations, as well as a greater possibility of receiving and providing services.

Activists are just starting to develop expectations from contacts, and they focus on three fields: work, socializing, and "God forbid", i.e., for all situations in which access to public institutions is needed (public administration, healthcare, education, police, etc.). Ivan, a young entrepreneur who joined the party through friends, believes that contacts are crucial in life, especially for private business:

> *Well, contacts are very important. Certainly for business, whatever it may be. It means a lot when someone recommends you to someone, then that person recommends you to someone else, and so on. Of course, people should socialise as much as possible and forge new friendships.*

He further states that it is necessary to be connected and that the party has good ways of connecting people through joint formal and informal activities. The immediate benefit of this is just socialising, but these people can also become potential users in the future.

> *You never know when you might need someone. For example, I made some lifelong friends here, including my best man. Sometimes we have some organised trips as well.*

Jelena distinguishes two types of contacts she made through political engagement, instrumental and expressive. The former are with the members of the party hierarchy and influential people she hopes to mediate in her employment in the public sector, and the latter are horizontal, with people who are in a similar situation as her, with whom she sometimes hangs out, has coffee and exchanges opinions. She does not expect help from them because they are usually in the same situation as her, i.e., unemployed.

Members who have been in the party for some time have somewhat more distinct expectations than social contacts. Some of the members point out that socialising with like-minded people is very important and that the instrumental aspect does not always have to be important. Most, however, have a very instrumental attitude towards the contacts they can make through their engagement in the party.

Sasa points out that he entered the party through a friend and exclusively for socialising, but he then realised that contacts in the party are the only real value. He especially emphasises the importance of knowing people who are in positions within the party and in public administration and who can enable faster advancement within the party or provide personal privileges within the public sector.

> *Well, of course, primarily with people who hold certain positions, both for myself and for the possibility of advancement within the party and at work. ... In our municipality, I met the founder of the party, and I met some people who are on certain committees, who hold office, and then you always have someone to turn to. As is the case in our country, connections will get you everywhere. Honestly, they did help me; the party founder introduced me to my current employer.*

Aca has been active in the party for about two years and is currently employed and satisfied with his job, so he believes that contacts are important primarily for socialising, but also that there are situations when it is possible to profit off of them. Through party connections, it is possible to get real and timely information from the public administration, to have a special status if needed. He cites one example of acquaintances from the party working in the municipal administration using their informal channels to put pressure on the communal police, who had to withdraw the fine they had previously issued to him. This is just one example because he says, "whatever I need in the municipality, I call them first, and then when I get summoned or anything related to the municipality, I immediately have a different status."

There is a much wider range of opportunities among party officials to establish networks and generate potential benefits from them. Having in mind that they are professionally engaged in the party, part of their job includes meetings with representatives of other parties and organisations. Milan, a member of a small opposition party, sees the importance of developing social capital as the function of his work in the party.

Contacts with organisations with which your party and other parties cooperate ... Then non-governmental organisations with which our party cooperates, educational seminars that are organised in Serbia at the regional level, where you meet people from the wider region, who are in similar parties like you. ... Contacts mean a lot and, in my experience, they really help you share your experiences with these people and share what you are currently working on both within the party and in the country.

At this level of the hierarchy, respondents are aware of all the above benefits of social capital, but it is interesting that only these respondents recognise the importance of providing and reciprocating services because only they have the ability to provide services. In a situation where they are in a position to be able to provide services, they have the ability to generate social capital and create credit with other people, who may return the favour in the future. Dragan states that contacts are the most important thing in politics, but he can potentially capitalise on the benefits from them in the future.

From an auto electrician to someone up at the very top, the reason is that you could help people who come to you either off the street or people who are your party colleagues, ... to help someone with the paperwork so they can start building a house, to solve their own existential issues or, for example, to help them enroll their kid into kindergarten. Contacts are the point of this job, and contacts are something that remains with you, so if one day you get out of politics, if tomorrow you need that someone, you can call him, remember the old times and that someone will come through for you, because once upon a time you came through for them.

It is also far easier for them to gain access to quality public services, given that they are within the circle of people who are in the positions of power or know the "right people". Thus, Miljana states that without the help of party colleagues, she would not be able to react quickly and secure adequate medical care for a family member.

I'll give you a personal example, my dad got sick, and if it weren't for the people from the party who helped me in terms of quick admission to the hospital and those connections ... it is questionable how quickly we would be able to admit him and make sure he is well taken care of, how to say, that there is that

special treatment. Those contacts mean everything in life, and that is what the party provides.

Work and advancement

A very important motive for young people to get politically engaged is to get a job, so young people even state that parties have become "symbols for employment", or "informal employment agencies". These social contacts are most often in the function of getting a temporary or permanent job. There are many cases where young party members get involved just before the elections in the hope of getting a job if the party wins the elections. Zoran, who has been a member of the party for four years, noticed this:

> *The motive of the activists is to prove themselves, to work for a party, it doesn't matter which one because they expect something in return. It has been about that from the very beginning, that idea that whoever works well can hope for something in return, and all the young people clung to that hope that they would get something in return for their commitment. And that something usually meant employment as most activists are unemployed.*

Miljana, who has been in the party for seven years, has a similar view on the motivation of youth and she believes that "90% of young people enter a political party to get a job". Ivana, from the position of an unemployed person who has not been able to find a job for years, states that her only motive for being active in the last elections was to get a job in a public company. When asked why she was active, she explicitly said:

> *Employment. This is Serbia, everyone here works for personal interests ... In state-owned companies, you can only get a job through political action, and that's it.*

Ivana states she was already promised a job if the party manages to achieve a good result in the local elections, which did not happen. She understands the situation because she believes that the party would have certainly helped her if they managed to enter the local government because "when you are in power, everything is accessible to you, everything is in your hands." This respondent already had experience with another party where she was promised a job after services rendered by her family members to a significant official.

I was personally deceived, my mother was doing something with a high official, and my husband was training his son, so something was promised to my husband and my mother for me ... But he lied about everything and then turned off his phone, changed his number. He probably deceived this way who knows how many people, we are talking about a big shot here, who is a serious liar.

Disappointments of activists and members are very common because, according to several respondents, the party cannot provide as many jobs as are demanded. Although some activists and members state that they failed to get a job or whatever they expected when they joined the party, there are also those cases when expectations were realised. Sasa, a member of the party of the current ruling coalition, states:

I was surprised when they invited me to work, more precisely to a job interview. I honestly didn't believe it because everyone makes promises, but they are the only ones who delivered on it. And then, of course, someone did something for you, so you have to, I mean you don't have to but ... it would be nice to return the favour, so I increased my participation.

In this and other similar cases, the activity of young people was rewarded with employment, most often in one of the public companies. But activity is usually not enough on its own; it becomes effective only in synergy with social capital within the party. Sasa joined the party through his neighbour, and in the beginning, he was supposed to be active during the campaign and provide a *sure vote* [2], but after the job invitation, he decided to get more involved. The above example shows that loyalty to your neighbour/friend was a necessary condition for getting a job. Loyalty and trust within party networks are created and reproduced within informal networks and through services. This is evidenced by the narratives of young officials who, in addition to being the first to have access to resources, also have the opportunity to provide services that can result in employment.

There are always new opportunities, there are many people of different profiles, and there is always someone looking for new people; it happened to me so many times that someone asks me if I have a brother, a sister, someone who is interested in

2 Sure vote refers to a practice where a person commit to vote for a particular party, and ask friends and relatives to vote to that party as well, in return for some favour.

working somewhere ... to recommend, everything goes again by recommendation, so opportunities open up to help those closest to you, to help your own.

Miljana joined the party because her parents have been members of that party for a very long time. She herself got a job in a public administration office after seven years of engagement in the party and passing step-by-step hierarchical levels all the way to the main board of the party. She states, "I didn't get anything overnight, but my goal was for them to help me do what I love or to find me a job because that would have been very difficult on my own" and further states, "the party later helped me get a job when I graduated from college". In her opinion, her party is fair to activists, but, unfortunately, there are not enough jobs for all activists, so there are often disappointments.

Young people who are ambitious are motived to find a job so that they can move up through the ranks of the party and, if possible, position themselves within the public administration. Bojan sees his career in the party and in public administration and wants to make a political career because he feels:

When a party comes to power, its active members who are really ambitious and who try hard have some benefits from it. They will get a position in the municipality, or they will be just councilpersons in the municipal assembly, or they will be at the level of the city or the republic, it doesn't really matter. If the party is in power, if someone is smart and capable, they will reap benefits.

Unlike members and activists, party officials can get a job in one of two ways - by appointment (in the party or public administration) and by a classic *recommendation* for employment. In both cases, these are better and more lucrative positions that include the possibility of further advancement.

It is good to position yourself to get a good position in the party, because the point is simply to have the decision-making power, the power of influence in general, so that you could later influence the work of your party, its opinions, to propose something to the higher levels and, of course, yes, if you prove yourself they should help you with employment, I don't think that's some big secret.

Miljana also believes that the career of a politician is the path she wants to take, and this career not only has possible benefits itself but also opens up other possibilities. As he states below, this trajectory of the young politician is self-evident and is not a secret.

Private business and party

A number of respondents see the importance of party engagement in protecting or improving the private business they run. Social contacts, key information, and the possibility of circumventing procedures, primarily procurement ones, can be very important for running a private business. Petar, a young entrepreneur who is working in carpentry and who is an occasional activist, expected to connect with as many potential clients as possible through the party, but so far, unfortunately, he has not succeeded in that.

> *I expected there to be more people who have the same or similar occupation as mine. I dreamed of connecting with people, starting a new business. Who knows how it would have ended if something like that had been realistically achievable.*

Darko, an entrepreneur who joined the party three years ago, had expectations when he joined that the party would allow his company to win several jobs in public tenders, and he is a little disappointed because he has not yet capitalised on his engagement to the extent he expected. He believes that work that is awarded through public procurement is rigged and that the only way for someone to get it is to be "part of the circle" of people who have influence.

> *They could have helped my firm win some of the tenders that we all know are rigged, but none of that has happened, at least not yet.*

However, considering that he has been in the party for some time, his engagement brought him access to resources, so he managed to improve his work through contacts in the party. Entering the party, he expected to get jobs from those people through whom he entered politics, but there were certain expectations on both sides, which is why he sought another network of loyalty within the party.

> *Well, I met a lot of people in the party; they helped me get recommended for a job, or I worked for them privately, but they*

were not the ones who "pushed" me into it, the ones I helped and expected they would be the first ones to return the favour to me, but they wanted everything for free. ... Yes, I did think about those contacts even before joining the party, and in a way, it was welcome, and it paid off, but I have to admit that it wasn't only for my business; I also made a couple of good friends there.

While young entrepreneurs join the party to protect and/or improve their business, there are those who have been in the party for a long time and understand the importance of the position and resources that go with it for the opportunity to start an independent business. Zlatko, a ruling party official, sees the importance of social contacts for the relatively wide range of benefits he can derive from them, among other things for the private business he plans to start:

As I matured, so did my goals ... Specifically, connecting with as many people as possible, so if I start my own business tomorrow, I can count on those who are capable and able to help me.

Party programme and ideology

Joining a political party is often, but not always, related to the party's ideology and programme. Our respondents testify that young people get involved in party life either because of the programme or because of interest, but most often because of both. As one respondent explains, "Of course young people enter politics out of conviction, but at the top of that pyramid is interest." Some chose a particular party because of their programmatic and ideological closeness to it, but the instrumental motive existed all the time, while some of them developed an instrumental motive later on.

Those young people who have purely instrumental goals stay in the party the least, either until they fulfill them or until they are disappointed. That the ideals do not have much significance for some activists and members is shown by Jelena's testimony which says: "Let me tell you, I did not like the programme at all, you know, to believe in all that ... I do not trust anyone, one hundred percent."

On the other hand, those who have purely ideological reasons stay in the party for quite a long time unless the party leadership makes radical ideological changes. Marko, a member of a nationalist party, justifies his long-term activism primarily with the ideology he believes in, rejecting any

instrumental motives, stating, "when I joined the party, the party literally had nothing to offer you - the only thing was the belief that something would come to life and succeed."

The ideology, programme, and activities of the party appear among the current young officials as one of the reasons why they joined the party, but they see the party, like Milan, as a training ground for gaining experience that can help them develop their personal careers.

> *I wanted it to be an organisation in which I would express something I really mean, my view of the world, the society in which I live, the relationships between people, politics, economy, culture, sports, the way I think it coincides with the principles of the party. ... I am a student of Political Science, so this is a sort of practical exercise. What we learn in school is one thing, it's a dry theory, and this is more practical. ... It helps me a lot to cope as a private and professional person and helps me in my future work and thinking about what I will do after college, where I could go, to work in a political party.*

Nikola states that the beginnings in politics can be marked by ideals, as in his case, because he chose the party primarily because he is left-oriented.

> *In the beginning, when you are young, you are not aware of what politics mean, so in the beginning, you draw your motivation from some curiosity, the desire for social change. And as you get older, there is some personal interest, and you look at it much more rationally; you are not lost in ideas and ideals, although you try to stay true to them, you still look at it more maturely.*

But ideals wear out over time, and sooner or later, people in politics start to change focus and look at their interests. In his opinion, his own interest is in connecting with as many people as possible who can be of use to him in different ways. In this process, the focus changes from the collective interest, embodied in the ideology and programme, to personal interest, which can be achieved only through informal networks - cliques.

Discussion and conclusion

Research in the West shows that the importance of informal political practices is growing in response to the inflexibility and non-responsiveness of institutions to the needs of young people. Thus,

articulation channels become informal or less formal, local, and dispersive. But in the context of Serbia, there is a different answer. What happens when institutions are framed by informal relationships and clientelism? One part of informality (based on friendship, kinship with personal and not social goals) finds its place within the system of political institutions. Paradoxically, the political system is becoming more inclusive of informal practices, but largely at the cost of the stability and regularity of the work of institutions. Young people, as well as the rest of the population, recognise these structural possibilities and use their own and family resources, primarily social capital, to achieve their goals.

Constellations within the political field, characterised by the dominance of informal ties, clientelism, and corruption, influence the motivation and strategies of young members of political parties. Although the research findings indicate that the reasons for joining and remaining in the party can be various, instrumental reasons are dominant, as well as the open admission that one enters politics out of personal (usually economic) interest. In addition to finding a job, the dominant reasons for joining the party are to meet other people, especially those in senior positions who could be helpful when needed. Also, young people see the importance of party membership and party acquaintances for developing a private business - either by speeding up administrative procedures or winning public procurement tenders through connections. Young people who are members of opposition parties that do not have direct access to social resources more often state non-instrumental reasons for joining the party, such as the attractiveness of the party programme and ideology, the possibility of socialising and making friends, as well as gaining internships for political science students. These differences can be explained by access to resources that the parties in power have and the absence of these among the opposition parties, which turns necessity into value.

The issue of membership in political parties can be extended to whether (young people) vote for political reasons, i.e., whether their motives are political, ideological, or instrumental. For a number of young people, voting is not motivated by the ideologies and programmes of political parties, but by instrumental goals ranging from getting a job, providing work for their companies, or helping their peers who are in an unenviable situation (usually without a job), where through "sure votes" they help them achieve their instrumental goals.

The last question that arises is the attitude of political parties towards young people. The professionalisation of parties that takes place in most

developed democracies has weakened the role of the youth and active membership in general in the work of parties. There is an evident increase in professionalized parties who no longer need mass support (Wiesendahl 2002; Klaus von Beyme, 2001; Jun, 2004). Serbia is still dominated by a traditional approach that favours mass membership and a high level of youth engagement. Democratisation has led to a greater degree of informality through parties and the need for "capillary" provision and expansion of support. Capillary implies that securing votes for the party is done through clientelism, which should provide all network actors (from activists and their families to small and large businessmen) with access to public resources for party loyalty in elections (from the vote itself to activism/volunteering).

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Everyday State-capture: Clientelism and the Masses-'clients' Role. Evidence from the Balkans

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Abstract

Departing from the fact that clientelism impinges the quality of democracy by undermining accountability and responsiveness of the political representatives (Ruth- Lovell, Spirova 2019), as well as by distorting the rulers-ruled relationship, eroding the citizens' trust in their governments, this contribution explores clientelistic practices nurturing state-capture process from the perspective of the the masses-clients. The article claims that citizens of captured states are crucial actors legitimising, cementing, and fuelling those very same detrimental processes: by blaming the system while excusing and tolerating their dishonest behaviours, the masses-clients thin the line between their being victims or accomplishes, eventually fuelling the state-capture's vicious circle. Drawing upon empirical material and everyday life's anecdotes collected in Bosnia Herzegovina and North Macedonia, the article shows what lays behind the masses-clients' behaviours, and by building upon the tensions 'blame-permissiveness' and 'victims-accomplices', it concludes informing a discussion on the masses' role in perpetuating such dynamics.

Keywords: state-capture, clientelism, citizens' agency, Bosnia Herzegovina, North Macedonia

Introduction

Scholars interpret and explain socio-political phenomena in various and different ways according to their perspective and discipline of provenance; nevertheless, thus far, there seems to be a generalized consensus over the major difficulties democracy is going through all over the European continent and among both consolidated and unconsolidated democracies. In this respect, the path the Western Balkans' limping democracies are following seems to be a particularly concerning one. The latest studies on the region have, in fact, pointed attention to the rise of illiberalism (Kapidzić 2020), growing authoritarianism (Bieber 2018), as well as the not-so-surprising longevity of ethnic identity politics (Agarin 2020). These phenomena have been explained by taking into consideration various elements, ranging from elites' behaviour to institutional design, from economic conditions to international relations and EU access' negotiations (see Cianetti et al 2018; Dimitrova 2018; Knott 2018). Yet, the available studies almost exclusively adopt a macro-structural perspective, and it is from this same angle that the condition of 'state-'capture' – featuring a number of unconsolidated democracies in the Western Balkans - has thus far been studied. Accordingly, when investigating what generates, leads, and turn a country into a 'captured' one, scholars have mostly pointed the attention on the political 'elites' (business-oriented) behavior and/or structural conditions (see Coelho 2018; Džankić 2018; Keil 2018; Saikkonen 2019), while the role and agency of other actors involved into such dynamics have largely been neglected. About three decades ago, in his book *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Paul Brass (1991) expressed his concerns about a self-interested and often ethnonationalist political elite competing over resources by converting cultural differences into bases for political differentiation, while *de facto* capturing the state itself. According to Brass, while the state is 'both a resource and a distributor of resources' (1991: 272), the citizens are both ideological targets and a fruitful pot of votes. More evidently, in multinational states divided along ethnonational lines, ethnically connoted political elites can acquire control of the state institutions by developing particularistic mechanisms of interaction with the 'ethnicised' masses (Piacentini 2019b; 2020). These interactions and alliances, especially but not exclusively when in presence of economic deficiencies, 'can take the form of clientelistic and patronage networks [...] or of a system of favouritism and corruption' (Wimmer 2013: 11). While on the one side, corruption and clientelism 'help' the political

elites to stay in power by, among others, exploiting the economic conditions of many/most strata of the population, on the other one, it is also true that if the political elites have been able to control the state institutions, capturing them, they necessarily had to previously gain popular trust and legitimacy. This means that masses often acting, and thus becoming, potential clients of patron-elites did and do exert a central role (see Grzymala-Busse 2008). And here, we come to the article's core issue: the implications of masses' behaviours in the state-capture processes.

Departing from the fact that clientelism impinges the quality of democracy by undermining accountability and responsiveness of the political representatives (Ruth- Lovell, Spirova 2019), as well as by distorting the rulers-ruled relationship, eroding the citizens' trust in their governments, this contribution claims that citizens of captured states are crucial actors legitimizing, cementing, and fuelling state-capture processes. By blaming the system while normalizing their actual or potential involvement into clientelistic networks - thus excusing and tolerating their dishonest behaviors -, the masses-clients thin the line between their being victims or accomplishes of such despised mechanisms, eventually nurturing them.

In order to counterbalance the literature's macro-centred bias and focus on the patrons/political elites' behaviors, the arguments put forwards by this contribution build upon first-hand qualitative material collected in 2016-18, with ordinary citizens of Bosnia Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia or BiH) and North Macedonia (hereafter Macedonia). Although not unique examples of state-capture and endemic political clientelism, BiH and Macedonia well showcase that interplay between structural factors and relational dynamics between social and political actors accounting for those normalized clientelistic relations standing at the base of the state-capture phenomenon. The article is structured as follow: the first part provides a conceptual overview making some clarity among the different - though used as synonymous - concepts of corruption, patronage, clientelism, and state-capture; by having a closer look at the case studies of Bosnia Herzegovina and North Macedonia, it then takes into account the main elements and circumstances which have, over the decades, favored birth, consolidation, and normalization of informal and illicit state-masses relations. The second part of the article, instead, draws upon qualitative data and shifts the attention on the masses as key actors legitimizing and nurturing the capture of their own states. Real-life anecdotes and experiences are used to show how the

masses-clients frame, narrate and justify their own actual or potential engagement into clientelistic relations; and how the excuses to those illicit behaviors perpetuate the state-capture vicious circle. Building upon the tensions blame-permissiveness and victims-accomplices emerged from the empirical data, the article closes with a reflection on the masses role and responsibility in both normalizing and interrupting the vicious circle of state-capture.

Concepts, Contexts, and Theories: an Overview

Often in the literature, concepts such as corruption, clientelism, and state-capture are used either as synonymous to describe different phenomena or the same phenomenon is explained using different concepts. While corruption exists when 'an individual illicitly puts personal interests above those of the people and ideals he or she pledged to serve' (Klitgaard 1998: xi), not all corruption is of the same kind. From a general perspective, we can distinguish between 'greed' and 'petty' corruption (see Belloni 2020), with the former taking place mostly at the highest levels, concerning the abuse of power of officials in the public institutions, and consisting in acts such as bribery, extortion, or fraud; and the latter taking place on a lower level, and mostly including patronal politics and clientelism. In her analysis, Karklins (2005) suggested differentiating between three levels of corruption: a first one consisting in everyday interactions between officials and citizens; a second one taking place within the public institutions; and a third one concerning the influence over political institutions. Ruth-Lovell and Spirova (2019), instead, studied from a comparative perspective how democratic representation is challenged and compromised by clientelistic practices. They adopted a minimal definition of clientelism - understood as a 'highly adaptive electoral strategy and a means for party building' (2019: 1), and considered only the effects produced by patronage and vote-buying practices. The capture of the state represents, instead, an overall undemocratic condition in which the state has been sized by a ruling political elite that uses economic and cultural resources for private and personal gains at the expenses of the public and collective ones. While state capture has been defined as the 'systematic high-level corruption that establishes a hidden political regime at odds with the constitutional purpose of state institutions' (Karklins 2005: 30), it is also true captured-states are also featured by a considerable degree of petty corruption - namely informal and illicit relations between parties-patrons and masses-clients.

Clientelism and State-Capture

From a theoretical perspective, scholars agree that political clientelism[1] is an informal relationship between two actors enjoying asymmetrical socio-economic power: the most powerful, the patron, controls the kind of resources the more subordinate actor, the client, pursues but cannot enjoy otherwise (see Hale 2014). The clientelistic one is thus 'a system that establishes a relationship of domination and exploitation that perpetuates the lock on the power of resourceful political leaders (Kitschelt 2000).

Although at a first glance dysfunction, systems governed by patronal politics and clientelistic relations have proven to be functional and rather stable, as the equilibrium featuring them is guaranteed by the two-sided expectation of reciprocating the favor. Nevertheless, while patronal politics does not necessarily account for a captured state, it represents one of its necessary but not sufficient conditions. Overall, a captured state features the 'de facto takeover of the entire state or public institutions, typically by an elite cartel of political and business oligarchs [...] manipulating policy formation and even shaping the emerging rules of the game to their own, very substantial advantage' (Karklins 2005: 29). The origins of the state-capture's featuring dynamics might, however, be traced back to the countries' specific history, stem from particular socio-political events, be they might be rooted in their very same social fabric and political culture.

In the case of the Eastern European and Western Balkans countries, clientelistic relations and patronage politics have largely been considered understandable responses to the multiple large-scale transition the whole region had to go through in the 1990s. From a systemic perspective, the persistence of clientelism has been explained as something expected and perhaps inevitable, justified in the light of the transformations and adjustments requested to the states and their economies after the collapse of the multinational federations of Yugoslavia and the URSS. The underlying, wrong assumption was that once the transition to liberalism

1 See Eisenstadt, S.N., Lamarchand R., 1981. Political clientelism, patronage and development, London: Sage Publications; Eisenstadt S.N., Roniger L. 1984. Patrons, clients and friends. Interpersonal relations and the structure of trust in society. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Eisenstadt S.N., Roniger L., 2007. 'Clientelism in Communist Systems: a comparative perspective', Studies in Comparative Communism, XIV:2&3, pp. 233–45; Robinson, N. 2007. 'The political is personal: corruption, clientelism, patronage, informal practices and the dynamics of post-communism', Europe-Asia Studies, 59:7, pp. 1217–1224

and democracy would be completed, clientelism would be over, leaving space for the rule of law, governments accountability, and transparent state-citizens interactions.

Brković (2017) acknowledged how this benevolent and paternalistic understanding of clientelism has in turn reinforced two main discourses: the hegemonic one, that views the region as perpetually ambiguous; and the therapeutic one, which instead framed the 'war-affected populations as in need of mass therapeutic interventions due to the experiences of a mass trauma' (Hughes, Pupavac 2005 in Brković 2017: 4). Particularly in the former Yugoslav region and in countries such as Bosnia Herzegovina, the adoption of such an approach has also largely justified the massive intervention of internationals into the new republics' domestic politics. The internationals' presence and the enormous amount of money in-flowed to assist the peace-building processes impacted the functioning of these new democracies, not only by de-empowering the local politicians but also creating 'the condition for the consolidation of rentier states, that is, entities dependent on sources of income based on external inflows' (Belloni 2020: 55).

While the transition from one regime to another one, and the legacy of the communism's patronalism' – as old as human community itself' (Hale 2014: 59) – furnished the new states with the structural foundations for state-capture, other factors concurred to consolidate such a condition, further cementing patronal politics. When looking at Bosnia Herzegovina, for example, Hulsey (2018) focused on the role played by regional factors such as level of government effectiveness, political stability, and the rule of law, therefore arguing that the way the Bosnian war was fought and the impact and consequences of the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement's implementation, structured the Bosnian corruption and paved the way for the political elites to capture the state. A different explanation was, instead, given by Džankić (2018), who comparatively focused on the contested states of Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro. She argued that external state contestation and internal ethnic division have allowed for two forms of state capture: party membership in the public administration and the privatization process. As she explained (2018: 85), the 'lucrative element of state capture enables the elites to acquire economic resources needed for maintaining the grip over the structural and cultural capital of the country'. Perry and Keil (2018) also addressed the link between economic performances, institutional design, and clientelistic behaviors, and they did it also from a temporal perspective looking at the heritage of the Yugoslav system and

the transition from it. More systematically, Karklins (2005) focused on the former Communist countries highlighting the political and cultural roots of informal networks, 'gifts' and 'blats'[2] – 'lubricants in otherwise rigid and regimented political systems' (2005: 79), and how their habitual character consolidated into the masses the belief that 'the system made [them] do it'. Last but not least, Belloni (2020) looked at corruption and patronage politics in the light of the 'region's peace-building processes, pointing the attention to how a set of circumstance and structural factors allowed political elites capitalizing from the war-time to mismanage economic resources to build clientelistic and patronage networks.

What is clear from these academic accounts is the multiplicity of factors and actors concurring, according to the circumstances, to generate and consolidates dynamics and processes, eventually featuring the state-capture phenomenon. Acknowledging the importance of a temporal perspective, the next section pays a closer look at the case studies of this article - Bosnia Herzegovina and North Macedonia, thus preparing the ground for the empirical analysis exploring the masses-clients role in capturing their own states.

State-Capture – Bosnia Herzegovina and North Macedonia

The republics of Bosnia Herzegovina and North Macedonia not only share the same past but also very similar socio-political, institutional, and economic circumstances, which led towards the consolidation of patronage politics, clientelism, and, in the final analysis, to a condition of state-capture. Starting from the 1980s, though particularly after the collapse of Yugoslavia and Socialism, Bosnia and Macedonia (alongside the other Yugoslav federal units) had to go through multiple transitions. In addition to the political and ideological ones, also the economic shift happened to seriously impact their destiny and journey towards democracy - which, at the present day, remains challenged and unconsolidated[3]. Among others, economic deficiencies, high rates of unemployment, and poor living conditions affecting most strata of the population represented a fertile ground for clientelism and corruption to grow, for the political elites to seize and control weak democratic institutions, and for the masses to 'need' the help of patrons in order to enjoy even the most fundamental rights (i.e. access to health care, social

2 Blat (Russian language) is the informal exchange of goods, services, and favours;

3 Freedom House 2020. Nations in transit. Accessed 26 November 2020 https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores

and housing assistance). Yet, neither economic deficiencies nor informal ties with the elites represented a novelty. Accordingly, already back in the Yugoslav era, Bosnia's and Macedonia's economic performances were not among the best, and although the Yugoslav system was rather egalitarian, disparities between the northerner republics of Slovenia and Croatia, and the southerner ones of BiH, Kosovo, and Macedonia, existed. As soon as an economic crisis hit the Yugoslav federation in the 1960s, the authorities established the 'Federal Fund for the Accelerated Development of the Underdeveloped Republics and Kosovo' (FADURK): the fund's aim was to fill the economic gap between the federal units by redistributing the resources from the richest to the poorest ones. The economic situation then worsened again in the 1980s, and a few reforms were adopted to counterbalance the crisis: among others, the Company Law (1988), which allowed 'socially-owned/state-owned companies to reorganize, merge, and to transfer social capital from one enterprise to another, thereby becoming mixed companies' (Perry, Keil 2018: 3); and the Social Capital Circulation and Management Law (1989). Unfortunately, however, the privatizations process occurred mostly with the small and medium enterprises, and 'the biggest and most lucrative assets remained in "government" hands during and after the wars' (Perry, Keil 2018: 4): the consequence was the bankruptcy of more than a thousand socially owned enterprises.

While informal relations between party members and citizens already existed, though mostly in the 'benevolent' form of gifts, connections, and recommendations (Brković 2017), it was with the fall of Yugoslavia and the surge of ethnonationalism that new modalities of interaction between political elites and masses were shaped. In addition to that, the economic performances of both Bosnia's and Macedonia's drastically worsened, further preparing the ground for the newly-born independent states to be captured. The war in Bosnia resulted in the impoverishment of the whole society; houses and cities went destroyed, alongside industries and companies. The GDP per capita of the Bosnian population dropped, and, at the same time, war dynamics favored the enrichment of war-profiteers generally linked to paramilitary formations. After the conflict, and in the context of state re-building, the new political elite 'largely emulated the control over state resources of the previous regime (and) the consequence has been a substantial increase in economic and social inequalities' (Bieber 2006: 34). Although it didn't go through a bloody war, in the early 1990s also Macedonia's economic conditions deteriorated further: the back

then ruling party SDSM[4] initiated a privatization process - which formally went very well, if it wasn't for the fact that preferential access was given to political elites tied to the ruling party, and enterprises sold to them at a more convenient price (Džankić 2018). Yet the 'business-oriented' behavior showcased by the newly elected republican political elites had its origins in the previous Yugoslav system itself. The 'quasi–consociational' structure the SFRY[5] assumed from 1974 onward, in fact, also concurred to lay the foundations for state-capture to become a reality in the post- Yugoslav era: with the federal units becoming *de facto* nation-states, the republican elites not only found the most suitable socio-political ground to rule in an (ethno) nationalist way but had also been supplied with the most favorable institutional structure to seize and control what they perceived to be their own nation-states. Once the Yugoslav federation disintegrated, and ethnic power-sharing mechanisms were officially introduced in both independent BiH and Macedonia, the ruling - ethnonationalist - elites come to power found 'state-sharing' (Piacentini 2019a) not only institutionally incentivized, but also legit. Exploiting in their favor existing inter-ethnic antagonism and economic difficulties, while deploying ethnonationalist narratives to further consolidate 'ethnonationality's salience, the new ethnic political elites succeeded in building - and then consolidating - their image of ethnic group's protectors and public resources' administrators and re-distributors. One's own ethnonationality became a catalyst channeling individuals into the corresponding ethnic group, political party, and thus network of alliance and solidarity alike; while informal and illicit relations of favoritism between parties-patrons controlling the public bodies and resources, and masses-clients in need for goods and services, progressively became the normality. Though colloquially addressed as 'recommendations' or 'connections with the right people', such dyadic exchanges stand at the very heart of the state-capture phenomenon. And while seeming marginal or limited, the masses too have a responsibility in feeding the vicious circle of state-capture - which retains its ability in satisfying both the parties-patrons and the masses-clients' most fundamental needs: power and survival.

The masses' role - the clients' perspective

Accordingly, if that of state-capture is a particular condition stemming from mutually reinforcing mechanisms and relational dynamics enabling the political elites' control over the state institutions and

4 Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija - Social Democratic Party of Macedonia
5 Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

resources alike, it is also true the masses play a role in tailoring such a condition. From a rational reasoning point of view, that of masses' involvement into informal networks of alliances favoring the capturing of the state can be understood as a collective action problem – as the collectivity-wide expectation that most individuals will act in a certain way is what prevents the most to defeat (Hale 2014). This logic stood at the core of Mancur Olson's collective action theory (1965), which showed how regimes dependant on personalized benefits, rather than on some kind of ideology did and do survive. The scholar drew his reflections upon the case of URSS during and after Communism, yet his theory remains fundamental when exploring political clientelism and vote-buying practices all across the democratic continuum. On a similar vein, Henry Hale (2014) in his book *Patronal Politics,* argued that citizens of 'patronal-states' face a coordination dilemma entailing which network is best to join in order to satisfy needs and interests, enjoy benefits and resources. According to Hale, how people do eventually behave and coordinate 'depends on what they *expect* other people to do' (*ibidem:* 36). Yet, although of great help, explanations solely based on rational choice theories only party grasp what lays behind people's behaviours, and it is especially so when investigating complex phenomena such as that of state-capture in transitional democracies.

By using everyday-life's accounts and testimonies, what follows represents an empirically-grounded attempt in reconstructing the masses' point of view concerning their actual or potential engagement into clientelistic relations, finally shedding light on their behaviours' implications on the state-capture processes. The aim is to give back to the masses their agency while counterbalancing the literature macro-entered bias. To do so, the next sections build upon empirical material collected in Bosnia Herzegovina and North Macedonia between 2016 and 2018, in the capital cities of Sarajevo and Skopje, respectively. The target of the study were both genders' ordinary citizens aged above 20 years old – thus citizens old enough to have concerns such as family, workplace, future, and politics, and belonging to any of the ethnonational groups living in the two republics. Participants to the interviews have been reached throughout the snowball sampling technique, yet the researcher sought to build the least biased possible final sample. The method used to gather first-hand data was the semi-structured interview, and about a total of fifty face-to-face conversations have been performed. The purpose of the interviews was to collect information and everyday life's anecdotes, enabling to understand the active role played by the masses in fuelling the state-capture phenomenon: the questions asked to the

participants explored individuals' reasons and interests, practices, and behaviors, expectations, and perceptions, informing and guiding their actual or potential involvement into clientelistic - thus informal and illicit - relations with 'powerful individuals'; as well as the structural conditions and possible constraints incentivizing their becoming clients, hence making them potential accomplices in the capturing of the state.

Given the methodology used, the small size of the sample, and the focus only on the cities of Sarajevo and Skopje, the findings do not have statistical relevance. Yet, they do remain a meaningful source of knowledge shedding light on everyday state-capture' dynamics from the often neglected perspective of the masses-clients.

The embeddedness of clientelism

'This country, its fundament, is clientelistic'[6]. *'It is a cultural thing'*[7]. Among similar others, these statements echoed all the interviews performed in the two countries surveyed. Citizens of Bosnia and Macedonia described clientelism as a practice rooted in both the social fabric and political culture, a normalized phenomenon. According to the participants, the vast majority of the political parties have adopted strategies of acquisition of popular support grounded on 'pragmatism', abandoning the ideologically imbued rhetoric featuring the 1990s and largely relying upon clientelism as an electoral strategy. Strong of their positions in the state institutions and privileged access to public goods and financial resources, political representatives of economically and democratically weak states have found it easier and more convenient to act as patrons, promising and 'selling' (not only metaphorically) rights and resources they control, administer and redistribute.

> *If you want a state job, you have to be in the party...or you pay. I know it is 9000 BAM*[8] *to get a job in the Ministry of Law* (Female, age 32, Sarajevo, March 2017)

In contexts featured by the scarcity of financial resources, low rates of employment, limping democratic mechanisms and institutions, citizens do often feel disempowered, left with no other alternative than following those tacit, culturally, and politically embedded rules regulating

6 Male, age 28, Skopje, February 2016

7 Male, age 25, Skopje, April 2016

8 Bosnian convertible marks (sign: KM, code: BAM) is the currency of Bosnia Herzegovina. 9000 BAM correspond approximatively to 4500€

interactions (and transactions). Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that, even when their range of action seems limited and constrained, people do always have a choice. Mistrust towards the captured-state and its ruling political elite might, indeed, originate two diametrically different 'political cultures' and thus behaviors (see Piacentini 2019b): one of re-action, civic engagement and political dis-engagement; and another one of 'hegemonic compliance' with the status quo (Nagle 2018), mirrored in civic apathy, non-participation and, oftentimes, engagement into clientelistic networks. Nevertheless, the *leitmotif* of the conversations carried out with the citizens of Sarajevo and Skopje was that *'there is no alternative'*; and, according to the respondents, the only way to obtain or access public services and resources was that of '*having the right connections*'.

The corrupted elites and the 'there is no alternative' explanation

By definition, political clientelism entails a wide set of favors, ranging from job positions to privileged access in the administration or public health; yet the most common and most mentioned favor among the Bosnian and Macedonian respondents was about job positions, mostly but not exclusively in the state apparatus. As they explained, because anyone in the society - regardless of ethnocultural origins, level of education, age, or gender - is equally vulnerable before economic insecurities, anyone might need for 'the help of a patron' in going through complex administrative and bureaucratic procedures, job applications, selections and so on. Anyone, therefore, might sooner or later require or - using the respondents' words, *'be forced'* to establish an informal and illicit relation with somebody *'that counts'*.

> *In the last couple of years, no one voted for them because they liked the political ideology. Mostly they did it because they needed something to survive.* (Female, age 29, Skopje, March 2016)

More in detail, when discussing the system's functioning, the mechanisms regulating access and redistribution of resources, or the relationships and alliances parties establish with their voters, the arguments that surfaced were definitely similar all across the Bosnian and Macedonian samples. Both country's respondents displayed a remarkable tendency to blame responsible *only* their political elites for having 'damaged' and 'destroyed' the state, making its institutions

dysfunctional; while, on the other side, they tended to pity the masses, 'justifying' the many's engagement into informal and illegal networks in the light of the system's coercive potential. Softer tones of understanding were, in fact, used when referring to people's clientelistic behaviors, while much harder and condemning were those employed to describe the 'corrupted politicians' lust for power'.

> *If you accept that you are in a trap, you really are. You have to do whatever they say, and you cannot decide what to do in your job; you have to vote for them, you have to attach posters for them when elections come, you have to share everything on Facebook. You are a slave of the party.* (Female, age 27, Skopje, March 2016)

Many participants reported personal experiences and anecdotes explaining what conditions led them, their relatives, or friends, to eventually approach (and electorally support) 'powerful' individuals or politicians, entertaining with them a mutually beneficial relationship based on the exchange of favors - generally consisting in voting during elections and monetary exchanges.

> *I have four daughters! Many times I gave them the documents to find them a job, but I always receive negative answers. [...] I must give 5000€ to somebody in the party* (Male, age 60, Skopje, August, 2016)

> *This person I know, she was working for a governmental institution and simultaneously for the party – going to meetings, gathering other people that will vote for the party. They bring them members. She does not like that party; it is just because of the job.* (Female, age 28, Skopje, May 2016)

> *It is quite common to get a job thanks to the party. After he got his MA, my brother was unemployed, and a neighbor told him that if he was going to join the party, he could help him out. Another friend of mine - she is a very talented journalist - was looking for a job and, during the interview, they asked her in which party she was a member. All parties do like this* (Female, age 26, Sarajevo, September 2016)

Very often people feel 'to be forced' to get involved into dynamics they widely despise; they feel left with no other option than that of going along with normalized - thought illicit - behaviors, using clientelistic

tools to enjoy and benefit rights and resources which should instead be granted to them in the name of democracy. Both Bosnian and Macedonia ruling and oppositional parties have been blamed for having created the conditions for people to get into 'the loop' contributing - willing or not - to maintain in place a status quo which has, eventually, become a fully-fledged state- capture condition.

The poor people and the subtle line between victims and accomplices

As mentioned above, the interviewees from both Sarajevo and Skopje were largely prone to 'excuse' the masses' illicit behaviors, and those involved in informal and clientelistic networks were, during our conversations, not negatively judged. Rather, they were commiserated, understood, and justified in the light of the system's coercive potential. *'People need money, need to survive'* was the answer echoing basically all the interviews. Many also well described the sense of frustration afflicting especially the younger and well-educated generations - whose resignation and pessimism towards the future often 'justify' their actual or potential engagement into clientelistic networks, as summarised by the following excerpt.

> *I am not part of anything, but maybe I will also be forced one day. If you want to find a job here, you have to be a member of a party – a party which is winning in some area, which has money, connections. Maybe one day I will be forced to. Maybe when I want to set a family, a life on my own...you need a job, you cannot stay home all day. I will do anything to find it legally, but if I won't...believe me, I do not want to do these things, but you know... we are forced, youth are forced to join that system. [...] Parties are not providing just jobs in the public administration; they are providing jobs in the real economic sector.. [...] I am seriously trying to work in the police - which is supposed not to be political, but still, you have to know someone that will help you to go through the application.* (Male, age 25, Sarajevo, October 2016)

The origins of this attitude are many: they range from the cultural rootedness of *štele* and *veze* (Brković 2017) – meaning recommendations and personal connections established to 'evade the pressure from the state and obtain social and economic goods through personal contacts [and] unofficial methods' (Karklins 2005: 59); to structural factors such

as weak democratic institutions and mechanisms, difficult transition to the rule of law, economic malaise and disparities, and ethnic – hence selective - politics. As some respondents stated, if back in the Socialist era *'it was common to give the politicians gifts such as a cow or some good meat'*[9] - presents helping to lubricate a rigid system and/or smoothen its procedures, nowadays clientelistic and informal ties represent - for many though not everybody - a shortcut, the easiest path to obtain what needed.

> *Many of my friends are not even willing to try to apply for some job. They prefer to spend their years and energy, talent and knowledge, to get a job in a public service institution - where there is only an illusion of stability and long term commitment of the state. This way of thinking is pervasive: people would rather go for 300€ in a public institution doing nothing and dying in it than trying to do something by themselves. Because in the end, we do not believe in anything anymore* (Male, age 30, Sarajevo, March 2017)

> *In these last elections, many of my former university's colleagues were candidates for some parties. They were unemployed, so they thought the only way was to enter into politics. They earn 700 BAM*[10] *[…]. Or you can subscribe to the party, and then they will find you a job: if the party is a dominant one, it is immediate. […] That thing has become normal, it is the only way really working if you want a job, even those well educated do that.* (Female, age 26, Sarajevo, October 2016)

As the above quotations show, the fact that corruption is endemic and entire societies are accustomed to 'get things done' thanks to the help of patrons, represents the reasons (alibi) why many of these societies' citizens act following, instead of challenging, relational dynamics perpetuating that same despised spiral. The widespread believes that neither will the system change for the better, nor will the future be brighter, further 'excuse and legitimise' the masses' actual or potential dishonesty and clientelistic involvement, upheaving moral judgments. Nevertheless, while it is true the current Bosnian and Macedonian socio-economic conditions, alongside pre-existing rulers-ruled modalities of interaction, favor people's behaviors' adherence to already existing patterns of interaction, these are not - and never - predetermined. Accordingly, while on the one

9 Female, age 55, Skopje, April 2016

10 Bosnian convertible marks (sign: KM, code: BAM) is the currency of Bosnia Herzegovina. 700 BAM correspond approximatively to 350€

hand, the political class' responsibility in sizing the state institutions cannot be denied, on the other one, the masses-clients keep legitimizing the elites' power and institutional control by 'excusing, de-condemning and tolerating' their own clientelistic involvement. Business-oriented elites acting as a uniform body 'regardless of their particular ethnic and ideological loyalties' (Mujkić 2016: 7) have prevented 'the development of redistributive policies on more impersonal, merit-driven bases' (Manzetti, Wilson 2007: 954), while consolidating the belief that the state institutions are means of selective rather than equal provisioning of resources. Political parties looking at their constituencies as mere 'groups of interests', (poor) people that can easily be manipulated and bribed – as the following interview's extract shows - have succeeded in building their electoral support and political power on the economic insecurities afflicting most strata of the population.

> *[political party's name] has given work to 20.000 families, and many of them do actually stay home and get paid anyways. So people are afraid to lose their job, and reciprocate by keep on voting for them* (Male, age 25, Skopje, July 2016)

> *In Šuto Orizari [...], during the elections, you can see bribing from all the political parties: they give money, food, even force people to go to vote. We are talking about a population that is really poor, mainly surviving from social welfare* (Female, age 30, Skopje, April 2016)

> *People have been promised a job, and then they vote for them. [...] Job is the only promise worth giving* (Female, age 27, Skopje, August 2016)

From this perspective, therefore, it is not surprising that a sizeable portion of the population feels 'coerced from the above' and sees their actual or potential involvement into informal, clientelistic, relations as a necessity - a specific, conscious and pragmatic, response to the scarcity of resources, services, and job positions. As they said, it is a survival strategy. Furthermore, this also explains the most's attitude in disenfranchising the masses - even when turned into clients - from any responsibility concerning the states' malfunctioning and consequent capturing.

On the other hand, in virtue of the fact that petty corruption has become normal and habitual, practiced by potentially anyone in the society, many were justifying their actual or potential dishonesty by stating

that *'everybody does it'*. As a consequence, like a self-fulfilling prophecy, people get what they expect, and what they expect is that everybody else would act the same way.

> *My sister is part of a political party because she needs to get a job and some money. [...] She is unemployed and trying to find a job...she is in the party and hopes to get a job.* (Male, age 25, Sarajevo, September 2016)

Interestingly enough, *even when* recognizing the 'poor citizens' too concur with their behaviors to fuel detrimental dynamics legitimizing the capturing of the state, in most if not all of the respondents' answers, the masses-clients were not portrayed, acknowledged, or labeled as accomplices. They always were the victims.

Nevertheless, by 'excusing' their illicit behaviors by claiming that 'there is no alternative', 'the system made [them] do it' (Karklins 2005), or 'everybody does it', citizens were i) heightening the collectively acceptable level of the permissiveness of illicit behaviors; ii) de-empowering themselves, portraying the masses as passive spectators of the reality they live in; iii) concurring to normalize, by legitimizing and excusing, dangerous and poisonous dynamics of state-capture; eventually, iv) distracting themselves from their role and responsibility not only in fuelling such dysfunctional mechanisms *but also and especially* in challenging them by reverting the trend. The line differentiating between their being victims or accomplices of state- capture is, therefore, a subtle one.

Conclusive reflections. Between blame and permissiveness.

The multiple transitions the former Yugoslav states had to go through in the 1990s did channel their democratic assets and performances. In the cases of Bosnia Herzegovina and North Macedonia, for instance, democratic achievements have been compromised by, among other things, economic malaise, stagnation, and resources' scarcity, which represented fertile ground for clientelism and corruption to eradicate and spread, becoming key tools of state capture.

Although oftentimes seeming unable to compromise over reforms aimed at their countries' amelioration, the ruling ethnic political elites have, however, proven to be very good at sharing public institutions and resources alike - and particularly the financial ones. Ethnic power-sharing mechanisms and principles have, on the one hand, helped both

post-conflict Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia to reach stability and overall ethnic-collective equality; but, on the other hand, have been misused by ethnic oligarchs becoming instruments to seize the state institutions themselves.

Building upon the existing studies on the topic, this contribution sought to counterbalance the academic literature's macro-centred bias by providing everyday life's testimonies accounting for the role masses play in state-capture dynamics. Although undeniably responsible for seizing the state institutions of their countries, controlling and redistributing public good and resources oftentimes according to informal and illicit criteria, the political elites are not the sole responsibility in such processes. Accordingly, if phenomena such as corruption and political clientelism have become habitual and normalized, and state-capture a condition which keeps being fed, it also means the masses have made choices and adopted behaviors fuelling and nurturing - rather than challenging and fighting - those very same dynamics.

The article has drawn upon empirical material collected in the cities of Sarajevo (BiH) and Skopje (N. Macedonia), with ordinary citizens of both genders: their opinions and real-life experiences served to reconstruct the interests, reasons, and patterns of behavior guiding and shaping masses' actual or potential involvement into illicit and informal relations with 'patrons'; and, from a broader perspective, their active contribution in legitimizing the capturing of their own states. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews brought to light, informative material underlying the existence of two meaningful tensions: i) 'blame and permissiveness', surfaced when framing and describing the state-capture phenomenon, and ii) 'victims and accomplices', emerged when accounting for the masses-clients' active role in perpetuating the state-capture vicious circle.

Blame and permissiveness

The opinion endorsed by the vast majority of the interviewees asked in BiH and Macedonia was that the elites are bad, corrupted, and responsible for both the system's rotting and the masses' malaise; while the masses are the poor people, deprived of alternatives, de-empowered, and 'forcedly pushed' to compromise and adopt illicit behaviors. While informal relations between rulers and ruled have been acknowledged as embedded in the history, social fabric, and political culture of both countries surveyed, the state-captured condition has largely been caused and also tailored by structural circumstances - such

as limping democratic mechanisms and institutions, lack of the rule of law, widespread economic malaise, ethnonationalism, and so on. Given such unpromising circumstances, the masses largely feel 'forced and left with no option' than going along with pre-existing patterns of behaviors, adopting those same despised - through illicit - behaviors blamed responsible for capturing the state. In turn, the belief that the system is too corrupted and damaged to be changed and that 'anybody will sooner or later need the patrons' help', end justifying the masses actual or potential clientelistic involvement.

Victims and Accomplices. On the other side, by accusing and blaming responsible solely the system and the political elites, the masses-clients displayed a tendency to pity, excuse, and tolerate their own dishonest behaviors. Because of their states' inefficiency, political elites' unaccountability, and lack of a brighter future, sentences such as 'there is no alternative', 'everybody does it', 'we are forced to do that' were frequently used to justify their own, that of their relatives or friends, actual or future potential involvement into patron-client relations. This generalized attitude of permissiveness towards normalized, daily acts of clientelism eventually concurs to legitimize the vicious circle of state-capture, cementing illicit and dishonest relations and exchanges while eroding further democracy's foundations.

To conclude, what the empirical material shows is that the formal rejection of corruption vis-a-vis the masses' informal toleration and potential involvement makes these regimes' opportunistic and hypocritical' (Karklins 2005: 76), though stable and functional. For their part, the masses-clients actively concur to nurture the state- capture vicious circle - yet in the light of the everyday life's accounts provided by this contribution, to determine and discern between their being victims or accomplices of those detrimental dynamics is hard, if not impossible. What is nonetheless true is that the tendency to blame the system while excusing their own actual or potential dishonesty is eventually distracting the masses-clients themselves from their crucial responsibility in both fuelling dysfunctional mechanisms and challenging them by reverting the trend. From this perspective, the article's findings suggest the need for further studies adopting the clients' points of view and researches more systematically investigating their behaviors' implications in processes of state-capture. This shift of attention would benefit both the academics interested in the topic and the policymakers - as measures aimed to fight and interrupt those normalized and illicit dynamics shall necessarily see the direct and committed participation of the masses- clients themselves.

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Active Political Engagement, Political Patronage, and Local Labour Markets – the Example of Shkoder

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Abstract

This paper sets out to gain an understanding of the effects of active political engagement on the port of entry job positions and career trajectories of students in Albania. We use recall information collected from a sample of 191 participants that record month-to-month employment states for three consecutive years (2012 – 2014). The data is analysed using sequence analysis with optimal matching and difference-in-difference methods. The results provide evidence of positive self-selection in the public sector and that election periods are linked with the short-term presence of vote-buying and the political business cycle. This is the case even for educated segments (university graduates) of the labour force. Findings also reveal accumulative disadvantages over time of subjective perceptions about life satisfaction, migration intentions, employability, and success in life as a result of active political engagement.

Keywords: political clientelism, Albania, higher education, sequence analysis, employment pathways

Introduction

The Western Balkans have often been referred to as offering a "laboratory" of domestically instituted clientelist systems and informal networks of power (Efendic and Ledeneva, 2020; Radeljić and Đorđević, 2020; Uberti, 2020). Regardless of the European Union (EU) membership targets and anti-corruption efforts, the process of adoption and application of EU rules and norms across the region has stalled. This is, even more, the case for Albania, the poorest performing economy in the Western Balkans (World Bank, 2017).

The clientelism phenomenon occurs when policymakers attempt to satisfy the electorate in opportune moments – usually in short-run periods before and after the elections occur – in order to hold or take office, and maximise their wealth. In Albania, because the incorporation of corrupt exchanges of votes has been common practice since the collapse of communism, perceptions of the normality of this incidence among the wider population have progressively contributed to the systematic reproduction of what the literature mentions as "bastard clientelism" (Moss, 1995). In fact, so much does political clientelism rest on widespread social tolerance, that in 2016, according to the 'Life in Transition' survey, 43% of Albanians approved that 'political connections' are the most important factor for success in life, scoring the third-highest percentage for this response in the whole transition region. By contrast, 34% chose "effort and hard work" while nearly 18% answered "intelligence and skills". The latter percentage is substantially lower than the averages for the transition region (31%), Germany (36%), and Italy (27%) (EBRD LiTS, 2016). This explains why a considerable share of the youth in South-Eastern Europe, perceive that the returns from investing in partisan politicization (a form of social capital) are significantly higher than those from human capital (Bartlett and Uvalić, 2019; Efendic and Ledeneva, 2020).

The effect of political clientelism on a number of labour market dimensions in developing economies has been widely analysed in the literature (Livanos and Papadopoulos, 2019; Wang and Wissenbach, 2019; Yıldırım and Kitschelt, 2020). Of particular interest to this study is the exchange of votes and active political support for employment positions in the public sector. The labour market in Albania is characterized by multiple segmentation, and there are strong preferences for public sector jobs on the supply side (more details on this issue are provided in the next section). The problem with political clientelism is that it goes hand-in-hand

with corruption and introduces direct and indirect effects on a number of labour market segments.

It nurtures distortions in what presumably must be competitive approaches to hiring and firing, thus decreasing labour market institutional quality and economic outcomes. Using public sector jobs as rewards for active support to the party/coalition generates work and employment inequalities for non-competitive favourable groups based on their political affiliations. These practices fuel differential opportunities for workers' wages and career prospects that are not driven by their potential productivity characteristics (human capital, effort, ability, skill, intelligence, etc.), and this has broader ramifications for society. For example, Djankov et al. (2016) found that in transition countries, beliefs about fairness in governmental processes were related to life satisfaction. Therefore, obtaining a job in the public sector as in return for partisan politicization means that incentives are not fairly attached to labour market investment or efforts and hard work, implying that the determinants of economic outcomes such as hiring and firing are not fair. According to Alesina et al. (2012), perceptions about inequalities and fairness in the labour market have insinuations about the steady-state level of efforts. If individuals believe that success in the labour market is not obtained by effort and ability but by political connections or even corruption and privilege, in other words, whether different career paths and upward mobility are "deserved" or not, this will have long-term effects on their equilibrium level of efforts (Alesina et al., 2012). By the same token, beliefs of lack of rewards for hard work and ability decrease incentives to invest in human capital and discourage entrepreneurial intentions. Altogether, in the long run, this under-investment negatively impacts the country's growth.

The objective of this paper is twofold. First, it sets out to estimate the effect of active political engagement in port-of-entry jobs and labour market pathways for graduate students based on recall data. It is focused on a small local labour market because political clientelism is stronger in these contexts due to the strong network ties which in turn generate more pronounced spillover and reference dependence effects. While there are previous studies at the national level for the Albanian case, this investigation is a novel attempt at measuring the effects of political affiliations with respect to evolving employment outcomes. Keeping account of both demand- and supply-side selection biases, we try to identify a profile of those who are more prone to engage politically in exchange for public sector jobs. Taking a dynamic approach, we seek to

evaluate how employment histories progress over time as students leave university to enter the labour market. Second, we are also interested in whether there are diverging or converging patterns of subjective perceptions such as life satisfaction and migration intentions, and of what is the key driver of employability and success in life in the long run.

The novelty of this study stands in its methodological approach. Occupational History Calendars (OHC) (Birkett et al., 2017; Carmichael et al., 2019; Porcellato et al., 2016) were used to capture quantitative information for detailed work histories. This retrospective/recall data collected in OHCs is then used and analysed by means of sequence analysis with optimal matching to identify the cluster-solution of employment typologies for comparisons (Brzinsky-Fay et al., 2006). This is an attempt to replicate an experimental design. To the best of our knowledge, this is an innovative method that has not been used before to measure the temporal effects of political engagement in labour market pathways.

Several findings emerge from this investigation. First, there is evidence of selection bias from both sides of the labour market in the public sector. Second, labour market pathways are found to exhibit influence from active political engagement, and this holds in particular for jobs in the public sector. Third, there are accumulative disadvantages of subjective beliefs about life satisfaction, migration intentions, employability, and success in life over time from active political engagement. However, we would like to consider these results as merely indicative until further validation of the methods used here. At this stage, this study is only piloting of the proposed methodology. The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we situate our theoretical argument within the strands of research that link hirings, particularly in the public sector, with clientelism in times of elections. In section 3, we offer an overview of the Albanian context. In section 4, we describe the methodology used to generate the clusters for comparisons and discuss the empirical specification of the models. Then, we introduce the data and present the variable definitions. This is followed by the results and conclusion in the last section.

Literature review

Clientelism and elections

Clientelism is a contingent relationship between politicians and voters in which the latter “get things done” in exchange for the votes from the former. It is rooted in the level of state distrust, and the subject of this

patron-client relationship is context-specific and may include direct cash payments, consumable goods, public sector jobs, court decisions, construction permits, etc. (Bustikova and Corduneanu-Huci, 2017). The development of clientelistic politics and political strategies to secure votes around election times, in particular, are shaped by the economic development (Hicken, 2011; Keefer and Vlaicu, 2008; Kitschelt and Kselman, 2013), democracy (institutional) quality (Keefer and Vlaicu, 2017), reputation (trust in the state) (Keefer and Vlaicu, 2008), and whether the economy is characterized by a small national population and small regional size (Veenendaal and Corbett, 2020).

A very crucial factor that needs to be considered when discussing clientelism is its temporal attributes (Keefer and Vlaicu, 2017). Direct vote-buying is used in pre-election times to target individual voters' benefits with cash, consumption goods, selective access to public goods, public sector employment, etc. This, in turn, leads to the side-stepping of problems inherent in reneging campaign policy promises in post-election times. In general, this strategy is used by politicians and parties/coalitions who seek to remain in office for the next elective mandate and is facilitated by their access to public funds and resources. On the other hand, a coalition/party that seeks to win elections and has no access to public funds and resources, in general, use indirect vote-buying to "buy votes with promises" in pre-election times and its effects are viable in post-election months, conditional that the coalition/party wins the elections. In this case, commitment to and delivery of pre-election promises is central to creating a reputation of loyalty among vote-sellers. Both forms of clientelism have distributional consequences on a number of labour market dimensions in developing economies (Livanos and Papadopoulos, 2019; Wang and Wissenbach, 2019; Yıldırım and Kitschelt, 2020). They create inequality of opportunity and differential access to public sector jobs and careers, generating non-competitive structural barriers to hiring and firing and ultimately weakening labour market institutional quality and economic outcomes. Employment and career outcomes that are not fair and unjust in the meritocratic sense provide undeserved and unfair labour market outcomes that result from the privilege of being part of a politically engaged family or from the individual's dishonest behaviours such as vote selling and/or transactional active political engagement in electoral campaigns in exchange for public sector jobs. Altogether they create unfair determinants of employment and career inequalities and produce favourable non-competitive groups based on their political affiliations. Perceptions about inequalities and fairness in the labour market have insinuations about the steady state level

of efforts. If individuals believe that success in the labour market is accumulated not by effort and ability but by political connections or even corruption, in other words, whether different career paths and upward mobility are "deserved" or not, this will have long-term effects on their equilibrium level of efforts (Alesina et al., 2012). If individuals do not believe they can get rewarded for hard work and ability, then there may be few incentives for them to invest in human capital or start their own enterprise. Altogether, in the long-run, this under investment will impact the country's growth.

There are also psychological costs, in terms of subjective well-being, related to the outcomes of clientelism. Djankov et al. (2016) found that in transition countries, beliefs about fairness in governmental processes were related to life satisfaction. This confirms the idea that notwithstanding the fact that a context is characterized by high systematic clientelism incidence, this does not reduce its psychological costs. In general, all segments of the labour market are worst off and suffer more from clientelism. By the same token, when discussing beliefs and perceptions about employability and success in life, labour market theory and empirical evidence from affluent economies point towards skills, education, effort, intelligence, and hard work. In principle, these should be fair determinants of employment outcomes; however, in transition economies, social capital, including clientelism, imposes non-competitive barriers to accessing many jobs that would have been otherwise achievable in a meritocratic setting. In these environments, jobs in general, and public sector jobs in particular, are acquired through informal networks which are at the heart of clientelistic and corruptive practices (Efendic and Ledeneva, 2020).

Relevant reference groups

Festinger (1954, p.16), in his social comparisons theory, contended that a person compares his opinions and abilities with those of others who are considered to be "at about the same level" on given dimensions such as age, education, gender, socio-economic status, employment status, as related features for social comparisons. This means that "peer reference groups" are those with whom we share the most similarities in the sense of proximity and attitudes. Indeed, empirical evidence suggests that reference groups tend to be local arguably reflecting a reference-dependent preferences (Kahneman and Tversky, 1972). In our case, labour market outcomes are evaluated relative to kin and social groups reference points at the local level. Individuals might be unaware of how the labour market is performing outside their place of

residence and will tend to compare themselves with others that have similar qualifications and background. For example, in Latin America, the effect of relative status is found to be strongest at the city level as compared to the country level (Graham and Felton, 2006).

The Albanian context and selection in the public sector

In terms of labour composition, Albania is an outlier in the Western Balkans. According to the World Bank (2017), compared to the Western Balkans region, for the 2010 – 2016 time period, employment composition in Albania was comprised by the highest share of low-skilled (47%) and the lowest share of high-skilled (13%) workers. This is mainly due to the fact that paid employment is largely dominated by seasonally based sectors such as agriculture and tourism. This study will deal with the latter share of employment, workers with university education, and their strong positive selection towards the public sector. For a more detailed overview of the Albanian context and labour market institutions, see also Drishti et al. (2021).

Table 1 presents the key segments of the contemporary labour market in Albania. The public sector in Albania is highly inefficient and bounded by two types of selectivity. On the one hand, the demand-driven selection is characterized by resilient 'partisan politicization' reflect perceptions that the public sector is depicted as a superior sector. High turnover of civil servants at the central and local levels is observed when a new political force wins the elections. Central to the analysis of these divisions and inequalities in shaping employment outcomes is the demand side of the market. While there is a more pronounced multiple segmentation in the private sector due to poor labour law enforcement and informal and corrupt practices, the public sector is perceived as a primary/core segment due to its regulation and protection. Recruitment of low-productivity outsiders without skills and experience but who support the political party generates crowding-in public sector jobs since social rather than human capital (labour market experience, tenure, training, or further education over the minimum level in the job description) is rewarded.

In terms of labour market pathways, this type of selectivity creates true (cross) state dependence. Experiencing a certain labour market state, especially in port-of-entry time points, causally affects the choice/distribution of labour market states in the future, therefore affecting preferences, relative rewards, human and social capital, and switching costs.

	Demand side: Employers			
	Non-agricultural private sector			*Public sector*
	Primary	Secondary		Primary
		Formal	Informal[1]	
Supply side: Employees	High-status professionals High wages Formal contracts	Low wages Minimum wage contracts[2]	Low wages No formal contract Survival employment	Low-high wages Additional non-wage income[3] Job security Some insecurity with regime changes

Notes:
Source: Drishti & Carmichael [forthcoming]
1 Jobs without a written contract (avoiding taxation and social security payments)
2 Employers will register workers as receiving minimum wage for tax reasons and asking them to partially return in cash the minimum wage received by the bank
3 Opportunities for bribery and corruption or other forms of in-kind payments such as real estate or land

Table 1. Segmentation of the labour market in Albania

On the other hand, supply-driven selection derives from the strong preferences for public sector employment by Albanians in general, reflecting communist-era fatalist views of life and the need/expectation of job security/protection. Generations of workers connected by family ties transmit their beliefs and preferences of what was a "good" job back then in communism, therefore influencing the preferences of the current generation and ultimately their labour market pathways. In other words, there is a chain of inter-generational transmission of altered preferences from long-term exposure to the communist footprint (Banalieva et al., 2017). Supply-side selection bias generates spurious (cross) state dependence, a situation where past and present labour market states share common causes. Time-invariant variables such as attitudes towards public sector employment, higher risk aversion, collective/social culture vs. individualist, self-centered, low autonomous decision-making (centralisation of efforts), and orientation towards material rewards simultaneously affect the choice of labour market state at different points in time.

Therefore, the profile of individuals who systematically self-select in the public sector includes less risk-taking individuals. Moreover, the public sector is attractive to some because it requires fewer demands on employees in relation to their productivity (e.g., hours of work, quality of work, additional holidays) and offers multiple options for corruption and bribery. These forms of selection have important policy implication in

the sense that policy measures such as agricultural and entrepreneurship subsidies programs, labour market reforms, and higher education reforms that the Albanian government has embarked on as part of the EU integration agenda will have short-lived effects if the first job is in the public sector.

Proposed methodology

We follow the methodology used in Carmichael and Ercolani (2016) which applies four integrated stages. In the first stage, we use sequence analysis to map out respondents' observed occupational histories over the 36 months period. Secondly, we use optimal matching with cluster analysis to group individuals with similar histories. This approach is in line with Super's (1980) life-span, life-space conceptual framework as one of the most powerful tools of evolving/dynamic approaches in the study of careers. Before this, career development was mostly seen as a singular choice; however, Super viewed career development as a lifelong activity where individuals go through different life stages and developmental tasks as part of their career decision-making process. Sequence analysis with optimal matching allows creating of typologies of work trajectories without reducing them to single events. One of the continuing criticism of the career stage perspective is that it emphasizes individual agency over structural factors (Tomlinson et al., 2018). In this study, we use the career stage perspective to go beyond the focus on the individual to include structural factors such as the composition of the labour market, the failures of the educational system, and how social networks and social capital in the form of political engagement have a powerful impact upon how individuals engage in career transitions, and in particular in the first stage of the university to work transition. The advantage of using sequence analysis over other methods, such as event history analysis, is that it allows capturing the sequential and multifaceted nature of life histories as entities. This is a non-parametric method that has been used extensively to analyse work-life events, life courses including career mobility dynamics (Brzinsky-Fay et al., 2006; Fuller and Stecy-Hildebrandt, 2015; Mattijssen et al., 2020). To our knowledge, this is the first time that political engagement and employment pathways have been analysed together in this way.

In the third stage, controlling for supply- and demand-side selection, we use regression analysis to explore how demographic variables, life-stage, and social attitudes shape the pathways that students follow. In the final stage, we use difference-in-differences estimation to examine whether any initial differences in life satisfaction, migration intentions,

and perceptions about success in life and employability widen as people's political engagement and employment histories evolve.

Data and variable definitions

In order to investigate the effects of active political engagement in employment histories, face-to-face administered surveys embedded occupational history calendars (OHC) (Birkett et al., 2017; Carmichael et al., 2019; Porcellato et al., 2016). The OHC is a type of event history calendar initially used by occupational epidemiologists. The OHC was introduced at the beginning of the survey. Demographic data along with important life events (marriage, graduation, firing, hiring, party membership, election campaings, etc.) were collected to create the event calendar (Lilley et al., 2011). The calendar was completed by moving backwards from present (December 2014, time point of the data collection) and back to the beginning of a 36 month-long period (January 2012). In this way detailed occupational histories (type of job, employment status, duration on a job) were collated. This helps respondents to retrospectively construct their employment histories based on a range of meaningful reference points. OHCs are a form of 'objective' information that helps to understand groups with similar employment trajectories.

The questionnaire also asked questions about attitudinal constructs included to control for demand- and supply-side selectivity. In addition, the survey included questions on subjective beliefs and perceptions about life satisfaction, migration intentions, and what makes one more successful and employable, at the time of the survey, December 2014 (which we refere as the follow-up estimation), and recall information about the same data on January 2012 (the baseline estimation).

The sample included students and alumni who agreed to participate in the study. In total, 191 valid surveys were collected from students at the University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi". They were either pursuing or had graduated from their degrees at the bachelor's, professional master's, or master of sciences level. The three largest faculties were included in the study, Faculty of Economy, Faculty of Educational Sciences, and Faculty of Law, as these programs have the largest number of graduates who enter the local labour market. Also, a number of alumni who had a job history before January 2012 were included in the sample for comparison reasons.

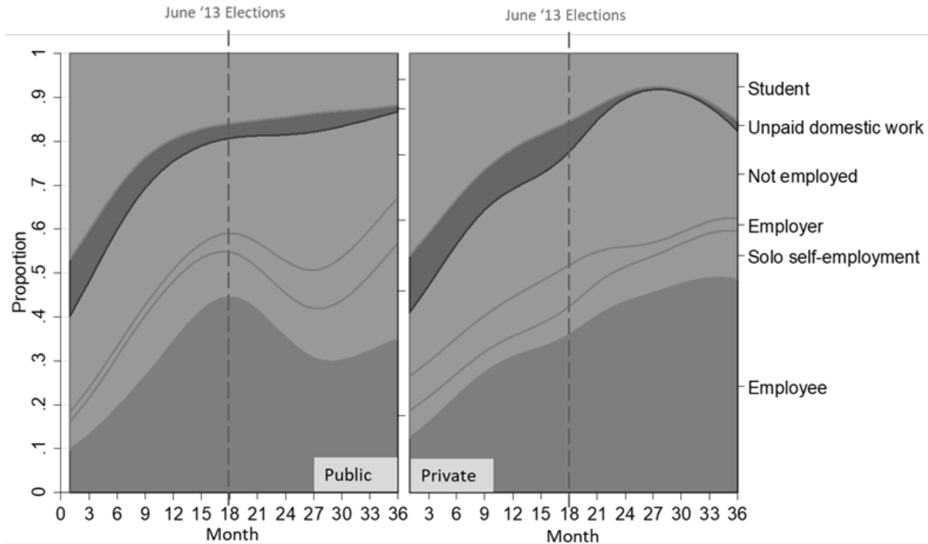

Figure 1. Proportion of respondents in each state by sector

This was not a representative sample nationally, but only locally[1]. Figure 1 illustrates the employment histories along the three years and divided by sector. Central government elections were held in June 2013, which corresponds to the 18th month of the sequence. The labour market pathways of respondents who worked in the public sector reveal a notable spike around June 2013, and this, in general, is not the case for the private sector. A total of six possible labour market statuses were identified and were coded as followed: employee (wage employment), solo self-employment (own-account workers), employer (self-employed with workers), not employed, unpaid domestic worker, and student.

There were issues regarding the overlapping of these states for a number of participants. In cases when respondents were studying and working, coding of the labour market state was established by the labour market participation. For example, participants who were studying and in employment were recorded as employed. The presence of non-mutually

1 Around one third of the high-skilled share of workers with a university degree in Shkoder, are hired in the public sector (28%) while the rest (72%) in the private sector. In our sample, the proportion of students who entered the labour market was comparable with this composition: 33% in the public and 67% in the private sector. Source: Employment by sector, 2017 – 2018, Municipality of Shkodra. Accessed on the 1st of December 2020, http://www.bashkiashkoder.gov.al/web/Profili_i_forces_se_punes_1123_1.php

exclusive states consists of a limitation in this analysis. It is important to keep in account that this is not a proper panel with repeated measures but retrospective data with recall information.

Results

Sequence analysis: a typology of labour market pathways

This section describes the empirical strategy and results obtained. Similar to the growing body of literature that uses sequence analysis to analyse labour market data (Brzinsky-Fay et al., 2006; Carmichael and Ercolani, 2016; Fuller and Stecy-Hildebrandt, 2015; Mattijssen et al., 2020; McVicar et al., 2019) we apply sequence analysis to the students' sequential record of labour market states which are treated as ordered patterns. Sequences are considered as entities where the focus of interest is in the sequential character of the sequence elements (Brzinsky-Fay et al., 2006). The 191 complete sequences in effect constitute a balanced panel. The 6 different sequence elements or states recorded over 36 months, employee (wage employment), solo self-employment (own-account workers), employer (self-employed with workers), not employed, unpaid domestic worker, and student, are subjected to optimal matching, which uses the Needleman-Wunsch algorithm to calculate the minimum distances between each sequence. The insertion-deletion (indel) costs were set to 1 and the substitution costs to 2. The distances were standardised by dividing each distance by the length of the longest sequence in the dataset.

It is these ordered patterns – sequences – that capture labour market histories, and in what follows the labour market pathway, rather than individual elements of sequences is the unit of analysis. The most common sequence is a labour market pathway consisting of 36 months of employment as an employee. But there are numerous pathways, and half of the sample members follow unique sequences. Detailed information about the year-to-year transitions and distribution of states across the sample and cluster is provided in the supplementary Appendix Tables 4 and 5.

On the basis of the distances calculated by 'optimal matching', similar sequences were grouped together using Ward's linkage cluster analysis technique. The optimal number of clusters was judged to be four based on the Duda/Hart Je(2)/Je(1) stopping rule index. The clusters are illustrated in Figure 2.

Cluster 1: election-related employees (n = 62). This is the largest cluster and groups together employment histories that are dominated by persistent wage-employment and transition from university or unemployment to wage employment. There are very pronounced surges and spikes around June 2013 and also exiting into unemployment in the following months after the elections. Some of the exits go on to become employed in micro-enterprises, and some others go back to university for a masters' or secondary degree.

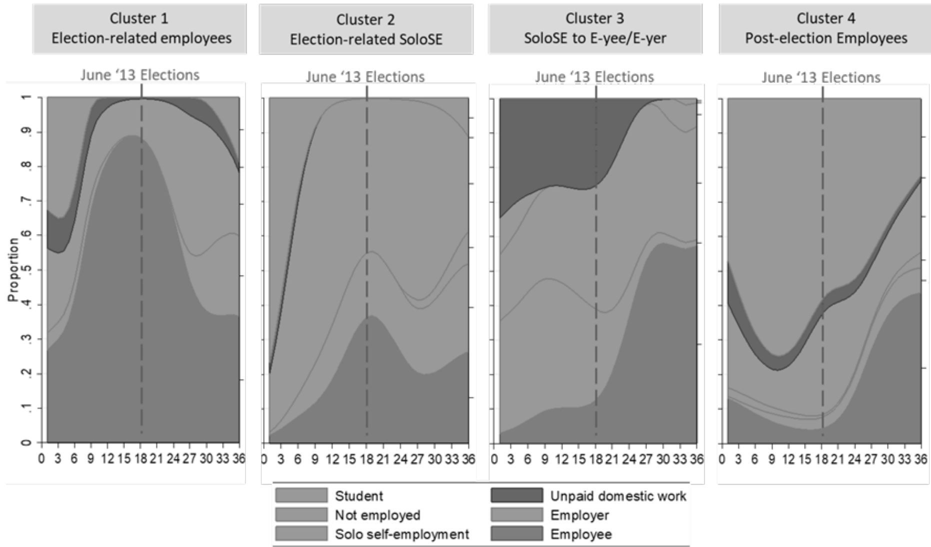

Figure 2. Typology of labour market pathways (4-cluster solution)

Cluster 2, election-related solo self-employment (n = 49). In this cluster, there are low but increasing shares of wage-employment and solo self-employment, which is more likely to follow after firings in the post-election months. These workers transition to self-employment as a way to escape unemployment which in this cluster is significant.

Cluster 3, solo self-employment to employee or employer (n = 28). This cluster is of particular interest to the study. The fact that it has a small count, a small number of 'student' labour market states, and it is dominated by self-employment makes it methodologically convenient for best-fit profiling of the 'reference group'. At the same time, these features also impose one of the limitations of this study as the true reference groups are ultimately unobservable.

Cluster 4, post-election employees (n = 52). This cluster contains the largest share of students and is dominated by the transition from university to wage-employment in the lagging months after the elections.

MNL estimation: cluster membership

For the 4-cluster solution, we run a model that attempts to map onto the rich set of individual and subjective perceptions as well as political supply-side attitudes and preferences and demand-side active political engagement variables, listed in Table 4 in the Appendix, and included in the model to account for supply- and demand-side selection described above. The outcome variable is the 4-cluster solution identified above. Since this is an unordered categorical variable, a multinomial logit (MNL) regression was used to explore cluster membership at the time of survey (t = 1, follow-up). Setting the third cluster as the control group (m = 3), the MNL specification for this estimation has the following form:

$$Pr(Cluster_i = m \mid X_i, Attitudes_i, Political_i) = \frac{\exp(\alpha_{m|3} X_i + \beta_{m|3} Attitudes_i + \gamma_{m|3} Political_i)}{1 + \exp(\alpha_{m|3} X_i + \beta_{m|3} Attitudes_i + \gamma_{m|3} Political_i)}$$

Since the majority of the characteristics captured in the interviews are correlated with each other, the MNL, as a multivariate regression analysis with the categorical dependent variable, is fit to estimate cluster membership. This allows to measure the relations between employment histories and selected characteristics based on the ceteris paribus – all other (observable) factors being equal (constant).

The results are presented in Table 2, both in coefficient and relative risk ratios estimation. The discussion of results is focused on clusters 1, 2, and 4 compared to cluster 3, the reference group. Controls for gender, age, age squared, marital status, education level, accumulation of years of work experience before Jan 2012, national quarterly unemployment rate are included in the models but not reported for the purpose of conserving space. All other (observable) things being equal, and compared to cluster 3 (solo self-employment to employees/employer), the relative risk ratios of following a labour market pathway that is affected by the June 2013 election was higher for respondents who were in wage-employment in the public sector, who are characterized by particular attitudinal traits and preferences such as less risk-taking, less innovative and more oriented towards material things and social connection (proactive personality).

Of specific interest are those characteristics that are differentially associated with the three measures of active political engagement, i.e., demand-side selection, that disproportionately predict how likely a respondent was to follow an employment trajectory that captures notable effects of the transition from student life to labour market by means of public sector jobs compared to those who are not affected by political engagement. The findings reveal significant positive effects for all the clusters compared to the reference group. These results confirm the presence of selection bias from both sides of the labour market into the public sector.

	Cluster		
Variables	(1) Election-related employees	(2) Election-related SoloSE	(4) Post-election Employees
Public sector	1.361*** (0.197) [3.900]	0.482** (0.171) [1.619]	1.188*** (0.148) [3.281]
Entrepreneurial intention	-0.237 (0.169) [0.789]	0.274** (0.093) [1.315]	-0.111 (0.077) [0. 895]
Proactive personality	0.855*** (0.131) [2.351]	1.301*** (0.117) [3.673]	0.707*** (0.048) [1.502]
Innovative	0.342 (0.263) [1.408]	0.659*** (0.094) [1.933]	0.112 (0.146) [1.119]
Materialism	0.715*** (0.073) [2.044]	0.216 (0.171) [1.241]	1.084*** (0.130) [2.956]
Active member of political party/forum	1.204*** (0.104) [3.333]	0.339** (0.139) [1.404]	0.376** (0.131) [1.456]
Family members and/or friends who are active supporters of political party	0.371* (0.167) [1.449]	0.278 (0.139) [1.320]	0.771*** (0.164) [2.162]
Meetings, hearings, discussion groups attended	1.107*** (0.215) [3.025]	0.250** (0.197) [1.284]	0.303*** (0.241) [1.354]

Notes:
Observations, N=191;
Log-likelihood = -3605.044; LR-χ^2 3253.55; Pseudo-R^2 = 0.311.
Figures in curved parentheses are standard errors; figures in square parentheses are relative risk ratios.
Also included but not reported, controls for gender, age, age squared, marital status, education level, accumulation of years of work experience before Jan 2012, national quarterly unemployment rate.
*, ** and ***, Significant at $p < 0.1$, 0.05, and 0.001, respectively.

Table 2. Typology of labour market pathways (4-cluster solution)

Logit estimation: accumulative disadvantages of political engagement

In this section, we examine whether any initial differences in life satisfaction, migration intentions, and perceptions about success in life and employability widen as people's political engagement and employment histories evolve. The descriptive statistics in Table 4 show that there were already differences in life satisfaction, migration intentions, and subjective beliefs of what makes one more successful and employable among the participants prior to embarking along different pathways.

According to the true state dependence perspective, some of these initial differences may have constrained or shaped future attitudes and perceptions relating to political connections and the above attitudinal variables. Some differences may have widened or narrowed as a consequence of the initial conditions of the followed pathways. Both options would be consistent with relative (dis)advantages with respect to life satisfaction, migration intentions, unemployment causes, and sources of success in life growing over time. To estimate these changes, we modelled a difference-in-difference specification that pools data from the first (baseline) and last (follow-up) month of the total sequence (January 2012 to December 2014). The model included three dummy variables, Lastmonth, to identify whether the measurement is for the last month of the sequence (follow-up), Clusterj identifies cluster membership with cluster 3 being the 'reference group' and clusters 1, 2, and 4 the groups 'treated' with 'partisan politicization'. and Clusterj × Lastmonth; the interaction between these two dummy variables identifies the cluster membership for the last month of the sequence (December 2014, the follow-up), and this is the difference-in-difference estimation of the models specified in the following form:

$$LifeSatisfaction = \beta_{10} + \beta_{1L}Last_{mo} + \sum_{j=1}^{4} \beta_{1j}\,Cluster_j + \sum_{j=1}^{4} \beta_{1k}\,Cluster_k \times Last_{mo} + \sum_{n=1}^{191} \beta_{1n}X_n + \mu_i \quad (2)$$

$$Migration = \beta_{20} + \beta_{2L}Last_{mo} + \sum_{j=1}^{4} \beta_{2j}\,Cluster_j + \sum_{j=1}^{4} \beta_{2k}\,Cluster_k \times Last_{mo} + \sum_{n=1}^{191} \beta_{2n}X_n + \mu_2 \quad (3)$$

$$Unemployment = \beta_{30} + \beta_{3L}Last_{mo} + \sum_{j=1}^{4} \beta_{3j}\,Cluster_j + \sum_{j=1}^{4} \beta_{3k}\,Cluster_k \times Last_{mo} + \sum_{n=1}^{191} \beta_{3n}X_n + \mu_3 \quad (4)$$

$$Success = \beta_{40} + \beta_{4L}Last_{mo} + \sum_{j=1}^{4} \beta_{4j}\,Cluster_j + \sum_{j=1}^{4} \beta_{4k}\,Cluster_k \times Last_{mo} + \sum_{n=1}^{191} \beta_{4n}X_n + \mu_4 \quad (5)$$

The outcome variables are dichotomized; therefore, the logit estimates are reported in coefficients and odd ratios. Table 3 reports the results for the difference-in-difference estimation for the four outcome variables. In estimation (1) and (2), the outcome variables are life satisfaction and migration intentions. The negative sign, albeit not significant, of the Lastmonth dummy variable in both estimations indicates that for the total sample, throughout the course of the observed sequence, happiness and intentions to plan a future in Albania declined.

	Outcome variable			
Variables	(1) Life satisfaction	(2) Migration intention	(3) Unemployment cause – not knowing the right people	(4) Getting ahead in life – knowing the right people
$Last_{month}$ (December 2014)	-0.154 (0.116) [0.857]	-0.184 (0.139) [0.832]	0.201* (0.160) [1.223]	0.124 (0.252) [1.132]
Cluster 1	-0.203** (0.077) [0.816]	-0.228*** (0.071) [0.796]	0.255*** (0.028) [1.290]	0.384*** (0.090) [1.468]
Cluster 2	-0.118* (0.056) [0.889]	-0.180*** (0.043) [0.835]	0.133** (0.387) [1.142]	0.096* (0.033) [1.101]
Cluster 4	0.111*** (0.023) [1.117]	-0.202* (0.097) [0.817]	0.233* (0.103) [1.262]	0.271** (0.081) [1.311]
Cluster 1 × $Last_{month}$	-0.399*** (0.062) [0.671]	-0.228*** (0.039) [0.796]	0.361*** (0.062) [1.435]	0.336*** (0.041) [1.399]
Cluster 2 × $Last_{month}$	-0.240*** (0.026) [0.787]	-0.108* (0.038) [0.898]	0.261** (0.082) [1.289]	0.114** (0.041) [1.121]
Cluster 4 × $Last_{month}$	-0.118*** (0.033) [0.889]	-0.201*** (0.053) [0.818]	0.251** (0.083) [1.285]	0.311*** (0.091) [1.365]
Migration intention	1.077*** (0.108) [2.936]			
Unemployment cause – not knowing the right people	-0.416*** (0.022) [0.664]			
Getting ahead in life – knowing the right people	-0.583*** (0.091) [0.558]			
Pseudo R Square	0.377	0.281	0.251	0.301
Log-likelihood	-8557.12	-7296.71	-8226.53	-7964.37
LR-χ^2	3007.02***	2257.14***	2784.31***	3107.35***

Notes:
Observations, N=191;
Figures in curved parentheses are standard errors; figures in square odd ratios.
Also included but not reported, controls for gender, age, age squared, marital status, education level, accumulation of years of work experience before Jan 2012.
*, ** and ***, Significant at $p < 0.1$, 0.05, and 0.001, respectively.

Table 3. Difference-in-differences logit estimates for life satisfaction, migration intentions, and beliefs about employability and success in life; (The reference 'control group' is cluster 3: Solo Self-Employment to Employee/Employer)

The negative signs for clusters 1, 2, and 4 confirm that cluster 3 (the reference group) is the one in the better position overall. In the same fashion, the difference-in-difference interaction effects of the Clusterj and Lastmonth dummy variables are negative and significant, indicating diverging trends for the outcome variables compared to cluster 3. In estimation (1), we have also controlled for interchangeable relation for life satisfaction and the three other outcome variables for the follow-up measures. As expected, life satisfaction, which is a proxy for utility, is negatively affected by beliefs that unemployment cause is lack of right persons in one's network and that these contacts (the right people) help one to get ahead in life. On the other hand, it is interesting that migration intentions contribute positively towards life satisfaction.

In estimation (3) and (4), there are positive and significant effects in the baseline and follow-up effects for all the three 'treated' clusters compared to the reference cluster. This means that the surveyed sample from the student population had strong beliefs that the key to becoming more successful in life and more employable are the right connections which in this context are political connections or people with influence. After the June 2013 general elections, these beliefs have become stronger indications, again widening effects along the observed period January 2012 and December 2014.

In line with the evidence from the 2016 Life in Transition survey (EBRD LiTS, 2016) 2016 for Albania, these results are indicative that careers and upward mobility in the public sector, and in some cases in self-employment as well, are not the award of hard work, ability, and a good education. To further validate our results, we applied a sensitivity test for the difference-in-difference part of the model where the dependent variables for estimation (1) to (4) were the first differences between the baseline and follow-up measures of the sequence. The explanatory variables consisted of the baseline estimations of clusters 1, 2, and 4. The results are reported in Table 7 and are sufficiently comparable to those in Table 3.

Conclusion

This paper has estimated the impact of active political engagement on employment pathways. In addition to providing evidence of positive self-selection in the public sector, we have shown that election periods are linked with the short-term presence of vote-buying and the political business cycle, and this is the case even for educated segments (university

graduates) of the labour force. There is also the presence of demand expansion in the public sector in the form of increased government spending for systemic vote-buying in the form of cash injections for increasing the public sector payroll. These forms of selection have important policy implication in the sense that policy measures such as agricultural and entrepreneurship subsidies programs, labour market reforms, and higher education reforms that the Albanian government has embarked on as part of the EU integration agenda, will have short-lived effects if the first job is in the public sector. We also found evidence of increased divergences of subjective well-being, migration intentions, beliefs about employability, and success in life that indicate cumulative disadvantages over time from active political engagement. Actively seeking public sector employment does not make you happier and more inclined to want/plan a future in Albania; rather the opposite, it externalizes the focus of efforts from internal factors (such as hard work, good education) towards non-competitive factors such as political networks. These findings shed some light on issues that are likely to be crucial for labour market performance. In order to mitigate these negative effects, programs aimed at increasing the private sector and self-employment attractiveness need to complement the integration agenda.

The limitations of our findings result from the fact that the data used in this investigation is not a true panel but rather recall information with one measure. This lack of availability to proper repeated measures is bounded by recall bias which can be a particular problem in baseline and follow-up studies with control/treatment groups. Additionally, the small count of the sample and control group and overlapping of labour market states also reduce the reliability of our findings. In these types of comparisons, true reference groups are ultimately unobservable. Until further validation of the methods used here, we would like to consider these results as merely indicative. At this stage, this study is only piloting of the proposed methodology.

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Annex

Variable	Definition	Mean
Public sector	If current/last job is/was in the public sector	0.33
Entrepreneurial intention	Mean score of single factor (index 1 – 7); 9-item scale Liñán & Chen (2009); Cronbach's Alpha 0.814	3.59
Proactive personality	Mean score of single factor (index 1 – 7); 17-item scale Bateman & Crant (1993); Cronbach's Alpha 0.883	5.34
Innovative	Mean score of single factor (index 1 – 7); 20-item scale Hurt et al. (1977); Cronbach's Alpha 0.795	3.77
Materialism	Mean score of single factor (index 1 – 7); 20-item scale Belk (1983); Cronbach's Alpha 0.902	4.74
Active political engagement	Formal member of political party or youth forum	0.32
Family/friends active political engagement	Family members and/or friends who are formal members and supporters of political party	0.38
Meetings, hearings, discussion groups attended	Count of meetings, hearings, discussion groups attended	2.14
Life satisfaction at baseline (t=0)	General satisfaction with life; coded 0 "not at all satisfied," 1 "less than satisfied," 2 "rather satisfied," and 3 "fully satisfied"; recoded to binary, for 2 or 3, as 'satisfied'	0.37
Life satisfaction at follow-up (t=1)		0.21
Migration intentions at baseline	Did you think that you had a future in Albania back then? (t=0)	0.54
Migration intentions at follow-up (t=1)	Do you think that you have a future in Albania?	0.31
Unemployment cause at baseline (t=0)	Recoded to binary for unemployment cause being 'not knowing the right people'; other response options for unemployment cause included: Inadequate or irrelevant education, Insufficient previous work experience, Lack of adequate jobs, Disability, Age discrimination, and other reasons	0.31
Unemployment cause at follow-up (t=1)		0.49
Getting ahead in life at baseline (t=0)	Recoded to binary for 'knowing the right people' as the way to get ahead in life; other response options for ways of getting ahead in life included: Having a good education, Working hard, Being lucky, Belonging to a wealthy family, other	0.41
Getting ahead in life at follow-up (t=1)		0.57
Δ Life satisfaction	Change in life satisfaction between baseline and follow-up	-0.18
Δ Migration intentions	Change in migration intentions between follow-up and baseline	-0.23
Δ Unemployment cause – not knowing the right people	Change in unemployment cause as 'not knowing the right people' between follow-up and baseline	0.18
Δ Getting ahead in life – knowing the right people	Change in getting ahead in life as 'knowing the right people' between follow-up and baseline	0.16
Quarterly unemployment rate[a]	The national quarterly unemployment rate for workers with higher education	15.98

Notes:
a Local labour market rates for the region of Shkoder were unavailable. Figures are from INSTAT

Table 4. Variable definitions and sample means: analysis sample

Labour market state at t	Labour market state at t+1						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
1. Employee	54.72	8.18	1.26	28.93	1.26	5.66	27.85
2. Solo Self-employment	23.53	35.29	25.49	11.76	1.96	1.96	8.93
3. Employer	21.88	15.63	53.13	3.13	0.00	6.25	5.60
4. Not employed	35.92	13.38	1.41	34.51	0.70	14.08	24.87
5. Unpaid domestic work	35.00	12.50	0.00	2.50	32.50	17.50	7.01
6. Student	27.21	5.44	0.68	25.17	2.04	39.46	25.74

Notes:

The sample is all those observed for at least 36 consecutive months between month 1 and month 36, aged 19 or more. Transitions are presented for each observation annually, for each 12 months: t (January 2012), t+1 (December 2012); t (December 2012), t+1 (December 2013); t (December 2013), t+1 (December 2014).

Table 5. Average year-to-year transitions: analysis sample (N=191) (%)

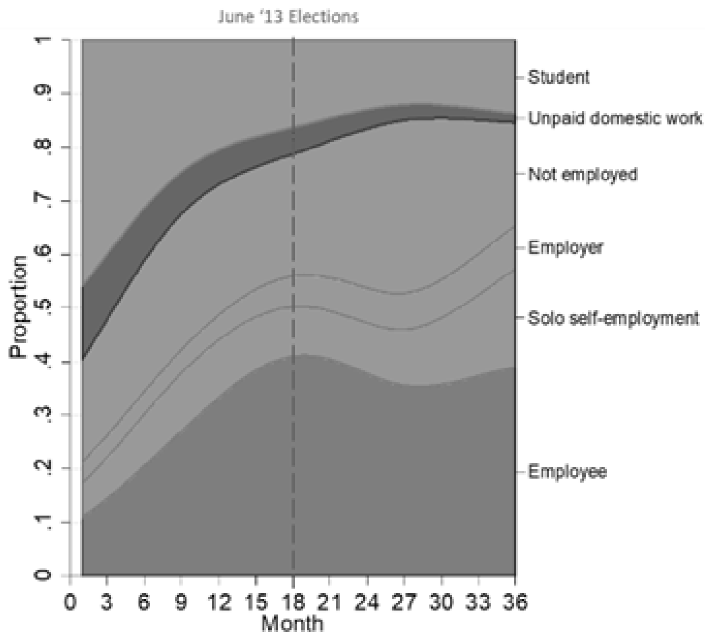

Figure 3. Proportion of respondents in each state by month

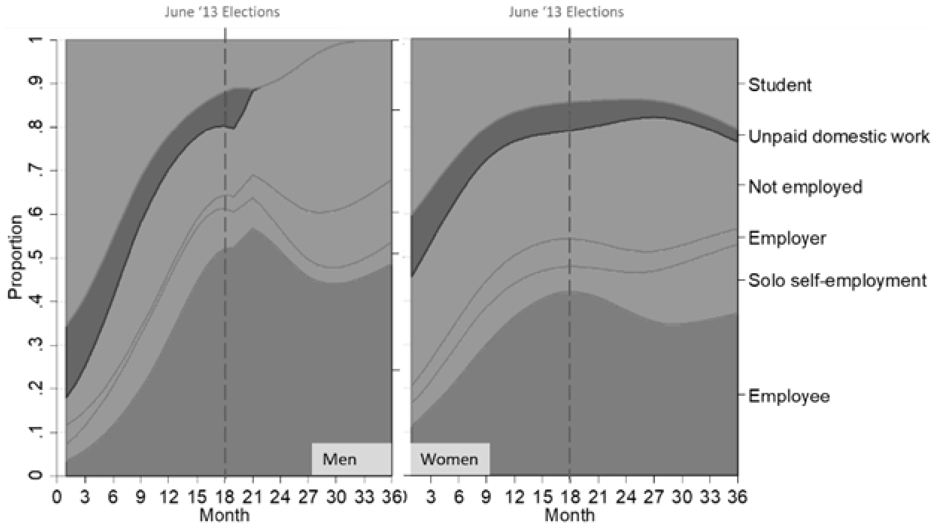

Figure 4. Proportion of respondents in each state by sex

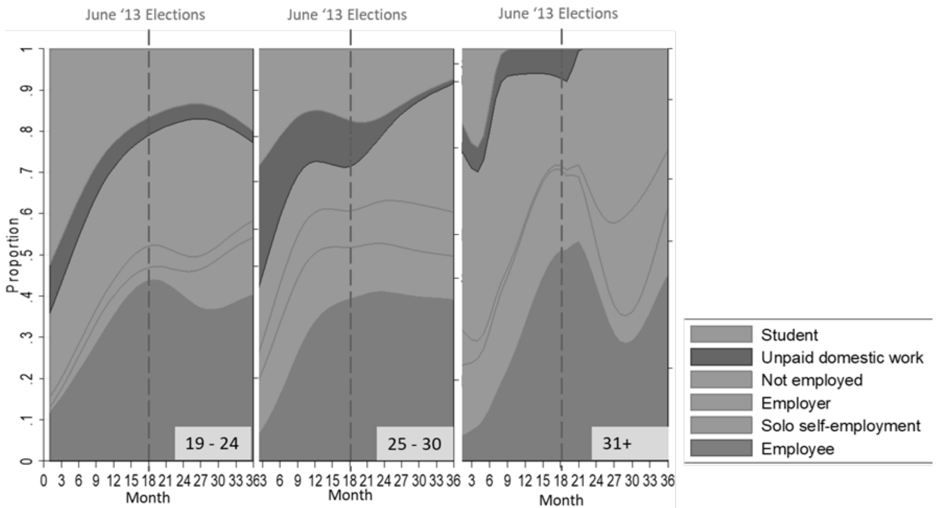

Figure 5. Proportion of respondents in each state by age group

Cluster	Cluster size	Total number of states	Modal sequence type	Distribution of employment states in cluster (% of all states)					
				Employee	SoloSE	Employer	NE	Unpaid	Student
(1) Students to Voting Employees and post-election SoloSE	62	2232 (100%)	Election-related employees	1296 (58.06)	159 (7.12)	0 (0.00)	491 (22.00)	106 (4.75)	180 (8.08)
(2) Students to Voting Employees and SoloSE	49	1764 (100%)	Election-related SoloSE	371 (21.03)	284 (16.10)	26 (1.47)	865 (49.04)	14 (0.79)	204 (11.56)
(3) Solo Self-Employed to Employee/Employer	28	1008 (100%)	SoloSE to Employee /Employer	263 (26.09)	214 (21.23)	322 (31.94)	29 (2.88)	176 (17.46)	4 (0.40)
(4) Student to election Employees	52	1872 (100%)	Post-election Employees	309 (16.51)	77 (4.11)	49 (2.62)	354 (18.91)	94 (5.02)	989 (52.83)
Overall sample	191	6876 (100%)		2239 (32.56)	734 (10.67)	397 (5.77)	1739 (25.39)	390 (5.67)	1377 (20.03)

Table 6. Distribution of labour states across the total sample and 4 clusters

Variables	Outcome variable			
	Δ Life satisfaction	Δ Migration intention	Δ Unemployment cause – not knowing the right people	Δ Getting ahead in life – knowing the right people
CLUSTER1	-0.201*** (0.077) [0.818]	-0.225*** (0.071) [0.799]	0.255*** (0.028) [1.290]	0.384*** (0.090) [1.468]
CLUSTER2	-0.119*** (0.056) [0.888]	-0.178* (0.043) [0.837]	0.132** (0.037) [1.141]	0.097** (0.033) [1.102]
CLUSTER4	-0.112*** (0.023) [1.119]	-0.197*** (0.097) [0.821]	0.229** (0.103) [1.257]	0.273*** (0.082) [1.314]
Δ Migration intention	1.116*** (0.089) [3.053]			
Δ Unemployment cause – not knowing the right people	-0.334*** (0.104) [0.719]			
Δ Getting ahead in life – knowing the right people	-0.614*** (0.077 [0.541]			
Pseudo R Square	0.372	0.284	0.248	0.303
Log-likelihood	-8602.08	-7288.13	-8178.87	-7788.53
LR-χ^2	3109.11***	2381.03***	2885.87***	3327.80***

Notes:
Observations, N=191;
Figures in curved parentheses are standard errors; figures in square parentheses are odd ratios.
Also included but not reported, controls for gender, age, age squared, marital status, education level, accumulation of years of work experience before Jan 2012.
*, ** and ***, Significant at $p < 0.1$, 0.05, and 0.001, respectively.

Table 7. First difference logit estimates for life satisfaction, migration intentions, and beliefs about employability and success in life; (The reference 'control group' is cluster 3 (Solo Self-Employment to Employee/Employer); (coefficients, standard errors, and odd ratios)

Investigation into the Potential for Clientelistic and Corruptive Behavior of Students of Private and Public Universities in R.N. Macedonia

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Abstract

Introduction: There is sufficient evidence in the scientific literature on the association between clientelism and corruption as they are often linked by conceptual similarities and common causes. However, the current research in the area is conducted dominantly using qualitative surveys. Despite the importance and implications of this phenomenon, there is a lack of quantitative instruments that would measure the potential for clientelism and corruption in a standardized manner.
Aim: By introducing a new quantitative instrument for potential clientelism and corruption, this article explores the potential clientelistic behavior of the young people living in Skopje through the prism of their socio-demographic characteristics. It then evaluates its connection with a variety of demographic and socio-economic characteristics.
Methods: A quantitative questionnaire was designed; pilot tested, and distributed among students from public and private universities in Skopje during September 2020.
Contribution: The article provides a two-fold contribution: a methodological tool in the quantitative investigation of clientelism and corruption; and research knowledge into the socio-demographic characteristics and potential for clientelistic behavior and corruption among young people in R.N. Macedonia.

Keywords: patronage, corruption, young people

"When we all fell asleep and dreamed, HE was awake and thinking.
When we were resting, HE was working hard.
When we were with our closest relatives, HE was with all of us.
When the hope for Macedonia was lost, HE set out for a new future.
When everybody said, "There is no salvation from [the former Prime Minister and party leader]", HE opposed him.
When everybody believed that the regime would fail, HE set to tear it down.
When nobody had courage, HE stood up bravely.
When many calculated, he set out for the goal… THE FREEDOM.
When everybody retreated, he moved FORWARD.
When everybody said,… this is THE END, HE said…this is just a new BEGINNING".

- "Tribute to [current Prime Minister and party leader]"
by Anonymous (2020)

Clientelism as a concept is defined as direct exchanges between patrons and clients and is a potential key power factor that is exercised in the political process of democracy. It first appears in the 70s-80s literature, when the first patron-client relations were seen as being typical for pre-industrial societies, which is a primitive organizational form that can be destroyed with state democratization (Volintiru,2012).

According to Scott (1972), this patron-client relation was defined as a relationship that includes friendship where an individual with higher socio-economic status uses his influence and resources to provide benefits to a person with lower status in exchange for general support. These relationships are based on mutual social trust (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984) and "trust networks" (Tilly, 2004).

However, throughout the time, clientelism was redefined. The main reason is the fact that this clientelistic approach exists in every country, regardless of the 'country's development rate and system of rule. This was explained by Piattoni (2001), who explains that democracy strengthens patron-client relationships. Consequently, democracy did not destroy clientelism, but it required developing "complex pyramidal exchange network of client-broker-patron exchange" (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007).

What is Clientelism

As a political phenomenon, clientelism involves an informal exchange of goods and survives in order to gain political support. Today, the ability to select and distribute resources from the clientelistic side is essential for the survival of political organizations. However, it is important to keep in mind that the clientelistic exchanges are different from one political party to another (Volintiru,2012).

Clientelism is an informal hierarchy that operates with formal institutions and is focused on influence (Weingrod,1968). It harms the relations between the state and citizen, including formal institutions and voter participation, it weakens the trust within the institutions and media. Despite the fact that it implies not equal power relations, it represents a personal and long-lasting affective relationship between two sides that gain some sort of benefit (Djolai and Corina, 2017).

According to the newest literature, clientelism is defined as a transaction; "the direct exchange of a citizen's vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods, and services" (Kitschelt and Wilinkon, 2007). It brings on the table a negative effect on three dimensions: electoral, economic, and institutional. In terms of electoral, clientelism misrepresents the electoral competition through "incumbency effects" generation (Wantchekon, 2013), which results in decreased contestation chances of the opposition. In other words, even if the person is not satisfied with the elected representative, the person will most likely vote and support the elected representative the second time around due to the network conditionality of resource distribution. In the short term, in such societies, there is a loss of strength in terms of the ability to impose sanctions, while in the long term, clientelism affects electoral competition by provoking a populist backlash (Muller, 2006).

From an economic point of view, clientelism leads to economic inefficiency, which is a result of discouraging the government from growth development (Medina and Stokes 2007). The multiplier effects of the economy decrease, making people more dependent on informal channels of resource distribution.

Last but not least, clientelism is considered to be interlinked with corruption. Since the clientelistic process is described as a "primacy to the distribution of individual, selective benefits to citizens, to the detriment of the provision of collective goods" (Hopkin 2006a), the same itself is the prescription for corrupt use of the state resources. Therefore,

there is a positive link between clientelism and corruption; a high rate of corruption is an indicator of clientelism frequency (Kitschelt, 2000).

In addition, the impact of clientelism on society is not always clear. Although in case of corruption or economic deprivation, the electoral competition is directly affected by informal exchanges, it is hard to state the relationship between them-which is the cause of which. Therefore, according to Stokes (2006), clientelism is related to poverty and inequality, which are both reason and consequence.

Clientelism in different Cultures

Different cultures have different perceptions of the clientelistic approach. Observing collectivistic exchanges and measuring their frequency is crucial in describing patron-client relations. Political cultures based on clientelism are associated with Italy, the Mediterranean in general, and parts of Asia. (Graziano 1973, Gellner and Waterbury 1977, Scott 1972).

According to the literature provided, there is an observed collectivistic approach in Latin America, mostly in The Dominican Republic - the country with the highest rate of clientelism, followed by Honduras and Mexico. Favors (Oliveros, 2016), clothing, medicine, milk, construction, utility bills, money (Brusco, Nazareno, & Stokes, 2004), alcohol, and drugs (Szwarcberg, 2015) are the most exchanged goods in Argentina, while in Brazil the medicine, health exams, wheelchairs (Nichter, 2011) are on the top of the list. Mexicans prefer property titles, housing, food, work opportunities (Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, & Estévez, 2007), and water access (Herrera, 2017) in exchange for patrons support, while people from Nicaragua look for animals, food, furniture, and construction materials (Gonzalez-Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge, Meléndez, Oso rio, & Nickerson, 2012).

The scholars agree that in Latin America, the poor voters are disproportionally targeted with clientelistic offers. The poor voters can be targeted by the parties because of the higher marginal gifts value or immediate assistance rather than future promises (Mares & Young, 2016).

In Romania, there is corrupt practices persistence on the one hand and the permanence of clientelistic networks that destroys the democratic system on the other. Romanian and Russian studies show that the most examples of the boss power consist of economic and political monopoly, and therefore the bosses have a strong clientelistic network (Volkov 2002, Olah 2004, Varese 2005). In the Romanian rural settings, the control

of the patron is higher because the clients there are more vulnerable to party mobilization due to the smaller community structures and information channels. The two main "symptoms" of Romanian clientelism are corruption and political in-cohesiveness. Despite the efforts to fight against corruption, there is evidence of a high rate of corruption in the country. Therefore, it explains why things go wrong in its institutional setting. Moreover, the political in-cohesiveness between parties and electorate result in clientelism, and there is evidence of cohesiveness in the actions of the Romanian political parties and the electorate's strong ideological positioning (Volintiru,2012).

In Greece, clientelism seems pervasive, and although there should be a fight against such practices, the clientelistic approach was widely common in temporary recruitments and assignments. The process of clientelistic reinvigorating was done by the trade unions, which are tightly controlled by the functions of the party. Trade unions proved to be the most powerful driver for clientelism. Not only in education, but there is clientelistic evidence in telecoms, cotton manufacturing companies, and banking sector. The presence of clientelism there is prescribed on the socialists who have a powerful party machine and impact over the sectors (Papadopoulos, 1997).

Not only in Greece, but the trade unions were also very important elements in Spain. There, many forms of clientelism were detected, from traditional caciques to party financing, thus helping it in making it stronger. However, in the 90s, there is a decrease in clientelistic job allocation because of the liberalization policies. This results in decreasing the rate of clientelism, making it not widely spread anymore (Papadopoulos, 1997).

Nowadays, it has been shown that clientelism has become a common part of modern democracies and can have not only a negative impact but also a positive one in terms of marginalized groups like immigrants (Roniger and Gunes-Ayata 1994). The new, modern clientelistic forms in Australia assist opportunities for resource allocation and mobilization. Ethnicity marginalization means that clientelism in Australia has not been put under a spell as a component of Australian political culture (Parking and Warhust, 1983). There, through clientelism, solidarity and trust are created as well as mechanisms for marginalized groups are established.

To the best knowledge of the authors, there are no existing published studies that explore the clientelism in the R.N. Macedonia. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to provide a contribution by providing the first academic investigation into the potential for clientelism and its link to corruption among young people in R.N. Macedonia.

Methodology

In order to properly address the goal of the paper, the research was designed as a quantitative study with convenience sampling. A quantitative questionnaire was used as the main research instrument. To the 'authors' best knowledge, this is the first study on clientelism that utilizes a quantitative approach.

Instrument

The instrument consisted of three main categories of questions. The first category of questions collected data on the willingness of respondents to do *small* favors that is in the "grey" zone of legality for a) their direct supervisor, b) a socially influential person, and c) a well-known and influential politician. All questions were related to a hypothetical situation, and respondents were also asked to select the main reason why they would do such a favor.

The second category of questions explored whether and for what main reason respondents would do *significant* favors that are in the "red" zone of legality for a) their direct supervisor, b) a socially influential person, and c) a well-known and influential politician. As in the previous section, all questions were related to a hypothetical situation.

The last category of questions collected information on the socio-demographic profile of the research participants.

Sample

The researcher utilized convenience sampling using the personal contacts of the researchers as main contact points. Through these contact points, potential undergraduate and graduate students were contacted in one state and one private university in R.N. Macedonia. All potential participants were asked to fill in an electronic survey. A total of 89 responses were collected.

Procedure

Prior to its official implementation, the instrument was pilot tested among a group of students that is representative of the intended research sample. After the final version of the questionnaire was approved, an online version of the questionnaire was designed. A link

was distributed to all potential participants. Although online research carries certain drawbacks, the researchers decided consensually that it was the best approach considering the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the state of emergency that was imposed on the country. After each of the potential participants opened the link, they were informed on the anonymous and voluntary nature of the research, as well as the aim of the research and the potential use of the collected data. This way, they were able to make an informed decision whether they would like to participate in the research.

The collected data was stored in a work computer that belonged to one of the researchers. All data were anonymously collected, so no personal and identifying information of the participants was obtained.

Results

Sample description

A total of 89 students were enrolled in the research. Out of this number, 30 were business students, 29 were medical students, and 30 were law students. The majority (78%) were female, and 22% were male. The ethnic distribution indicated that 94% were Macedonian. As expected, the majority of the respondents belonged to the 20-30 years old age group. When questioned about their monthly household income, the majority indicated that they belonged in the *over 50.000 denars* group, closely followed by 35% who belong to the *10.000-30.000 denars* group.

Based on the instrument construct, the results are presented in two main categories: (1) small favors and (2) significant favors. Each of the two respective categories is presented in three main sub-categories: favors to supervisor favors to socially recognized person (not supervisor), and favors to politically influential person (not supervisor).

Small favors

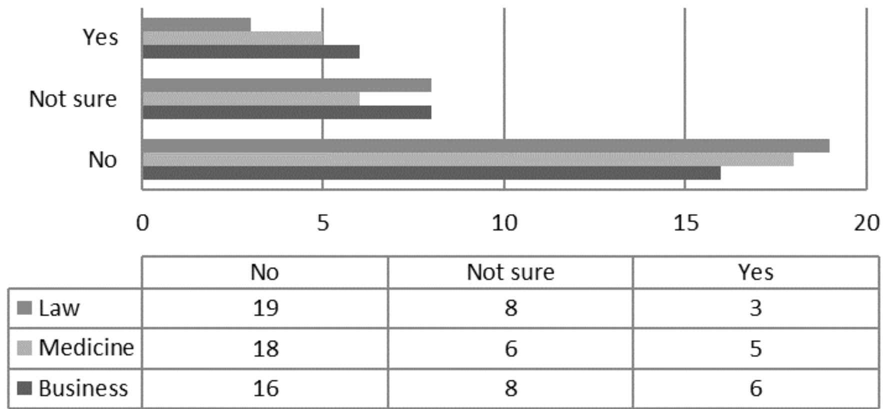
For the purpose of the research, *small favors* were defined as favors in the “grey zone” of what is allowed. As an example, this would include approving a loan that is 10% above the limit; allowing an extra 10% discount; giving a colleague a more favorable evaluation, and similar situations. The majority of the participants declared that they would not do such a favor (Graph 1), followed by the group that was not sure whether they would do such a favor. Only a small group of participants

openly declared that they would do such a favor for their supervisor. Afterward, participants in the research were asked to list the main reason why they would conduct a small favor to their direct supervisor. A presented in Graph 1, the majority of the business and law students would conduct a small favor for their supervisor because they would feel good knowing that they helped someone in need. On the other hand, the majority of the medical students indicated that they would do a small favor to their supervisor because they would expect that the supervisor will provide a better evaluation afterward.

Gender	
Female	78%
Male	22%
Ethnicity	
Macedonian	94%
Bosnian	3%
Other	3%
Age	
20-30	90,0%
31-40	6,50%
41-50	3,50%
Education	
Master	29%
Bachelor	71%
Monthly household income	
10,000-30,000	35%
30,000-50,000	26%
50,000+	39%

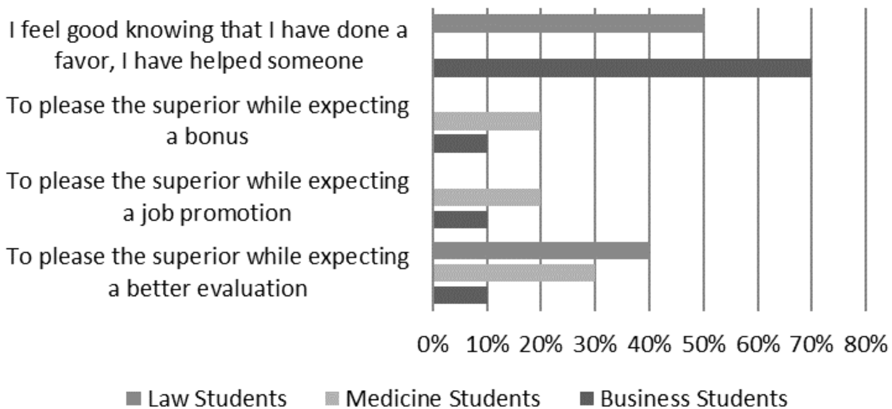
Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of research participants

Graph 1 - Would you conduct a small favor to your direct supervisor?



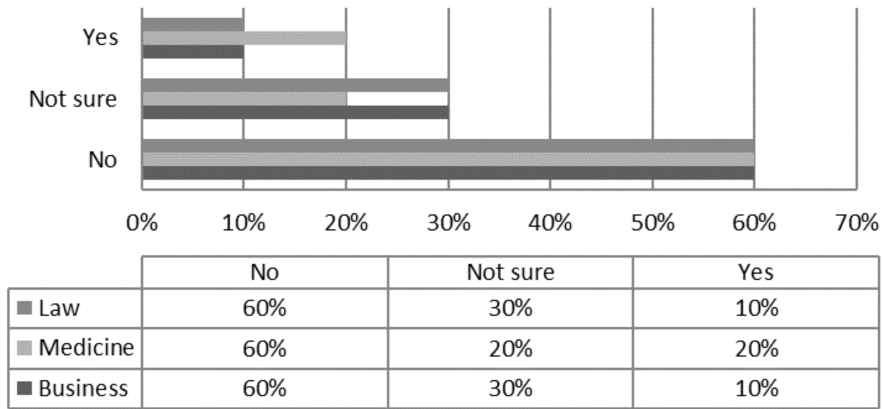
	No	Not sure	Yes
Law	19	8	3
Medicine	18	6	5
Business	16	8	6

Graph 2 - Why would you agree to do a small service for your supervisor?



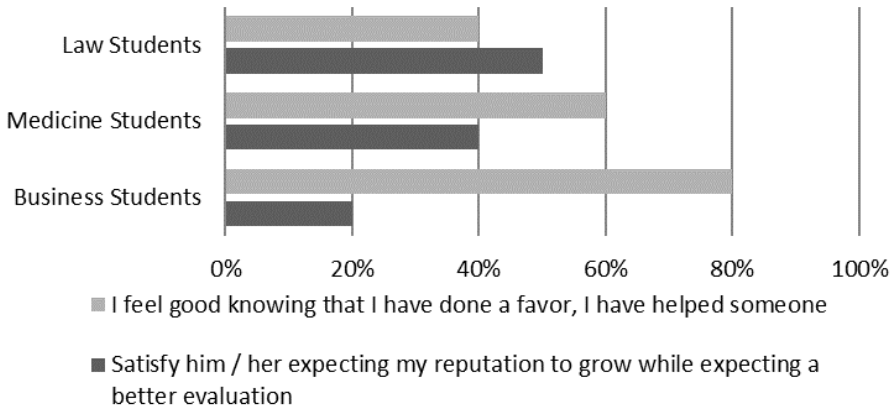
In the next segment of the questionnaire, the participants were asked whether they would do a small favor to a socially influential person who is not their direct supervisor. The majority of them stated that they would not do the favor (Graph 3), followed by the group that was not sure whether they would conduct the favor. An exception is the medical students' group, where the distribution of respondents who were not sure whether they would do the favor and the ones that declared that they would do the favor was equal (20% in each relevant group respectively).

Graph 3 - Would you conduct a small favor to a socially influential person (not your supervisor)?



	No	Not sure	Yes
Law	60%	30%	10%
Medicine	60%	20%	20%
Business	60%	30%	10%

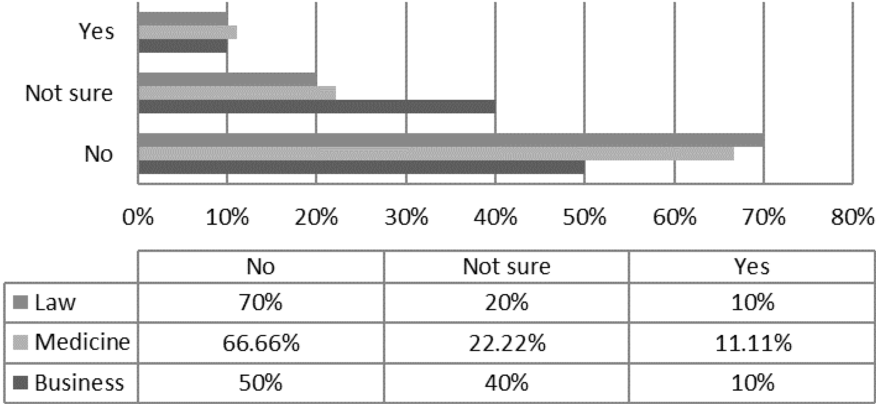
Graph 4- Why would you agree to do a small favor for a socially influential person (not your supervisor)?



The distribution of the answers of the participants changed when they were asked for the main reason they would do a small favor to a socially influential person who is not their supervisor. The majority of the law students indicated that they would do the favor because they would expect that this would positively influence their evaluation. On the other hand, 60% of medical and 80% of business students declared that the main reason why they would do a small favor to a socially influential person who is not their supervisor is that they would feel good knowing that they helped someone.

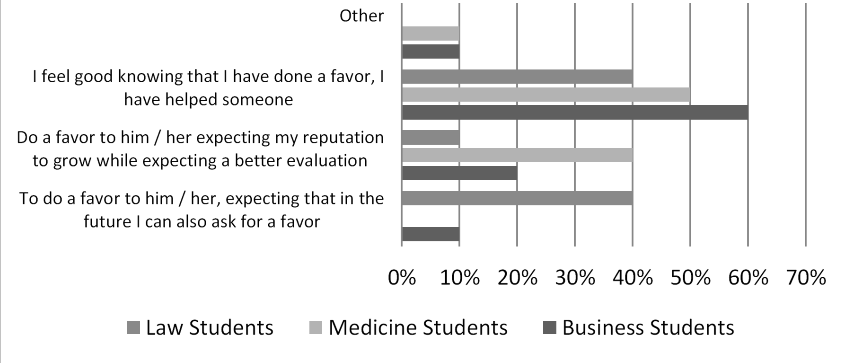
The final group of questions in this category concerned the wiliness and reasons to do a small favor to a politically influential person who is not the 'respondents' direct supervisor (Graph 5 and 6). As in the previous questions, the majority of the respondents declared that they would not do a small favor to a politically influential person. This was followed by the group that was not sure, while the least number of respondents declared that they would do such a favor.

Graph 5 - Would you conduct a small favor to a well-known and influential politician (not your supervisor)?



	No	Not sure	Yes
Law	70%	20%	10%
Medicine	66.66%	22.22%	11.11%
Business	50%	40%	10%

Graph 6 - Why would you agree to do a small favor for someone who is a well-known and influential politician (not your supervisor)?

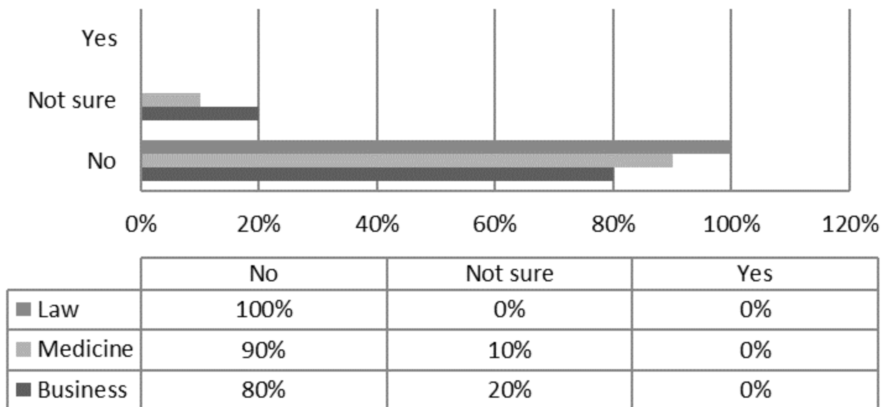


The main reason why they would conduct a small service to this group of individuals was that they would feel good knowing that they helped someone (60% of business students and 50% of medical students). The predominant reasons among the law students were “knowing that helped someone” (40%) and “to do a favor expecting that in the future you can also ask for a favor” (40%).

Significant favors

The second part of the questionnaire was designed to explore the wiliness and reasons behind doing significant favors to supervisors, socially and politically influential individuals. For the purpose of the research, a significant favor was defined as a favor that is classified in the “red zone” of what is legally allowed. Examples can include: approving and issuing a loan that is now in line with the defined procedures; promoting an employee contrary to rules and procedures of the organization; giving a positive evaluation that is not realistic, but its results can lead to a workplace promotion, etc. Compared to the distribution of responses in the previous section, a strong majority of the respondents replied that they would not do such a favor (100% of law students, 90% of medical students, and 80% of business students). None of the respondents declared that they would do such a favor.

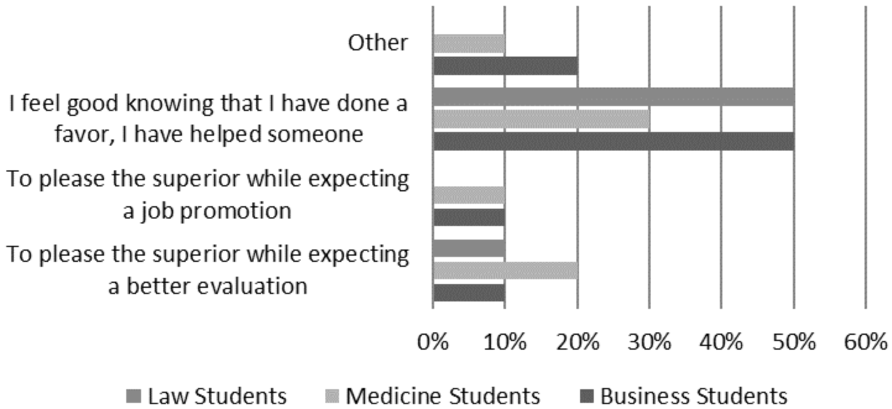
Graph 7 - Would you conduct a significant favor to your direct supervisor?



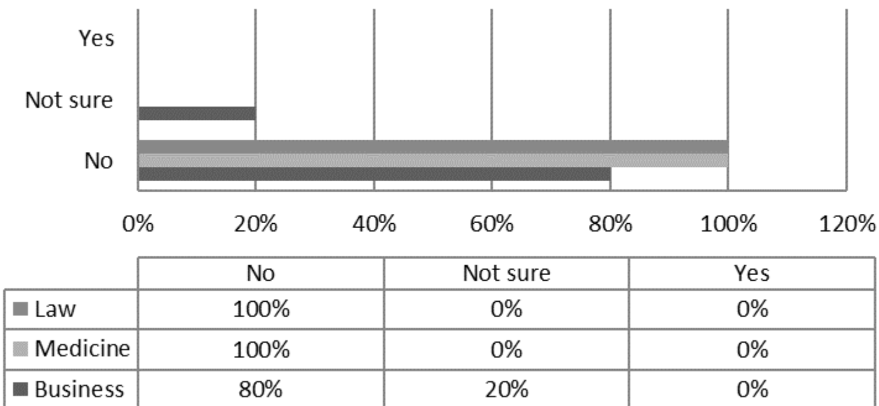
Despite the distribution of replies to the previous question, the respondents were nevertheless hypothetically asked why they would conduct such a significant favor to their supervisor (Graph 8). The majority

of the law and business students (50% in each respective group) declared that they would do this favor because they would feel good knowing that they helped someone. Regarding the medical students, 30% responded that they would do this favor to help someone, while 20% declared that they would do the favor to please the supervisor and have a better evaluation.

Graph 8 - Why would you agree to do a significant favor for your supervisor which is in the "red zone"?



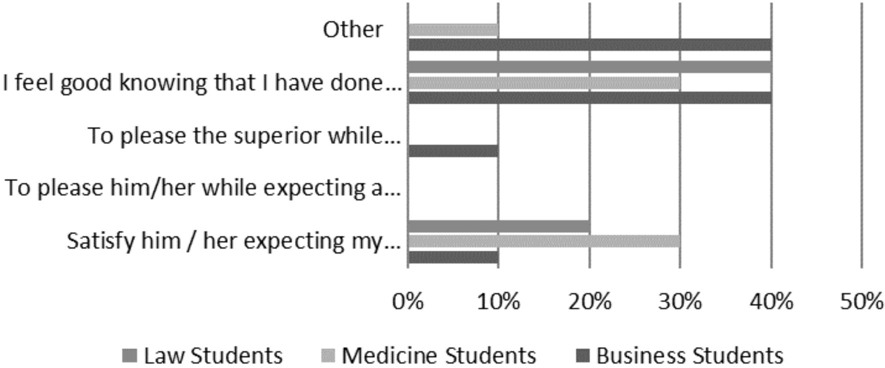
Graph 9 - Would you conduct a small favor to a socially influential person (not your supervisor)?



	No	Not sure	Yes
Law	100%	0%	0%
Medicine	100%	0%	0%
Business	80%	20%	0%

When asked whether they would do a significant favor to a socially influential person, the responses were even more negative. A significant portion of the respondents stated that they would not do such a favor (100% of medicine and law students and 80% of business students). Only 20%

of the business students declared that they were not sure. Furthermore, when they were asked about the reason why they would conduct such a favor to a socially influential person, the majority stated that it was because they would feel good knowing that they helped someone (Graph 10). A smaller portion of 30% of the medical students and 20% of the law students stated that they would do it expecting a positive influence on their evaluation.

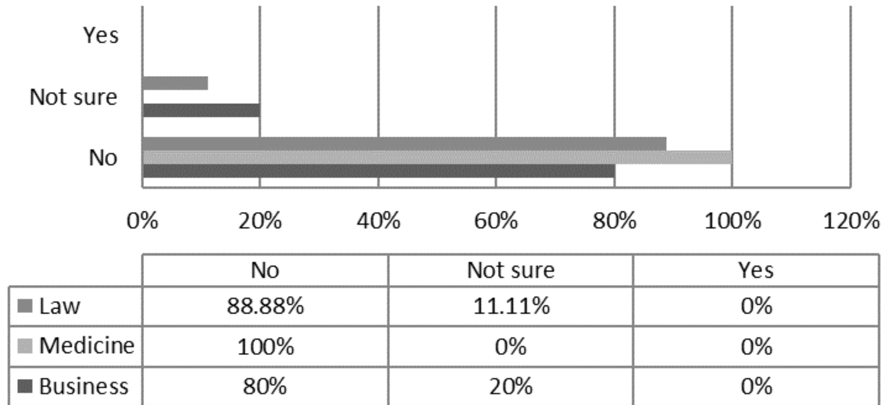


In the final set of questions from the questionnaire, the respondents were asked if they would conduct a significant favor to a well-known and influential politician and for what reasons. As with the previous cases, the majority stated that they would not do such a favor (89% of law, 100% of medical, and 80% of business students), while 11% of the law and 20% of the business students stated that they were not sure.

When asked about the reason for doing such a favor, the respondents declared that they would feel good knowing that they helped someone (60% of business, 50% of law, and 40% of medical students). The remaining respondents declared that they would do the favor expecting a positive influence on their future evaluation someone (20% of business, 20% of law, and 10% of medical students), while the remaining stated that they have some other reason for doing such a favor.

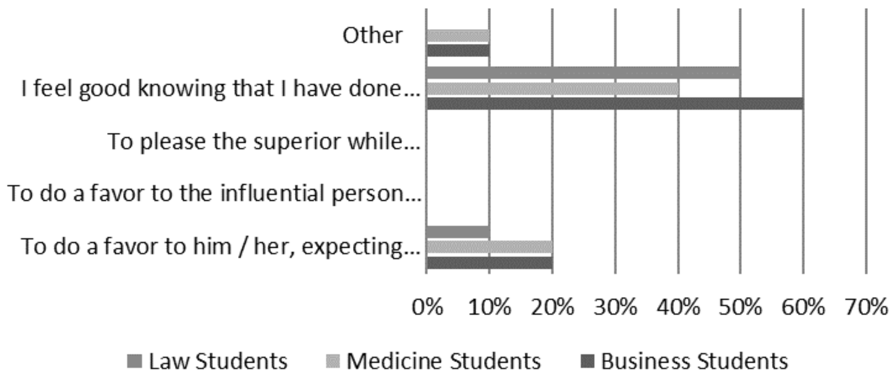
In order to gain a more detailed understanding of the research, a series of statistical tests were employed to test differences between groups in their intention of doing favors (small and significant) in general.

Graph 11 - Would you conduct a significant favor to a politically influential person (not your supervisor)?



	No	Not sure	Yes
Law	88.88%	11.11%	0%
Medicine	100%	0%	0%
Business	80%	20%	0%

Graph 12 - Why would you agree to do a significant favor to a well-known politician (not your direct superior)?



Differences between universities

The results suggested that there was no statistically significant difference in the intention of making small favors between respondents coming from different universities ($t=1.60$; $p>0.05$). However, a statistically significant difference was found in the intention of making significant favors between respondents coming from different universities ($t=6.71$; $p<0.05$).

Differences between age groups

The results from the ANOVA testing (Table 2) suggested that there was a significant difference between age groups in their intention of doing small favors (f=0.029061; p<0.05). No statistically significant difference was found in the intention of doing significant favors among respondents of different age groups (1.427821; p>0.05).

Small favors						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	1302	2	651	6,757785	0,029061	5,143253
Within Groups	578	6	96,33333			
Total	1880	8				
Significant favors						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	1268,222	2	634,1111	1,427821	0,311024	5,143253
Within Groups	2664,667	6	444,1111			
Total	3932,889	8				

Table 2. ANOVA results in the intention of making small and significant favors among students from different age

Differences between different income groups

The last investigation was concerned with the differences in the intention of doing small and significant services among respondents based on their monthly household income (Table 3). For both small and significant services, no statistically significant differences were found among groups based on their monthly household income (F=5.143253; p>0.05 and F=0.065907; p>0.05, respectively).

Gender differences

Finally, an F-test was conducted to explore any potential gender differences in the intention of doing small and significant favors. The results suggested that there is no significant statistical difference found regarding the gender of the participants (for small favors F=7.708674;p>0.05 and for significant favors F=7.708647;p>0.05)

Small favors						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	18	2	9	0,108	0,899333	5,143253
Within Groups	500	6	83,33333			
Total	518	8				
Significant favors						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	29,55556	2	14,77778	0,065907	0,936886	5,143253
Within Groups	1345,333	6	224,2222			
Total	1374,889	8				

Table 3. ANOVA results in the intention of making small and significant favors among students with different monthly household income

Small favors						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	726	1	726	4,426829	0,103186	7,708647
Within Groups	656	4	164			
Total	1382	5				

Significant favors						
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*F crit*
Between Groups	770,6667	1	770,6667	1,128906	0,347899	7,708647
Within Groups	2730,667	4	682,6667			
Total	3501,333	5				

Table 4. F-test results in differences in intention for conducting small and significant favors between genders

Discussion

The recent decades have witnessed the emergence of a substantial work of research into the areas of clientelism and corruption. However, although both issues have reemerged as relevant for economic, business, and political development, there has been little research on the potential for these issues in developing countries such as R.N. Macedonia. This paper contributes to the existing field of knowledge by providing the first quantitative investigation of the potential for

corruption and clientelism among young people in R.N.Macedonia. The results suggested that there was little difference in the intention and reasons for doing small favors to supervisor, socially influential person, or well-known and influential politician. The same was found for significant favors.

In order to investigate this phenomenon further, an investigation into certain socio-demographic characteristics of individuals was conducted. As it has been already demonstrated, attitudes towards corruption play a critical role in the persistence of corruption. Therefore the research investigated the potential for corruption and clientelism further by conducting statistical analyses to determine any statistically significant differences between different groups of participants.

The analyses suggested that there was a significant difference between age groups in their intention of doing small favors, with younger age groups being more prone to corruption and clientelism. This is in line with published relevant research in the area. A study by Mocan (2008) reached a similar finding with individuals who are 20–39 years of age are more likely to bribe than older individuals and those younger than 20. A study done by Torgler and Valev (2006) used data from eight Western European countries from the World Values Survey and the European Values Survey that span the period from 1981 to 1999 to distinguish between an age effect and a cohort effect. The results suggest that there is a strong age effect and no cohort effect on corruption. This study found that individuals that are between 30 and 60 are more likely to justify corruption compared to their younger counterparts. A more closely related article to the Balkans was a study by Magnafic and Veselinovic (2020). The study used data from the National Survey of 'Citizens' Perceptions in Bosnia-Herzegovina to investigate the determinants of offering a bribe in the form of money, gifts, or services to medical personnel, professors, judicial personnel, police officers, and public servants. The research showed that corruption is a widespread phenomenon in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and more educated people, people living in urban areas, young people, and individuals with higher incomes are more likely to engage in bribery in several sectors. The findings that concern the role of income differed from the findings of this study which suggested that for both small and significant services, no statistically significant differences were found in the intention for conducting these favors between groups based on their monthly household income. However, in the literature, income remains an important micro-level predictor of corruption and clientelism. In fact, some studies find that individuals that are rich and have higher incomes

are more likely to engage in bribery and clientelism compared to other individuals (Mocan, 2008; Hunt and Laszlo, 2012; Ivlevs & Hinks, 2015). Another group of studies found that poor individuals are more likely to engage in clientelism and corruption (Razafindrakoto and Roubaud, 2007; Islam and Lee, 2016).

Concerning gender differences in the intention of doing small and significant favors, no statistically significant difference between groups was found. This is in line with the existing literature. A recent study based on experimental data collected in Australia (Melbourne), India (Delhi), Indonesia (Jakarta) and Singapore, showed that while women in Australia are less tolerant of corruption than men in Australia, there are no significant gender differences in attitudes towards corruption in India, Indonesia and Singapore (Alatas et al, 2009). However, other studies differ in this opinion. For example, there is a significant number of studies that suggest that men are more prone to engage and/or justify corruption (Mocan, 2008; Razafindrakoto and Roubaud, 2007, Torgler and Valev, 2006) because men are more engaged in the labor market compared to women and therefore more exposed to the potential for bribery and clientelism by government officials. Gutmann et al.(2014) reported that women demonstrate a higher level of corruption perception.

Limitation of the research

There are a few limitations to this study. First, due to the coronavirus pandemic as well as the sensitivity of the questions, the study used convenience sampling. This sampling carries the risk of not being representative of the general population. Furthermore, all participants were selected from the rows of public and private universities. This limits the investigation only to a certain sub-population that participates in the corruption and clientelism activities; however not representative in opinion to the general population is. Third, the survey was administered online. Although all measures were undertaken to preserve anonymity, still a social-desirability bias is plausible in this situation due to the sensitivity of the questions and the cultural distrust in the privacy of the internet. Finally, the study was cross-sectional, and future research should focus on longitudinal studies as especially useful in researching this phenomenon.

Conclusion

This paper contributes to the existing field of knowledge by providing the first quantitative investigation of the potential for corruption and clientelism among young people in R.N. Macedonia. The provided results contribute to the more in-depth understanding of the micro-level variables that may determine corruption and clientelism among future generations. However, further research is required in order to provide an increased understanding of the short and long-term consequences of these actions as well as develop preventive measures to minimize their negative impact.

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Political Clientelism and Private Security Sector in Serbia

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Abstract

The private security sector began to develop in Serbia during the 1990s. Along with the formation of the neo-patrimonial regime in the 1990s, followed by gradual stabilization of political clientelism after the year 2000, the private security sector developed through privatization processes, the establishment of domestic private security companies (sometimes in conjunction with organized crime or with the state security apparatus), but also through the development of the market by the inflow of international corporations. In this paper, we will try to examine how the system of political clientelism shaped the private security sector in Serbia. The main thesis is that privatization processes and the normative framework of public procurements, whose manifest goal was to prevent corruption, were the key factors that shaped the development of the private security sector in Serbia on a clientelist basis, causing serious market distortions. Furthermore, we will try to explore whether new forms of clientelist relations are being formed within this sector. The paper will be based on the analysis of the relevant normative framework and contextual factors crucial for the development of the private security sector in Serbia, supplemented by the secondary analysis of interview data, gathered from the actors belonging to this sector, and conducted and published by researchers of Belgrade Center for Security Policy.

Keywords: private security sector, clientelism, state-capture, Serbia

Introduction

Several studies (Cvejić et al, 2016; Antonić 1993, 2006; Arandarenko 1995, 2000; Pešić 2007; Cvetičanin, Popovikj and Jovanović 2019; Radeljić and Đorđević 2020) have demonstrated how the system of clientelist relations had been shaped in Serbia during the post-socialist period and what were its main characteristics. Furthermore, a number of authors (Kmezić and Bieber 2017; Bliznakovski, Gjuzelov and Popovikj 2017; Brković 2017; Radeljić and Đorđević 2020) showed that similar systems of informal, clientelist relations characterize other post-socialist societies in South-Eastern Europe (North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo*, Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc.). There are a number of explanations on why are post-socialist societies more susceptible to the development of clientelist relations (Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1997; Grodeland 2007; Aliyev 2015): while some point to the importance of historical heritage in the development of clientelism (although there is no agreement on whether the effect of long-lasting historical processes and structures is crucial or the effect of socialist heritage - Polese and Rogers 2011), others emphasize the delayed democratization processes within the Eastern Bloc, during which weak political institutions enabled the development of clientelist relations and asymmetrical exchange of resources between various actors (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007).

Given the existing studies, which have largely explored the nature and forms of clientelist relations in Serbia in general, the aim of this text is to point out how the private security sector in Serbia has been shaped in a specific way, precisely thanks to clientelist relations. The paper will be based on the analysis of the relevant normative framework and contextual factors crucial for the development of the private security sector in Serbia, supplemented by the secondary analysis of interview data, gathered from the actors belonging to this sector, and conducted and published by researchers of Belgrade Center for Security Policy.

Conceptual framework

There are a number of concepts used to encompass and describe the nature of the system that rests on the extraction of (public) assets or on gaining different benefits through an asymmetrical exchange of resources between power holders and other relevant/interested stakeholders (economic elites, entrepreneurs, organized criminal groups, voters, ordinary citizens, etc.): political capitalism (Kolko 1963; Weber 1978; Holcombe 2018), party patronage (Kopecky and Sherlis

2008; Kopecky and Spirova 2011), informality (Nee and Ingram 1998; Misztal 2000; Helmke and Levitsky 2004), political clientelism (Hopkin 2006; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Van Biezen and Kopecky 2007; Chavance 2008; Muno 2010; Hicken 2011), state capture (Hellman, Jones and Kaufmann 2000), neopatrimonialism (Eisenstadt 1973; Bratton and van de Walle 1997), etc. Although most of these concepts point to similar phenomena, their scope and focus are somewhat different. In this paper, we will try to analyze distinctive characteristics of the private security sector in Serbia, mainly relying on the concepts of political clientelism and state capture.

Political clientelism and party patronage are sometimes used as synonyms (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). However, some authors (Hicken 2011) point out that clientelism represents a much broader phenomenon than party patronage. More precisely, party patronage is usually defined as an exchange of public sector jobs for political support (Piatonni 2001); or, more broadly, as the use of resources and benefits that flow from public office (Stokes 2007). Whether we accept the narrow or expanded definition, they both assume that within patronage relations, patrons hold public positions or have access to state resources. In clientelism, however, patrons may or may not be officeholders and may or may not have access to state resources. Therefore, means of exchange here could be much broader than state resources (for example, they may include alternative private resources or party resources, etc.) (Hicken 2011).

Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007:7) define clientelism as a system of relations that rests on different types of exchanges between political parties and other agents, wherein one side provides benefits that the other side seeks. Although the exchange is focused on particular types of goods and assets, they argue that feasibility and persistence of clientelist reciprocity are not determined by the types of goods exchanged. Clientelist exchange often implies uneven distribution of resources which is related to uneven distribution of power, even when the actors in exchange consciously accept the terms of exchange (Kopecky and Sherlis,2008). Kitschelt (2000) and Hicken (2011) indicate that clientelist relations can take various forms: in traditional societies, they appear as direct, dyadic, face-to-face relations, while modern clientelism emerges as a hierarchical network in which there are a number of intermediaries and brokers between the patrons and the clients, i.e., where these relations are often impersonal or even institutionalized (see also in: Pešić and Stanojević 2016).

Political clientelism can emerge in different political settings - from autocratic to democratic. However, as Hicken (2011) notices, the nature

of the political environment can influence the functions and the scope of clientelism in different types of regimes: in democracies, clientelism may be instrumental in building loyal networks of supporters through the distribution of rents to targeted groups; in autocracies, on the other hand, it could lead to the creation of socio-economic dependence on the regime or to political subservience (predatory clientelism, see in: Grzymala-Busse 2008).

In this paper, we will broadly define political clientelism as a system of relations that invokes asymmetrical, contingent, and targeted distribution of selected goods and services by the power holders that have access to state (public) resources to different actors interested in these resources, in exchange for their loyalty (Gryzmala-Busse 2008). Clientelism appears within Serbian society in an oligopolistic political context (i.e., competitive authoritarianism – Vladisavljević 2010), wherein political parties are competing over public resources in order to gain and sustain power positions, relying on the networks of loyal collective or individual clients (economic elites, entrepreneurs, voters, different institutions, media, professional associations or interest groups, etc.). The mechanism of clientelist exchange provides parties in power a strong advantage in political competition.

While political clientelism relates to the type of relationship established between political power holders and other relevant actors, the term state capture indicates the relationship of political power holders to public resources, i.e., the control and unequal and targeted redistribution of public resources by political actors, whether for gaining private or political (party) benefit (Gryzmala-Busse 2008; Pavlović 2020). Capturing the state does not necessarily lead to the weakening of the state; namely, the extraction of public resources may increase the power of those holding office by reducing the degree and scope of regulation and supervision of the use of public funds, but at the same time it can lead to the creation of new rules on redistribution, budget allocation, and authority (Gryzmala-Busse 2008). In other words, clientelism does not necessarily occur only where the state is weak, but on the contrary, the creation of specific institutions can serve the extractive goals of power holders, sometimes as an unintended consequence (Tilly 1992). This may result in a situation where the party takes over the administrative functions of resource redistribution and thus becomes an agent of the welfare state, but also in a situation where the holders of power deliberately weaken state institutions, increasing the costs of their own descent from power (Gryzmala-Busse 2008).

In the literature, we come across two conceptions of state capture (Pavlović 2020): the first, called regulatory (or corporate) capture (Stigler 1971), is related to capturing the process of business regulation, where companies and economic elites corruptly influence decision-makers (holders of political power) in order to change the legal environment in their favor. This model is closely related to Holcombe's (2018) conception of the modern form of political capitalism. The second model is political and refers to the extraction of public resources for political purposes. The prime goal is not necessarily the personal enrichment of the holders of political power but the financing of the political machinery that brings a significant advantage in the election game. Clientelism appears here as one of the main mechanisms of capturing the state (through party employment or various mechanisms of extracting public resources to finance campaigns). One of the epiphenomena of this process can be the personal enrichment of holders of political power, economic elites, or other actors associated with the ruling parties.

Shaping of the private security sector in Serbia's transitional and post-transitional contexts

Serbia's post-socialist transformation was specific in comparison to other Eastern and Central European countries. After the reformed communists won the first multi-party elections in Serbia and after (formally) pluralist political institutions, the market economy and private ownership were reinstated, the disintegration of the common state (Yugoslavia) in series of civic wars (followed by economic sanctions imposed by the UN) ended up in one of the slowest post-socialist transformations in Europe. The former socialist elite swiftly managed to convert its political resources into interlocked positions of political and economic dominance that was used to block the transformation, postpone the development of the market economy and slow down privatization processes (Lazić 2011; Babović, Cvejić and Pešić 2016). The concentrated control over political and economic resources enabled the elite members to build up new institutional frameworks that very much relied on clientelist networks. This phase, usually referred to as the phase of "blocked transformation" (Lazić 2000), has been characterized by several important features: a) political system that was formally constituted as pluralist parliamentary democracy, but actually functioning as autocracy with concentrated and centralized power in the hands of a small group of ruling party members distributing privileges to loyal party members or entrepreneurs (paternalistic, semi-

authoritarian regime - Cohen 1997; political capitalism - Antonić 1993; competitive authoritarianism - Vladisavljević 2010); b) political elite controlling the economic resources by postponement of privatization processes, creation of inter-organizational networks, co-option of the large entrepreneurs into political power circles; c) political elite control over institutions and organizations necessary for interest articulation of autonomous social groups (media, universities, trade-unions, social movements, etc.); d) informal economy that served as a mechanism of pacification of lower social strata whose socio-economic position deteriorated during PST, but also as a powerful channel for elite members to accumulate their economic wealth (often involving illegal, semi-legal or war-related activities); e) isolation from international community which prevented the impact of external transformation influences, but also enabled the creation of specific paternalistic relationship between elite members and lower social strata (through the mechanism of state redistribution, but also involving different hegemonic means, such as nationalist mobilization) (Babović, Cvejić and Pešić 2016: 37-38).

During this phase, which roughly ended with regime change in 2000, the private security sector slowly started to emerge. Up to 1993, security services other than military, police, and intelligence were regulated by the provisions of the 1974 Law on Social Self-protection, which introduced "industrial militia", a predecessor of private security companies. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Serbian parliament abolished a number of laws from the period of socialism, and among them was the Law on Societal Self-Protection. However, without proper legislation, this auxiliary force continued to exist in accordance with market demands. Until 2013, when the first version of the Law on Private Security was adopted, this emerging sector was shaped by market demands and piecemeal regulated by dozen or more normative acts (Unijat, Petrović and Milošević 2008).

The emergence of the first companies that offer security services on the market (whether private or state-owned) can be traced to the early 1990s, as the 1990 Constitution recognized private property ownership and equalized it with other forms of ownership - state and social. At that time, the first companies were formed by former members of the security apparatus. The other characteristic legacy of the "self-protection concept" was the existence of (state-owned) companies that started to operate on the market, competing for jobs in a new market environment. Nevertheless, during the last decade of the XX century, there were few incentives for the development of this sector, and it merely existed

without a significant growth rate. The state institutions were protected by the state apparatus of force, while the underdeveloped private sector fed this sector with insufficient needs. Furthermore, criminal clans, often associated with the State Security and the Police, were imposing their services to the private sector by offering protection that could not be evaded without costs.

The second phase of PST started after the regime change in 2000 when Milošević's regime was dismantled by a broad coalition of opposition parties. This phase is usually referred to as "unblocked transformation" (Lazić 2011) and is marked by the attempts of the new elites to establish institutions on somewhat different foundations in order to catch up with other post-socialist societies in the processes of transformation. Institutions of parliamentary democracy, however, proved to be rather weak, so that frequent premature elections, shifting coalitions, and changes in the balance of power were the main characteristics of this phase. Furthermore, after the Serbian Progressive Party won the elections in 2012, Serbia is being faced with declining media freedom, serious doubts in the fairness of election processes, and the rise of populism (Pavlović and Todosijević 2017).

Elites that came at power after the year 2000 started implementing neoliberal economic reforms: the privatization processes gain new impetus with the Law on privatization in 2001; the public sector has been restructured, with the obligation of singling out those activities that were not the main activity of the companies (mainly security and maintenance services) before the privatization; macroeconomic stability has been achieved and inflation put under control.

The lack of political stability, absence of clear ideological and political programs, non-principal coalitions, severe struggles of political parties overpower and public resources, etc., enabled the flourishing of the new forms of political clientelism; namely, both new political elites and their political opponents, pretendants at power, desperately needed financial contribution from the new economic elites which in turn required and received a number of benefits - from the ability to influence legislative, through confidential information on tenders, to the increasing possibilities to use public resources through contracts with the state (Stanojević, Babović and Gundogan 2016). At the same time, the clientelist system spilled over to the electorate, where political parties that had access to public resources served as the key substitutes for the declining welfare state.

The turning point in the post-Milošević era was the year 2012 when the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) won the elections and was successful in keeping it since then. Despite coming to power in the midst of the recession caused by the economic crises, SNS nevertheless continued to implement neoliberal reforms: the new (neoliberal) Labor Law was billed in 2014, employment in the public sector was banned, austerity measures implemented, etc. Although it came to power on the promise of dealing with the problems of corruption, the new government continued to maintain old clientelist practices and mechanisms (Stanojević, Babović and Gundogan 2016). At the same time, due to demands coming from the EU, a number of anti-corruption laws and regulations were enacted, which, as we will show later, had exactly the opposite effect from intended - new patterns and mechanisms of clientelist relations emerged. Therefore, this phase could be referred to as the phase of consolidated clientelism.

The period of post-socialist transformation and consolidation of capitalism in Serbia has been characterized by two patterns of state-capture that dominated in different phases. According to Pavlović (2020: 9; see also Pešić and Cvejić 2016), during the first decade (in the 1990s), marked by authoritarian Milošević's rule, the political model of state capture has been prevailing; the phase of dynamic economic reforms coupled with political instability after the year 2000 brought about the domination of corporate model of state capture when strengthened economic elites had the dominant influence over political parties at power on creating favorable legal and regulatory arrangements; finally, during the third phase, when financial strength of economic elites was seriously undermined by the economic recession that started in 2008 and when Serbian Progressive Party took over the control over state institutions (2012), the political model of state capture again started to prevail, shifting the center of the power into the political arena.

During the second phase, which started in 2000, the initial shift of powers gave a boost to economic transformation, especially with the acceleration of privatization processes. The new Law on Privatization (2001) envisaged the restructuration of public companies prior to their privatization with the extraction of secondary services (such as protection or sanitary services) into subsidiary companies. This provision had its effect on the development of the private security sector. Namely, daughter companies of large public enterprises that provided security services were granted exclusive contracts with their mother companies for several years, often remaining non-privatized. Bearing in mind that public companies had the largest network of infrastructural facilities,

generating a significant share of market demands for security services, it is no wonder that “daughter” service companies numbered almost one-fifth of private security staff in the first decade of 2000 (Milošević and Petrović 2016).

The second incentive for the development of the sector stemmed from the privatization of the large state banks and from the penetration of the foreign banks (but also other multinational companies) into the market. This placed the commercial sector in demand for security services, and those needs could not be met by either state-owned service companies or by criminalized security companies. As the privatization processes progressed and the commercial sector developed in the mid-2000, the private security sector started to develop rapidly. Several multinational private security companies, mainly operating within the private sector, also entered the market.

The more intense opening of the public sector for private security services came rather late, and it was twofold: on one side, the Law on Public Procurements (2012) obliged the public sector to transparent public announcements for the bids; on the other side, preferential contracts of “service” companies with public entities ceased, so that private security companies could compete for contracts with large public systems. It was estimated that in 2014 around 45% of contracts that private security companies entered into were contracted with the public sector and that around 80% of their staff worked in the provision of security for public institutions (Petrović and Milošević 2017:14).

However, despite these changes, legal regulation of the sector was absent until 2013, when the Law on Private Security was passed. Although the managerial staff of those companies mainly arose from police or army ranks, their employees were of diverse occupational background, lacking proper professional qualifications, and recruited from the vast reserved army of workforce created after the privatization processes. Professional standards were lacking, as was the employment status of private security staff, who occupied the bottom levels of wages within the commercial sector.

Characteristics of clientelist relations between power holders and private security sector after 2000

Given the fact that the private security sector started to develop more rapidly after the year 2000, we will focus in this paper on patterns and specificities of clientelist relations between political power holders

and actors belonging to this sector in this phase of post-socialist transformation. When mapping the key patterns of clientelism, we will rely on: a. the analysis of normative framework that manifestly or latently brought about and facilitated these types of relations, but also on b. secondary analysis of qualitative empirical data gathered by the researchers of Belgrade Center for Security Policy. The thesis that we want to explore in this paper is that the private security sector in Serbia has been shaped by clientelist relations in relation to several factors: the lack of proper regulation; expansion of the sector that was related to the opening of the public sector to private security companies; normative regulations, initially aimed at prevention of the extraction of public resources (Law on public procurements and employment of control mechanisms), paradoxically, contributed to the formation of new (more refined) mechanisms of clientelist relations; and finally, neoliberal labor legislation (Labor Law and Agency Employment Law) provided support to the existing patterns of clientelism and in creating the new ones.

Normative framework

In the previous section of the paper, we outlined specific characteristics of the development of the private security sector. Hence, in this section, we will deal with the normative framework that enabled the flourishing of clientelist relations between power holders and actors coming from this sector. We will not go much wrong, saying that preconditions for the current patterns of clientelist relations are set up within the normative framework.

As it was already said, one of the turning points in the development of the sector was related to the Privatization Law[1] (2001) that envisaged restructuring of public companies prior to privatization and extraction of secondary activities into separate (daughter) companies. In this way, public companies were obliged to subcontract other companies for the security and cleaning services, and therefore this sector provided (limited) incentives for the growth of private security companies. These limitations stemmed from the fact that large public companies that previously were obliged to extract sanitary and security services into daughter service companies had made preferential contracts with those companies, remaining closed for services offered at the market.

1 Law on Privatization, Official Gazette RS 83/2014, 46/2015, 112/2015 and 20/2016 - authentic interpretation

Furthermore, the umbrella law that defines criteria for practicing private security and defines control mechanisms - the Law on Private Security[2] - has been amended rather late, in 2013, leaving the sector poorly regulated. The key issues arising from the lack of regulation were the poor professionalization of the services, eradication of companies that operated illegally, and the employees' status within the sector. This means that control over the companies operating within the sector was rather weak and divided between various institutions that controlled only those segments of the activities that they were entitled to - Labor Inspectorate, for example, controlled contracts of the employees and safety at work, whereas the Ministry of Interior controlled possession of firearms. Practicing private security, however, was never controlled. The 2013 Law imposed criteria for licensing managers and employees of PSC alongside criteria for establishing training centers. The aim of the Law and several other bylaws was to standardize the security staff's training, establish the minimal level of qualifications necessary for employees in the sector, and, among other things, to impose the obligation of security screening of employees for carrying firearms. The Law envisaged that people with criminal files could not work as security staff; however, it failed to impose the same limitation to owners of these companies (some of whom were convicted for criminal activities). Most importantly, the Law foresaw the establishment of training centers, which started to flourish soon after the Law was introduced, since it was estimated that around 40 000 people employed within the sector needed training necessary for obtaining licenses granted by the Ministry of Interior Affairs (Petrović and Milošević 2015a). However, a number of these training centers were founded by retired police ranks, and in some cases, these centers informally advocated benefits for their trainees because of the close connections with the police (Petrović and Milošević 2015b). In this way, the whole process of licensing PSCs became a field in which potentially corruptive practices developed.

Another set of laws that enabled the flourishing of clientelism and extraction of public assets were laws on public procurements. These laws have been changing since the year 2000, and each change brought about a new mechanism of clientelism. Since the private security sector largely developed thanks to contracts with public enterprises, these legal solutions significantly defined the private security market and the relations established between companies operating within it and power holders that had access to public assets.

2 Law on Private Security, Official Gazette RS 104/2013, 42/2015 and 87/2018

The Law on Public Procurements from 2002[3] envisaged two principles of procurements - open and restrictive calls. The latter principle of restrictive calls was interesting since it was abundantly used for the purpose of extracting public funds. Namely, the Law enabled public entities to set the criteria in advance and invite only selected companies for the bids if the provision of services can be offered only by a limited number of companies. In this way, power-holders could use this procedure in order to set criteria that only certain companies could meet, and often these were the companies that maintained close ties with political parties at power.

The second Law on Public Procurements from 2008[4] pre-defined provisions of private security service as small value procurements, opening the doors to direct agreements between public entities and private security companies. The Law enabled the flourishing of clientelism between parties at power and PSCs since the contracting authority was only obliged to provide three bids at the call, two of which would usually be fictitious (also provided by privileged companies related to the parties at power or as a result of previous agreements of PSCs on the division of the market and contracts with public entities). This mechanism enabled the creation of informal clusters of privileged companies (affiliated to the parties at power) that participated in the public procurement procedures, wherein one company wins the contract while the other two provide fictitious bids. In this way, the contracts with public entities were divided between "party companies".

The 2012 Law on Public Procurements[5] was passed as the result of external pressures to harmonize domestic legislation with European regulation and to reduce opportunities for corrupt practices. The Law introduced new patterns of acquisition of private security services. These services were no longer treated as small value procurements, but instead, two criteria for acquiring such services were envisaged: the lowest price and the most cost-effective offer. Although the new Law aimed to break the vicious circle in which party-affiliated companies were granted contracts with the public sector and open the market for other companies, it introduced a number of practices that further enabled the extraction of public assets (Milošević 2015). Namely, despite the fact that the Law provided for two public procurement criteria, in practice, the most cost-effective offer criterion was bypassed so that the higher weight carried the criterion of the lowest price. "Fitting into the lowest price" produced

3 The Public Procurement Law, Official Gazette RS No. 39/2002.

4 The Public Procurement Law, Official Gazette RS No. 116/2008.

5 The Public Procurement Law, Official Gazette RS 124/2012 and 14/2015.

new patterns of clientelism that included selective usage of control mechanisms: PSCs affiliated with parties at power were granted with contracts offering underpaid services, while selective usage of control mechanisms enabled them to compensate for the loss by reducing labor costs and violating labor rights, by partially delivering the contracted services or by subsequently increasing the price of services by annexing the contracts.

Creative interpretations of the Public Procurement Law and selective use of control mechanisms are further supported by the Labor Law of 2014[6] and the Law on Agency employment of 2019[7]. Namely, the Labor Law of 2014 provided for the possibility of hiring workers on the basis of vocational training contracts. In this way, private security companies hired a significant part of the workforce, given that such contracts did not provide for the obligation to pay the statutory minimum wage but compensation that was often below the minimum wage. It is estimated that in 2015, 23% of the workforce in the private security sector was hired under this type of contract, which allowed companies to significantly reduce labor costs and compete for contracts with public entities fitting into the lowest price criterion (Petrović and Milošević, 2016:95). This type of practice was discontinued only with the implementation of the Law on Private Security, which provided obligatory licensing and training of private security staff (however, although the Law was passed in 2013, the deadline for completing the licensing process was extended to 2016). Furthermore, the Law defined the competences of the Labor Inspectorate, whose role was to control the employment contracts of employees. Since inspectors' working hours ended during the day, companies used this circumstance by hiring staff with valid work contracts, but not necessarily with licenses, during day shifts (when controls of Labor Inspectorate were possible), and workers with licenses, but not necessarily with proper contracts, during night shifts, when there were no Labor Inspectorate controls, but only license control performed by the police officers (Milošević 2020). In addition, the data show (Petrović and Milošević 2015a) that the Labor Inspectorate exercised selective control over companies, avoiding controlling those companies associated with the parties at power.

The Law on Agency Employment (2019) further cemented the existing clientelist practices by enabling companies to lease their staff from agencies, i.e., to compete and win contracts with public companies even

6 Labor Law, Official Gazette RS 24/2005, 61/2005, 54/2009, 32/2013, 75/2014, 13/2017 - CC decision, 113/2017 and 95/2018 - authentic interpretation.

7 Law on Agency Employment, Official Gazette RS 86/2019.

when they did not have the necessary human resources. In this way, newly formed firms affiliated with the parties at power obtained contracts with public enterprises despite having not previously had sufficient capacity. Also, although the Law provided that companies could lease up to 30% of the workforce from the agencies, this provision did not apply to employed workers who had permanent contracts with the agency, which potentially increased the possible share of leased labor (Milošević 2020; see also: Reljanović 2019).

Clientelism in Practice

The previous chapter outlined the normative framework that favored the development of clientelism between political power holders and private security sector actors. In this part of the paper, we will point out the patterns of clientelism based on the secondary analysis of empirical data collected by researchers from the Belgrade Center for Security Policy (Unijat, Petrović and Milošević 2008; Petrović and Milošević 2015a; Petrović and Milošević 2015b; Petrović 2016; Milošević 2020). In addition, we will point out the changes in the mechanisms of extraction of resources from the public sector and the way in which various normative solutions were (mis)used in order to establish and maintain clientelist relations.

Generally, we could distinguish two patterns of clientelist mechanisms that roughly coincide with two already outlined types of state-capture (corporate and political). The first one can be defined as "direct clientelism" where public entities, under the control of the ruling parties, award contracts to preferred private security companies affiliated with party structures, on the basis of setting up criteria at the tenders that only selected companies could meet (until 2008)[8], or by securing at least three bids (some of which were often fictitious), after 2008 (Petrović and Milošević 2017). In return, financial contribution to the party was expected, as well as employment of the party staff or some other type of compensation. This type of clientelism bloomed until 2012, when the regulatory framework

8 In the study on private security companies (Unijat, Petrović and Milošević 2008:62), a statement of respondent coming from a smaller private security company testifies in favour of this insight: *"If one analyzes tenders in the state or public sector, one will see that certain items appear there and each time a new item appears after the tender is announced. So, there is no continuity of criteria. Why are the criteria in the public tenders changing? What counts: the number of guns in the company, the number of radio stations, why is the number of employees needed as a decisive factor for the quality of work? If you are announcing a tender for 50 positions, then why is it important if the company has 1000 workers, which is 20 times bigger than what you are announcing?"*

enabled such practices. The second type is a "complex" form of clientelism that involves a larger number of actors and is developed due to different incentives: normative, political, and market. The normative incentive stemmed from the 2012 Law on Public Procurements, initially designed to reduce corruptive practices; political incentive came from the major shift of parties at power, at central and local levels; finally, the market incentive came from the cessation of preferential contracts of service companies with their mother companies and opening of the public entities to a wider pool of private security companies (Milošević 2020).

The phase in which "direct clientelism" prevailed has been marked by the introduction of the practice of the founding-party affiliated security companies, mostly led by the people that were members of the parties at power, who expanded their business through contracts with the public entities (Petrović and Milošević 2015a:42-46). During this phase, we have witnessed the growth of such companies and their expansion in the market. With the change of parties at power, the "old" party affiliated security companies would lose their contracts with public entities, and the "new" companies (usually affiliated with the "new" power holders) would be awarded these contracts. Often, "new" companies would lack human resources or capacities to fulfill their contractual obligations; however, their skyrocketed growth in staff members and other resources was undeniable after the contracts with the public sector were won. After the power shift (at central and local levels) and loss of contracts with public entities, party affiliated private security companies would usually be taken over by multinational companies, mostly due to their other contracts with private sector companies and remaining contracts with the public sector, or they would shut down their businesses (Petrović and Milošević 2015a: 41,47).

To understand why contracts with the public sector are relevant for the development of clientelist relations, we have to understand the role of control mechanisms. Namely, in providing security services to the private sector, private security companies are always under the supervision of professional security managers of their clients, who control the quality of the service and qualifications of security personnel. However, this is not always the case with services provided to public companies since, most of the time, they do not have security managers or employees competent for performing supervision of the quality of these services. Therefore, compliance with the contract terms is rarely controlled. In line with this is the statement of the manager of a private security company (Petrović and Milošević 2015a:15): *"The state is late with the*

payment, but in the end, it always pays. At the same time, I can put the worst security worker to secure the state facility. This is not possible with a private company because they are constantly asking questions and controlling. Still, they are looking for some quality".

In addition to that, public procurement officers are rarely qualified to assess the necessary number of security staff to be contracted or to evaluate a fair price for these services. These circumstances would often open up the space for bidding companies to overblow the number of personnel necessary for providing the service. Since the control is poor, the contracted number of personnel is often not fully engaged, so that public funds are extracted based on the difference between the contracted number of staff and the one that is actually engaged. It is estimated that in 2014, around 45% of contracts private security companies had signed were with the public sector (Petrović and Milošević 2017:11).

The second type, which we named a "complex" form of clientelism, started to shape after the Serbian Progressive Party won the elections in 2012 and stabilized its power. As it was said, this coincided with the new Law on Public Procurements and cessation of preferential contracts of service companies with their "mother" firms. The large public enterprises that had a wide network of facilities throughout the country and were the biggest seekers of the security services suddenly opened up for private security companies. This situation opened the space for party companies affiliated with the new power structures to enter into business with the state. However, the Public Procurement Law of the same year made it impossible to enter into direct agreements with party firms, so new mechanisms for extracting public resources had to be devised.

The 2012 Law on Public Procurements envisaged the lowest price bid and the most cost-effective offer as the key criteria for winning the contracts with public enterprises. However, very often, the lowest price offer, which usually carries a higher weight, was not high enough for the extent of contracted services to be carried out without loss to service providers. This problem is most often being solved at the expense of workers by using various mechanisms for the avoidance of the payment of the minimum wage to security staff or by a subsequent increase of the price of services by annexing the contract. Since the first method mainly involved either a violation of the law or its creative interpretation, the control bodies in charge of supervision of various segments of compliance with the law, had to be included in the clientelist networks. In this way, it is ensured that the preferred companies win tenders, eliminate competition and enable potential extraction of public resources. Although the Law nominally

opened up the doors of large public enterprises to the private security sector, in practice, winning the tenders and fulfillment of contracted obligations became virtually impossible without some sort of political protection or exception from the control.

One of the most important mechanisms of maintaining a “complex” form of clientelism was the (mis)use of control mechanisms. Various controls of the compliance with the regulations were selectively used in such a way that private security companies that had political protection were excepted from the control, while competing companies, especially those affiliated with previous power structures, were more or less constantly controlled. To back up this claim, we will rely on Belgrade Center for Security Policy interview data: namely, a respondent, manager of the company affiliated with previous power structures, testified on the exposure to constant controls from the Labor Inspectorate inspecting contracts of their employees. When the Inspectorate failed to find irregularities, they were still sentenced for an “insufficient level of light” in managerial premises (Petrović and Milošević 2015a: 73).

Therefore the clientelist mechanism includes public entities under the control of the parties at power (mostly through management structures), private security companies that won the tenders for providing security services to public entities, and various inspection agencies that selectively controlled compliance with the laws and regulations of the companies. An indicative example of the use of control mechanisms is related to Labor Inspectorate control. Namely, data obtained from researchers of Belgrade Security Center (Petrović and Milošević 2015b) testify on the paradigmatic malpractice of one of the politically protected company: in order to comply with the lowest price criterion, the company failed to pay wages to their employees for 6 months. Official Business Register Agency financial report of this company showed a negative balance on the company’s account. Nevertheless, the Labor Inspectorate, that in the period 2014-15 performed control over 300 companies (out of 600 registered), did not exercise control over this company nor pressed charges for a misdemeanor.

Another example of the misuse of control mechanisms is related to the work of the Republic Commission for Protection of Rights in Public Procurement Procedures, which supervises the implementation of public procurements. One of the competences of this body refers to the complaints of companies participating in tenders regarding the regularity of procedures. Often the reason for the appeal was the fact that the tenders were won by private security companies that offered an

unrealistically low price for security services. However, the data show that this Commission, in the same staff, made completely opposite decisions regarding these complaints, which, with good reason, raised suspicions that some companies enjoyed its protection (Jovanović 2014).

The role of control mechanisms is to enable the implementation of the laws and equal access of different companies to the market. However, the selective control of different agencies enables companies to circumvent the laws and regulations, while the clientelist relations significantly shape the selective character of these mechanisms. In order to fit into best price offer at public tenders, private security companies therefore often use various strategies that are against the law or which violate workers rights: pays of salaries that are below the legal minimum sum in cash; hiring security staff without contracts during night shifts when the Labor Inspectorate does not perform control; *racketeering* of employees, when minimum wage is paid off, but workers are informally obliged to give certain sum back to the employers voluntarily or through penalization for different misdemeanors at work; contracting *ghost servicemen*, when companies contract fewer security staff than needed (often in remote area where controls are rare), but charge for the full declared number of personnel from the client; by calculating longer nightshifts and extra charging them from the clients; by not paying overtime work to the employees; by hiring retired persons in order to pay lower tax rates; by leasing workforce from the agencies in order to get the contracts without having to employ workers, etc. (Petrović and Milošević 2015a; Milošević 2020).

The political impetus for the development of a new "complex" form of clientelism after 2012, in addition to the aforementioned opening of the public sector and the change of the Law on public procurement, came from the fact that there was a change of the parties at power. Private companies that were affiliated with the old government structures lost contracts with the state after the change of government, which "passed" into the hands of companies associated with the new political structures. However, given that these were relatively new companies, with insufficient capacity to compete in tenders at all, especially when it comes to large public systems, and then to implement the given contracts, they were using different strategies in order to widen their capacities. One of the most common strategies was the formation of a consortium for each bid at tender, which, as a rule, consisted of party companies and existing companies with resources (often service companies, daughters of companies that already provided services for public facilities). In

this way, party companies managed to grow and slowly take over the market. Interestingly, multinational companies are also entering into these agreements with party companies, most often under pressure to preserve their contracts, by hiring party affiliated companies as junior partners and employing party affiliated staff (Milošević and Petrović 2016:70; Milošević 2020:14).

Conclusions

Post-socialist transformation of Serbia and consolidation of capitalism have been shaped by persistent clientelist relations between power structures and different actors (economic elites, constituency, institutional actors), becoming one of the key mechanisms of extraction of the public resources. Clientelism largely spilled over in the private security sector that developed through processes of privatization and commercialization of protection services previously provided by the state and its apparatuses or being an integral part of public enterprises. In this paper, we argue that clientelist relations that shaped the sector developed and changed in relation to three factors: characteristics of the market, characteristics of the political system, and characteristics of the normative framework.

As for the first factor, the key impetus for the development of the sector came from the rise of the commercial sector and privatization processes. While the former created demand for this type of services within the commercial sector, the latter factor led to opening up, at least to some extent, public entities to private security companies through the extraction of the security services from the main activities of public enterprises. The opening of the public sector for this type of service has enabled the growth of the private security sector. At the same time, however, security services were included in a wider mechanism of state capture and extraction of public resources through companies operating in this sector that were closely affiliated to power structures. In this way, not only did the characteristics of the market for these services provide an impetus for the development of clientelism, but clientelism and party patronage, in turn, became important factors in shaping the private security market.

The second impetus for the development of clientelism came from characteristics of the political system itself. The fragility of the newly established institutions of representative democracy and the competitive character of the political system in which the very existence of political

parties is significantly linked to access to public resources produce a system characterized by various state-capture strategies. While the corporate model of state capture mostly related to the phase of relative political instability after the year 2000, when economic elites utilized this situation in order to influence the favorable regulatory framework (funding political parties in turn), the stabilization of parties at power after 2012 led to the change of the locus of power from economic to political structures, installing political model of state capture (within which political power holders dictated the conditions of clientelist exchange). During the phase of corporate state-capture, clientelist exchange between power holders and private security companies was direct and almost unobstructed by the regulatory framework (due to the lack of proper regulation of the private security sector and insufficient regulation of public procurement processes). On the other hand, the need to harmonize regulatory frameworks of Serbia and the European Union in the accession process and the requirements aimed at reducing the space for corrupt practices in doing business with public companies and in financing political parties resulted in the adoption of legal solutions (Law on Public Procurement 2012 or Law on Private Security from 2013), which, paradoxically, contributed to the innovation of new and development of the old strategies and forms of clientelist exchange between holders of political power and other actors. New patterns of clientelist exchange have become more complex, involving a larger number of different actors, especially control institutions and agencies which, due to direct party control or indirect channels of influence, exercised selective control over public procurement processes or the work of private security companies. As Radeljić and Đorđević (2020) noticed, in the situation of the uncertain outcome of the process of EU accession, authorities tend to adopt EU standards merely rhetorically, without substantial engagement in substantial reforms of the system relying on clientelism and informal networks of power.

Finally, the third incentive for the development of clientelist relations came from normative solutions or their absence - through the Law on Privatization (2001), the Labor Law (2014), the Law on Agency Employment (2019), the Laws on Public Procurement (2002, 2008 and 2012), and the Law on Private Security (2013). While the phase of domination of corporate model of state capture has been characterized by the absence of clear legal frameworks and laws that open the space for corrupt use of public funds, the phase of domination of the political state capture model, on the contrary, is being characterized by a legal framework that has largely emerged through alignment with European legislation but produced new

forms of corrupt practices and the extraction of income for the party or personal needs of holders of political power.

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Corruption and Women's Access to Politics: Comparative Perspectives on Quotas and Party Funding in Kosovo* and North Macedonia

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Abstract

Although scholars such as Swamy et.al. (2001) and Dollar et.al. (2001) made connections between corruption and gender, a few explore the impact that corruption has on women. This paper, therefore, aims to get a better understanding of the impact that corruption has on women's access to politics by focusing on the cases of North Macedonia and Kosovo*, countries characterised by clientelist patronage networks and systemic corruption. The analysis focuses on gender quotas and electoral funding, two closely related issues crucial for women's involvement in politics.
The study argues that women's political participation is negatively affected by closely tied insider patronage male-dominated networks and identifies direct and indirect obstacles to women's access to politics in North Macedonia and Kosovo*. The findings confirm that the introduction of quotas in Kosovo* has paved the path for descriptive representation of women in politics, but these efforts are limited by legal discrepancies and lack of women in leadership positions. Moreover, in both Kosovo* and North Macedonia, party funding regulations are short of provisions on the distribution of funds between male and female candidates for office. This hampers women's involvement in politics, which is already restricted due to the presence of political clientelism.
The paper relies on documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews with professionals working on corruption and/or gender-related issues.

Keywords: patronage, gender, quotas, party funding, Western Balkans

Introduction

In the past two decades, the regulation of political party funding raised high on the agenda of international organisations, such as the Council of Europe and the United Nations. In addition to various recommendations for improving party funding regulations with the aim to reduce corruption, efforts have been made to incorporate gendered aspects in the financing of political entities. Over 30 countries have incorporated regulations where the financing of political parties is linked to gender, such as linking the amount of public finances political parties receive to the number of women members or women candidates for office per party, or coniditoning public finances for political parties to the development of gender action plans (Ohman 2018). Many European jurisdictions, such as France or the Netherlands have established such provisions (Ohman 2018). Similarly, gender quotas have been introduced in national electoral laws as a tool for improving the number of women in public decision-making bodies. Quotas have recently become a popular tool used by the European Union (EU) for increasing the election of female members of national parliaments and the European Parliament and promoting gender equality in politics (European Parliament 2013). However, how such tools are being implemented in practice depends on several factors, including issues with corruption control, patriarchy, and domestic will and capacity for positive changes. This paper, therefore, examines gender quotas and electoral funding, two closely related issues, to explore how male-dominated patronage networks and the institutional control they enable have a detrimental impact on women's access to politics.

This study relies on qualitative analysis and focuses on the cases of North Macedonia and Kosovo*. In North Macedonia, the rule of law overall and corruption control in particular have risen high on the political agenda, especially as part of the country's EU accession process. The international community has attempted numerous state-building efforts in post-war Kosovo*, and improving the rule of law and fight against corruption have been at the core of these attempts. In addition, efforts have been made to reduce gender inequality by introducing relevant legislation and gender-oriented policies in both countries. Despite such efforts, corruption and gender inequality remain areas for concern.

This paper argues that corruption has a detrimental impact on women's access to politics in two dimensions: women's quotas and electoral funding of women. It examines the legal frameworks regarding quotas and critically

assesses party funding regulations, explaining how they pose direct and indirect obstacles to women's access to politics. Due to the scarcity of data on this topic, the research relies on documentary analysis and semi-structured elite interviews with professionals working on corruption and/ or gender-related issues, particularly NGO representatives, public officials, professionals from international organisations, and researchers working on corruption and/ or gender issues. The interview data is triangulated with documentary analysis to add validity to the findings.

The paper initially identifies linkages between gender and corruption and discusses obstacles for women's political participation, followed by examining the importance of gender quotas and gendered party funding. Corruption control in the two cases is then examined before moving onto analysing how gender quotas are regulated in North Macedonia and Kosovo*. Corruption risks regarding the funding of political parties in the two cases are offered before presenting the main conclusions.

Linking corruption and gender

Until the early 2000s, corruption was considered a 'genderless' issue, and no questions were raised about the impact of corruption on different genders. Recently, however, studies and reports that seek to understand the connections between corruption and gender started to emerge. The initial links between corruption and gender focused on answering questions such as who is more corrupt, men or women (Swamy et.al. 2001). The arguments offered were that women are less involved in bribery and are less likely to take bribes. Moreover, whether more women in politics are associated with lower corruption was examined by Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti (2001). They argued that higher female representation is linked to lower corruption perceptions. Recently, studies seeking to investigate the gendered impact of corruption also began to emerge.

Another stream of the literature focuses on the links between political participation, corruption, and gender. Agerberg (2014) examined whether there are gender differences with regard to corruption in Europe and argued that women's participation in politics is likely to reduce corruption. He concluded that higher gender equality may reduce corruption and sargued for a contextual approach when examining the relationship between corruption and gender. This conclusion is in line with Stensota and Wangnerud (2018) argument that higher levels of corruption are linked to higher levels of gender inequality. Likewise, Bauhr, Charron,

and Wangnerud (2018) argued that increased participation of women in elected offices helps in reducing corruption:

> *Women are on average more dependent on public services. They are therefore expected to work politically to reduce corruption that harms public service delivery. Female politicians will particularly seek to improve the conditions in the services that benefit women, such as healthcare and education. By pushing for effective and encompassing public services, female representatives reduce the need for petty corruption. We call this the women's interest explanation.*

In addition to the 'interest explanation', which suggests that women should enter politics to reduce the gendered impact of corruption, Bauhr, Charron and Wangnerud (2018) also coin the term 'exclusion explanation'. They suggest that it is more difficult for women to gain access to privileges that come from grand corruption, because often women are not part of high-level decision-making processes, and when women engage in public office, they often seek to improve public sector delivery and to break down male-dominated networks (Bauhr, Charron and Wangnerud 2018).

Echazu (2010) reaffirmed that a higher number of women in politics decreases corruption but, unlike previous studies, argued that despite popular belief, women might not be naturally less corrupt than men. She links such claims to gender inequality and argues that the dominated groups in politics exhibit more honest behaviour compared to the dominant group (Echazu 2010). Similarly, Goetz (2007) argued that women are perceived as less corrupt because they are less involved in public life and are less likely to be put in a situation to pay a bribe. Sung (2012) illustrated that there is no causal relationship between women's participation in politics and decreased corruption.

While the debate on whether more women in politics are likely to reduce corruption is not over, a general consensus on the negative impact of corruption on women seems to exist. Women are likely to be disproportionately exposed to corruption compared to men (Transparency International 2014). Corruption seemingly negatively affects women's participation in political life (Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2018) and creates obstacles to women's participation in politics (Stensota and Wangnerud, L. 2018). Corruption restricts women's access to political parties because corrupt leaders tend to keep women out of politics to keep the spoils of corruption and to maintain established corrupt networks, usually male-dominated, for themselves (Stockmer 2018). As Sundstrom and Wangnerud

(2016, 355) note, *"where levels of corruption are high, the number of women elected is low"*. The mechanisms through which corruption influences the election of women, however, remain opaque and multifaceted, but a general distinction between direct and direct obstacles can be made based on the existing literature.

Corruption is a direct obstacle for women's political participation when male-dominated networks influence political parties' candidate selection (Sundstrom and Wangnerud 2016, 355). In cases where corruption is prevalent, such direct obstacles include legal discrepancies, lack of formal institutions regulating equal access, and low efforts aimed at increasing substantial representation of women in politics (Cvetanoska 2020). Coupled with a political context in which civil society is reluctant to advocate for women's political participation, access is likely to remain low (Stegmaier, Tosun and Vlachova 2014). Indirect obstacles exist, where social setups of everyday life are such that put women off from engaging in politics (Sundstrom and Wangnerud 2016, 355). These issues are closely related to attitudes towards women's perceived role in societies and are interlinked with patriarchy. Societies is which women are the primary caretakers and where access to social care, education, and healthcare is affected by corruption, are likely to indirectly impact women's ability to enter politics due to their caretaker roles (Cvetanoska and Kubbe 2021). This paper examines whether such direct and indirect obstacles exist by looking at rules on gender quotas and party funding in North Macedonia and Kosovo*.

Quotas and gendered party funding

Quotas and gendered party funding are two means of increasing women's political participation. In the context of corruption-related restrictions on women's participation and the possible breakdown of men-dominated patronage networks, gender quotas have become a useful tool. They encourage women to get involved in politics and allow for an appropriate minimum number of different genders to be included in decision-making processes. Quotas are often combined with gendered party funding, which, among other, includes sets of measures aimed at promoting political nominations of women for office.

The application of quotas is generally aimed at promoting increased descriptive representation, that is – *"compositional similarity between representatives and the represented"* (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler, 2005, 407). This is in line with the argument that the composition of political offices

should reflect the composition of the wider population and specifically allow for political inclusion of marginalised groups (Phillips 1995). Given that corrupt economic and political processes reduce the opportunities for women to seek and hold public office (Transparency International 2014), the introduction of quotas should mitigate, if not eliminate, their exclusion from political participation. Gender quotas also provide an opportunity for women to be part of parliamentary decision-making processes and reduce exclusion in the process of proposing candidates for parliamentary seats. Nevertheless, descriptive representation, or quotas, should be complemented by additional measures to ensure substantive representation while making sure that representatives' actions promote the interests of those represented (Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler, 2005, 407). This is because, in politics, women are often given nominal roles with little effective power. As a result, the introduction of quotas does not always result in substantive representation. However, the introduction of quotas can yield changes in voter preferences over time. Attempts to increase the political participation of women, together with a change in political context, have been known to make a difference in an election (Stegmaier, Tosun and Vlachova 2014, 194). The party candidate selection process affects women's seats, and a lower electoral threshold can result in an increased women's parliamentary representation (Stegmaier, Tosun and Vlachova 2014). Additional measures, such as providing equal funding opportunities for all candidates, can also ensure such effective power.

Finally, the quality of quota-related legislation and how quota laws are implemented in practice are crucial for controlling the impact that corruption has on women's access to politics. Clear legal provisions without discrepancies between the various laws regulating access to politics, demonstrate political will (Brinkerhoff, 2000) for addressing the problem of corruption from a gendered perspective. In summary, when applied appropriately, quotas may reduce the direct negative influence that male-dominated political networks have on women's access to politics by reserving part of public offices for women. Indirectly, too, the introduction of quotas may empower women to get involved in politics as it signals that male-dominated patronage networks are becoming more open to the inclusion of women. However, when quotas are not implemented as intended in the law, their positive impact will be limited at best.

Regulating how money in politics is being obtained and spent are two very important corruption-related issues for women's access to politics as they allow for transparency and oversight of money. Lack of transparency and audits of money in politics increases corruption risks,

such as quid-pro-quo situations and promises for future favours in exchange for donations. Given that financial resources are necessary for funding electoral campaigns, lack of funding hampers women's participation in political life (Muriaas, Wang and Murray, 2019). Providing adequate funding for women's political campaigns will allow the composition of political offices to be more inclusive and allow for political inclusion of marginalised groups (Phillips 1995). The inclusion of different groups, especially minority and/or marginalised women will reduce the risks of ethnolinguistic fractionalisation, which increases political instability and favouritism of members from the same group (Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer, 2018).

Party funding of electoral campaigns also facilitates who gets to the finish line. Because of patronage networks, women tend to receive less funding for electoral campaigns from their respective parties. Hence, the introduction of quotas does not always facilitate women's representation or gender equality in political decision-making. After all, the functioning of quotas is dependent on and often limited by existing broader institutional frameworks, including political culture and electoral systems (Muriaas, Wang and Murray, 2019). Those challenges can be mitigated by supporting quotas with other measures, such as gendered electoral financing. Gendered electoral financing refers to" *interventions that use funding as a remedy to promote balance in political office"* (Muriaas, Wang and Murray, 2019, 3). This is done either by financially incentivising political parties to nominate women and by punishing parties financially when they fail to do so (party-directed incentives) or by providing financial support, so-called candidate-direct incentives, to support women electoral campaigns (Muriaas, Wang and Murray, 2019).

Gendered party funding is mainly applicable to countries where a significant part of party finances is provided by state funds and can make a difference if parties will gain significant funds by adhering to gender equality provision (Ohman 2018, 9). Furthermore, whether leaders of political parties will opt out of gender-related party funding provisions depends on whether *"the impact of increased or decreased public funding [is more] important to political party leaders than the loss of votes that they fear might arise from nominating women to electable positions"* (Ohman 2018, 9). This is in line with general rational choice arguments on the dependency of actions on perceived outcomes, that is, actors will measure the pros and cons of their acts and will act as per the most beneficial outcome. In patriarchal cases, voters are likely to 'punish' political parties for an increased number of women candidates, and substantial efforts for equal

representation will remain low. Therefore, gendered-party funding is an important reward as it can pave the path towards a more equal political participation in male-dominated, informal networks, and together with women quotas, can contribute towards reducing gender gaps in politics.

Corruption in Kosovo* and North Macedonia

Various corruption perception indices have been continuously placing North Macedonia and Kosovo* at the bottom of Europe. Kosovo's* score in the World Bank's Good Governance Corruption Control Indicator (2021) for 2019 had a percentile rank of 31.73[1]. Except for a score of 40.38 for the year 2016, Kosovo* has maintained low scores in the 30-39 percentile ranks (World Bank 2021). North Macedonia received a slightly higher score of 38.94 for 2019, a drop from previous years but compared to the average score for the Europe & Central Asia region where these countries are assigned, they score significantly below the average (World Bank 2021). Both countries have dropped in Transparency International's (2020) Corruption Perception Index for 2020, that is- Kosovo* with a score of 36 was in the 104th place, whereas North Macedonia, with a score of 35 was ranked in the 111th place. The European Commission, in its 2020 Progress Report, praised North Macedonia for progress made regarding the fight against corruption but concludes that *"corruption is prevalent in many areas and [that] a more proactive approach from all actors engaged in preventing and fighting corruption needs to be ensured"* (European Commission 2020, 5). Similarly, in Kosovo*, despite notable efforts, the European Commission concluded that corruption remained widespread and a serious problem (European Commission 2020, 5). While both countries are considered to have well-developed legal frameworks for tackling corruption risks, complemented by anti-corruption institutions, such as the Anti-Corruption Council in Kosovo*[2], or the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption in North Macedonia[3], weak implementation remains a concern for both cases.

Corruption is often linked to the hierarchical and patronage-based structures of political parties. In the Balkans, *"patronage has been a long-term feature of socio-political relations"* (Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000,

1 According to the World Bank data, a country can score between 0 (highly corrupt) and 100 (very clean).

2 See: https://president-ksgov.net/en/anti-corruption-council.

3 See: https://dksk.mk/.

29–33) and has become the dominant principle of governance across the region. The hierarchical nature of political parties results in the creation of, often, informal patronage networks across institutions (Tadic and Elbasani 2018). Therefore, if those in power in tightly knit patriarchal structures are predominantly males, women's access to politics, especially at the senior level, will be impacted by men who control those levels of power (Cvetanoska 2021). North Macedonia, overall, is characterised by *"patriarchal/patrimonial tradition in which women are subordinated"* (Center for Research and Policy Making 2012, 59) especially in rural areas. In Kosovo*, women maintain a marginal role due to the political sphere being largely dominated by men (Haug 2015) , and the society functions on patriarchal values (Lucy in Morina 2017). Gender quotas and party funding are crucial for improved women's political participation, and lack of regulation and/ or partial implementation in these areas is expected to pave the path for unequal access to politics in male-dominated patronage networks.

Quotas in Kosovo* and North Macedonia

Kosovo* has made efforts towards reducing gender inequalities by incorporating various provisions in its legal acts. The country's Constitution considers gender equality as a fundamental principle while expressing a commitment to equal opportunities for both female and male participation in the political, economic, social, cultural, and other areas of societal life (Article 7). It provides protection against gender-based discrimination and calls for the incorporation of gender equality principles in the composition of its Assembly (Article 71). The country has also adopted a new Law on Gender Equality (Law No. 05/L-020) in 2015 imposing gender parity in legislative, executive, and judiciary bodies, which is achieved by having a representation of 50 percent of each gender[4] in these bodies (Article 6 of the Law). The 2008 Law on General Elections (Law No. 03/L-073) has further introduced gender quota requirements in the process of elections. Article 27 of the Law imposes a gender requirement: "in each political entity's candidate list,

4 It is important to note that while the English translation of the Law, uses the term of "gender", from the content on the Law it is more likely that a reference is made to the term "sex". The law suggests that only two genders are recognised, considering that it requires a 50 percent representation of each gender. This paper focuses on women's political participation and because of its focus does not go into a detailed elaboration on the understanding of gender in the legal systems of the cases examined, but it would like to note the laws in both countries seem oblivious to the existence of other genders.

at least thirty percent shall be male, and at least thirty percent shall be female, with one candidate from each gender included at least once in each group of three candidates, counting from the first candidate in the list" (Law No. 03/L-073). This requirement is further elaborated in Article 111 of the Law in order to ensure that women as the minority gender will receive at least 30 percent of the seats in the Assembly. This is organised by replacing candidates from the majority gender with candidates from the minority gender until quotas are fulfilled.

However, despite the issue of gender equality been part of Kosovo's* political agenda and even though the Constitution and laws in Kosovo*, on paper, promote gender equality, and prohibit discrimination based on gender, in practice, a number of concerns in regard to gender equality remain. Regarding the legal framework, there is a discrepancy between the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on General Elections when regulating women's political participation. The Law on Gender Equality requires equal participation, whereas the Law on General Elections imposes a 33 percent quota. It is the latter law that is followed in practice. This legal gap suggests a lack of harmonisation between general and specialist laws and leaves room for those in power to avoid responsibility to uphold the Law on Gender Equality. This discrepancy creates a legal uncertainty regarding equal representation in a male-dominated political party system such as the one in Kosovo* where *"most leaders in institutions and most decision-makers are men, and they function based on patriarchal values – the same values that placed them in those positions"* (Morina 2017). In such circumstances, women are often discouraged by family to engage in public life, which, combined with their limited access to politics due to the closeness of party structures (Emini to Cvetanoska, Interview, September 2019), reduces opportunities for participation.

While introducing quota is a positive step forward, it does not ensure equal access and participation in politics, and other related measures towards increasing women's political participation need to be introduced. Kosovo* is still to adopt a Programme for Gender Equality, introduce gender-responsive budgeting, and an efficient mainstreaming of gender in laws and policies is missing (Cvetanoska 2021). Moreover, because of the guaranteed seats for women in the Assembly, a narrative of voting for male candidates is present, under the excuse that women will get elected anyway (Emini to Cvetanoska, Interview, September 2019). Women are therefore seen as "a numerical fulfilment" (Lucy in Morina 2017) and while there have been some notable exceptions, including Kosovo's* first woman president Atifete Jahjaga and current president Vjosa Osmani ,

women are still missing from many senior-level positions in the country (Kosovar Gender Studies Center 2017).

Gender equality issues in North Macedonia are regulated in the Constitution and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. According to the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (No. 06/2012): *"political parties in their acts determine the means and measures for the promotion of equal participation of women and men in the party bodies and structures"* (Article 16). This is different compared to Kosovo*, where political parties are not discussed in the Law on Gender Equality. However, the law in North Macedonia does not address equal representation in the Assembly and leaves this to be regulated with the Electoral Code. The Law on Election of Members of Parliament of the Republic of [North] Macedonia (No. 42/02), now revoked, introduced a mandatory 30% representation in the electoral lists of both sexes. The Electoral Code that replaced the previous law regulates this matter somewhat differently:

> *At least 40% of the candidates from the submitted list of candidates for Members of Parliament referred to in paragraph (2) of this article and for Members of Council of the municipality and the City of Skopje referred to in paragraph (3) of this Article shall belong to the underrepresented sex, as follows: at least one out of every three places shall be reserved for the underrepresented sex, with at least one additional place out of every ten places.* (Article 64)

This provision is a guarantee that the candidate lists will contain a minimum of 40% of candidates from the less represented gender (Jovanova and Doninovska Susinov 2020 , 5). As quotas are legally binding, failure to incorporate the above requirements in the candidate lists will result in such lists not being accepted, ultimately stopping the holders of such lists (political parties) from participation in the election (Jovanova and Doninovska Susinov 2020, 6). However, this does not by default disqualify political parties breaching the gender quota requirements from receiving public funds, which will be discussed in more details in the next section. Efforts towards gender equality in politics have also been made by introducing a legal requirement for the State Electoral Commission, responsible for overseeing elections, to include a minimum of 30% representation of each sex in the election management bodies (Article 21(3)). Women's organisations have been formed in the main political parties, and the number of women in the Assembly has increased since the introduction of the mandatory quotas, which are being respected.

Despite progress at the formal level, substantial representation of women is still largely missing in North Macedonia. The country is yet to have a woman president and/or a prime minister, and at the time of writing, four out of 20 cabinet members[5] positions are held by women, compared to Kosovo* where six out of 18 cabinet members are women[6]. Research by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy suggests that women are still largely missing from decision-making processes, both at the national and at the local level (Georgiev 2016, 18). The lack of women's involvement is particularly noticeable at the local level, especially in rural areas (Georgiev 2016, 19).

Party funding regulations in Kosovo* and North Macedonia

In Kosovo*, party funding is regulated with the Law on financing Political Entities from 2010 (No. 03/L-174) and executed via the Fund for supporting political parties. Similar to North Macedonia, political parties are funded by membership fees, contributions, the Budget of the Republic of Kosovo*, and incomes from activities of political parties (Article 4), but the contribution from the Budget is slightly higher in Kosovo* compared to North Macedonia, with up to 0.17% of the Budget being made available for funding political subjects.

The financing of political parties in North Macedonia is regulated with the Law on Financing of Political Parties introduced in 2004 (Official Gazette 61/ 2004). The Law, which was amended and supplemented several times[7], prescribes the sources of funding for political parties, the management of party funds and contains provisions for controlling financial spending of political parties (Article 1). According to Article 7

5 The number of 20 cabinet members includes the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Ministers, none of which are positions help by women. Out of 15 ministerial positions, four are held by women at the time of writing.

6 The number of 18 cabinet members includes the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Ministers. At the time of writing, two out of the three deputy prime minister positions were held by women. Four out of the 14 ministerial offices were also held by women.

7 Amendments and supplements: Decision of the Constitutional Court 174/ 2005; Law for the Law on Financing of Political Parties 161/ 2008; Law for Amending and Supplementing the Law on Financing of Political Parties 96/2009; Law for Amending and Supplementing the Law on Financing of Political Parties 148/2011; Law for Amending and Supplementing the Law on Financing of Political Parties 142/2012; Law for Amending and Supplementing the Law on Financing of Political Parties 23/2013; Law for Amending and Supplementing the Law on Financing of Political Parties 140/2018.

of the Law, political parties are financed both publicly by the State and local budgets (Article 8) and privately by membership fees, donations, legates, sales of promotional and advertising materials, and own income (Article 13). On an annual basis, after the latest amendments to the Law in 2018, 0.15% of the Budget of the country is dedicated for financing political parties, compared to 0.06% before. The reason for the increase in public financing was introduced to reduce the dependence of political parties on private donations and, in turn, increase the transparency of party funding (Crvenkovski and Janeva 2020, 6). As a result, a legal person can donate to a political party a sum not larger than 60 average salaries, as opposed to 150 average salaries[8] as per the old rules, and an individual may not donate a sum larger than 30 average salaries, as opposed to 75 salaries before (Jordanovska 2018).

Despite efforts towards reducing gender gaps in public life with the introduction of quotas, gendered provisions regarding the distribution of funds are still missing in both countries. In North Macedonia, the Law on Financing Political Parties from 2004 did not have any gender-related funidng provisions, neither did any of the amendments. As a comparison, Kosovo's* initial Law on Financing Political Entities did not have any gendered aspects to party funding as well; however, a 2012 amendment to the Law specified that party funds might be used to fund the respective units of organisation of women and youth in political parties (Article 3, Law No. 04/L-058 on Amending and Supplementing the Law No. 03/L-174 on Financing Political Parties). Nonetheless, this is the only gendered element in the Kosovar Law, and there are no provisions that address the distribution of funds between different candidates. The same goes for the Law in North Macedonia, and, in both cases, neither the Laws nor their amendments provide regulations on how party funds, especially those from the Budget should be distributed among political candidates.

The Law does prescribe how money is allocated between different parties, that is, 30% are distributed equally between all parties that received at least 1% of the votes in the last election, and 70% of the funds are allocated according to the number of seats in the Assembly. Similarly, in Kosovo*, funds to support political parties are allocated according to the number of seats in the Assembly (Law No. 03/L-174, Article 9). However, once a political party receives public funds, no regulations exist on how those funds are distributed between different candidates for office within the party.

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8 As an illustration, the average net salary for December 2020 was 28294 MKD, which is equivalent to approximately 460 Eur.

Both North Macedonia and Kosovo* have been criticised for the lack of transparency of party funding. In North Macedonia *"political financing is considered to be the least transparent and the least controlled area of the political landscape"* (Georgiev 2016, 2). Donors fail to provide reports regarding the funds they contribute to political parties, and political advertising in the media lacks transparency (Georgiev 2016). The European Commission acknowledged the need for continuous improvement of transparency of party funding, as identified by GRECO, calling political parties to work on their internal democratic processes (2020, 10). Specifically, transparency of media advertising of political parties is lacking (European Commission 2020, 28), and political parties using state funds for media advertising raises concerns over potential influence over media independence (European Commission 2020, 29).

In Kosovo*, electoral candidates are not required by law to declare where they have received donations for their campaigns (Demhasaj 2018), and such legal gaps provide opportunities for them to evade transparency. The European Commission (2020a) deemed the public broadcaster vulnerable to political influence, pointing out that no adequate solution regarding its funding has been reached. Moreover, the 2020 Report reiterates that the legal framework concerning campaign financing and party funding remains untransparent and inadequate. In addition, *"the revision of political party financing legislation was delayed"* (European Commission 2020a, 24) which stagers anti-corruption efforts in Kosovo.

The haphazard access to information regarding party financing has an effect on transparency and women's inclusivity in political parties in both cases examined here. In North Macedonia, parties rarely publish information on the inclusivity of women, and despite women unions being present in many political parties, information regarding their activities is limited on political parties' webpage (Neziri 2019, 20). Moreover, "what is known is that the top positions are reserved for men, given that there is only one female party leader in the current parliamentary composition" (Neziri 2019, 20). Women are also absent from executive and local committees in political parties in North Macedonia (Neziri 2019). As women are seen as less desirable candidates for political office in patriarchal societies (Cvetanoska 2021), lack of information on their activation in parties and their exclusion from party processes is likely to hamper their political participation. In Kosovo*, when political parties nominate candidates for electoral management bodies, they tend to prefer males due to the perception of women being seen as "softer" and men "the ones with the muscle" (Emini, Interview with Cvetanoska, September 2019).

Gendered distribution of party funds is also important as males are often more likely to have better access to resources to finance an electoral campaign (Cvetanoska and Elbasani 2020). In Kosovo*, men are better equipped to access funds for political campaigns and resources for support (Cvetanoska 2021), and the lack of regulation in this area contributes to the unequal distribution of party finances between male and female candidates. This is especially because, in patriarchal societies, women are not seen as leaders of processes, and funding is streamed towards male candidates (Emini, Interview with Cvetanoska, September 2019). While political parties provide reports on spending, no information is available on how much financial support each candidate for office has received from their respective party, and this is not a legal requirement for political parties at present in both Kosovo* and North Macedonia. Nevertheless, as males are predominantly holders of positions on power, both in politics and the economy, they are more likely to have access to donors for campaign funding (Lipovica Interview with Cvetanoska, September 2019).

Finally, neither country offers benefits or financial rewards for political parties for achieving or superseding the minimum number of women on electoral lists or for gaining a certain amount of money for each woman candidate or elected. Finances for political parties are not dependent on gender requirements, and the current legal frameworks do not impose any gender-equality related sanctions.

Such provisions (or lack thereof) result in 'quid pro quo' situations through which powerful individuals and businesses provide funding for electoral campaigns in an assumed expectation that once those individuals are elected, they will protect the private interests of their donors. Considering the privileged position that men have in political parties and the perception that men will get more votes in elections, such donations are likely to end up in within male-dominated structures . As corruption and patriarchy both have a negative impact on women's access to politics, lack of regulation on the distribution of funds is likely to affect negatively affect women due to their position within political parties.

Conclusions

This paper examined the impact that corruption has on women's access to politics in Kosovo* and North Macedonia by analysing the role of quotas and party funding. The paper argued that corruption is closely tied to insider patronage networks, which control who enters and thrives

in the system. Given that such networks are usually male-dominated, particularly in the context of patriarchal societies, they tend to restrict women's access to politics. The analysis examined direct and indirect obstacles to women's political participation. The direct obstacles are demonstrated through lack of regulation, combined with the existence of legal discrepancies and insufficient efforts towards achieving active political participation of women beyond the introduction of formal quotas. This allows for the selective application of laws and policies, which in turn contributes to maintaining party patronage networks and patriarchal features which discourage women from taking part in politics indirectly.

Those obstacles show themselves in both issues under study – the system of quotas and party funding. In both countries, a certain mandatory inclusion of women in politics is guaranteed by the existence of the quota system. Yet, sanctions for political parties breaching the gender quota requirements, such as freezing access to public funds, are yet to be introduced. The quota system explains the growing number of women in politics in the cases of interest. However, this increase does not necessarily mean that gender equality rights guaranteed on paper are also protected in practice. In both cases, women are missing from leadership positions both in the Government and in the municipalities. Parity has still not been achieved, and the legal discrepancies in regard to the quota requirements in Kosovo* regulated by different laws remain. Women's political representation is affected by the type of electoral system, and while North Macedonia has noted an increased number of women in public office after the shift to a proportional system, and in line with the theoretical discussions on descriptive and substantial representation, the efforts should not stop with the introduction of quotas.

Regarding party funding, insufficient regulation on how funds are distributed among male and female party members is present in both countries. In patriarchal societies as Kosovo and North Macedonia, such a lack of regulations allows male candidates to be prioritised and enhances the lack of transparency regarding how money is distributed within political parties. On the one hand, men are seen as more desirable candidates as they are more likely to receive a higher number of votes in elections; thus, more money is allocated to them. Party funding regulations in both countries, on the other hand, have serious shortcomings, which makes financing un-transparent and prone to corruption. How much an individual candidate may receive from the party, how much allocation should be dedicated to women for party funding, and lack of

implementation of regulations regarding party spending reports and audits of party spending are all corruption and transparency related risks that have a negative impact on women's political participation.

Considering that corruption undermines the public good for private interests, the concerns raised in this paper are likely to have a negative impact on women's political participation. When the public good is not at the core of policymaking, political elites do not generally focus on adopting and implementing gender-balanced policies. Attention is not being paid on how to integrate women to engage in political life and on how to increase women's participation in politics. Still, it is worth noting that the introduction of quotas in the two countries, even though in a limited manner, has paved the path for a descriptive representation of women in politics. However, to ensure an effective and long-lasting change, additional measures are needed to ensure women's equal participation in public life.

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Electoral Rules and Corruption as Drivers of Political Fragmentation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract

This paper explores the fragmentation of the political landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina and attempts to explain why the overall number of political parties in BiH, as well as the number of parties participating in power, remains high. Using electoral data, scholarly literature, investigative journalism articles, and three interviews that the author conducted with high positioned party cadres, the paper identifies two main drivers of fragmentation, the electoral system, and the highly corrupt environment. The two main features of the electoral system are the ethnic balance of elected and appointed representatives omnipresent at almost all levels of government and the high degree of proportionality that the system aspires to. The first resulted in complex power-sharing arrangements in order to provide for equal ethnic representation, while the second led to low thresholds for entering local, cantonal, entity, and state parliaments, strong electoral positions of mayors, and preferential voting. Thus, the electoral system created an environment in which corrupt exchanges both between and within parties flourished.

This paper uses three case studies on the formation of the parties that have appeared on the political scene in the last few years to investigate the fragmentation. Some of the new parties were created as split parties without a significant new ideology that distinguished them from the original party (examples include Narod i Pravda and Nezavisni Blok in FBiH) except for a commitment to anti-corruption. Others, primarily in Republika Srpska, were assisted in their creation by the ruling SNSD in order to weaken the opposition. Regardless, corruption played an important role, serving as either a justification for the split or for the provision of opportunities for those leaving the parties. Still, there are political projects, such as the leading Croat party HDZ, which seem to be resistant to corruption in this sense.

The paper concludes by examining the consequences of fragmentation and finding that they vary. Some are only negative;

grand yet dysfunctional coalitions at all levels of government, lack of responsibility from elected leaders, and difficulties in establishing political responsibility for the failure of public policy reforms. There are both negative and positive aspects to other consequences, such as the impact on the fight against corruption, while others are decidedly positive, such as the prevention of the emergence of authoritarian leaders.

Keywords: **corruption, Bosnia and Herzegovina, political parties, fragmentation, electoral system**

Introduction

The exact number of political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is not known. Estimates range from 131 (Al Jazeera 2016) to 150 registered political parties (Radio Sarajevo 2020). The country's media often use this piece of information coupled with the fact that BiH is a European leader in terms of the number of registered political parties to perpetuate the high level of mistrust towards political parties and the despair that the citizens feel concerning the lack of substantial social or economic progress in the country (Radio Sarajevo 2018). This is accomplished through comments such as, "...in Bosnia and Herzegovina it is easier to start a political party than to register a company" (Pod Lupom, 2015). Indeed, starting a political party in Bosnia and Herzegovina costs only 50 € and requires articles of association and 50 (in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, hereafter FBiH) or 500 (in Republika Srpska, hereafter RS) signatures of support (Kapidzic 2015). However, comparative experience shows that similar permissive conditions for registering political parties exist in other countries but do not lead to such a high number of political parties, particularly ones that actually participate in government (European Parliament 2012; Casal Bertoa & van Biesen 2018).

The high number of political parties seems to translate to the high number of political parties participating in the government. From 2006 to 2020, Bosnia and Herzegovina was governed by three different coalitions at the state, entity, and cantonal levels of government. While the three key actors in these coalitions (SNSD, the main Serb party, HDZ, a leading Croat party, and SDA, the traditional Bosniak conservative party) have remained in power almost the entire time, many other actors have also played pivotal roles in forming coalitions. A total of 19 political parties

have held power in the various levels of government since 2006. In the same period, four general (2006, 2010, 2014, 2018) and four local (2008, 2012, 2016, 2020) elections were held.

The complex federal structure of the country, which represents a federation between two entities, one that is a federation within itself (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and one that is a republic (Republika Srpska), is a result of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which has been cited as a driver for political fragmentation (Kasapovic 2006). Indeed, the index of the federalization of countries shows that BiH is more decentralized than any other federalized country in the world (Requejo 2017), which is especially evident in the fact that the national government spends a mere 7% of the total government spending, compared to the 22% that Switzerland spends or the 26% that Belgium does.

However, the ethnic diversity and federalization by itself may not explain the high number of political parties, let alone parties who participate in the government or grand coalitions.[1] The Bosnian political system is segmented and involves bloc volatility (Kapidžić 2018); political competition happens mostly within blocks, meaning that most voters prefer a political party that represents their ethnicity (Hulsey & Stjepanović 2017). Such preference, coupled with a lack of political consensus concerning the country's future, limits the ideological volatility of both the parties and voters. This leads to a predominantly intra-ethnic competitivity of the parties that arises out of the existence of the ethnic divisions as the main cleavage (Stein & Rokkan 1967) but does not explain the degree of fragmentation, which, according to the Laakso-Taagepera index (Laakso & Taagepera 1979), has ranged from 7.17 to 7.60 between 2002 and 2014 (Kovacevic 2019). Other cleavages, such as education and the urban/rural divide, also exist; for example, SNSD and SDP have traditionally fared better in urban environments, and NS has fared better among the educated (International Republican Institute 2018). However, these cleavages are also inadequate explanations for the fragmentation, even when taken together.

There is no doubt that the constitutional and electoral systems contribute to BiH's political landscape fragmentation. However, it is important to look beyond their effect in order to explain the degree of fragmentation that has occurred. In this sense, the idea of examining the corrupt practices and patterns of the political parties comes from two sources, the low levels of social capital and the frequent dissolving of coalitions that occurs at almost all levels of government.

1 Data for Spain, Canada, Belgium, and India should be inserted here.

Name of party	Level of government in which it held power	Ethnic affiliation[2]
SNSD–Alliance of Independent Social Democrats	State (2006 – 2014), entity (2006 – 2018), canton (2006 – 2018)	Serb
SP – Socialist Party	State (2006 – 2014), entity (2006 – 2018)	Serb
DNS–Democratic National Alliance	Entity (2010 – 2018)	Serb
PDP – Party of Democratic Progress	State, entity (2006 – 2008), entity (2014 – 2018)	Serb
NDP – People's Democratic Movement	State (2014 – 2018)	Serb
HDZ – Croat Democratic Union	State, entity (2006 - 2010, 2012 – 2018), canton (2006 – 2018)	Croat
HDZ 1990 – Croat Democratic Union	State, entity, canton (2006 – 2014)	Croat
HSP – Croat Party of Rights	Entity, canton (2011 – 2014)	Croat
NS RzB – People's Party of Work for Progress	Entity (2011 – 2012), canton (2011 – 2014)	Mixed
SDA – Party of Democratic Action	State, entity, canton (2006 – 2018)	Bosniak
SBB – Alliance for a Better Future	State, entity, canton (2012-2018)	Bosniak
SBiH – Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina	State, entity, canton (2006 – 2010)	Bosniak
DF – Democratic Front	State, entity (2015), canton (2015 – 2018)	Mixed
SDP – Social Democratic Party	State, entity, canton (2011 – 2014)	Mixed
A-SDA – Party of Democratic Activity	Canton (2012 – 2018)	Bosniak
PDA – Party of Democratic Action	Canton (2018)	Bosniak

Table 1. Parties and level of government in which they held power

2 Ethnic affiliation should not be understood to mean that all supporters and all members of a political party belong to a single ethnic group. Rather, the vast majority of the membership and candidates of this party belong to a single ethnic group.

Robert Putnam, a researcher famous for his work in the field of social capital, called Bosnia and Herzegovina a case of "bonding without bridging" (Putnam 2004), referring to the fact that the three ethnic groups in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina are living in a political system that brings them together without bridging their differences (Šalaj 2009). Indeed, BiH ranks low in indexes measuring social capital. Surveys and research conducted from 2002 onwards show that BiH citizens distrust political parties (Šalaj 2009, Delić et al. 2017) and have a worldview that leads them to "explain the world in terms of corruption" (UNDP 2002). These results, consistent with findings from other transitional post-communist countries (Ceka 2013), seemingly verify the assumption that the failure to deliver public goods and belief in widespread corruption among the political elite are the drivers of such sentiment.

Coalition	**Level of government in which it held power**	**Reason for break-up**
PDP - SNSD	Entity, state (2006 – 2010)	RS government's policy towards the national level government, PDP's fear of being marginalized
SDP – SDA – HSP - NSRzB	Entity, state, canton (2011 – 2014)	Inability to form government at the state level, dissatisfaction of SDP over control of resources, fear of illegitimacy of government because of low number of Croat MPs.
SDA-SBB-HDZ-SDS-PDP-NDP	State (2015 – 2018)	Excise Law, internal splits in SDA.
SDA-SBB-SBiH	Canton Tuzla (2015 – 2018)	Internal split in SDA over control of resources in Tuzla canton.
SDA-DF-HDZ	State, entity, canton (2015)	DF and SDA disagreement over control of resources
SDS-NS-NDP	Entity (2018)	NDP left the coalition to join SNSD in power

Table 2. Coalitions that fell apart from 2006 - 2018

This lack of social capital translates into a lack of trust between political actors. Pre-election coalitions, in which parties go to elections with a joint list of candidates, are a rare occurrence.[3] BiH political parties tend to form large post-election coalitions instead. However, large post-election coalitions do not guarantee a stable government. On the contrary, it seems that almost every single coalition between 2010 and 2020 has fallen apart over control of resources, policy decisions, ideological reasons, or a combination of all three.

The challenges that arise for coalition governments in BiH are significant but are expected due to the complex system of the country and the electoral system and are hardly unique to the Bosnian political scene. However, unlike other countries, the level of incentives for these issues to be overcome through negotiations or interparty competition seems to be lower in BiH. It seems that the negative social capital present in Balkan countries (Mungiu - Pippidi 2005) may not only impede the functionality of the coalitions but make the distribution of resources both a form of governance and an incentive for corruption.

As corruption is an umbrella-like concept (Varraich 2017) that involves many forms of corrupt behavior such as influence trading, embezzlement and misuse of public funds, nepotism, cronyism, and patronage, both these practices and the fight against them have been elements crucial to the fragmentation of the BiH political system. While research on other regional political systems has focused on so-called "flyovers" (Klačar 2020, 68), people who leave one party to join another, this phenomenon is less present in BiH. Instead, people who leave one political party do not necessarily join another but rather create their own political project, usually a split party that operates as a new political subject. These political projects then either profit from the patronage of one of the three main political parties or, in rare instances, are fighting patronage. Those that fight patronage often become a victim of corrupt practices that target their membership.

The following section examines the specific features of the electoral system of the country. The system of ethnic checks and balances, proportional representation, and the Sainte-Laguë method applied to seat allocation together with the low thresholds for entering Parliament are all identified as contributing to fragmentation. In so doing, the election system can be understood as an enabler for the market of corrupt exchanges (Della Porta & Vanucci 1999, 57). The second section focuses

3 The PDP-NDP coalition in the 2014 RS general elections RS for the House of Representatives is an exception.

on the effect of corruption within that ecosystem by looking into the case studies of the fragmentation that resulted from the actions of the two leading parties, SDA and SNSD. The two cases are different; the SDA's struggle with corruption is essentially a strategy for mobilizing public support for intraparty struggle, while the SNSD effectively weaponizes patronage as a tool against its political opponents. The corrupt actions of the two parties in buying support from opposition MPs and councillors by using public resources in order to foster fragmentation of the political scene allows them to both contribute to and exploit what is already a highly corrupt environment. The exploitation of the public procurement system and the appointments in public companies appear as the two main tools for the patronage. The third case, that of HDZ, demonstrates the limitations of the corruption led fragmentation by illustrating a resistance to such trends. Specific strategies that the HDZ deployed post-2006 period and the fact that it exploited the fear of the Croat population as its electorate from being outvoted by the parties coming from two other ethnic groups contributed to HDZ's resilience against fragmentation. Three interviews that the author conducted with the high level party cadres in addition to the rich investigative journalism resources represent the main sources of the information on which the analysis is based. This section of the paper demonstrates that the connection between corruption and fragmentation is mutually reinforcing. The electoral system does provide the incentive for party creation and the fragmentation thus created provides additional opportunities for patronage. Internal party struggles lead to a polarization for and against corruption (in the case of SDA) and the exploitation of public resources is a bait for recruiting the membership and reducing the support of opposition parties (as in the case of SNSD as well as SDA). The conclusion offers different perspectives presented by the three case studies and links them with the consequences of patronage.

The electoral and political system of BiH

Composed of two entities and one district that is a condominium of two entities, BiH is an extraordinarily complex country suffering from "institutional overkill" (European Commission 2019). Its structure was created during the 1995 Dayton peace talks. While it has remained an asymmetrical federation between a unitary republic and a federation composed of ten cantons, international state-building efforts from 1996 to 2006 somewhat strengthened its relatively weak central government. The central government has few exclusive competences: foreign affairs, defense, indirect taxation, and foreign trade; all others are shared

with entities. RS is a unitary republic in which the local governance has considerable responsibilities, however, the power ultimately rests with the government in Banja Luka, its capital (Husic 2017). FBiH is divided into ten cantons that each have considerable competences in education, sports, culture, and economic policy. All cantons, both entities, Brčko District, and the state all have parliaments with directly elected representatives. The cantons, Brčko District, and RS have monocameral assemblies, while FBiH and state-level parliaments are bicameral and are made up of a House of Representatives (HoR) and a House of Peoples (HoP). The HoR is elected directly, while the HoP is appointed by cantonal assemblies. While HoPs at the BiH and FBiH levels of government are equal in power to the HoRs, the Council of Peoples that exists in RS is merely a body that can temporarily veto a law by citing protection of vital national interest in order to initiate a constitutional review of the law before the RS Constitutional Court.

The Election Law of BiH was designed by international actors during the intensive and internationally led state-building efforts from 1996 to 2006 (Ademović & Steiner 2010; Belloni 2004). One major concern of the designers of these solutions involved whether the returnees, referring to those who had been expelled from their homes during the war and had later returned to those homes, would be able to elect representatives to the assemblies. This explains the low threshold, ethnic quotas, and the desire to make the law as representative as possible. Another reason for this could lie in the desire to prevent large parties from gaining too much power, which could lead to authoritative abuse of power.

Ethnic quotas apply at all levels of government, and many deliberative procedures in parliaments and the government are influenced by ethnic participation. The BiH Presidency is composed of three members; one Bosniak, one Croat, and one Serb. The FBiH government has eight Bosniak ministers, five Croats, and three Serbs, while the RS government has eight Serb, five Bosniak, and three Croat ministers. Cantonal governments are composed in accordance with the proportional representation of peoples from the 1991 census. In municipalities, mayors and speakers of the assembly may not come from the same ethnic group unless the ethnic majority in that municipality is more than 80% of the population.

The threshold for entering parliaments is based on a model of proportional representation and stands at 3% for all municipal, cantonal, entity, and state assemblies. Due to the use of so-called compensatory

mandates[4], it is possible to win a single seat with as little as 1.5% of the vote at the state and entity level. This is the case when a particular political party has fared well in a specific electoral unit without winning votes in the rest of the state/entity; this has happened in all electoral cycles. There have been no significant calls for a reform of this system by, for example, increasing the threshold to enter parliament.

However, a first-past-the-post system is applied when candidates run for the Presidency of BiH, meaning that only one electoral cycle determines the winner of these elections. Thus, it is possible for a candidate with a minority of support to win the Presidency seat and thereby control the formation of the state government. This creates what the Croat parties view as a particular problem of legitimacy in the Federation of BiH (Zdeb 2016, 552). Namely, as per the BiH Constitution, voters in the Federation elect two Presidency members, one Bosniak and one Croat. However, the voters in FBiH, comprised largely out of two main ethnic groups, Bosniaks and Croats, can vote for only one candidate. This led to a situation in which an elected Croat candidate was elected with a majority of Bosniak votes in the 2006, 2010, and 2018 elections. This alienated both major Croat parties and a great deal of the Croat electorate from collaboration with Bosniak parties in general. To complicate things even further, the European Court of Human Rights found the constitutional provision governing elections to the BiH Presidency to not be in line with the European Convention on Human Rights because it prevents those citizens who are not members of the three major ethnic groups from standing for elections in its ruling on Sejdic and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina (Milanović 2010).

Another important trait of the BIH electoral system is that (except for RS in 1998) no extraordinary elections have been held at a level other than the municipal. In fact, cantonal constitutions and rulebooks of assemblies do not even have a legal provision governing the dissolving of the assemblies prior to the expiry of their four-year term, nor does the state House of Representatives. BiH Election Law simply states that preliminary elections will be held "when a mandate of an elected body stops or when that body is dissolved" (Election Law of BiH 2020). Other legal norms governing the matter also demonstrate a lack of clarity and, in any event, have not been used in practice.

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4 As per Article 2 of BiH Election Law, "Compensatory mandates shall mean the mandates that are allocated to the lists of political parties or coalitions according to the number of valid votes received and serve to compensate for inadequate proportional representation at the entity level arrived at by summing up the results for the particular multimember electoral units in the entity."

At the municipal level, mayors are elected using a first-past the post system, and local self-governance laws give them considerable power. Unlike government officials at other levels, once elected, mayors are hard to remove and often get reelected, holding their positions for several consecutive mandates (Al Jazeera 2020). Referenda may be held for the mayors to be removed by popular vote and must be initiated by a two-thirds majority of municipal councilors. However, mayors are surprisingly resilient towards referenda, and many have withstood them. This makes mayors desirable partners in the creation of party factions and new political projects.

Preferential voting lists were introduced in 2000 in order to "promote candidates with a more moderate appeal" (Belloni 2008), allowing voters to favor candidates regardless of their position on the list. This created an atmosphere of agile political campaigns; candidates were more motivated to participate actively in campaigns knowing that they had a chance of being elected regardless of their position on the list or their stance within party structures. In order to "bypass" a candidate on the list, a margin of 5% of preferential votes was required. This threshold was increased to 20% of the total number of ballots cast for the list of the party with the 2016 changes to the law (Election Law of BiH 2020). Comparative research has identified varying effects of preferential voting, such as an increase in campaign costs (Karvonen 2004), a greater sense of fairness among citizens (Farrell, & McAllister 2006), and the involvement of citizens in intraparty dynamics (Katz & Bardi 1980).

However, the main problem with the preferential list in the context of this inquiry is an increase in electoral fraud. Unlike most cases of electoral fraud, this was not directed at other parties but rather at members of one's own. Many ballots in which preference towards one candidate was indicated were destroyed or invalidated by members of the election boards from that same party. Minor cases of election fraud have been prosecuted, and the details of the media reports concerning at least two instances have confirmed that local party leadership has worked to prevent the election of certain candidates from their own parties with assistance from persons from other parties and other election officials (Tuzla 2008; Mostar 2020).

Corruption

Extremely high levels of corruption and “elements of state capture, including links with organized crime and corruption at all levels of government and administration” are present in BiH (European Commission 2018). Many corrupt acts are related to political parties and their functioning. This can partially be explained through the weak enforcement of the legislative framework concerning political party financing and conflict of interest norms. A robust conflict of interest review was established in 2006, but it was degraded by legislative changes in 2013 that removed the process of conflict of interest review from the BiH Central Election Commission, placing it instead under the authority of a committee of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly. This committee failed to take up this mantle for the following two years, and its subsequent activities were criticized as inefficient by local NGOs that monitor corruption. Similarly, the legislative framework for financing of political parties has been repeatedly recognized as inadequate, chiefly because of low fines issued for those in breach of the law (Transparency International 2015) but also because of the significant expansion of the options regarding illicit financing through the misuse of public funds (Hogic 2020, 210).

The first effect of the electoral system is that smaller parties or their MPs become kingmakers in a sense; the stability of the whole government can depend on one vote, and the smaller parties tend to capture the sectors of government entrusted to them. This has been the case with NSRzB (People’s Party for Progress and Wellbeing), which practically privatized the Ministry of Agriculture of FBiH from 2011 to 2014, its time in the FBiH government (Žurnal 2014; Inmedia 2012), leading to the criminal prosecution of the party president who was, at the time Minister of Agriculture. A similar development happened with BOSS, a marginal party that was SDA’s junior partner in the Canton Sarajevo government. They used public funds intended for party financing to fund credit for one of its most prominent members (Klix 2018). BPS, a marginal member in the Canton Sarajevo coalition government from 2015 to 2018, fully controlled the War Veterans Ministry, which made direct payments to a foundation that provides legal counseling for war veterans led by the son of the president of that party (Klix 2018). However, the trends in prosecutions (Transparency International BiH 2019) seem to prove that this less sophisticated form of corruption remains reserved for the minor players; the big parties remain focused on the grand corrupt deals that remain beyond prosecution.

I present the elements of corruption and state capture that exist due to fragmentation by analyzing the cases of fragmentation that occurred because of events that took place within or as a result of actions from three political subjects, namely SDA, the leading Bosniak party, SNSD, the leading Serb party, and HDZ, the leading Croat party. This is not to say that there were no other significant fragmentations within both the nationalist and non-nationalist parties. Prominent examples include the creation of DF from the members of SDP in 2013 and the split of A-SDA from SDA in 2008, but these splits were not corruption-driven. Rather, they were a result of political opportunism and different views concerning party ideology.[5]

SDA, the mathroshka of fragmentation

Several significant corruption-related splits have occurred within the main Bosniak party, SDA. In 2017, SDA's MP and Presidency member Senad Šepić left the party in order to form Nezavisni Blok (NB – Independent Bloc), allegedly because he was unhappy about the lack of democratic procedures within the party and its failure to work towards a modern BiH. Aligning himself with several mayors from predominantly Bosniak communities, his political project aimed to position itself as a centrist party running against both the left- and right-wing establishments (Interview 2021a). While the lack of intraparty democracy was the key driver for Šepić's behavior (Interview 2021a), he also claimed to be motivated by a desire to fight corruption and nepotism, topics that he had shown interest in before leaving the party. Šepić had been the head of SDA's political academy and had attempted to modernize the party through established cooperation with international foundations and European parties such as the European People's Party group seeking to create a modern centrist party that would emancipate itself or, at least, present itself as emancipated from the clientelist policies of SDA. However, after the 2018 elections, which saw NB enter the parliaments at all levels of government, two of its MPs in the FBiH Parliament that were crucial for the creation of a potential SDA-less majority switched their allegiance to SDA (Avaz 2019; Raport 2020). Widespread allegations that they had traded their votes for lucrative contracts for their companies remain unproven (Radio Sarajevo 2019; Transparency International 2020; Interview 2021b).

5 See the interview with DF founder Zeljko Komsic given to FTV in 2012 on the occasion of the split from SDP.

Two other important splits occurred in 2018. Dino Konaković, the Prime Minister of Canton Sarajevo government, and Mirsad Kukić left the party, which led to a governmental collapse in Tuzla and Sarajevo Canton. The former cited the fight against corruption as the main reason for his resignation while the latter feared expulsion from the party because of corruption charges brought against him in a court procedure and a battle over political control of Tuzla Canton in which Kukić was deemed to be working against the interest of the party (Radio Free Europe 2017). Thus, following different trajectories, Konaković left the party at the zenith of his power while Kukić left it as his decline began (Interview 2021b). Konaković stood at the 2018 general elections with his newly formed NiP (NiP – People and Justice), forming a coalition government in Sarajevo Canton with SDP and NS. The government took a strong anti-corruption stance, winning the plaudits of international observers for filing reports on corruption at the prosecutorial offices and setting up stronger controls regarding procurement and conflict of interest rules (European Commission 2020). Following the 2020 election results, which allowed NiP to take control over most municipalities in Canton Sarajevo, the party began presenting itself as a political project separate from SDA, with anti-corruption as one of its main goals (NiP 2020; Interview 2021b).

Kukić's PDA struggled to form a cantonal government in Tuzla Canton, remaining in opposition, and the judgment of the court that found him guilty of influence trading affected the results of the 2020 local elections. Despite reduced support, the PDA finally entered the Tuzla canton government in 2020, but with the FBiH government taking away his main asset, the coal mine in his native town of Banovici, from his control (Žurnal 2020), his influence began to wane, as evidenced by PDA's electoral defeat in that municipality (Central Election Committee of BiH 2020).

All three split parties have collaborated against SDA post-2018, which seems to be their modus operandi for the time being (Interview 2021a; Interview 2021b). However, whether their MPs and appointed officials will remain clear from SDA's influence remains to be seen. In this sense, the lack of ideological distinction from the SDA that is not evidenced in the PDA, as well as its overall inability to clearly distance itself from the patrimonial practices of its founder Mirsad Kukic (Žurnal 2020), are perhaps a key limiting factor.

Cooperation with SNSD, a guarantee of fragmentation

SDS, the party that enjoyed most of the Bosnian Serb population's support from 1990 onwards, lost power in RS in the 2006 general elections. This marked the beginning of the fragmentation of the party. In 2009, former SDS President Dragan Čavić and several prominent MPs left the party to form DP (Demokratska partija). Čavić was widely blamed for the electoral loss in 2006, and he was excluded from most decision-making processes within SDS after he resigned from the position of party president. DP managed to preserve a small but resilient following and establish itself to the left of SDS without collaborating with SNSD. In 2013, DP merged with the minor party NDS in order to create NDP. Together with SDS, NDP participated in a coalition against SNSD in the 2018 general elections. Surprisingly, after almost upsetting SNSD in those elections, NDP left the coalition with SDS and joined SNSD. Dragan Čavić obtained the position of acting director of the electric distribution company Elektrokrajina (Radio Free Europe 2019; Transparency International 2019).

In 2015, in what was widely seen as a split induced by SNSD in order to weaken SDS following a rather weak majority that SNSD enjoyed in the RS Parliament, SDS MP Zlatko Maksimović, left the party and formed USPS (Successful Srpska). The tradeoff was SNSD's support for Maksimović's bid to become a mayor of Bijeljina , a relatively prosperous northeastern town and a traditional SDS stronghold in the 2016 local elections. This effort failed, and USPS would go on to dissolve in 2020 after it failed to secure a single seat in the 2018 and 2020 elections – with Maksimović securing a spot first as a director of Bijeljina hospital and then as the deputy manager of the Health Insurance Fund of RS (Inforadar 2020). However, this did not end SNSD's ambitions to rule Bijeljina. SNSD courted Mićo Mićić, the mayor of Bijeljina, in 2020, supporting his ambitions to create his own local political project, SDS Semberija (named after the subregion in which Bijeljina is located), in exchange for support for his mayoral bid. However, the 2020 local elections again failed to bring Bijeljina into SNSD's lap, and the unfortunate post-election death of Mićić led to a temporary halt to these ambitions.

SNSD was much more successful in flipping Doboj, another traditional SDS stronghold, to its side. Using the internal strife between the local party board and the SDS leadership, SNSD convinced Doboj mayor Obren Petrović to leave SDS and join SNSD, bringing most of the local SDS membership

with him. This allowed SNSD a comfortable election victory in that city in the 2020 municipal elections (BiH Central Election Committee 2020).

Similarly, Nenad Stevandić, Vice President of SDS, left the party in 2015 in order to create US (United Srpska). SNSD rewarded him with positions in the public sector for his party colleagues (Žurnal 2018). This split somewhat differed from others as the US had a more ideologically profiled attitude as a right-wing party which undoubtedly contributed to its solid performance in the 2018 and 2020 elections.

In 2017, Ognjen Tadić, who was an unsuccessful SDS candidate in 2008 and 2014 for the post of RS President, left the party in order to start the short-lived NS (Narodna stranka), which soon merged with DNS. Thanks to its hold in some important cities in RS, partnership with DNS was vital for the staying power of SNSD post-2010. The successful rise of the US meant that the kingmaker role of DNS gradually became less important, especially between 2006 and 2010. This created internal tensions within DNS that escalated by the creation of DEMOS, which was a split party led by those DNS members that sought to align themselves closer to SNSD. The remaining members found themselves leaving the coalition with SNSD in 2020 after fourteen years of partnership. PDP and SP, the two remaining important political parties for the Serb electorate, were also not immune from rifts caused by cooperation with or refusal to co-operate with SNSD. PDP lost some of its prominent members who opposed the leaving of the coalition between SNSD and PDP in 2009 (Radio Free Europe 2009). Despite the longevity and successfulness of SNSD's coalition with SP, which began in 2006 and was dubbed "the longest political alliance in the region", SNSD exploited the internal dissatisfaction of SP members with intraparty dynamics in order to encourage the formation of a new party, SPS (Socialist Party of Srpska), which took almost half of SP's support to the local 2020 elections.[6]

DNS, the traditional kingmaker of RS politics since 2006, was also not immune to the external pressures that eventually led to its fragmentation. Marko Pavic, the long-standing party president, faced an uphill struggle in maintaining his position. He was challenged within the coalition with SNSD by party members that alleged unfair distribution of positions after the 2018 elections. These pressures led to an internal struggle that resulted in the departure of RS National Assembly Speaker Nedeljko Cubrilovic, a key party member, who then started the splinter party DEMOS (Democratic Srpska) (Deutsche Welle 2019). DEMOS involved many of the sitting MPs

6 See the interview with DF founder Zeljko Komsic given to FTV in 2012 on the occasion of the split from SDP.

and ministers of the RS assembly and government and was quick to align itself with SNSD. DNS left the ruling coalition after losing one-third of its electoral support in the 2020 local elections (Deutsche Welle 2020).

All these recompositions and fragmentations did not, however, guarantee SNSD's absolute power in RS; its majority in the RS National Assembly went from 56 to 45 MPs (out of 87), and the party lost Banja Luka, the capital, in the 2020 local elections. Additionally, its partner SPS failed to support the mayoral bid of SNSD's candidate in Banja Luka, which prompted the SNSD to end the coalition with the party it had helped create less than a year before (Danas 2020).

HDZ and its resilience towards fragmentation

Not a single significant split[7] occurred within te ranks of HDZ, the major Croat political party, between 2006 and 2020. There are several reasons that may explain this absence. First is the existence of the Croat National Council, a non-governmental organization that is in charge of the creation of a common political narrative for all Croat parties in BiH and is not, at least formally, a part of HDZ (Interview 2019). It is a unique organization that does not have its parallel among the forums that gather voters of other ethnic affiliation. Furthermore, HDZ excels in the mobilization of Croat voters, effectively exploiting the fact that, in terms of sheer numbers, the Croats in BiH are the smallest of the three major ethnic groups. The social capital might also play a role here; it is found to be the highest among the members of the Croat ethnic group in BiH (Salaj 2009), which may contribute to more coherence within HDZ ranks and a lack of societal support for those that would involve themselves in separate political projects.

HDZ 1990, the main threat to HDZ, gradually weakened in the observed period. One of its founders, Božo Ljubić, joined the HDZ on a list for diaspora voting from BiH and was elected to the Parliament of Croatia. HDZ 1990 also failed to create a separate ideological stance from HDZ; its members aimed to differentiate themselves solely through their stance on constitutional reform. Other Croat parties, such as HSP or NSRzB, lost much of their standing within the electorate between from 2010 to 2014 period thanks to the collaboration with the SDP, that was, due to its choice of the candidacy of Zeljko Komsic as the Croat BiH Presidency member

7 This refers to the mayor of the small city of Tomislavgrad that left HDZ in order to pursue his own political project.

who was elected with a majority of non-Croat votes considered by many as a political option hostile for the Croats (Zdeb 2016, 552).

Conclusion

The main driver of the fragmentation of the BiH party system is the electoral system. Its usage of a seat allocation system that favors small and medium-sized parties, low thresholds, and the complex coalition governments that are *conditio sine qua non* of government formation demonstrate this. The electoral system creates a market for the exchanges that strengthen corruption. This situation is exploited by the political actors that create new parties lacking a clear ideological profile that are, as the cases of fragmentation linked with SNSD demonstrate, not only prone to patronage but also short-lived.

Such a corrupt and fragmented system of government makes the BiH political coalitions largely dysfunctional and prone to break-ups. Party splits occur, as in the case of parties operating in RS, as a result of a destabilization strategy based on patronage that essentially weaponizes the internal strife within both political opponents and traditional partners to the ruling SNSD. In FBiH, as the case of SDA demonstrates, corruption plays a role as a legitimacy tool that justifies splits and pursuance of one's own political project. While a lack of intraparty democracy may play a certain role in inducing the splits, it may not explain their frequency. To put it bluntly, this system appears to reward starting one's own political project more than trying to work within party ranks to change the ideology of the party or establish oneself as a leading figure within it. This results in volatile and unpredictable developments that make smaller and regional parties kingmakers; they are able to trade their vote for support of legislative proposals and reform measures for government influence.

Not all corruption-related effects are negative. In some instances, those who left the parties were willing to act in a role similar to that of whistleblowers revealing evidence of the criminal behavior of their former party colleagues. The fragmentation has also been a barrier to the creation of authoritarian leaders, particularly in FBiH. The rise of such authoritarianism in RS, however, points to the fact that the decentralized cantonal structure in FBiH has been a major factor in its prevention there.

The case of HDZ demonstrates that ethnic cleavage is more important for Croat leaders than for others as it reduced the possible splits occurring within HDZ. Additionally, HDZ's mitigating strategy played a role in preventing their occurrence. The absence of cantonal structures in RS

and the strong commitment of SNSD to a secessionist project regarding RS independence may be considered mitigating factors that result in SNSD being splinter-free. This, coupled with its control of RS resources, and its purchasing of support, may explain why SNSD remains the most stable party on the BiH political scene.

The durability of the split parties is often a result of the strength of the regional support that its leaders enjoy (NiP, NB, A-SDA) or the patronage that is provided to them by one of the three main parties. However, a lack of ideological differentiation and strong regional affiliation to cantonal structures make them less appealing outside of a certain territory. Comparative research with North Macedonia and Kosovo, where the number of parties is among the highest in Europe, has the potential to determine whether similar patterns of patronage that may exist, play a role in this phenomenon.

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Clientelism in the Process of Public Sector Employment: the Case of Montenegrin Municipalities

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Abstract

In this paper, I analyse the employment processes in three Montenegrin municipalities from the perspective of corruption and political clientelism. The paper argues that corruption and clientelism overlap in this context of public employment, and that political employment in the public sector can be considered both clientelistic and corruptive practice. The paper further analyses several mechanisms developed with the aim to curb the practice of political employment, however, it finds that they are only contributing to providing legitimacy to these processes. The paper argues that mechanisms developed with the aim to tackle corruption and clientelistic practices need to communicate with cultural patterns present in the local context and to take into consideration the value systems that exist within the public sector. Developing mechanisms that heavily rely on institutional practices and administrative processes, without communicating with the deeply embedded traditional and cultural practices will have limited results as they will only be adjusted to the existing practices. In that case, they can even be used to give formal framework to the corruptive and clientelist practices and thus strengthen their impact.

Keywords: political clientelism, corruption, local self-government, Montenegro

Introduction

The paper deals with the problem of political employment in Montenegro, focusing on the level of local self-government. As many other neighboring countries, Montenegro is struggling to solve the problem of too big public administration. The state apparatus requires significant budget allocations, which is not being followed by the efficiency and quality in service provision. Public jobs are one of the most important resources available to the ruling party when it comes to fighting for votes. Furthermore, during the 30 years of the rule of the Democratic Party of Socialists, this resource has been widely used in all of the government levels, which has caused a high level of politicization of the public sector. Although the fight against corruption and political employment, and public sector optimization have been a declarative commitment of the government for the past period, relevant reports still do not show any progress (Freedom House report 2019, Montenegro country report 20120, European Commission). The public sector remains big and expensive despite many institutional mechanisms that are being introduced to mitigate the problems mentioned above. This paper first of all deals with the theoretical concepts of corruption and clientelism, arguing that politically driven employments in the public sector can be perceived as both corruption and clientelism. Although the literature is abundant with attempts to make a clear division between the two concepts, this paper argues that more attention should be paid to developing effective mechanisms that would mitigate corrupt and clientelist acts. After presenting the findings from the research on human resources management (HRM) in three Montenegrin municipalities, the paper discusses some of the mechanisms that have been introduced to increase the quality of the HRM. The paper tries to argue that in order to be effective, mechanisms need to be rooted in the cultural and social background of the given area. Whether management of a town, city, or country will be corrupted or part of the clientelist scheme depends on the tendencies of their employees, their understanding of the acceptable behavior, and the norms they cherish. Therefore, the mechanisms that do not communicate with these aspects are not likely to be successful.

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Clientelism and corruption

In this section, we will discuss the terms of political clientelism and corruption regarding the public administration, or more precisely, human resources management and employment in the public sector. These are the terms that are often being used to describe the same undemocratic procedures that undermine fair political competition and reduce the efficiency of the public administration. There are numerous definitions of corruption, but all of them include using something public for something private. The variations are the abuse of entrusted power for private gain (Transparency International 2005, 50), abuse of public roles or resources for private or party gain (Robinson 1998 cited in Cheung and Chan 2008, 223). Clientelism, on the other hand, is most commonly defined as an exchange of votes for favors (Graziano 1974). In defining clientelism, Ayero emphasizes bonds of dependence and control based on inequality (Ayero 1999, De Soussa 2008, 4). The literature is abundant with articles trying to define the differences between the two concepts and provide a theoretical explanation that could draw the line between corruption and clientelism (De Soussa 2008, Maiz and Requejo 2001).

Regardless of that whether these concepts overlap, are clearly separated, or are in a causal relationship, it is sure that that they all need similar environments to flourish (Singer, 2009, 7). Some of the main features of the societies that will allow the emergence of corruptive or clientelist practices are weak institutions, short democratic histories, poverty, and significant economic state presence (Treisman 2007, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Although some authors dispute the last one, stating that Scandinavian countries are among the countries with the highest public spending and represent the most functioning states at the same time (De Sousa 2008, 14). However, the last being the precondition, or not, the fact that we are discussing whether clientelism and corruption are overlapping clearly indicates that they appear in similar societies and are underpinned by similar circumstances, norms, and practices.

Speaking of the preconditions for the development of clientelism, Hicken argues that the patron must have access to the public resources that will be exchanged for favors (Hicken 2011, 300). However, the same also goes for corruption if we know that the corrupted official needs to have access to resources that will be wrongly used for private gain. Also, apart from making efforts to separate clientelism from corruption, some authors highlight the causal relationship between the two.

Singer, for example, sees clientelism as leading to corruption. Clientelism creates incentives for politicians to resist reforms that aim to increase transparency and enhance the rule of law (Geddes 1994, cited in Singer 2009, 6). Maiz and Requejo (2001) also discuss clientelism as a political incentive structure for corruption. Some authors put focus on the aspects of differences between the two concepts. Della Porta, for example, states that in corruption, the object of exchange is money, while in clientelism, it is the votes (Della Porta 1992 cited in Maiz and Requejo 2001). Singer argues that some forms of corruption have nothing to do with clientelism, such as for example when public official steals money. Equally, not all of the clientelist relations are corrupt (Singer 2009, 24). However, that does not exclude the possibility that some actions can be qualified as both corruption and clientelism at the same time.

If we take into account the most widely accepted definition of corruption as a misuse of public power for private or party gains (Huntington 1968, Heidenheimer 1978, Johnston 1968) and compare it to the most widely accepted definition of clientelism as an exchange of votes for favors (Graziano 1974), we can see that there are possibilities for overlaps. Namely, votes from the clientelism definition can clearly be "party gains" from the definition of corruption. Equally, "favors" from the definition of clientelism can be made by "misusing public power" from the definition of corruption. If we apply this to the issue we are investigating in our paper, and that is public sector employment, we see that it can fit into both definitions and, therefore, can be considered as both clientelist and corruptive practice at the same time. If we use the concept of corruption, public officials are misusing their powers to employ people in exchange for party gains or votes. At the same time, using the clientelist framework, votes are being exchanged for jobs in the public sector. So, the conclusion is that political employments in the public sector can be perceived as both corruptive and clientelist actions.

However, it is not too important to strictly define boundaries between corruption and clientelism or make a clear conclusion are those two separate terms, or they can be used interchangeably, as the literature seems to be intending to. What is more important is to know to recognize the behaviors that undermine the efficiency of public administration in favor of corruption or clientelism and use the generated knowledge to develop mechanisms that will effectively tackle these behaviors.

Even though there are certain discussions around the positive or negative nature of clientelism, authors mostly agree that clientelism prevents citizens from holding elected officials accountable and encourages

them to keep corrupt in power out of fear and self-interest (Hicken, 2011, 290). Clientelism is believed to be threatening to the democracy and causing government capture by interest groups, reducing its legitimacy, the ability to perform, and undermining the sense of public good (De Sousa 2008, 6). Without regard to what is leading to what in the corruption-clientelism discussion, the fact is that both phenomena have the same or similar detrimental consequences for democratic development. As Singer argues, a weak and politicized state makes it hard to punish corruption, and therefore clientelism can be associated with a variety of corrupt acts (Singer 2009, 7). Therefore, one of the recommendations for future research would be to invest more time researching the effectiveness of anti-clientelist and anti-corruption mechanisms instead of trying to make theoretical differences between the two concepts. As part of this paper will be dedicated to the analysis of some of the mechanisms that are introduced to prevent clientelism and corruption manifested through public employments in the Montenegrin municipalities, it is also important to shortly discuss the factors that influence the development of clientelism and corruption, as the mechanisms to tackle them should eventually affect their root causes.

What causes clientelism and corruption

Veenendaal and Corbett (2020, 61-76) argue that small states are more prone to clientelism. They say that politicians have direct contact with their constituents in small societies, which leads to the blurred boundary between the private and public spheres. Ideologies and political platforms have a very limited role in voting behavior, while voting behavior is more affected by personal face-to-face interactions. They define two important concepts relevant to clientelism in small societies: hyper-personalism and social intimacy (Veenendaal and Corbett 2020, 62-73). They explain that politicians in small districts often have overlapping personal and political relations with their constituents which causes significant social pressure to provide voters with certain benefits. What is also important to mention when it comes to small societies is that often, a small number of votes decides the results of the elections, which creates additional incentives for the politicians to use all necessary resources in order to compete for electoral support (Veenendaal and Corbett 2020, 67). This point of view can be used to analyze Montenegro's case, given the fact that it is a small state and local municipalities are small electoral districts.

Interestingly, when we speak about causes, the literature on clientelism is much more abundant with cultural theories than it is corruption, even though there are many overlaps between the two, as previously discussed. De Sousa argues that cultural theories are important because cultural factors can significantly affect the expectations actors have in the exchange process (De Sousa 2008, 7). The presence of clientelism in one society depends to a great extent on the "degree of tolerance of these practices in society (low moral costs) and the people's predisposition to enter those exchanges" (Auyero 1999; Maiz 2003 cited in De Sousa 2008, 7).

Collier (2002, 7-8) gives an explanation based on the country's belonging to one of the three types of the culture-individualistic, collectivistic and egalitarian, and their propensity to a certain corrupt behavior depending on that. According to this typology, Montenegro belongs to the second group, collectivist culture, together with most of the countries in Eastern Europe and most of the consolidating democracies. These types of societies are characterized by small groups gathered around a common ethnic, family, religious, or some other belonging. Those are the cultures with strong paternalism. Most transactions done within these cultures are personal ones, done "face to face" (Collier 2002, 7). As Collier (2002) explains it:

"Citizens in collectivist political cultures interact with the ruling elite in two primary ways. First, citizens retreat into the safety of their respective groups and expect either few services and benefits from the government or that the ruling elite's paternalism will provide for their needs. Second, citizens, often entire groups, establish strong patron-client dependency relationships with members of the ruling elite. Under a system of informal reciprocity, the clients (citizen/group) pledge their economic and political support to the patrons (ruling elite) for access to government resources" (Collier 2002,8).

He further argues that politics is perceived as a privilege in these cultures, and it is expected for those involved in politics to have some additional private gain. Moreover, these kind of relations and expectations are what makes fertile ground for the development of clientelist relations. So, in analyzing public administration systems, processes, and institutions, it is crucial not to forget about cultural aspects as an important factor that shapes institutional processes. As De Sousa puts it, cultural practices shape the normative practices, and they do finally influence institutional performance (De Sousa 2008, 7). It can even be argued that clientelist and corruptive practices help shape informal parallel institutions that actually take over the ruling power over the formal ones.

Rothstein (2012) argues that corruption should not be seen as culturally determined because the quality of political and legal institutions itself is not culturally determined. This has a reasonable point, but only if we perceive institutions in a purely technical sense. However, that is not possible because people with their values, assumptions, and cultural backgrounds are what institutions are made of and what determines their functioning. Therefore, yes, institutions are partially culturally determined in the amount that their employees determine them.

This paper is not arguing that the culture is the only factor that affects the level of corruption and clientelism in a country, but that ignoring the culture as one of the factors can lead to the development of anti-clientelist and anti-corruption mechanisms that will not work because they are not anticipating the behaviors triggered by cultural patterns.

The following section gives a brief overview of the political situation in Montenegro in order to have a better understanding of the employment practices that are to be discussed in the later stage.

Background information on Montenegrin context

Montenegro is one of the countries geographically and politically situated in the context of Western Balkans. Even though officially it is advertised as the country that has gone the longest way in the accession negotiations with the European Union, the country is troubled with high levels of corruption, relatively high unemployment, high economic dependence on tourism, and 30 years of the political rule of Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) (Freedom House report 2019, Montenegro country report 20120, European Commission). The lengthy ruling period of one party led to creating, as many call it, a party-state. The recent period saw the emergence of public disclosure of numerous cases of corruption and misuse of public funds (affairs "Envelope", "Recording"). All of those events and the long history of citizens` dissatisfaction with the low level of life quality started to be manifested in the electoral results on the local level. Most of the municipalities, relatively small by territory as well as by population, had a long period of being run by DPS and partners, but the last decade saw some changes. As in most of the countries, patterns present on the national level can also be perceived on the level of municipalities, which in Montenegrin case is proven by the low level of efficiency of local administrations, a high number of employees not being followed with the improved services as well as suspicious activities in local enterprises. In addition,

Montenegrin municipalities remain on a very low level when it comes to transparency (Centre for Democratic Transition, 2018). For this paper, we analyze the cases of Tivat, Kotor, and Kolasin, out of which Kotor and Tivat are municipalities in the south, and Kolasin is considered to be in the central-north region. In order to explore employment practices by both sides of the Montenegrin political spectrum, we have chosen municipalities that have had different ruling parties in different periods and have had some sort of reorganization. Given the fact that its political opponents are often accusing DPS that it has created a wide network of clientelist and corruptive relations, we wanted to examine if clientelism is something typical only for DPS, or it is rather something embedded in the political culture and the social patterns that define political relations in Montenegro, or maybe even in the wider area.

From January to February 2020, we have implemented research on human resources management in Kolasin, Kotor, and Tivat. The research included sending requests for free access to information related to the number of employees, performing a search of web presentations of the municipalities, and conducting interviews with a range of current or former municipal officials and journalists familiar with a local business.

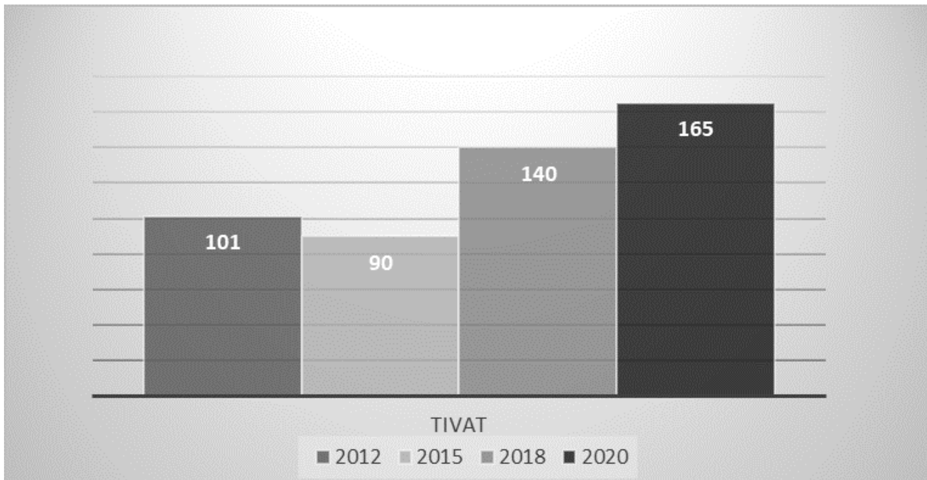
Findings

Public Administration Reorganization Plan was adopted for the period 2018-2020, stating that the number of employees in local self-governments is going to be reduced by 10% or 1 217 out of the 12 174 employees (Ministry of Public Administration 2018, 42). Although 230 employers left their position in 2019, new 137 persons were employed on the local level, which clearly shows the inability and lack of political will to tackle this problem (Ministry of Public Administration 2019).

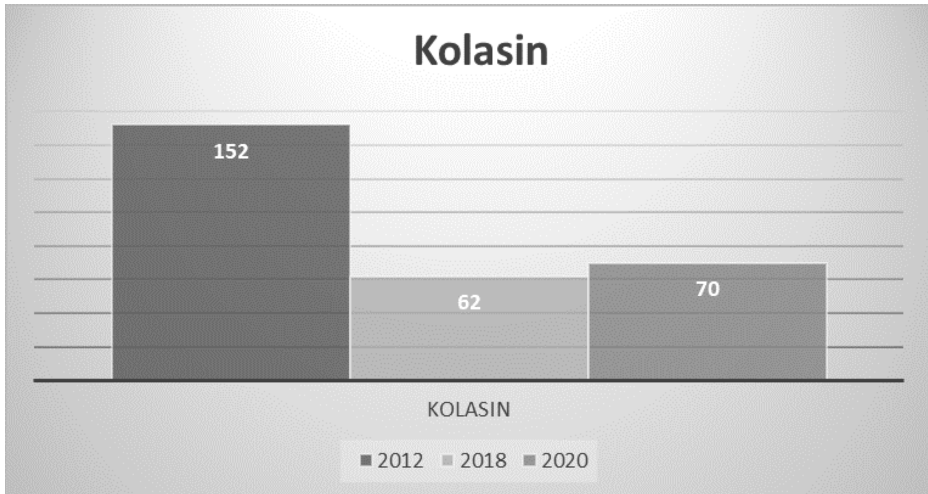
When it comes to the municipalities that were the subject of our research, the numbers themselves did not lead us to the conclusion that the process of optimization is actually ongoing.

Graphics 1, 2, and 3 show the changes in the number of employees in the three municipalities from 2012-2020. The numbers are based on the information received from the local governments, the data available on their web presentations, as well as from the official Government documents. As it can be seen, the only municipality which actually saw a reduced number of employees is Kolasin. In 2014, the Coalition consisted of Social Democratic Party (SDP)-Pozitivna- Democratic Front (DF)-Socialist People's Party (SNP) took over the power in this municipality

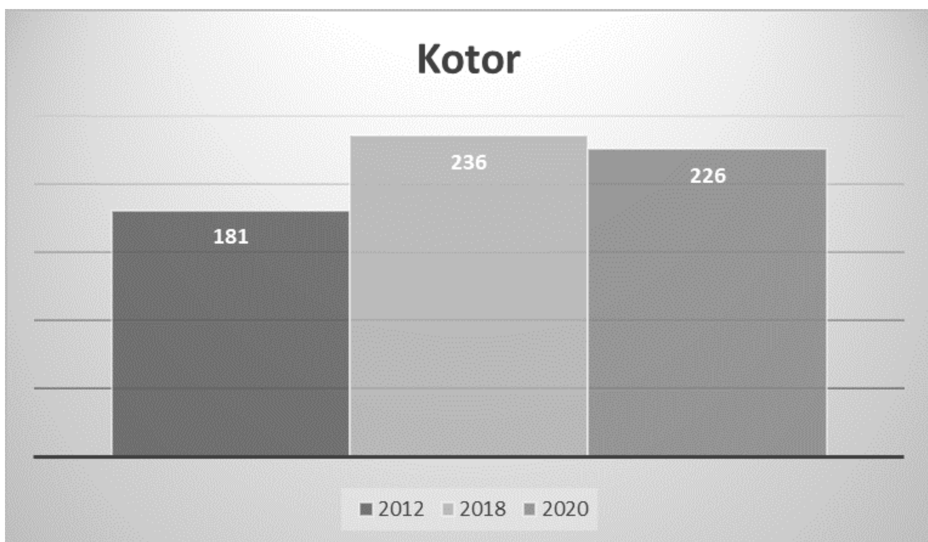
after more than a decade of the rule of DPS. The number of employees the new government found was significantly higher than the budget of the municipality would allow, and a large number of them was employed against the law, following the procedures that are not envisaged by the Law on Civil Servants. An enormous number of employees were hired based on a contract of temporary employment, which is a civic-legal and not a labor-legal relation, and it is envisaged for short-term service contracts, not for public sector employment (Marovic, Markovic 2020). However, this is one of the mechanisms that is being widely manipulated and used to bypass official procedures. Ms. Zeljka Vuksanovic, Mayor of Kolasin in the period of 2014-2018, states that there were 308 persons on the payroll when their coalition came into power. She insists on using the term "persons being on paycheck" because she cannot consider them employees since they were not even coming to their offices. As Bold et. al (2018) notice, based on their excessive literature reviews, absenteeism is one of the most common things in public services shaped by clientelism. Sometimes it is even combined with "moonlighting"- when public servants are not coming to their job because they are using that time to work privately on other jobs. According to the words by Ms. Vuksanovic, they have managed to reduce the total number of employees to 33. However, it is important to mention that the documents from that period indicate that the process was not really designed based on the systematic analysis, but rather everyone who wanted to take severance pay and quit the job could do that. As the data shows, the new change of power in 2018 caused new uncontrolled rises in the number of public servants.



Graph 1. Number of employees in Municipality Tivat: SOURCE: Marovic, Markovic, Montenegrin Municipalities and Human Resource Management,



Graph 2. Number of employees in Municipality Kolasin: SOURCE: Marovic, Markovic, Montenegrin Municipalities and Human Resource Management, Podgorica, 2020.



Graph 3. Number of employees in Municipality Kotor. SOURCE: Marovic, Markovic, Montenegrin Municipalities and Human Resource Management, Podgorica, 2020.

Zeljka Vuksanovic, Mayor of Kolasin, from 2014 to 2018, mentions a striking example of over-employment, and that is the example of the Centre for Culture, a municipal institution in charge of the cultural life

in the town. In 2014 the number of people employed in the Centre was 34. The Coalition led by SDP managed to reduce the number to 9, but what Ms. Vuksanovic states is that the cultural life of Kolasin with the Centre for Culture having 34 employees was equally non-existent as before. These numbers may not be big, but annual budget allocations for salaries represent a significant part of the overall local budget. In addition, it is interesting to see how fast the number of employees at a local level can be reduced by almost 30% and even more, how it is not affecting at all the institution's work.

When it comes to Municipality Tivat, the number of employees in the local administration was almost doubled within the monitored period. However, the municipality does not find that the number of people working in the municipality is too high, and they argue that Tivat's fast development requires a higher number of people (Marovic, Markovic 2020). In addition, the number of people employed is not the only thing that increased during this period, but the number of secretariats as well. Namely, from the previous three, Tivat increased the number of secretariats to seven. Another thing that can be indicative of higher need to control the process of employments from the higher level of administration is the fact that the municipal employment service has been transferred to the Mayor's Cabinet, although all of the relevant recommendations state that this service should be part of the office of the Main Administrator (Allan and Biro 2011).

Despite the limitations of advertising new jobs during the period prior to the elections, the Municipality of Tivat published 17 vacancies only several months before local elections in 2020. Pre-election employment is something that civil society has constantly been drawing attention to during the period of DPS rule. In 2014 MANS (Network for Affirmation of the Non-Governmental Sector) has filed a complaint to the State Electoral Commission against state and local bodies for their employments in 71 cases, contrary to the legal regulations (Radio Free Europe, 2014). Only ten days after the local elections have been called, different state bodies, local governance bodies, and public companies have posted a significant number of new vacancies. These practices are seen as one of the most direct and striking examples of developing clientelist relations and exchanging public jobs for votes. In fact, a common formula that is widely present in Montenegrin society is that one job provides four votes.

The Municipality of Kotor represents another interesting example. Namely, after the rule of DPS, which lost elections held in 2016, the opposition has formed the local government at the beginning of 2017.

The government has been consisted of Demokrate-URA-DF. According to the official data on the website of Municipality Kotor, the number of employees in 2016 was 197, and in 2017, when the opposition took over the power- 189 (Municipality Kotor website, 12.03.2018). The new ruling structure allocated 400 000 Euros for the purpose of severance payments to the number of employees. That was one of the main tools intended to reduce the number of employees on the local level. However, only one year later, Municipality Kotor made 58 contracts for temporary employment (Ministry of Public Administration 2018). We already discussed the phenomena of temporary employment as a way to avoid official employment procedures and the existing limitations but still hire people and provide them with public sector jobs. This is also a very effective way to avoid changes in the statistical data since these contracts usually do not go into some parts of the statistics on the official number of employees. So, although new local management was declaratively dedicated to reducing the number of employees and showed dedication to that goal by allocating significant budget funds to perform this, the later actions show the same practices as having been implemented by the previous ruling structure. In some way, this practice can be even more worrying because of the fact that the new governments spent taxpayers' money to encourage previous employees to leave their jobs and then hire new employees, and the level of accountability can be seriously questioned. The purpose of severance payments is to reduce the number of employees, not reduce the number of employees hired by the previous political structures and then hire new people. The example of Kotor is very illustrative of the level of lack of responsibility towards the public money, public institutions, and the lack of dedication to the true reform of the public sector.

Human Resources planning for the party or the service

When it comes to human resources planning, the situation is rather similar in all three municipalities. In most cases, municipalities do not have properly updated plans, strategies for human resources and departments in charge of HR usually have only one person employed. In addition, those departments have a more bureaucratic role, being in charge of the legal procedures that follow employment processes, and usually do not perform analysis of the efficiency of the employees, job appraisals, make strategic plans of human resources management, etc.

If we go through the acts of systematization of Municipality Kolasin, we can see that some acts have been changed every couple

of months. Acts of systematization are documents that are the basis for employment in the municipalities, but they should be based on the needs and capacities of the local governments as well as the needs of the local community. If we know this, then there is reason to ask how it is possible that the situation within the local municipality changes at that pace that requires changes of the official documents. Namely, the Act of Systematization adopted in April 2019 states that Secretariat for space planning, communal duties, and traffic has eight jobs within, while the new Act adopted only three months later increases that number to eleven. Similarly, the municipal government has systematized six jobs within the Communal Police and three months later increased it to nine, while Secretariat for Finances, Property and Economic Development increased the number of systematized jobs from nineteen to twenty-one.

	Number of posts in April 2019	Number of posts in June 2019
Secretariat for Spatial Planning	8	11
Communal Police	6	9
Secretariat for Finances	19	21
The number of jobs increased by: 8		

Table 1. The changes in Systematization Acts of Municipality Kolasin

This would not be worrying or suspicious in a more extensive public system, but the current administration number of created jobs represents 12% of the total number of systematized working places. These data can indicate several things. First of all, the lack of strategic planning of the local human resources. In a situation where the number of systematized jobs is being changed by 12% only three months after the previous plan has been adopted, it is clear that there is no strategic and long-term planning of the HR. It must be mentioned that there were no specific new circumstances that would require this kind of change. The second conclusion that can be drawn from this example is that the political employments are being formalized through the change of the local documents so that official municipal documents are being subordinated to the needs of clientelism. Moreover, this goes in line with what is widely present in the literature, stating that clientelism itself creates a bureaucratic machine and becomes an informal institution itself (Flap

19920 cited in Maiz and Requejo 2001). We will get back to this later, trying to examine the actual efficiency of the measures that are being implemented within the municipalities in order to contribute to the professionalization of the public service.

Institutional limitations- Do they serve the purpose?

When it comes to the employment procedures, they are defined by the national-level legislation, and due to the necessity for a higher level of control, employment on a local level has been additionally conditioned. Namely, each municipality is obliged to formally ask for consent from the Ministry of Finance before publishing a new vacancy. This obligation is introduced in order to establish higher control of the employments on the local level due to a significant increase in the number of employees and constant accusations of political employments. As the body in charge of implementing the Optimization Plan, the Ministry of Public Administration regularly publishes reports where it also deals with the employments on the local level. Among other things, the reports contain information on the number of vacancies published by the municipalities, which were not given consent from the Ministry of Finance. However, the report does not mention the number of vacancies that the Ministry approved. This information clearly indicates the manipulative purpose of this measure. The intention is clearly to fulfill the form by calling upon municipalities for not asking permission for two or three jobs, while there is no data on the approved jobs and where the number is much higher. So, for example, The Report on Implementation of the Optimization Plan of the Public Administration for the period April-June 2018 states that Municipality Kolasin employed three persons without the consent of the Ministry of Finance and one person in the period from September to December. So, the central government calls upon the municipality for the unapproved employment of four persons, while the total number of employees in municipalities is being increased significantly. This clearly indicates the attempt to imitate the existence of the control and the true efforts in solving the problem of excessive employment.

If we talk about regular employment procedures, all municipalities need to publish the vacancy and leave enough time for the application. Further, applicants need to pass the test organized within Administration for Human Resources. After that, there is the interview process for the most successful candidates. However, the effectiveness of these measures is rather questionable, first of all, because experience shows that they are

easily manipulated. Our interviewees mention some examples, such as that the candidate who should get the job is given the test in advance or even answers to the test questions, so the moment of competition rather loses its significance. However, even if this manipulation mechanism fails, then there is the discretionally right of the Mayor to choose the person who did not have the highest results at the test. So, the question that must be asked is how effective these procedures really are, and are they preventing clientelism or actually creating space for its justification. We argue that these procedures actually give credibility to all of the wrongly implemented employments and all clientelism rooted in these procedures. The fact that a municipality formed a commission and organized a series of tests and interviews only provides legitimacy to the municipality's actions and gives arguments to the municipality in the process of defending the legality and legitimacy of the employments, which are most often political and not meritocratic. Also, we must not forget that the local officials are implementing these procedures, and therefore they also represent a significant waste of time and resources invested in justifying clientelist procedures. Time and resources that could be used to increase the quality of services to the citizens.

It is also important to mention another important tool created with the aim to reduce corruption on the local level, which also deals with the topic of employment. Those are Integrity plans that Montenegrin municipalities have an obligation to adopt according to the Law on the Prevention of Corruption from 2014[1]. Integrity plans are usually made for a period of one or two years and are based on the self-assessment made by the employees. The plans contain a list of areas most prone to corruption according to the self-assessment results and a set of measures that should mitigate the risks. However, no data would indicate that these plans are contributing to the actual reduction of corruption in the municipality. In the Integrity Plan of the Municipality Kolasin for 2018/2019, one of the activities set for implementation is the establishment of the central personnel registry. The deadline for this activity was March 2019. Also, the Plan envisages assessment of the necessary personnel for efficient implementation of tasks of the local self-government. However, neither of these activities was implemented by the end of 2019. What is even more important to mention is that these measures were also planned by the previous Integrity Plan for 2017/18, which is indicative of the relationship the local governments have towards human resources management. Some municipalities, on the other side, define measures in a very vague way

1 Law on the Prevention of Corruption, "National Gazzete", No 53/2014

and set rather vague deadlines. Municipality Kotor envisages a measure of "achieving transparency in HR processes" (Integrity Plan, Municipality of Kotor, 2019, 12). Instead of defining the concrete activities that should lead to higher transparency, the municipality leaves the possibility for different interpretations. In addition, instead of the concrete timeframe, they say that the activity will be implemented continuously.

Integrity plans are another institutional mechanism whose contribution to reducing corruption remains questionable and unproven. As we have been told by our interviewees, most of the time, the employees themselves do not take these plans seriously, and there are cases of municipalities just copying documents from each other. Furthermore, according to our interviewees, this is another thing that does not serve its purpose, but it takes significant time and effort from the employees that need to provide data.

> *"I need to collect data from all of the secretariats, but other officials are reluctant in providing them because they know it is useless, so I need to remind them all the time about something that I also know is useless. And that is how it goes, lots of paperwork and lots of trouble over something that does not change anything"* (quote from one of the interviewees employed in the local government.

The quote illustrates the absurdity of certain processes implemented within the municipalities, in the specific case the process of developing Integrity plans. It shows the attitude officials have towards the specific task and how these tasks are actually just helping fulfill the form, without having concrete impact.

The effectiveness of measures designed to curb clientelism and corruption

So, when the situation is being looked at from aside, it would be possible to conclude that both central and local government are investing significant efforts in developing mechanisms that should contribute to the public sector reform, including the professionalization of the public service, reduction of politicization, prevention of corruption, clientelism, and nepotism. Local self-governments are introducing more thorough employment procedures, adopting strategic and action documents envisaging a whole variety of activities, etc. The central government is introducing new control mechanisms; financial

assistance is being conditioned by the fulfillment of some centrally set goals, etc. However, the results are clearly lacking. Apart from the three municipalities that were the subject of our research, the quantitative data from other municipalities show equally worrying numbers. Numbers show that allocations for employees on the local level were 45 million Euros in 2016, while that number is 58,8 for 2020 (Institut Alternativa, 2020). The data shows that the number of employees on the local level is significantly higher in 2017 than in 2012.

Year	Number of employees on the local level
2012	10,508
2014	11,778
2017	12,174

Table 2. Comparison between the number of employees on a local level during the years. Source: Institute Alternative, 2018.

The described situation is an indicator of the implementation gap, which Bratu defines as a mismatch between declarative political commitment to fighting corruption and actual institutional setting and implemented activities (Bratu et. al. 2017, 140). It means that the actual setting and the activities that are being implemented do not reflect the expressed commitment, and the will to reduce corruption cannot be seen from the actual doing. According to Bratu, this gap is usually a consequence of the mixture of different factors, most commonly lack of expertise, lack of international pressure, fluctuating political commitment, and difficulties in adjusting anti-corruption legislation to existing legal narratives (Bratu et al. 2017, 140). What should also be added to the list are social, political, and cultural contexts.

However, not only that the implemented activities do not contribute to solving the problem, but they also provide space for its further flourishing by providing legitimacy to the process. Same as with the previous example of employment procedures, adopted integrity plans actually give arguments to the local governments to say that they are implementing certain things to reduce corruption. This process, although substantially irrelevant, gives the authorities the arguments in the form of percentages of implemented activities.

In all of the mechanisms aimed towards reducing political employments, we have identified certain loopholes that actually leave enough place for corruptive behavior. If a country allows massive employments during

the election campaigns and gives the possibility to individuals to ignore procedures and employ people based on their own preferences, then can we really talk about serious anti-corruption efforts? The public sector lies upon the rules that directly allow corruption, and it tolerates corrupt behaviors and the development of clientelist networks. However, we must ask the obvious question. Can anybody really expect that the public servants who have come to their positions thanks to the clientelist relations will honestly fight to implement regulations that prevent clientelism? Are the governments really expecting public servants to undermine the whole system that provides for their jobs and probably even their families' jobs?

This could be a sign that there is no political will to actually fight corruption and clientelism with full determination because it is not in somebody's interest for these matters to be solved. As Di Puppo (2010, 228) argues, it often happens that countries which are not willing to fight corruption are actually very likely to have some sort of strategic document, which remains only paperwork. It indicates that the governments are developing measures aiming only to make cosmetic changes to the system and allow for the state and local bodies to check the given boxes. None of these measures actually tackles the root causes of the problem, neither it has the intention to do so.

So, if strategic documents are just masking the lack of political will and procedures are prone to manipulation, what should local governments do in order to fight clientelism and corruption? According to many scholars, the answer lies in taking the indirect approach and starting with the root causes (Shah 2000, Rothstein 2011). Since corruption is a symptom of not-so-strong and successful governance, the higher corruption gets, the less anti-corruption tactics should concentrate on narrow corrupt behaviors and more on general norms underlying governing structures (Shah 2000). Shah suggests that countries with a higher level of corruption and, therefore, weaker governance should focus more on strengthening the rule of law and accountability in the public sector, increasing civic participation in decision-making, and simplifying administrative procedures.

Johnston (2010, 5) argues that the core parts of the reforms should be aimed to build social and political trust, not only for the anti-corruption effort but also for the government itself. Moreover, in his opinion, the key way to gain trust is to perform quality, effective service delivery. In regard to most commonly used corruption remedies, Johnston (2010, 8) states that they will most often be ineffective if they insist on attacking corruption as such, instead of working on strengthening foundations for the reform.

Montenegro and the three municipalities presented are definitely not the lonely cases in putting the emphasis on the legal and institutional framework in the attempt to fight the problem of corruption and clientelism. In fact, that was the path that many countries chose, following Western examples. As Bukovansky (2006, 182) argues, today's anti-corruption discourse rings hollow in its "neglect of the moral core of the corruption concept", thus making it less effective. In other words, aren't we forgetting about the importance of people's mentality, political culture, tradition? At the end of the day, as Heidenheimer tries to define corruption in terms of behavior being tolerated or behavior being un-tolerated, putting the focus on the perception of the people, shouldn't we raise a question on how public perception is being shaped? Here we need to come back to the discussion from before regarding the values, traditions, and norms that decide on somebody's acceptance or rejection of a specific behavior. As we have discussed previously, some types of societies, such as collectivists societies, that Montenegro belongs to, are more prone to behaviors that expect politics to bring personal gain. These societies rely heavily on personal connections and face-to-face interactions, which will inevitably affect their job as public servants and their activities during their service. Therefore, it should be expected that these factors are taken into consideration when designing mechanisms that aim to reduce certain anomalies from the public service. Fukuyama (2002, 35) states that much of the research on anti-corruption initiatives have been done in relation to administrative reforms and institutional solutions, forgetting the important role of culture in corruption. Therefore, he argues that reformers must consider broader solutions, including education and training. Similar to that, Collier (2002, 2) argues that corruption can successfully be addressed only through grass-roots changes done across political, economic, and cultural institutions and that they cannot only be technical but rather social by their nature. It means that Montenegrin municipalities and the whole public sector actually need to change their perspective in fighting corruption and clientelism. Investing too much effort in procedures that can be manipulated and plans that remain pieces of paper has been proven not to work. It can only contribute to the fatigue of the public servants and the lack of motivation. Instead, more attention should be paid to developing a sense of belonging to the public sector, strengthening public accountability and responsibility of public officials, steadily changing the value system of the public officials. Only when legal and institutional mechanisms are followed by the mechanisms that question cultural patterns and social norms of those who are supposed to implement them can it be expected that some improvements can be made.

Conclusion

This paper tried to provide evidence for the inadequacy of the measures implemented to curb clientelism and corruption at the local level in Montenegro. First of all, this paper dealt with the problem of political employments on the local level and explored it through the prism of both corruption and clientelism. Using the most commonly used definitions of corruption and clientelism it is identified that political employment can be perceived as both clientelism (votes for jobs) and corruption (public good (jobs) for private or party gain (votes)). The level of clientelism in the Montenegrin municipalities is that high that it undermines the perception of a public good. Numerous examples showed that not only the available vacancies are being filled by politically suitable people, but that new vacancies are being created in order to satisfy all of the people that need to be employed. Systematization acts are being changed every several months in order to legalize the new employments. There are no explanations why new employments are needed, there is no human resources planning according to the municipality's needs, and there is no long-term planning of the human resources. The examples of Kotor, Tivat, and Kolasin showed that despite all of the measures undertaken to reduce employment in the public sector, the numbers are constantly getting higher. This paper argues that the measures such as stricter employment procedures and different action plans not only do not help reduce political employments, but they rather help legitimize those actions. These measures are arguments in the hands of the authorities to prove their declarative commitment to fight corruption, and these measures allow them to tick boxes given by the donors. So, one of the possible topics for further research should be how anti-corruption or anti-clientelism measures can actually be detrimental to the process of fighting these phenomena if not designed carefully.

The research has shown that similar employment practices are present within the municipalities that had different ruling structures within different periods, which proves that political employment is not something inherent to the dominant ruling party, but it is something rather inherent in the political culture of this area. The paper tried to shed light on the cultural and social foundations of political actions. At the end of the day, institutions are made of people, and how they will function depends on those people and what shapes their system of values. As it has been shown from the example of Montenegrin municipalities, the numerous action plans, additional employment procedures are inefficient as the people can manipulate them. As already mentioned, it is not likely that

people who got their jobs and whose families probably got their jobs thanks to clientelist relations will truly engage in dismantling the clientelist system. Measures created only by institutional wishful thinking, relying on the obligation of respecting the law and administrative procedures, are underestimating the effects cultural patterns, and human connections have on individual decision making. Moreover, as long as governments are creating laws and measures that do not consider citizen's behavior, in this case, the behavior of the public servants, these measures will not be effective. Therefore, further research should be taken in order to examine how to develop anti-clientelist and anti-corruption measures that will incorporate the cultural and social norms present in one area and thus reduce their effect on the level of implementation of those measures.

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Public Administration Reform Against Clientelism: Montenegro's Missed Expectations

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Abstract

The paper follows the premise that the "cornerstone of clientelism is personalized trust in a politician or in party brokers in place of impartial public administrators" (Bustikova and Corduneanu-Huci, 2017). Building upon the results of a large-scale study that links political clientelism to the failures of public administration reform (PAR) (Cruz and Keefer, 2015), the paper provides a qualitative insight into the interplay between political clientelism and PAR in Montenegro. It focuses on two particularly clientelism-prone areas: civil service recruitment and public financial management, taking into account the key aspects of the wider context, namely one-party predominance and the distinction between programmatic and clientelistic party appeals and their implications for PAR. The paper tries to grasp the extent to which reform limited the political discretion in public administration recruitment/appointment and distribution of public funds. Analysis suggests that, in some instances, the reform has strengthened discretionary practices and consequently enabled political influence in the distribution of public resources. While making certain concessions to the EU conditionality, politicians were more resilient in making concessions in the areas, which are politically opportune due to the predominantly clientelistic nature of the long-time standing Democratic Party of Socialists. As a result, PAR perpetuated clientelistic practices in patronage appointments and distribution of public funds rather than restricting them. Theoretical and policy implications of these findings are manifold. Since clientelistic parties tend to resist painful reforms in politically sensitive areas, PAR efforts should consider the overall political dynamics and institutionalization of party systems. Further research is needed to detangle the nature of the relationship between party system institutionalization, types of parties and

party systems in the Western Balkans, and the effects of the public administration reforms, which are among the fundamentals in the EU integration of the region.

Keywords: clientelism, public administration, civil service reform, public financial management

Introduction

Clientelism and the lengthy rule of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) in Montenegro are closely associated. The infamous 2012 quote of one DPS official that each new person employed brings four votes to the DPS (Kosovic 2013) stands as an anthological illustration of political clientelism in the country and almost perfectly coincides with the generally adopted definition of this phenomenon which is centrally about the exchange of public resources, including public sector jobs, for political support.

Public administration reform, which, among other things, entails more transparency, optimization of work, merit-based recruitment, and more effective provision of public services, is thus in a peculiar relationship with clientelism from the very start. It should provide systemic preconditions for countering and discouraging clientelistic practices while, at the same time, its success depends on the overall state of democracy and characteristics of party systems. Having in mind this puzzled relationship, this paper follows the premise that the "cornerstone of clientelism is personalized trust in a politician or in party brokers in place of impartial public administrators" (Bustikova and Corduneanu-Huci 2017). On the other hand, it adopts the conceptualization by Cruz and Keefer (2015), which outlines how failures of PAR can be contributable to clientelism. The authors underline that politicians in clientelistic parties do not depend on well-performing public sectors to support their appeals. Consequently, PAR is significantly less successful in the presence of non-programmatic political parties: parties without an identifiable policy platform that are more likely to rely on clientelistic appeals to voters.

With the 30 years long uninterrupted rule of one prevailing party, Montenegro is fertile ground for analyzing the interplay between PAR and clientelism. The focus is not only on PAR effects on clientelism but also on the extent to which the design of PAR was aimed at curbing clientelism. The features of Montenegro's party systems and inter-party

competition are analyzed as a wider context, as potential explanations of the dynamics and reform outcomes I try to grasp by this paper. Given the impetus to build administrative capacities provided by the 2006 restoration of Montenegro's independence, as well as push to increase capacities for absorbing EU conditionality provided by the 2010 positive opinion of the European Commission on Montenegro's application for membership in the European Union (EU), the paper focuses on two subsequent PAR cycles: from 2011 to 2016, and from 2016 to 2020. Due to their susceptibility for abuse in exchange for political support, public financial management (PFM) and civil service reform are selected as special focus areas.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: the first part presents the overview of the political context in the country. The second and third sections present the key priorities and results of the two consecutive reform cycles. The conclusion outlines policy and theoretical implications of the findings of the interplay between PAR and clientelism in Montenegro.

Political context: One-party predominance as a shortcut for clientelism

The awkward embrace between the ruling party, government, and the state – a distinctive feature of the party system with one prevailing party (Giliomee and Simkins (eds.) 1999), has been very prominent in Montenegro since the official fall of communism. Although the opposition has seen new parties "springing up like mushrooms after the rain", the Democratic Party of Socialists stood largely unchallenged until the 2020 elections (Stankov 2018). The emerging opposition parties or players were not always entirely new, as they either inherited or mimicked institutions, infrastructure, and internal organization from mother parties (e.g., Social Democrats, United Montenegro), or they lacked official legal status and rather served as a platform for already established parties (e.g., Democratic Front). On the other hand, the ruling DPS has directed party competition along ethnic lines and divisive issues such as support for Montenegrin independence and NATO membership, which prevented opposition parties from pushing new agendas and re-aligning party competition.

Therefore, from the perspective of institutionalization of the party system, understood by the stability of inter-party relations, the Montenegrin party system can be regarded as highly institutionalized

in the chosen period. If we apply another concept of “party system closure”, which captures the degree of stability of party relations from the point of view of coalition patterns, the Montenegrin party system was among the most closed ones in Eastern Europe. Following three major components of party system closure: the form of government alternation, the degree of access to office, and the innovative nature of the coalition formulae, the Montenegrin party system remained highly closed and predictable (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa, 2018). In other words, governments remained confined to a narrow circle of parties, the governing alternatives remained stable over a longer period, while substantial alternations of governments did not occur.

Hence, following the famous Sartori’s classification, Montenegro, until the shift brought about by the 2020 parliamentary elections, had a multi-party system with a prevailing party (Vujovic and Tomovic 2019). Despite the DPS having certain features of the hegemonic party, which sometimes seemed impossible to win, the party could not form the government alone following 2012 and 2016 elections. Therefore, I agree with the assessment that classifying party system as non-competitive would be exaggerated, however, by taking into account “the existence of factors which undermine a full freedom of voters’ expression, as well as numerous examples of misuse of state resources which enable a dominant party to gain a privileged position over the other party” (Vujović,2015). Regarding the ideological profiling of the long-standing DPS, it does not have a sharp ideological profile. Rather, as Džankić and Keil (2017) notes, it resembles a *clientelistic* network with many different interest groups represented within it: despite having largely populist rhetoric, the DPS is not a populist party *per se,* but uses populist methods to keep control of the *clientelistic* network of competing interests.

The outcome of the 2020 parliamentary elections, which were lost by the DPS, largely due to the party’s controversial policy on the property of Serbian Orthodox Church, will definitely have a lasting impact on party competition and are likely to bring more durable changes. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this paper, I take into account the period between 2010 and 2020, which was undoubtedly characterized by the blurring lines between party and the state and by clientelism. In a survey conducted within the INFORM project, Montenegro topped the Western Balkan countries with the percentage of citizens who experienced clientelist offers: one in five respondents in Montenegro (22.5%) reported receiving an offer of money or favors in exchange for a vote, while 11.7% of respondents reported that they had been asked by their manager/boss to vote for a certain party on

election day. The relationship, however, went both ways: 13% of citizens in Montenegro said that they had approached a party official or activist for help (Bliznakovski, Guzjelov, and Popovikj 2017).

Surveys commissioned by the Institute Alternative in the period 2016-2019 largely coincide with such findings: the largest share of Montenegrin citizens considered political ties a key factor for employment in public administration (more than 40 percent), compared to the less of a quarter of citizens who considered education, ability, and experience of the candidate, all indicators of meritocratic recruitment, as key (IPSOS 2019).

Politicization and "elements of state capture" did not pass unnoticed by the EU. The 2010 positive opinion of the European Commission on Montenegro's application for membership underlined the need to depoliticize and professionalize public administration and curb widespread corruption. These priorities were mirrored in the Common Position of the EU on Chapter 23 (judiciary and fundamental rights), within the accession negotiations with the EU, opened in 2012.[1] There has been a positive development in the evolution of EU-defined benchmarks, particularly with the 2014 introduction and 2017 amendments of the European principles of public administration for EU Enlargement countries and the accompanying indicators and monitoring methodology (SIGMA 2014 and 2017). The principles specifically encompass aspects of PAR covered in this paper: civil service and public financial management. A shift has also been made to an emphasis on consistent implementation of legislation rather than the mere adoption of laws. Still, the progress driven by the EU conditionality resulted more in capacity building for certain institutions, the organization of training, and legislative activity. Track record benchmarks, emphasizing a merit-based public administration and anti-corruption achievements, faced the most obstacles on the ground (Milošević, Bajramspahić, and Bogojević 2018). Given this wider contextual background, in the following section, I analyze specific reform measures and targets, especially from the perspective of their contribution to curbing clientelistic practices.

1 One of the opening benchmarks for the Chapter reads as follows: «Within the public administration, Montenegro recruits, promotes and nominates public officials on the basis of clear and transparent criteria, focusing on merit and proven skills. Montenegro reinforces the capacity of the Administrative Inspectorate, implements a risks analysis methodology, adopts integrity plans and appoints trained integrity managers in the public administration. Montenegro provides an initial track record of effective sanctions in cases of breach of ethical values».

2011-2016: Proliferation of strategies, priorities overshadowed

Montenegro's adoption of the 2011-2016 Public Administration Reform Strategy was a response to the EU conditionality in the field. Strategy pledged to improve civil service system and public finances, especially in terms of reform of public sector salaries and planning and control of budgetary expenditure. Since Montenegro already had in place the anti-corruption strategy, previously defined specific anti-corruption measures had been deleted from the PAR strategy (Government of Montenegro, 2011). On the other hand, the anti-corruption strategy listed two key HRM-related objectives: an enhanced system of recruitment, promotion, and rewards in the public sector, by establishing objective criteria and full implementation of codes of ethics at the level of the entire public administration. Public finances were also a subject of the 2010-2014 anti-corruption strategy, with the following key measures: alignment of the legal framework with EU standards; transparent, efficient, and effective public expenditure on both central and local levels; improved administrative, technical, and material capacities in the sector of public finances; efficient system of control of regularity in handling public money by spending units with commercial bank accounts, progress in countering "grey economy", efficient system of internal audit of spending units, efficient of control audits, and development of a system of sector analyses in public finances (Ministry of Interior Affairs and Public Administration, 2010).

The list of the key objectives is rather long. Nonetheless, it is not followed by measurable indicators, nor is it preceded by a thorough analysis of the existing problems. The same applies to the so-called "AURUM". The strategic planning was underdeveloped in Montenegro at the time, while regular and sound reporting on the implementation of strategies was missing. Key objectives in both HRM and PFM areas have been formulated in a manner centered on normative activities - the adoption of certain by-laws and laws. Targets of proper implementation of the new legislation were missing, and indicators, which would demonstrate a more substantial achievement of key objectives, were avoided. For example, in the 2013-2014 Action Plan for implementation of the Anti-corruption strategy, one of the key measures was the adoption of the Decree, which regulates the testing of prospective civil servants. No specific indicators for implementing the Decree or testing procedures during public administration recruitment have been defined. The adoption of the Decree itself stemmed from the previously adopted civil service law. As such, it was not a strategic measure in its full meaning. On the

other hand, PFM-related objectives and indicators suffered from similar flaws: e.g., while there was an objective of efficient control of public money, it was followed by a vague measure of continuous control of the budget units while the indicators were not quantified. Even if they are achieved, indicators of the number of controls and the number of determined irregularities can only provide an analytic basis for the follow-up measures aimed at curbing corruption and intertwined clientelistic practices.

Despite the proliferation of strategic documents in the fields, the programmatic appeals of the ruling DPS have not been centered on the fight against corruption, merit-based recruitment, or transparent and effective public finances. The program presented to the Parliament by the Prime Minister Designate in 2012 did not reiterate strategic commitments from the anti-corruption and PAR strategies. It just sporadically mentioned strengthening of the rule of law, transparency and accountability, and zero tolerance towards corruption (Đukanović 2012), without operationalizing these declarative statements into more concrete actions. Following the 2011 congress, the DPS established an advisory body (Council for following the implementation of the electoral program), encompassing 87 persons from the country's senior civil service. This stands as the illustration of the politicization of public administration, and it goes against the declarative pledge for professionalization. The decision to establish the body clearly stipulated that its members by default were deputy ministers, directors, and secretaries from "the lines of DPS" (Milošević 2014).

On top of the two strategies, in 2013, following the opening of the EU membership talks in the previous year, Montenegro adopted the Action Plan for Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights). The Action Plan also addressed some of the issues covered by the PAR and anti-corruption strategies. Nonetheless, it suffered from the same deficiencies, namely from the overly technical approach mirrored in the lack of achievement-oriented indicators. The two key measures related to the areas covered by this paper were the enhancement of the Administrative Inspectorate and full transparency of recruitment and promotion in state authorities. Nonetheless, some of the key impact indicators associated with the measures were "increased number of inspection controls", "number of detected irregularities in comparison to the previous period", with no additional explanations or thresholds. In other words, detected irregularities do not say much if there are no actions to alleviate them, and the key impact indicators failed to address

this crucial issue. Similarly, indicators associated with recruitment and promotion were overly quantitative and technical, one of them being the establishment of a system of regular submission of data on new recruitments and promotions and termination of employment. There was a demand for more information on recruitment with no follow-up foreseen depending on the quality of implementation of recruitment in public bodies. Public procurement was also separately addressed in the 2013 Operational document, as the attachment to the Action Plan for Chapter 23. Anti-corruption targets were implied in the establishment of the electronic system of public procurement by the end of 2018 and the number of controls and information on conflict of interest during public procurement procedures. Still, no thresholds or details were presented.

Therefore, it did not come as a surprise that the PFM and HRM measures from these core strategic documents either have not been implemented or have not brought results, which could effectively curb widespread clientelistic practices. As the implementation of the PAR Strategy 2011-2016 neared its end, European Commission noted in its 2016 report on Montenegro:

> *Even though the law establishes merit-based recruitment and promotion as a principle, loopholes in the organization of the selection process allow for* ***arbitrary selection at all levels. Montenegro has made little progress in ensuring merit-based recruitment for senior civil servants...***

On the other hand, the PFM area was also suffering from many deficiencies, which failed to effectively impede public resources abuse. The 2016 report noted in that regard that there was no established functioning system for monitoring and managing fiscal risks that arise from the operations of, among others, state-owned enterprises and public-private sector partnerships (PPPs), while management of public investments and implementation of the decision on capital budget was assessed as particularly weak (European Commission 2016).

2016 – 2020: New reforms, old patterns

Simultaneously with the expiration of one reform cycle, the new PAR strategy has been drafted for the upcoming cycle (2016-2020). The PFM reform program and action plan were adopted in December 2015, and they covered the same period. The time-span of the two new strategic documents coincided with the start of the new government's work,

headed by Duško Marković. While presenting his program to the Parliament, Marković stressed PAR within the specific sub-section. Nonetheless, apart from the increasing emphasis on optimization and downsizing and announcement of the establishment of the new Ministry of Public Administration, the program copy-pasted earlier declarative statements on transparency, accountability, and the rule of law (Marković 2016).

PAR strategy was more advanced than the one before: its sections followed areas of Public Administration Principles for EU enlargement countries. Still, the objectives and indicators were not carefully formulated. For example, the strategy listed the objective of amending the Law on Freedom of Information without explaining key anticipated changes. As a result, the law has been changed to introduce new grounds for restriction of access to information, such as tax and business secrets (Milošević and Vavić 2018). Especially state-owned public enterprises, whose work was untransparent prior to the law amendments, declared as business secret anything that is business-related (Sošić and Muk 2019).

Less than three years after implementing the 2011 civil service law, the reform paved the path for the new one. However, the vague strategic objectives did not set the right path for the new civil service law, although the European Commission praised its adoption (European Commission 2018). The discretionary right not to select the best-ranked candidates was widened. While previously, the first ranked candidate should be selected as a rule, now, any of the top three candidates can be selected. Having in mind the low competitiveness of recruitment procedures, especially at the senior level, the level of discretion of the public administration recruitment remained very high. The overall politicization remained unaltered as well: at the end of this cycle of the reform, in 2020, at least 35 members of only one advisory body of the ruling party occupied senior civil service positions; a fifth of total senior civil service positions (Muk 2020).

The 2016-2020 PFM reform program aimed at improving the budget system, including stronger medium-term budget framework, improved program budgeting, better planning of capital projects and enhanced debt management, upgrading of the tax and customs administration, further alignment of public procurement with the EU acquis and development of an e-procurement system, improved public internal financial control and greater transparency in financial reporting and accounting. Still, the program was largely project-driven and depended on external assistance: the slow pace of its implementation was justified

by the pending implementation of various projects supported by the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).[2] No significant progress has been made in budget transparency or quality and inclusiveness of budget planning: the amendments to the Law on State Administration restricted public debates on the state budget, while the discretionary budget spending increased. The allocation of budgetary reserves best illustrates this.

Allocation of budgetary reserves is an especially clientelism-prone area since these funds, among other things, are intended to help companies or individuals to finance activities, medical treatments, education, and material needs. Still, the 2009 Rulebook adopted by the government, which guides the resource allocation from the budgetary reserve, does not prescribe specific criteria and allows discretionary distribution of these funds. Thus, the most vocal civil society organizations often voiced concerns that such legal loopholes were an excuse for the abuse of public funds, especially when it comes to social benefits in the pre-election period. Instead of more transparency and legal predictability, the share of non-transparent spending of budgetary reserves increased during the implementation of the PFM Reform Programme. The entire work of the government's commission tasked with the allocation of these funds had been declared secret.

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Budgetary reserve (in million euros)	18.8	19.6	23.2	24.2	133.6

Graph 1. Expenditure of budgetary reserve in Montenegro 2016-2020 (based on the budget execution reports and 2020 budget plan)

Conclusion

In the context of the predominance of one party, which heavily relied on clientelism to ensure its lengthy rule, the PAR in Montenegro over the decade 2010-2020 was not designed to curb discretionary practices and arbitrary allocation of public funds and positions. As strategies in the field proliferated, they created a cacophony of activities and objectives, which were not strategic in their full meaning but rather technical or stemming from the legal obligations. Although the 2014 and 2017 editions of public administration principles for EU Enlargement

2 Reports on the implementation of the PFM reform programme are available at the following link: https://mf.gov.me/en/library/Strategic_document

conditions clarified the EU conditions in the field, the government has not incorporated key principles of merit-based recruitment and transparent public expenditure into the reform priorities. Merit-based recruitment and transparent and sound public expenditure were not translated into concrete action: they instead remained at the level of declarative statements.

As a result, rather than restricting them, the reform has strengthened discretionary practices and consequently enabled political influence in distributing public resources. While making certain concessions to the EU conditionality, politicians were more resilient in making progress in the areas, which are politically opportune due to the predominantly clientelistic nature of the long-time standing DPS. Furthermore, with the widening discretionary powers in public administration recruitments and reluctance to introduce transparent criteria in allocating budgetary reserve to companies and citizens, PAR perpetuated clientelistic practices in patronage appointments and distribution of public funds.

These findings confirm that PAR fails where clientelism blooms. They have manifold theoretical and policy implications. PAR design, conditionality fostered by the EU, and advocacy efforts by the civil society should take into account the overall political dynamics and institutionalization of party systems. Strategic objectives and accompanying indicators should be as operational and specific as possible in order to avoid that some of the objectives have an adverse effect in practice: this is best illustrated by the case in which adoption of the amendments to the Law on free access to information in Montenegro negatively affected transparency of public administration and state-owned public enterprises. Further research is needed to detangle the nature of the relationship between party system institutionalization, types of parties and party systems in the Western Balkans, and the effects of the public administration reforms.

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Neopatrimonialist Practice as a Soft Strategy of State Capture: The case of Western Balkans

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Abstract

Three decades since the beginning of the democratization process and the emergence of the illusion of the ultimate triumph of democracy over any other system and two decades since the pacification of the Western Balkans region, despite large investments by Western actors to democratize this space, the countries of this region continue to oscillate between democracy and authoritarianism.
Albeit these countries have adopted liberal-democratic legislation and have done the installation of the institution of elections, still, behind the “illusionist curtain” of the “democratic paradise” lies autocratic governing practices coupled with neo-patrimonial practices as such: corruption, clientelism, patronage. This paper provides a detailed elaboration of the development tendencies of authoritarian-based neo-patrimonial practices, from the perspective that mainly includes the manner of organizing and structuring political parties, party-society and party-state relationship, political strategies, and contextual factors, as political culture and idiosyncratic socioeconomic factors.
The core argument of this paper brings forward the conclusion that the capture of the state in the Western Balkans region proceeded as an outcome of multiple processes that involve the organizational, discursive, and performative dimension and that might be namely convoked as a “soft strategy”.

Keywords: neopatrimonialism; clientelism; corruption; state weakness

Introduction

Commonly, Western Balkans have been portrayed as one of Europe's most complex regions, doomed by its own ability to produce an "excessive amount of historical events". This ability to produce the "surplus of history" has been shown out, once more, in the context of the disintegration of the communist regimes, whence, wholly region would face an atypical transition typified by a one-step of progress and a two-three steps of setback.

Even though throughout the post-communist region, the transitional process from communism erupted scarcely simultaneously (between 1989-1992), the political development among these regimes has not been alike. Whereas the countries of Central Europe and the Baltic states underwent a rapid transformation that enabled them to fastly join the EU, such course of political development in the Western Balkans has been matchless.

Thereon, the transition of each Western Balkans country has its idiosyncratic context, which implies different historical heritage and differences in socioeconomic conditions. By and large, the aforesaid transitions have manifested several common, typical features such as adjustment of elections without democratization, which shaped out together with the distortion of competition, whereabouts opposition becomes irrelevant; political systems were "hybrid regimes not only in terms of having features of competitive authoritarianism but also in combining state control over the economy with the new wild capitalism from which an emerging class of tycoons profited, usually closely associated with, and loyal to, the regimes" (Bieber 2020, 19-20); arbitrariness which means disparagement for a much-needed constitutionalism culture. "The adoption of presidential or semi-presidential systems allowed personal politics to develop and strong leaders to emerge with a formidable power to control and often abuse the system" (Anastasakis 2013, 98); and finally, intolerance of dissent by manifesting acts of violence against opponents.

The dissolution of these regimes enabled the opening of a new horizon for "the democratic breakthrough" (Bieber 2020) of the region. Nevertheless, democratic progress has been confined, insufficient, and mainly focused on adopting liberal-democratic legislation.

Nowadays, longer than three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall and two decades since its regional pacification, the Western Balkans region remains volatile, characterized by enormous levels of corruption and organized crime, with extensive informal clientelistic networks and nepotistic, hereafter dominated by the neo-patrimonial political condition.

Some theoretical considerations

In his seminal work upon legitimacy, Max Weber (1978) has differentiated three ideal types of legitimate domination: traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational authority. In addition to the ideal types of political domination, there are also sub-types such as patrimonialism.

Patrimonialism is a concept used by M. Weber (1978) to describe a traditional sub-type of political domination, which encompasses relationships of loyalty and personal dependence that are constituted, based on unequal interchangeability between patron and clients (1010-1069). Hence, in many contemporary regimes, including "new democracies", jointly with the legal-rational rule of the state, there are patrimonial networks that undermine official institutions (von Soest 2010, 3; O'Donnell 1996, 40-41). The coexistence of patrimonial relations with the legal-rational rule of the state has produced the concept of neopatrimonialism (von Soest 2010, 3; Erdmann and Engel 2007).

Moreover, neopatrimonialism was developed as a concept to describe contemporary regimes, which are known for their concentration of power in the hands of leaders. This type of centralized power is based on informal networks, organized through relationships that imply reward in exchange for support – it treats and distributes public resources as if they were private property, hereby undermining formal rules but claim legitimacy over modern forms of exchange (Kahn 2006, 714).

Wherefore, in such a definition of neopatrimonialism, we encounter several interrelated relationships that imply causal consequences on each other:

First, incompatibility between neopatrimonial relations and intentions to codify liberal democracy, but compatibility with hybrid regimes (von Soest 2010, 6-8; Erdmann and Engel 2007, 111-113; Levitsky and Way 2015, 53). Thus, "neopatrimonialism corresponds to authoritarian politics, where legal-rational domination relates to democracy" (Erdmann and Engel 2007, 114). Precisely, it is the conceptualizations on hybrid regimes (Merkel 2004; Levitsky and Way 2010) that have been carved out to describe intermediate regimes that interlace the features of democratic and authoritarian regimes. One model of such a regime is competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way 2010).

"Competitive authoritarian regimes are civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents' abuse of state places them at a significant advantage vis-a-vis their opponents. Such regimes

are competitive in that opposition parties use democratic institutions to contest seriously for power, but they are not democratic because the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of incumbents. Competition is thus real but unfair" (Levitsky and Way 2010, 5).

The distortion of competition is executed through informal networks. The origin of informal networks is a consequence not solely of the weak or incomplete institutions (Giordano and Hayoz 2013, 15), but also of the technique of maintaining secret goals, ones that are "not considered publicly acceptable" (Helmke and Levitsky 2004, 730) and mainly adopted by hybrid regimes (Levitsky and Way 2010). "Informality is part of the governance mode of all more-or-less soft variants of authoritarian regimes" (Giordano and Hayoz 2013, 11). Herewith, these regimes, commonly install competing for informal networks, that operate in violation of formal rules and compete with them (Helmke and Levitsky 2004, 729), with the aim of undermining them (Levtisky and Way 2010; Bieber 2018; Günay and Dzihic 2016, 9-11).

Second, we encounter a relationship that is related to the first, i.e., its derivative, and that sends us to the ground of clientelism, patronage, and corruption. All three of these concepts are considered an integral part of neopatrimonialism (von Soest 2010, 7; Erdmann and Engel 2007, 106).

Although a myriad of perspectives has been developed that conceptually differentiate clientelism from patronage[1], in this paper, they will be used inside a framework that interchangeably grasps them. In this manner, "clientelism and patronage are strategies for the acquisition, maintenance, and aggrandizement of political power, on the part of the patrons, and strategies for the protection and promotion of their interests" (Piattoni 2001, 2). This means not only the adoption of electoral clientelism but also a relational one (Nichter 2010, 2-7). Electoral clientelism implies a sporadic relationship that is mostly highlighted during the election and manifests itself as phenomena of vote-buying or even as a favorable or beneficial exchange. In contrast, relational clientelism implies a longer-term relationship that emerges out from the post-election period (Nichter 2010, 2-7). In this way, we enter the ground of conceptualization of clientelism as an organizational resource – as the mode of organizing political parties on the basis of clientelism and patronage, which extends and carries consequences in the state – that manifests itself as colonization (Kopecký and Mair 2012; Kopecký 2006). Likewise, inside a neopatrimonialism frame, clientelistic relationships

1 Throughout the text, clientelism, patronage, and nepotism are integrated under the term neopatrimonial practices.

are co-associated with corruption (von Soest 2010). Corruption represents "the misuse of public office for private gain" (cit. In von Soest 2010, 8), this means not merely "bribery in public administration" (Fazekas and Tóth 2016, 321), but also the adaptation and manipulation of rules of public procurement too, in order to channel contracts to preferred businesses (Fazekas and Tóth 2016, 321). Thus we reached out the conceptualization of state capture, which implies the use of state resources for private purposes through the penetration of institutions with clients and the exploitation of resources (Grzymala-Busse 2008).

Lastly, in terms of the third argument, we encounter a personalization of political power that is shaped differently from the traditional sphere of legitimacy and submerged into the modernity realm of legitimacy (Khan 2006, 714). This means legitimation "on modern forms of exchange between patrons and clients, where clients agree to provide political support to the patron in exchange for pay-offs that the patron can deliver by using political power to capture public resources" (Khan 2006, 714). This form of legitimacy can be manifested as a modernizing enterprise – one that enters into the domain of performance as a legitimation strategy (von Soest and Grauvogel 2015, 8). Other legitimizing strategies that are of interest in the case of the Western Balkans are personalism and international engagement (von Soest and Grauvogel 2015, 6-8).

The embryonic origins of state capture in the Western Balkans

The embryonic origin of state capture, in the case of the Western Balkans, lies in the creating, structuring, and organization process of political parties. Mostly, the political parties in this region are top-down construction, i.e., founded by certain political, economic, and intellectual elites, largely concentrated in the identification process[2]. Still though, without any strong programmatic and ideological connection with a certain societal class – consequently, beyond any stable sense of representation (Passarelli 2019; Stojarová 2010; Bieber 2010; Kjasiu 2015; Kjasiu 2008; Subotic 2017, 172; Kopecky 2006), this party-society clear-cut gap, is manifested by the inability of governments to implement policy visions that would penetrate society. Consequently, conceiving the matter from this perspective, the countries of the Western Balkans

2 Political parties in the Western Balkans region are constantly involved in an identification process which corresponds to two levels: at the first level, in a process of identification with the leader and historical events that have an impact or harass the historical memory of society and at the second level, in a process of identification with orientations or agendas such as pro-EU or anti-EU, pro-NATO or anti-NATO, etc.

continue to be conditioned in a weak state (Krastev 2002, 50). Thus, in order to reduce this penetrating gap, political parties are oriented towards neo-patrimonial practices as mediating and interacting mechanisms with society (Djolai and Stratulat 2017; Beha and Selaci 2018, 111; Kjasiu 2015; Kjasiu 2008; Pavićević 2017; Gërxhani and Schram 2009).

This focus of political parties exclusively on neo-patrimonial practices such as mediation, liaison, and interaction mechanisms with society produces some important consequences for the structuration and organization of political parties, party-state relations, political discourse, and above all, for the democratic process.

In addition, most political parties in the Western Balkans region are structurally organized, strictly vertically, in the form of a laddered pyramid. Power is exclusively concentrated at the top of the pyramid, where the overlapped leader stands. In these parties, leaders "represent the central authority, exercising executive competencies in the absence of accountability and control mechanisms" (Passarelli 2019, 14). Around the leader or on the first ladder of the pyramid (vertical structure) stand the close associates of the leader or his most trusted or selected. Whereas, in other levels, take place (fourth, fifth, and so on) the clients of the trustees. Clients are required to be loyal and committed to the party and the leader, while in return they gain other positions or privileges (Subotic 2017, 172; Beha and Selaci 2018, 111-112; Jackson 2014, 19; Bieber 2020, 111-114). Thus, the maintenance of these structures is done mainly through neo-patrimonial practices. In this sense, neo-patrimonial practices are the principle and organizational resource of these parties, through which intra-party cohesion, organizational loyalty, and punitive instruments are ensured (Kopecký and Mair 2012, 9-10). This intra-party organizational model is then exported to the state, through the instrument of colonization, at the moment of taking power either locally or centrally (Kopecky 2006, 258-260). However, neo-patrimonial practices do not only serve as an organizational principle but also, stand out as an electoral engine in election campaigns. These are moments when the vertical structure — party — aims to touch the horizontal ends. Therefore, elections in the Western Balkans are accompanied by a number of irregularities, such as vote-buying, multiple voting, manipulation of electoral registers, ad hoc employment (Wunsch and Džihić 2017, 15-31).

Referring to the typology of Herbert Kitschelt (1995), in the Western Balkans, we are facing a mingled type of party: clientelist and charismatic (449-450) or presidential/personalist (Passarelli 2019). The personalization of the parties in the Western Balkans is developed in that manner, that

the name of the party is eclipsed by the name of the leader — therefore, in the elections, it is voted for the presidency and not the party.

This form of structuring and organization of the party bolsters the glorification of the leader, i.e., completes conditions, for the construction of the cult of personality, in the form of 'Putinism'. The concept of Putinism maintains not merely the Russian political system in general, which consists of "a form of autocracy that is conservative, populist, and personalistic" (Fish 2017, 61), but also the phenomenon of the concentration of power, in the hands of one man (Fish 2017, 68-70). The concentration of power, not only as a direct exercise of it but also, as a symbolic construct, contains extraordinary qualities and transmits powerful messages to citizens (Cassiday and Johnson 2010; Lu and Sobodoleva 2014, 13-15; White and Mcallister 2008) that serve significantly in building the legitimacy of the regime (Lu and Sobodoleva 2014, 13-15; von Soest and Grauvogel 2015, 12). Although the model of Putinism has long been coveted by the autocrats of the Western Balkans, its adoption has been almost impossible in the conditions of a favorable international environment for democracy. However, during this political period, when this environment is contaminated, and we are already facing a "democratic backsliding" (Bermeo 2016), the first demands for a personal type of legitimacy have appeared — as the case of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić (Tannenberg et al. 2019, 15).

Since coming to power, A. Vučić has invested heavily in curing his image, which consists of a dual, dialectical enterprise: firstly, one that distances him from his radical past, but does not separate him from the legacy of the 1990s and the other that equips him, with the background of a pro-Western reformist (Subotic 2017, 173), but still, a feature that does not detach him, from relationships with Serbia's traditional allies, as is the case with Russia. While the first enterprise aligns him among the traditional Serbian leadership, the second venture links him to the Yugoslav leadership of Josip Broz Tito and lists it as a reformer that will improve the lives of citizens (Pantovic 2016). Both of these enterprises converge on a single mission.

The above-mentioned possession of mission is crucial in the charisma-building process (Eatwell 2006; Eatwell 2002). A. Vučić already has found a meaningful one. His mission is to restore Serbia, to open its golden age of development after a decadent period, corresponding to the period of the ruling Democratic Party (DS) (Günay and Dzihic 2016, 12; Pavićević 2017, 32). Nowadays, this so claimed era has begun, and A. Vučić bears the stamp of each success. He owns the cresset of Red Star qualification-success in

the Europa League and the successes of other athletes (Mitrovic 2017). Ergo, the portrait of A. Vučić is shaped to present him as a sincere leader who has overall qualities (Subotic 2017, 173). Such image construction has been developed under a strong populist appeal (Subotic 2017, 175), which is evident in the cases of other Balkan leaders too.

Populism as a political strategy

During the 90s, throughout the Western Balkans region, both at the regional level and in the domestic politics of the countries, the Schmittian concept of politics prevailed, which utilize the politics on the basis of classical division into friend and enemy (Schmitt 2007). This friend-enemy antagonism domesticated in internal politics, in the form of discourse, consisting of a division between patriot-traitor and manifested as xenophobic nationalism as in the Serbian case, has produced two important regional consequences, such as fragmentation of the region and polarizing structure within countries. This inherited photograph, from the 90s, has demonstrated to be quite prolific in the constant production populism. Populism in the Western Balkans is considered to take the shape of a tendency to be a "part of the official establishment" (Momčinović 2019, 12) or "state-sponsored" (Džankić and Kiel 2018), but also "anti-establishment" (Yabanci 2015).

Although there is not a broadly accepted agreement among scholars on the definition of populism, there is a variety of research, which provides an overview of what the phenomenon represents, the forms in which it occurs, and its different types. The internal logic of populism manifests a moralistic image of politics that adopts a simple, emotional, and manipulative discourse. Such discourse evokes and awakens the people's passions — it leads to a division into two antagonistic groups (Müller 2016, 19-25; Krastev 2007).

Thus in the Western Balkans, whereabouts polarizing structure and regional fragmentation have been present since the 1990s, the range of populist options are quite wide. This fertile environment provides the necessary comfort for the strategic use of populist narratives.

Therefore, in this region, we face the simultaneous capture in a short period of discourses that are essentially contradictory to each other — so we face a Camelonian populism (Taggart 2004; Džankić and Kiel 2017) that constantly adapts itself to concrete situations or fabricates them on opportunistic mode, which most often — for the region in case — manifests itself, in the form of nationalist populism and reformist populism.

Ethno-populism and the politics of spectacle

In Western Balkans conditions, the ghosts of the 90s are still wandering, and ethnic divisions are still strongly established and embedded within the political systems. Furthermore, in the current situation wherein national projects are still considered uncompleted, the populist fabrication of nationalism is evident and presents a powerful instrument for consolidating authoritarian powers and positioning the leader within the political scene.

A number of studies have grasped the topic of populist fabrication of nationalism under the term “ethnopopulism” (Jenne 2018; Vachudová 2020). “Ethnopopulism combines the demagoguing of national outgroups with the demagoguing of elites” (Jenne 2018, 549), which consists of finding or identifying external and internal enemies based on an exclusive focus on culture, ethnicity, race (Jenne 2018; Vachudová 2020). This kind of populism, in the Western Balkans, takes the form of a situation compound by three dimensions:

First, the populist fabrication of nationalism in the Western Balkans spread as a tendency to cause the controlled crises through politics of spectacle. Crises represent the optimal condition that creates strong stimuli in the form of a magnetic attraction for populisms (Taggart 2004, 275). In this way, the above-mentioned political spectacle, such as the train case[3], serves as a powerful tool to trigger the controlled crisis, which creates the image of a tense situation, up to the extent of the radicalization manifesting the fear and insecurity of a new war (BBC 2017), which primarily serve as “weapons” in the hands of those in power to consolidate, reproduce and legitimize their authoritarian power (Bieber 2018, 90-98).

This phenomena’s second manifestation, display as the romanticization of the nation’s glorious past and, likewise, in the form of, leader’s mission to seek the greatness of the nation again. This shape is exclusively used to create a “heartland”. “The heartland is a construction of an ideal world, but unlike utopian conceptions, it is built retrospectively from the past - it is essentially a vision derived from the past projected onto the present as one who has lost” (Taggart 2004, 274). Therefore, in the case of A. Vučić, the relationship with the past has been brought to an interlacing end between different discourses of various Serbians

3 In 2017, a train from Serbia with ultra-nationalist inscriptions aimed to enter Kosovo. This would create an escalating situation that would bring back memories of the events of the 90s.

and Yugoslav traditions of J. B. Tito. The Vučićian rhetoric criticizes the results of great past leaders but recognizes their good intentions (Knezevic 2018). Thus, A. Vučić is presented as the synthesizer of good intentions, and his own well-thought strategy will make Serbia strong again (Günay and Dzihic 2016, 11-13). This discursive and visualizer's construction, among others, gains tremendous power as it is distributed in an environment where a myriad of myths and political programs are established to fulfill the aspiration of a dominant Serbia in the Balkans (see: Anzulović 1999; Rossi 2009).

In Northern Macedonia, during the rule of Nikola Gruevski, the populist discourse was constructed around strong pathos for re-modeling the nation, which means re-writing history, re-creating myths, and visualizing it through architecture (Petkovski 2015, 54-55). Unlike Serbia and Northern Macedonia, in other Western Balkans countries, there is a more reductionist venture that is outlined and reduced into a slogan approach where symbolism or the connection with past historical events is integrated.

Lastly, since the leader has the mission of restoring the glory of the nation, he/she also has the ability to identify elites who have betrayed national interest. This form is put in the function to demonize opponents and serves to another kind of populist discourse encountered in the Western Balkans, which is reformist populism.

Reformism as populist fabrication

Almost all political parties in the Western Balkans have won elections, formed a coalition, and governed to reform the system, consisting of combating corruption and organized crime. However, the sterility of governments in this mission testifies to the use of strategic utilization of such discourses. In this way, we enter into the realm of grasping and deciphering the populist narratives that this discourse entails.

By reformist populism, is meant destructive narrative of certain political leaders, through which they try to build their constructiveness. Reformist populism states that there is a corrupt and parasitic political elite that benefits at the expense of honest people. Therefore, separation from the morally discredited elite is needed, and likewise, in the meantime, a popular unification around leaders, who are the true representatives of the people (Müller 2016). Thus, A. Vučić, through by the reformist discourse, during the 2012 election campaign and a year later as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense in the Government of Serbia, has

managed to morally discredit his main opponents, the DS and its governing allies successfully, portraying them as corrupt and responsible for Serbia's political and economic powerlessness (Günay and Dzihic, 12; Pavićević 2017, 32). Hence, the degree of his popularity has grown much faster, to become the dominant figure. "He has, significantly, presented himself to the Serbian public, as well as to the EU and the larger international community, as someone who can finally get things done" (Subotic 2017, 173). Similarly to A. Vučić, during 2013, Edi Rama will rise to power, based on a politically reformist discourse, one type that differentiates him from the 21-year long politics of post-communist transition. These differentiating claims would be completely crystallized in the next elections (2017), when the whole electoral campaign of E. Rama, became organized around the demands for having power, as the only manner to mark the final division with the insufficient post-communist policy of Albania and to open the horizon for integration in the European Union (EU). Unlike Serbia and Albania, in Montenegro, due to the longevity of the ruling of Milo Đukanović and his party, the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS), the reformist discourse has manifested itself as a mere demonstration of performance that is, namely reduced into, Montenegro's EU integration before each country in the region (Džankić and Kiel 2018, 10).

Besides different characteristics — substantial and nuanced ones — the populist fabrication of nationalism, as well as the reformist populism, are part of the same political strategy that aims to rule discursively, within society, as a necessary pre-condition in the state-capture venture.

From intra-party hegemony to state capture

Evidently, one of the key features that characterize the countries of the Western Balkans is the dominance of one political party within the polarized structure. This party dominance comes (primarily) as a result of its discursive dominance within society. Howbeit, due to the way the party is organized, structured and personalized, this party dominance can become the dominance of a leader, too. Ergo, "the personalization of political leadership is a further implication of the mediatization of politics and is closely related to that of dramatization" (Mazzoleni 2008, 53). These phenomena mean building a special media-politics relationship that consists of interchangeability, which implies not solely commanding and centralizing the news about the leader's figure but also financially favoring. Thus, the dominant party, through pressure and favors, aims to bring under control media and, if necessary, to de-

legitimize them (Kmezić 2020, 192-194; Bieber and Kmezić 2015; Vračić and Bino 2017, 55-71).

In the list of being subject to influence and instrumentalism lies public service broadcasters. “In most Western Balkan countries, public service broadcasters are used either for political purposes or commercialized, or both, failing to provide either impartial news or quality programming due to colonization and political instrumentalization” (Kmezić 2020, 194). Notwithstanding the withdrawal of foreign capital, from the Western Balkans media, after the financial crisis (2008-2010), the pressure and instability of the advertising market, and the lack of transparency, in terms of state aid (Bieber 2020, 124-129; Kmezić 2020, 192-194) creates the suitable environment for media penetration by the clients. Largely, the pressure is concentrated towards the position of editor-in-chief and editors (Kmezić 2020, 194) and (equally) in the roles of opinionists and political commentators. Likewise, “the ongoing privatization of the media has been marked by numerous controversies, including the purchase of media by party friends; political influence over the media is exercised through the direct involvement of media owners in politics, covert actions or links of owners with particular politicians” (Kmezić 2020, 193).

In the service of controlling, subjugating, and blackmailing the media and journalists in the Western Balkans, the range of instruments is quite diverse and maintains to create a block of the pro-government media. The media should be used for two purposes: first, to expose a well-established image of the leader, which is shown by his long presence. This means constructing the leader’s figure, in the term hyperbolizing, giving him even superhuman features (Bieber 2020, 128) to bring into shape a ‘political brand’. Being a ‘brand’ means constantly advertising in order to consume the created image — in other terms, creating, maintaining, consolidating, and expanding audiences through the construction of an identity or symbol that remains in mind (Sammut-Bonnici 2015). Thus, “the tabloid media in Serbia contributed to the emergence of a personality cult around Aleksandar Vučić, portraying him as a constant victim of enemies [...] while also displaying superhuman traits in overcoming these challenges” (Bieber 2020, 128). Second, pro-government media or in-control media serves to de-legitimize the critical voice of other media and journalists. “Labeling journalists as foreign agents, enemies of the state or blaming the media and journalists for ‘throwing government pollution’ are just a few examples of attempts by political actors to denigrate the media” (Vračić and Bino 2017, 61). In this condition, the media serves not only to consumerize the leader/party but also to prevent a discursive break

memento, which would make the introduction of competing discourses or 'brands' possible.

Discursive hegemony, on the one hand, and the extreme personalization of political parties, on the other, turn the leader into the gravitational center — whereabouts is concentrated power. In the hands of one man, this concentration of power renders impossible the separation and balance of power. In this stance, the parliaments of the Western Balkans countries are influenced and instrumentalized by the party leader (Keil 2018, 8-9). On the one hand, the current situation implies confinement and impairment of space of the parliament for exercising its competencies (see: European Commission reports for 2018, 2019, and 2020), and on the other hand, they are used to intervene in the independent institutions, in order to instrumentalize them as well as enact the laws that favor private interests, i.e., so-called tailor-made laws (Transparency International 2020; Vurmo 2020).

Accordingly, in the venture of controlling the independent institutions — at the forefront — lies the institution of the president. In Albania's case, the president has served as an instrument that facilitates the party's penetration into the institution of justice (Elbasani 2017). At the same time, the opposite scenario happens in the case of Serbia, where the leader of the dominant party continues the position of president but has exercised control over the prime minister (Withal). Therefore,

"Tadić won his re-election in 2008, and his party formed a coalition government with the SPS; he controlled the government as head of the party and named Mirko Cvetković as prime minister, an economic expert without a party base or political ambition. Merging control over the ruling party and the presidency, and with the power to name the prime minister, Tadić had shown a way to informal presidentialism. This path was emulated by Vučić, who perfected and advanced informal presidential control" (Bieber 2020, 118).

As in the case study of Albania, as well in Serbia and other Western Balkans countries, through — reached out — uniformity, in the state institutional hierarchy, the upheld aim is to materialize power without objections, so to speak, the capitalization of "power of a party or parties to appoint people to positions in public and semi-public life" (Kopecký and Mair 2011, 1). Otherwise, this is understood as the colonization of the state by the party (Kopecký 2006).

"Party colonization of the state - refers to the rent-seeking behavior of political parties within the state apparatus" (Kopecký 2006, 258-260); this

resembles recruitment, much precisely, penetration inside institutions and, also distribution of goods and resources based on neo-patrimonial practices (Kopecký 2006, 258-260). Hence, the capture of the state in the Western Balkans can be approached, as the capture of institutions, on the one hand, and the exploitation of resources, on the other hand, which can be summarized in three dimensions:

First, since European Union integration for the Western Balkans — leastwise in the last eight years — has become a non-alternative orientation, that displays itself as a hegemonic manifestation of discourses which take on the features of integration without choice, the engagement to systemic reform of meeting the European conditions has turned into a demonstration of perseverance but gives little substantial result in this regard. This reformist perseverance has turned into a façade that hides the stance of reality — that of state capture.

Thus, although the reforms, principally, ought to not be understood on the basis of aesthetic changes or corrections of peripheral violations, but instead understood on the basis of adoption of 'new uses' (Gasset 2019, 5-8), which means immunization of institutions against idiosyncratic local pathologies, in the Western Balkans, mainly, the reforms have been focused, on cosmetic changes that deepen the fragility of institutions and expose them to party intervention (Günay and Dzihic 2016, 6-9). Thus, the reformation process in this region is characterized by transformational emptiness and is described under the concepts of "patchy reforms" (Elbasani and Šabić 2017, 3) or "empty shells" (Gordy and Efendic 2019, 10).

The phenomenon of superficial reform — free of transformation — has been sufficient, helped by the nature of the reforms imposed by the European Union, which are top-down reforms and allow room for action for the ruling political elites, to the extent of "reducing the space for political competition and domestic deliberation" (Richter and Wunsch 2019, 8). Besides other things, the interaction between local leaders and European representatives serves as a stimulus that strengthens the legitimacy of decision-making elites, and thus expands the room for maneuver so that the preferences of decision-making elites are served as objective decision, based on requirements of the European Union (Richter and Wunsch 2019, 8-9).

In addition, the party has successfully managed to bring forward its decision under the logo of reform. This means reaffirmation of existing control "through the erosion of independent institutions, the penetration of state administration by party members and the use of informal mechanisms to secure control" (Bieber 2020, 110). Altogether,

this means institutional redesignation and redistribution of state resources on the basis of neo-patrimonial practices, leading to the creation of "party soldiers" (Bliznakovski 2020). "To be a party soldier is not only to vote for a given political party in exchange for clientelist benefits but also to offer services relevant to the building and maintaining of party organizations" (Bliznakovski 2020). The creation of so-called 'party soldiers' through formal institutions implies the institutionalization of 'party soldiers'. This implies important two-fold consequences, in the institutional function: first, non-neutral (bias) of institutions, which means instrumentalization in order to rehabilitate party interests, blackmailing and de-legitimizing opponents, so to speak, using institutions for partial campaigns against opponents, that consist of arrests on 'fabricated' charges for corruption (Subotic 2017; Pavićević 2017, 32) and covering them with media spectacle. Secondly, the inefficiency of institutions, not merely as a consequence of political bias, but (primarily) as a result of their deprofessionalization, deriving from — non-meritocratic — partisan employment and adaptation or submission of the profession to the demands of the party/leader (Djolai and Stratulat 2017, 75-76). Both of these consequences produce inadequate services for citizens. According to the Balkan Barometer (2020) data, about 70% of citizens in the Western Balkans do not trust justice institutions. Also, the vast majority estimate that the laws are not implemented effectively and impartially — the same large numbers show distrust towards government and parliament (94-104). In this way, in the Western Balkans, we are dealing with weak states even as citizens are valued by the citizens (Krastev 2002, 50).

Second, state capture in the Western Balkans manifests itself as a legal emptiness, especially in case of regulation of conflicts of interest (Djolai and Stratulat 2017, 82-83) and as a legitimation of interests, or in other words, in the form of tailor-made laws (Transparency International 2020; Vurmo 2020). "Tailor-made laws seal and legitimize the privatization of public institutions and resources by making it legal" (Transparency International 2020, 16). The tailor-made laws in the Western Balkans are encountered in two levels: at the political level, as they favor certain political parties. Thus in Albania, according to the constitutional changes of 2008, there was adopted "an electoral system that favors establishment parties (as opposed to new or smaller parties) and bolsters political leaders' control over parliamentary realm" (Vurmo 2020, 5). At the economic level, the second effect codifies the monopoly of certain groups or individuals over state resources, sectors, services, and industries. Thus, the range of interests to be monopolized is quite wide, and it includes a variety of industries, sectors, and services ranging from gambling, energy, infrastructure, construction

to notary, agriculture, and health (Transparency International 2020). These laws are shaped like: ordinary laws, special laws that bypass the main legislation in force, and in the shape of public-private agreements and concessions (Transparency International 2020; Vurmo 2020). Moreover, the monopolies of specific sectors in the Western Balkans have been derived from agreements between certain ministries and companies, in violation of applicable legislation, such as the example of the homologation monopoly in Kosovo (GAP 2016).

Third, state capture in the Western Balkans is manifested as systemic corruption that collects the economic power into business networks close to the party (Günay and Dzihic 2016, 9-11). So this venture is manifested, through the erosion and exploitation of state resources, through corrupt schemes that imply distortion in procurement (Transparency International 2020), or in other words, the trucking the tenders and providing major infrastructure projects which plays "an important role in the redistribution of public resources for business networks close to [..., the ruling party]" (Günay and Dzihic 2016, 11). In this way, the party secures the financial power, which becomes a matter of reproduction of the power.

Facilitating factors of state capture: political culture and socio-economic factors

It is important to carefully treat every beginning of the transition, as many of the essential features of post-communist systems are defined from their inception (Anastasakis 2013). Contextually approaching the topic, post-communist politics, in the Western Balkans, has been taken hostage by strong leaders, which means that it has suffered from an extreme personalization — together with strong tendencies, to personalize the political system (Anastasakis 2013, 98). Nevertheless, the dominance of politics — by strong leaders — in the Western Balkans has an earlier origin, dating back to the founding of states in the region, but which lives out the primacy time during the communist regime. The dominance of politics, for several decades, through the cult of the leader (Tito in Yugoslavia and Enver Hoxha in Albania) has formed a political culture that shows outside itself, as a tendency, to reconcile strong leaders with democracy. Therefore, "the role of strong leaders finds support among citizens, where surveys suggest that support for democracy has declined in the past decade, while the number of those supporting a strong leader has increased. Furthermore, by 2017, a majority across the region believes that strong leaders are compatible with democracy, suggesting that many who support democracy would

also support a strong leader within a democratic system" (Bieber 2020, 120).

Moreover, the societies of the Western Balkans countries have coexisted with patrimonial systems for a long time (Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000, 29-35; Kitschelt 2001, 309-313). This fact implies some important consequences that emerge: first, as a culture of informality working, deteriorating the institutionalization process — legitimation of methods of recruitment and separation of powers, on the basis of patrimonial practices either through participation or through passivity (Gehl and Roth 2013; Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000, 29-35). Second, weak opposition (Kitschelt 2001, 309-313), not only in a partisan sense but also an evident weakness of civil society, explained eloquently as "low capacity for self-organization and the articulation of interests and demands" (Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000, 31). Consequently, it shapes out a submissive culture that operates on the basis of the belief of society's powerlessness to change the politics of the country (Pudar Draško and Džihić 2019). The combination of these two consequences produces participation in informal networks and passivity — putting it differently into words, it creates non-reaction clime towards governance based on informal networks.

"But the strength (or lack thereof) of popular pressure from below in the Balkans invariably also reflects these countries' overall level of socioeconomic development and, in particular, growing levels of unemployment and thus inequality. Rising deprivation and social inequalities work against individual emancipation, fostering instead a popular culture that builds on 'bread-and-butter' materialistic and security preoccupations, and feeds on ignorance, obedience, and distrust at the expense of self-expression values" (Djolai and Stratulat 2017, 83-84).

In social conditions, whence the state is the main employer, and (meanwhile) the desire to be employed in the state is high (RCC, Balkan Barometer 2020, 43-63), the power of the one/those who have the right to assign and distribute jobs becomes uncontrolled. This power brings out insecurity among employees — such a condition implies an addictive relationship and takes the form of a mobilizing demonstration in support of the party, which becomes clearer during crises (Kraske 2017; Bieber 2020, 111-112).

Conclusion

In this paper, the venture of state capture — for several reasons — has been named the soft strategy:

Firstly, the takeover of the state in the Western Balkans has been performed out, under the shibboleth of reform. The reformation process, which ended up into a mere (contentless) manifestation which translates into a manifestation consisting of redistribution of goods under an initiative that emerges not only as controlled and commanded employment but also as a modernizing (transformative) enterprise unfolding in the form of major infrastructure projects producing a strong insistence of the leader/party on transformational success. Thus, this superficial performance is a strategy on which the legitimacy of regimes in the Western Balkans is built.

Second, the transformative appeal done by regimes technocrats, namely confined on the increase of the welfare of the citizen and the Europeanization of the country — in a process in which reforms derive from the top down — is legitimized by the interaction of local actors with European ones. This constant interaction is converted in support of the letter ones for the first. Willy-nilly, the performance of the Western Balkan regimes is legitimized not solely by the culture of informality but also by external actors, as is the case with the EU.

Third, the populist fabrication of reformism, alongside the populist fabrication of nationalism is complemented, in order to channel it into a reachable mission for the leader. The leader's mission is reduced to making Serbia/Albania/Northern Macedonia (and so on) once again a great country. The attribution of the mission to the leader arises through a process of differentiation — from others — through a populist narrative that implies the destructiveness of certain opposition political leaders. Such political act implies their involvement in the process of betraying national interests, corruption, and other profit schemes, at the expense of the decent people. Thus, the leader's dominance derives, first of all, from the symbolic rise and the discursive dominance. The process of its establishment follows a line starting from the party, followed by its export into the whole domain of national politics.

Lastly, the capture of the state was performed, in the absence of protest and civil revolt — expressed differently, without pressure from below. This is due to the combination of the culture of informality, together with the organizational weakness of civil society and materialistic concerns.

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Political clientelism in Western Balkans - A Mechanism to Amplify Power Gain- The Case of Albania

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Abstract

Political clientelism is not a new phenomenon in Western Balkans. Widely perceived as a “negative trend” throughout various research, different scholars have elaborated it as an existing occurrence until late in the region, mostly in the frames of “state capture” linked with corruption.
This worrisome occurrence has recently begun to take on its conceptual, interpretive, and functional importance in the Western Balkans as a paradigm that impacts the economy, democracy, and society in many directions. This sort of trade-off agreement is well known to advancing specific groups’ interests linked with politics and public administration or institutions, while on the other side, boosting power gain and authority of various political clans, political leaders, or administration officials by releasing specific benefits related to public resources and providing access to the authoritative allocation of values for these kinds of groups or individuals.
Through a qualitative methodology, this paper explores available data, facts, reports, various media, and academic sources to bring through the deconstruction method a better understanding of this society’s plague, concentrating more broadly on the Albanian’s case. This paper elaborates primarily on more or less the same susceptibilities that Western Balkans countries evince toward these practices and transactions, and why the region poses high vulnerability to clientelism.
Then, as different cultural backgrounds may shape specific forms of political clientelisms, the paper focuses more in detail on Albania’s cultural experience and particularities of political clientelism that have merged, adopted, and developed in this context.
Third, the analysis follows with the most trapped vital sectors, harvested by “specific groups” involved in this kind of “contingent exchange”on the grid, a lopsided procedure that leads to lack of transparency, prolonged transition, autocracy armored by top-level

power gain - that also impacts sustainable development.
The conclusion's section will precede recommendations that try to explore theoretical approaches on how to uproot, to some extent, the manifold facets of this remarkable occurrence in this specific case of observation (Albania).

Keywords: political clientelism, power gain/unlimited power, transition, vital sectors

Introduction

Western Balkans is a region facing many issues relating to its developmental process. The region's lingering concern is its political reality, engraved by its unique political culture and historical background. After 20 years of post-conflict and 30 years of democratization process also labeled as a long transition where informal procedures and structures, such as an almost captured media, weak civil society, the manipulated rule of law prevail, a severe issue such as political clientelism is gaining more and more attention and conceptual clarification because of its impact in economic progress, social inequality, democracy, recycling of clientelist parties and most crucial culture of these countries.

A "keyword" encountered in numerous scholarly articles and research defining this region since long is "transition". Indeed, a transition is a state where a change from one phase to another is expected to happen, and it was also typical for the Western Balkans region to undergo this phase, particularly in the post-90s period. Although sound progress, a region 30 years in the making, incarnated by its transformation process, has brought to the surface some permanent contingent features that require a more in-depth conceptual elaboration, reflection, and analysis at the practical level.

The regional transition is taking momentum! That is why its permanent features, where political clientelism plays a critical role among others - because of its interrelation with other unfavorable features - finally need a conceptual and practical deconstruction before becoming a permanent obstruction pillar in social culture and democracy.

Political clientelism procedures or trends may occur everywhere, in developed countries and less developed ones, but what marks and highlights their persistence is their adaptability to a specific environment

and to what degree it can be an obstacle to sustainable development. The political culture inherited by the past communist regimes and Western Balkans' historical background has been a fertile ground for this destructive phenomenon to grow.

Because of its theoretical intricacy with concepts such as patronage and nepotism in practical operation, clientelism is a practice of exchanging resources or access to resources with privileges or benefits. In any case, "nepotism and patronage", although they may not "necessarily involve an exchange" as Kosovo Local Government Institute states in a study relating to clientelism in Kosovo, may contribute or back up such practices and procedures. More specifically, such trade-off agreements are beneficial to boosting power gain and authority of various political clans, political leaders, or administration officials by releasing specific benefits related to public resources and providing access to the authoritative allocation of values for these kinds of groups or individuals. Such clans or groups may vary from simple groups of interest to patron-client relations or kinship/ friendship favoritism or loyalty.

Many definitions on clientelism have been elaborated so far, and they have contributed to extensive explanations, "sufficiently broad to capture three general characteristics of clientelism: 1) the asymmetry of power discernible in patron-client relationships; 2) the quid pro quo nature of the exchanges attendant upon such relationships, and 3) the scope and durability of the relationships" (de Sousa 2008, 5).

The literature on political clientelism has been elaborated through different periods in times that also correspond to specific evolutions and modernizations. Different scholars and political scientists started to analyze clientelism and patronage concepts from 1960 until 1970 (Powell 1970) (Scott 1972), giving some accurate definitions as a manifestation of the relationship between the patron and the client. During this decade (1960 – 1970), as author Roniger L. recalls, this phenomenon was merely "a vestige of early modern development and that political and economic modernization would render it obsolete and ultimately end it". Nevertheless, the occurrence persisted, and then with the beginning of the 70s until/mid-80s with the development of society and economy, the relations became more balanced by bonding actors also in paralleled ramification but not only.

Then practices developed with extended forms of distribution in the modern political segments in frames of top-down-bottom-up relations.

In the late 70s, T.H. Rigby deepened the analysis focusing on communist systems, having elaborated much previously his "spider-web theory of politics", trying to explain the role of patronage in more power gain practices and appealing the need for comparative research on this issue. The research from the 1980s to 1990s broadened the research scope and "gave way to greater awareness of its ubiquity also in developed democratic and communist polities" (Luis 2004, 356). After the 90s, many other exchange forms, brokerage, and other definitions indicated that the phenomena developed from the navel-patron-client relation to a more diversified way of interactions, including vertical and horizontal positions and strata as a capillary process. As Susan C. Stokes (2011) ascertains, "the early wave was inspired mainly by anthropology and secondarily by sociology, the later one by economics" (Stokes 2011). In practical terms, in a region like Western Balkans, the features of the three waves are noticeable and intertwined.

There is a broad understanding now among scholars that clientelism and clienteles exist in many societies, but as this phenomenon poses transformative capacities in the base of the social, economic, cultural, and political background of a country, the variables of this phenomena may differ and exist coupled with different strategies and interests.

Considering the difficulties in Albanian statehood practices, the difficult transition phase from communism to pluralism, the low ownership on EU reforms - clientelism in all these years has been there to hinder and shake the fragile pillars of democracy and run against any practice of formality. The fact is that clientelism is a widespread phenomenon in numerous sectors - (in the case of Albania) - making the whole system vulnerable to autocratic, informal, and corrupt practices and murky procedures. It incorporates patterns of behaviors, norms, social relationships and interactions, and always more economic features. Therefore it seems profoundly ingrained and deeply spread in this specific case.

This paper elaborates primarily on more or less the same susceptibilities that Western Balkans countries evince toward these practices and transactions, and why the region poses high vulnerability to clientelism. Then, as different cultural backgrounds may shape specific forms of political clientelisms, the paper focuses more in detail on Albania's cultural experience and particularities of political clientelism that have merged, adopted, and developed in this context.

Second, the analysis follows with the most trapped vital sectors, harvested by "specific groups" involved in this kind of "contingent exchange"

on the grid. Such lopsided procedures lead to lack of transparency, prolonged transition, autocracy armored by top-level power gain - impacting sustainable development.

The conclusion's section will precede recommendations that try to explore theoretical approaches on how to uproot, to some extent, the manifold facets of this remarkable occurrence in this specific case of observation (Albania).

Western Balkans' vulnerability to clientelism

Political clientelism is an ongoing many folded phenomenon that continues to hamper democratic progress in Western Balkans. The cause of its widespread occurrence is, first, part of cultural context and people's behavior because of their ties and interpersonal relations. Secondly, it emerges as an ordinary informal reality combined with double procedures that have been carried along volitionally for years.

Although reforms are going on in frames of the EU integration process, this rationale of the whole process seems to align in the periphery of attention, considering the tense scene of high polarization in some countries, economic recession aggravated by the pandemic, corrupted procedures favoring some groups/indviduals and organized crime associated with high criminality affairs.

The EU has since long assumed a role in the democratization process through Europeanisation, also with "a new enlargement strategy document to reinvigorate the process". It qualified the Western Balkans' EU integration process as a "geostrategic investment" and put forward a best-case scenario for the accession of Serbia and Montenegro by 2025 (European Commission 2018, 1)[1]. Often, the rhetoric on the EU side has been a discourse of hope, although the pace of the integration has barely changed. In the meantime, internal issues circulating in a vicious circle resembling to "business as usual" continue to evolve, regardless of the Europeanization process.

All in all, the vulnerability to political clientelism lies in diverse structural and functional fragilities that prevail in an environment that Euro – Atlantic rhetoric is overused for elites' political and power-gain purposes, while the process lacks substantial results when it comes to the implementation of EU democratic standards and embezzlement of EU values. Challenges abound in a pile of variances such as neighborly

1 http://biepag.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/The_Western_Balkans_as_a_Geopolitical_Chessboard.pdf

disagreements, ethnic disputes, uncertain EU full membership time, hybrid regimes, weak freedom of media and rule of law, high rates of corruption and organized crime, lack of trust and transparency in government activities and institutions and other foreign influences. All these factors hinder a solid platform for sound progress and sustainable development.

The coil axes of this vicious circle are political clientelism and its resultants corruption and organized crime. More or less, this phenomenon is apparent in all Western Balkans' countries, but a broader analysis on one by one WB countries - before having a detailed analysis of the Albanian case - can bring a better understanding of why these countries pose a vulnerability to political clientelism.

After 30 years of transition and an ongoing pandemic - Albania and North Macedonia are on the verge of opening negotiation talks. Nevertheless, the way forward considering the past delays according to different scholars and experts (BiEPag-Policy Brief 2019), is deemed long, considering the lost dialectic between advancement on reform implementation and internal issues in the political, economic, and social background. The surge of bilateral dispute between the North Macedonia and Bulgaria postponed again the decision on opening the negotiation talks. The WB region proves a history of such entangled disputes and they usually do take time and energy to resolve. The previous dispute on the name issue did indeed consume some time. "While the long-running dispute between Greece and North Macedonia remained unresolved for many years, just as many bilateral disputes in the region still do, leaving such problems unaddressed can still pose a real obstacle to the EU integration process for would-be members."(Huszka 2020) In this regard, the EU has played a very constructive role in resolving bilateral disputes, but in the end, they have thwarted the Euro-Atlantic perspective for some years, depending on the country's nature of dispute and the time consumed for such settlements.

Moreover, North Macedonia has since long been dealing with corruption. Although many attempts to deal with this endemic issue, "critical institutions, such as those distributing social benefits and subsidies, inspectorates, and law enforcement" (Popovikj 2019) remain exposed to similar procedures. "These institutions were used to buy loyalty from voters and companies through clientelism and punish those favoring the opposition, while law enforcement turned a blind eye to the abuses" (Popovikj 2019).

The situation spiked with power malversation headline news, especially in the last five years. There were the wire tape story and other proofs of misconduct in top-level governance, as strong indicators that procedures of clientelism and abuse of power had long since crossed the red line and demanded a finis'. The main atony to tackle such procedures and practices is mainly due to a corrupt justice system. The story of the justice structures responsible for acting, intentionally disregarding such courses of action, is a similar plague in each of these countries. Although progress in terms of EU reforms is ongoing, in sectors such as "public administration, judiciary, and intelligence services" (Popovikj 2019), the vulnerability is still there since reforms lack a critical analysis on ""what happens, why it happens, and how" " (Popovikj 2019) in terms of finally pinpointing corruption and healing the system from these malign procedures.

In the Albanian case, the European perspective has been derailed merely by internal political issues. Albania gained candidate status in 2014, and since then the "antechamber" has not been a "comfort zone" to advance on economic reforms, rule of law, and democratic progress.

Although opposition and position leaders and MPs continue to cite "consolidation of stability and full implementation of liberal political and economic reform" (Bieber, Tzifakis 2019, 5) as priorities also as policies guiding their political programs; still the void created by numerous internal issues and the melding of external powers in pursuit of their interest hamper the rationale of the whole process. Thus, the decision on opening the negotiation talks is not only long overdue but also uncertain of how political parties will consent and further cooperate, in primis, for the interest of the Albanian country. Especially after the 25 April elections, where opposition fiercely accused the position of an "electoral massacre", intentional irregularities, and vote-buying.

Until now, Montenegro leads as a frontrunner towards the EU integration process and has better probabilities compared to other WB candidates while still processing with the last chapter. The lack of the rule of law and lack of media freedom and clientelism in dubious patronage networks frames are irrefutable facts that hamper progress and economic development in this country. "Bribery scandals" (Freedom of Hause, 2020) in political life interweaving business and government's senior officials/politicians, "misuse of public resources", and "institutional advantages" noted in the elections of 2016 have posited a need for a wind of change in the elections of August 2020, considering that "the governing Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) has been in power since 1991" (*ibid*

2020). Governing with extensive power while having control of public institutions became a dominant feature in the political background of Montenegro. The difficulties in tackling corruption starting from the top level reveal the suspicious linkage between judiciary and politics for lack of institutional independence in general.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is another country case where high ethnic polarization of the society has turned into distress between societies where political and ethnic divisions are far from reconciling or getting equal opportunities. Procedures of corruption and cronyism favored by nepotism and ethnic influence create conditions for a more severe political clientelism. This corrosive occurrence stretched in such divisions hampers peaceful coexistence and turns into a precondition for economic, social fragmentation/ marginalization and amplified ethnic division.

State capture is a widespread phenomenon in BiH. However, under state capture, it is implied "domination and control of domestic political parties, the public sector, the public administration, and other state institutions including the state-owned (public) enterprises, for the purpose of controlling and extracting public resources and keeping political elites in power" (Obradoviç, Goran 2019, 86).

BiH suffers issues relating to poverty, severe economic challenges, and cohesion and sustainability imbalances. On top of that, as the country organizes throughout ethnic segments, "social protection system maintains high inequality in access to social benefits and social services" as modus granting "political patrons to maximize political gains, i.e., political support and thus electoral votes" (Obradoviç, Goran 2019, 86).

In this regard, political clientelism is merely an "ethno-clientelism" (ibid) process. Despite the fact and blunt initiatives that these segments jointly undertake, the legal and institutional reality is tailored in such a way to build and create ethnic discrimination, social inequality, politics, and administration on an ethnic basis. These instruments deepen political and ethnic clientelism in many dimensions.

Serbia is not exempt from political clientelism practices and informality. Going back to historic chronological events in government systems and political changes, it is quite intelligible how nonchalance attitudes and clientelism practices have prevailed and exceeded over the formality. In the post-war period, after a series of conflicts that ex-Yugoslavia went through, the informality and clientelism were long sustained by political inheritances and instability. The dominant features after 2000 (according to a study edited by Slobodan Cvejić on this subject) were "premature

elections, frequent changes of governments, shifting coalitions and changes in the balance of power in parliament and government".

Like in some other countries in Western Balkans, intercession tendencies and patronage links to dominate economic life were noted in Serbia. "Through the selective implementation of privatization laws the state enabled the process of conversion of political into economic capital and legalization of illegal or semi-legal profits of tycoons and criminal structures" (Cjevic 2016, 40). It was through the process of "privatization" and "restructuring" that "state maintained control over key resources, such as electricity, telecommunications to some extent"*(ibid)*. These transformations have brought to closed circles of ownership and, instead of unblocking the transition, extended the life of the informality rule. "Preservation of state monopolies in import and trade of some strategic goods such as oil and electricity, and subsidizing losses of big public companies" set "state companies in a privileged position on the market, distorting the regulatory functions of market competition" *(ibid)*. Political clientelism and informality have left their footprints in its prolonged transition and lack of economic and social sustainability.

Among other issues, Serbian society still witnesses "examples of egregious electoral engineering" where "the widespread misuse of state resources for campaign purposes, vote-buying, ballot substitution, and ballot-box stuffing" are characteristic of the deep-rooted" (Jeremic 2020) "hybrid regime" as defined by Freedom of Hause.

Kosovo is dipped in political clientelism so that it seems that this practice shapes relations between government and society or officials/ politicians and citizens. Clientelism prevails as a standard 'liaison governing' culture. This phenomenon is more evident at the local level than at the central one. "At the municipal level, the "patrons" are most likely—but not exclusively—to be mayors, who are directly elected, have significant executive powers and access to the widest array of goods" while "clients are ordinary members of society, who become clients by agreeing to an exchange" (Kosovo Local Government Institute; 2019). Its longevity characterizes this kind of relationship as now is a permanent feature in the society's culture. According to the study carried by Kosovo Local Government Institute on this matter, the most dominant fields where clientelism is noticed are voting, participation, distribution of resources, and society's treatment. Since the country is small and more or less needs to benefit from these practices, many people avoid claiming for lack of transparency, informality and tacitly either assent or become indifferent to such practices.

In light of the broader picture made up case by case of Western Balkans countries, it is evident that clientelism in this region has gained specific importance as a form of behavior and culture to quickly accessing and benefiting from resources, services, or special rights. The coin is two-sided: one side reflects the (seeming) commitments to democratic principles and norms such as good governance, equal treatment, economic sustainability, and democratic progress, the other side reflects how the political clientelism occurrence erode capacities, responsibilities, and goodwill to reverse the positive side of the coin and finally escape from the long transition phase where these countries are stalled.

The worrisome fact lies in the very social-political background of this region. Although some slight changes, the most captured and jeopardized sectors from innumerous series of these practices, remain vote buying/selling and elections, judiciary, public administration, organized crime, health, and transport in terms of concessions as much as "access to healthcare, education or employment" (Biepag 2019, 79).

The challenges are overlapped on a legacy first left by the Ottoman Empire, then carried along by communism and implemented as part of general behavior even more flagrantly in these 30 years of transition.

As noticed in one by one state cases, and enlisted issues and facts, the countries of the Western Balkans pose a susceptibility to falling prey to clientelism procedures because these countries appear in contexts where societies have a legacy of such culture, they abide by a cause-effect relationship by interacting with their fragile systems, where the rule of law is still weak, institutions have not yet modernized, such procedures have turned out as social norms in practice and individuals, political parties and interest groups turn into faulty players in all this established vacuum.

For this reason, Western Balkans countries deal more or less at the same level with these trade-off occurrences. One of them is an exchange of votes for other benefits, a pure practice of clientelism. "The practices of vote-buying and selling have been present across the region since the introduction of the formal multiparty democracy at the beginning of the 1990s" (Bliznakovski 2020).

While other clientelistic practices are deeply rooted and ramified in the regions governing systems, where "the practices of vote-buying and vote-selling represent only a fraction of exchanges associated with political clientelism" *(ibid 2020)*.

Although clientelism is a procedure one can notice in liberal regimes and illiberal ones, the tendency is still more remarkable for it to flourish

in totalitarian and autocratic regimes because of lack of transparency, habitual culture, weak institutions, and autocratic leadership controlling mode. Most of these characteristics are noted also in the case of Albania, which serves as a case study in this paper.

Socio-cultural background in Albania regarding clientelism

Albania, like most of the countries of Western Balkans, is installing (although communist legacies) an autocratic regime of modern times, which has contributed to an entrenched culture of informality where practices of corruption, clientelism, favoritism/nepotism, non-transparent linkages gloom in full relation of trade-off, brokerage and are attuned to such reality.

As culture can influence behavior, clientelism has turned out to be a behavior and vice cultivation from where a set of procedures and practices derive and when the matter is rooted in the culture, although there are measures and actions one can take, the culture and the conditions created by that sort of culture prevail.

As a way of exchanging benefits, clientelism has been long inherited from living, or social legacy acquired, transformed, and adapted to present circumstances. (Johnson M. 2013), defines culture as “a learned behavior” (Clyde Klucikhohn’s; 10), and reflecting on that, part of some life activities and practices are clumsily able to change over generations and time. The factor, social heritage, and the factor, biological nature of man, make a resultant behavior in culture (Krober, Klucichohn 1952, 84).

Hence, using the term “state capture” for a set of practices related to clientelism and favoritism, informality and harness of power, the risk of generalization may shortly lead to falling into a metaphoric concept and proper lack of elaboration, rather than bringing to an understanding of such a series of “quid pro quo” practices dominant in many vital sectors. The most suitable term denotes “the practice of political clientelism” (Obradoviç, Goran 2019, 86), and it needs to be elaborated with all the complexity it provides and how it appears in society and why it flourishes.

The history of civilizations has been structured in various organizational forms, and some features of the way of organization and governance were embedded in the history of humanity. Since Rome, Byzantium, or the Ottoman Empire, forms of clientelism have existed. In ancient Rome,

clientelism was known as “patrocinium”[2]- a hierarchical relationship between the patron and client. Patronage was not just confined to the military and political aspects of the Roman lifestyle. Patronage was linked with the public display of status, social ranking, the legal system, and even Roman Society’s arts.[3] At the same time, the political and social history of the Ottoman Empire has not only developed but left back the imprints of this occurrence.”The system of “Taraf/clan/sect” was a community of people related to each other based on tribe (blood) or country (province), who “guaranteed public peace, collected taxes and supplied the sultan with soldiers in case of war, and in return received from the political power, central or local, public posts for their people”. These posts were seen as a source of illegal profits in exchange for loyalty toward this clan”.[4]Almost a similar system was noticeable in medieval Europe with the feudal system or structure of lords and peasants/other/rest in more or less seemingly interactions.

It appears that some countries in WB, as in the case of Albania, that have been under the Ottoman Empire for several centuries and 50 years under communism can not give up privileges and power. Politics has the power, the connections, and the network, the access to state resources to distribute them to the beneficiaries in this network of beneficiaries and acquaintances or family members, which provides power to the ruling political party, survival as well as the ability to reprocess itself.

Albania has almost by default a deeply rooted clientelism of different forms. As aforementioned, it lies in the civic culture, ingrained in social norms that often act as a substitute for legal rules and consequently is settled in traditional practices. “Cultural explanations of clientelism are important to the extent that cultural factors/attributes can frame and influence the expectations of the actors involved in the exchange” (de Sousa 2008, 7). There is a terminology that associates with these occurrences in everyday life like “miqtë”[5] and “leku”[6] - open many doors or

2 Quinn, Kenneth (1982). “Poet and Audience in the Augustan Age”. Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. 30/1. p. 117. doi:10.1515/9783110844108-003. ISBN 978-3-11-008469-6.

3 Roman Patronage in Society, Politics, and Military https://sites.psu.edu/romanpatronagegroupdcams101/

4 Klodi Stralla, https://flasshqip.ca/opinione/blog/3360-tarafi-osman-dhe-metamorfozat-e-tij-ne-kohen-tone-nga-klodi-stralla

5 Kind of a mediator that might be a relative, a client or a friend that in exchange to other benefits or as a sort of pay-off act goes inside the matter to solve it, for services/benefits, employment etc.

6 There is a saying in Albania that money can solve anything.

"qokë"[7]-(something that someone needs to do or pay off to a person involved in some sort of exchange benefits relations). As a type of "personalized and reciprocal relationship between an inferior-superior" but also in parallel positions "commanding unequal resources" (Lemarchand, Legg 1972, 151), the occurrence is profoundly and broadly embodied in "affectivity" or/and "loyalty" feelings and interconnectivity among people.

In Albania's case (the other Western Balkans' states cannot be excluded), the interpersonal relations are very closed because of family, province/regional/tribal, "kinsman" relationship, and strong friendship ties.

The broad web of relations "encompass longer evaluation of reciprocal benefits and commitment as the prerequisite to maintain ongoing relationships" (Roniger 2004; 356) and coordination.

According to these circumstances, "affectivity serves as the primary social adhesive for binding a patron to his client, and vice versa" (Lemarchand, Legg 1972, 151) and "loyalty" serves as a cornerstone of such a relationship and guarantees the longevity of the relationship, through expecting benefits. These kinds of emotional and close relations posit a seed to the very phenomena that transform itself in various forms such as:

- **Familial clientelism** – family bonds, blood relations, and relatives that tend to create a short circuit. Having specific features related to the developing transition countries, Albania often shows this phenomenon as favoritism on family ties. In the business sector, family nepotism might be a routine procedure and acceptable, and within this type, there is the opportunity to inherit different professions, but not in state institutions and public administration.
- **Clientelism based on friendship** – the same occurrence is noted in this kind of practice, which happens on a friendly basis (society), either in politics or business or in relations between them. It relies on a bond among people with horizontal and vertical ranking, but with various interests among resources and benefits, and these procedures isolate in a sort of clan.
- **Clientelism based on simple mutual interests** – these are reciprocal ties and bonds that vary from specific individuals or agents that may not be relatives or friends but work with each other or get to know each other in specific contexts. They continuously manage

7 Figurative meaning to explain a marked case, when going to visit a family and you expect the same practice in return or in clientelism context – when someone replies to a favor or to a benefit done by another person involved in this sort of exchange relationship.

and deal with uneven or even resources or benefits through a mutually beneficial scheme.

- **Brokerage clientelism** – ties and bonds established with the support of brokers that introduce and exchange interests of parties/groups or many actors involved, but the profits are triangular or ramified in the scheme. They are individuals that may interrelate groups or clans of different parties or different interest groups as well, and benefit too from the scheme.
- **Electoral clientelism** – vote-buying and selling practices; this is also an occurrence based on party favoritism of involving individuals aiming to access a Public Administration position or upgrading themselves if they obey vote loyalty to a specific party. In electoral campaigns, party promises attract loyalty from groups of societies that aspire to a career in various state institutions or public administration or access to services and resources. Sometimes the citizens fall prey to vote bargains in exchange for short-term clientelistic gain, and when the political party happens to come into power, the opinion of citizens and their need to interact and impact the decision-making process is ignored. Also, the sponsorship offered to a political party without transparency may raise doubts about being of a clientelistic nature.
- **Media clientelism** – reflects features such as media ownership and its instrumentalization for political parties, imposing their opinion and marketing. This form of clientelism is characterized by a lack of transparency and lack of independence because political structures may control media, in both ways by interfering in law procedures and enforcement or by founding.
- **Economic clientelism** – where gross economic interests involve politicians and various actors defined as "oligarchs" in most media reports and everyday analysis of society (Bogdani 2020), (Ivokvic 2021) (AIS 2020). These actors constitute a prevalent power group that continuously concentrates power in their hands, by "abusive tenders" and "contracts", what eventuates into " cash agreements" "for favorite clients" (AIS 2020) with the government's consent.

Political clientelism encompasses and may build upon all these kinds of linkages and categories. To these ends, there are many ways of involving such practices and procedures for money interests, friendship, kinship, interests that go through a specific period, to please the patron/client/relative/friend ..etc, access some resources, and various similarities.

All these linkages and categories merge or rise into one simple scheme "followers are known as clients, leaders as patrons, and intermediaries as brokers"(Lawson, Greene 2014, 61).

The hierarchical scale is sometimes a generic feature of these kinds of the exchange process, but it may be not since, in some cases, pure interests and resources in the base of common preferences are shared.

The series of transactions involved in such relationships may vary from local to the central government system. "The greater the volume of transactions, the greater the diversity of political resources handled through clientelism" (Lemarchand, Legg 1972, 155). Moreover, the greater the risk to never erode such practices evaluating the fact that such procedures branch out according to the (above mentioned) categories of clientelism in the Albanian political culture, especially the governing one, the greater they have become a distinguishing feature of the internal social, economic, political, and institutional developments. The phenomenon has already gained some modus-operandi status officially accepted.

Officials and leadership meanwhile avoid reforms and commitments because they deviate, driven by self-interest, and not only fail to implement long-term policies in favor of the change and genuine developing culture, but also lack ownership on reforms that finally should be implemented. Institutions operate by political agendas dictated by the day or moment and in line with clientelistic ties. "Regardless of the level at which they occur or the resources they may involve, transactions are likely to cut across different social sectors" (Lemarchand, Legg 1972, 151). When they cut across different political-social sectors, the erosion of authoritative values and any social progress attempt is prone to align with reversible effect.

Such practices have failed to surge a public and political reaction because they have established as social norms reflected in social connections and interactivity that in certain or similar circumstances prolonge the continuations of such clientelistic behaviors and actions. The context in which such procedures and actions persist and influence behaviors is an important factor when it comes to addressing such a phenomenon. In the case of Albania, clientelism practices are behaviors and attitudes that lie either in the formal or informal structure of interrelationships, as unwritten norms, ingrained in a socio-cultural context. When "norms" serve as "the basis for clientelist exchanges", affectivity, and "gratitude" or "indebtedness" (Lawson, Greene 2014, 61) seed such relations, and they not only transform into various forms but also entrench in vital sectors.

Political clientelism entrenched in vital sectors

In Albania, the columns of the liberal regime were built upon old ruins, which continue to hamper from time to time multi-sectorial progress, reform efforts, and formality - what results in a lack of sound foreign investments attraction from EU countries and hardships in reform implementations. “Economically” other “external non-Western actors” have been filling a gap left in terms of investments, loans and infrastructural projects” (Bieber, Tzifakis 2019, 9). These actors play by their own rules, and “these investments often do not come with the usual strings attached” that EU actors may apply in similar cases, leaving the same business and informality climate (*ibid*) perennially. In this regard, doing business as usual, accompanied by a lack of transparency, can make such practices even more intractable. As such, “clientelism turns to the state as a source of patronage and resources, with negative effects on the regime” (Jusufi 2018, 147).

Clientelism needs a certain kind of favorable ecosystem to thrive, and that ecosystem is nourished and sustained by social behaviors/norms and relations. Some sectors where such kind of practices are noticed are as follows:

Electoral system: Over the years, this system has shown its irregularities accompanied by dissatisfaction and complaints from certain parties or electoral groups. Ways in which parties are funded or how votes are secured have left room for doubt. Vote raising in other dubious ways and clientelist networks in this process has led to the representation of people with dubious pasts in parliament, which opened the way to decriminalization law in 2015. However, there were still calls from international experts in Albania on the verge of elections of April 2021 to give special attention to integrity scanning of the electoral list’s candidates.

Electoral mobilization is intensified through promises for jobs in the public administration or the provision of other benefits and services, resulting in penalizing the fulfillment of the program objectives or other reforms. These practices result in being highly disfavoring versus meritocracy and impartiality and progress achievement. Citizens have not yet become aware over the years of how to punish clientelist parties or clientelistic behavior of certain parties to break the supply chain of power without obeying their manipulative will or tendencies. Thus, some political parties that function more through clientelism without having a clear program and principles find it difficult to implement changes that

result in progress but fall prey to a continuous cycle where privileges and interests other than the state interest prevail.

Judiciary system: Various reports, articles, and surveys of international partners and organization (Freedom House 2021; EWB 2020; Dobrushi 2016) reveal that the level of citizens' or public trust in the justice system has been to the lowest point during these three decades, until the reform of the justice system took place, although a process accompanied with contested claims and a slow engine, but still much needed for Albanian reality. The "justice reform progressed smoothly albeit at a snail`s pace, as in previous years", (Freedom House 2021) but it is the linchpin of the whole system and other crucial reforms that are ongoing in Albania.

The lack of impunity phenomena, resulted from a compromised judicial system because of the clientelistic ties in most of the cases, which lacked many essential components such as transparency, integrity, professionalism, accountability, and credibility. Political interference and clientelism networks prevailed over fair implementation and application of laws and rules.

Public administration: Despite the call of international organizations and experts to maintaining expertness and depoliticization in the public administration and the staff not to be subjected to the political rotation under the will of the switching political parties, again the political rotation has been accompanied by significant changes in public administration. These changes, accompanied by uncertainty and stress at the employees' level, have further reduced professionalism and civil service quality for the citizens. Personnel rotations under political lust have impacted the state coffer considering that civil service personnel has a high legal protection level regarding financial redress against unfair dismissal.

The problem is that "public administration is not regarded as a servant to the public, to meet the objectives of sustainable development and the implementation of necessary reforms, but as a direct servant of the ruling cabinet".[8]

Economic Sector: Albania's economic sector lacks formality and transparency. Informality appears mainly in unregistered business companies, where tax evasion prevails, appearing in non-declarations of assets, lack of equal treatment, and dominance of monopolies. The fight against informality is often considered a lost battle due to the tolerance conceded by politics because of various ties in the format of "government

8 https://www.dw.com/sq/rotacion-politik-me-rotacion-militant%C3%ABsh-n%C3%AB-administrat%C3%ABn-publike/a-16959661

to clients" and vice versa and "pie-pan" politics. The construction sector is often considered obscure and lacking transparency, too.

"In the past few years, several corruption allegations related to public, private partnerships (PPPs) and concessions have been raised by the media and civil society organizations (e.g., concessions on hydropower plants, mining industry, healthcare services)[9]. These procedures have been until the present time considered corrupt and proceeded through clientelistic ties. "The lack of transparency and integrity regarding concessions and PPPs have become severe concerns".[10]

Media: Mass media has shown to be highly politicized and polarized according to political wings. The political majority in power tends to control public opinions under a specific dictation. The connection ties are schematized through media owners, journalists, with politicians. This triangle scheme is far from informing, analyzing, and preventive relating to the media`s mission. Instead, they generally produce and propagandize the opinion that shapes the beliefs and attitudes of the individuals.

Albanian media lacks independence and impartiality. This lack of independence is evident when instead of reporting events objectively, "it is forced to be biased and take sides due to the conditions present in the socioeconomic climate" (Birn 2015; 25) and diverse political dictates of the country.

Moreover, "political and economic pressures, financial insufficiency, lack of professionalism and professional ethics, as well as the violation of journalists' rights" (Birn 2015: 25) either contribute or "push journalists to face censorship or exercise self-censorship" (Birn, 2015; 26) or lack objectivity.

These shortcomings created by short-circuiting connections have constructed vast informality barriers in sectors of vital importance to the Albanian state and citizens. When Government officials actively engage, connect and entrench linkages in various sectors to pursue their interests instead of developing and enhancing upturn to enact progress, citizens witness a harvest of benefits by superior clans and not a sound economic growth and fair distribution welfare.

In hybrid or weak democracies, because of diverse forms of insufficiencies and poverty, the society, in general, might be prone to either surrender or become part of the phenomenon. Since the regime change in the early 90s, "the transition period has seen clientelistic

9 https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/albania/commitments/AL0051/

10 *(ibid)*

networks to informally resist, rely upon their identity network, and exploit state institutions for their advantage” (Jusufi 2018, 147). The asymmetrical actions and profits have contributed to more power gain for specific groups and individuals at different political levels. When power has no restrains in countries with such political, social environment and narrative, the system is even more susceptible to non-transparent practices and procedures.

Conclusions

Clientelism and clienteles exist in many societies of Western Balkans, as reports and reviewed literature in this paper evince. This phenomenon has drilled transformative negative trends in the base of the social, economic, cultural, and political background of these countries, although, as seen in the country cases through a broad perspective the variables of this phenomenon may differ and exist coupled with different characteristics, strategies and interests, depending (but also differing) from one country to another.

The process of allocating resources (in a narrow network or forms of clientelistic acquisitions as “patron-client”) such as public services, jobs in state-public administration at both local and central level, access to procurement contracts, facilitation or evasion in taxes, and especially the privileges of individuals or offenders in litigation create narrow clientelistic procedures and networks known as clientelism. Clientelism produces corruption, abuse of state office, and deviation of resources and services to some privileged individuals or groups.

Moreover, Western Balkans societies have witnessed three decades between procrastinating old evils in interethnic relations, legacies of the past, nationalism phantoms, unstable democratic tendencies, and informality foundations.

Turning to the topic of EU membership, as North Macedonia and Albania are on the verge of the decision on the negotiation frame - the phase afterward should resemble a closer approach and a clear orientation towards the EU full membership. Although the acknowledged progress from the EU side, both countries need to advance on and consolidate reforms, also achieve tangible results because if informality and lack of rule of law persist, political clientelism will continue to erode resources and deviate reforms. Thus, the wind of change will not speed up the process and the region will lack positive examples approaching the EU.

As such, the negotiation phase will risk resembling another transition chapter that will anguish Albanian society for an unpredicted time.

Although reforms are going on in frames of the EU integration process, (and reforms are related to the consolidation of institutions, rule of law, fight against corruption, an efficient administration in most WB countries), this rationale of the whole process seems to align in the periphery of attention, considering the tense scene of high polarization in some counties, informal social practices, and connections and other internal issues.

In Albania, the ongoing reforms haven't been able yet to break clientelism chains and tackle such practices through tangible results. The country presents in general a predisposition to developing clientelism and as a result, corruption and organized crime bonded with the unlimited power and politics persist because informality and impunity are very discernible and there is no sustainable and satisfactory economic growth. Political, socioeconomic gaps, corruption, and unemployment rates are concerning issues, while resources become increasingly insufficient or mismanaged.

These practices have become somewhat acceptable social norms that outlast due to the culture of impunity, weak rule of law and interference in the judiciary system from the political level.

The clientelism phenomenon is first a symptom of the whole political culture and behavioral practices that perennially interfere with the consolidation of the institution and democratic advancement. As such it is transforming itself as a flexible barrier, surviving transition by underpinning informality in Western Balkans societies (that is the case of Albania as well). Second, the diffusion of this phenomenon into a multi-sectoral approach further enroot these malignant practices to the detriment of the general public good.

As analyzed throughout this paper, one can not “directly associate the phenomenon with electoral mobilization” (de Sousa 2008, 4) because relations and linkages are askew, benefits may be of a “give – and – take” sort, exchanging favors, returning favors, reciprocal of mutual interests/ different interests and other various kinds and ranks entrenched.

By its very own facets nature, in the way it manifests itself, “it can therefore be used in different contexts” *(ibid)*/ sectors and linkages.

Unlike totalitarian regimes, the web of clientelistic relations is not dome-shaped but very irregular, widely entrenched, uneven containing many nuclei. As noted through the analysis, in the case of Albania, the

civil culture and social affection/loyalty first fetes a perfect ground for it to flourish, and its transformation sets on in frames and ties such as family, friendship, brokerage, electoral, media, and economic clienteles, but that may entrench in essential sectors like the judiciary, public administration, economic/financial sector, media, elections, and other sectors.

What makes this symptom of society (because of civil and political culture) in Albania more worrisome is that citizens are still distant and distrustful in their institutions. This is a crisis of faith and transparency, a crisis of society's orientation which, being exploited by those in power, allows it to fall into a permanent recycling process and acquiescence.

The clientelism occurrence in Albania is often voluntary and sometimes coercive, where feelings such as affectivity and loyalty are important adhesive tapes to reach the targeted group or individual, but always in the common denominator of all these relationships lie the interests in access to mutual/even unmutual benefits and interests.

Resilience cannot be built, especially in a region like the Western Balkans, without all relevant stakeholders' involvement in society. The state's institutional setup needs to strengthen to meet contemporary challenges, but non-state actors like civil society groups and western international community involved in support initiatives (where EU as an actor plays a linchpin role) should have an essential contribution in this process.

Recommendation

Through this study, it was noted that a gap of research/reports exists in measuring this phenomenon correctly and its spread in various sectors and segments to identify the leak sources and how it impacts corruption, poverty, and organized crime. Albania, as a study case in this paper profoundly lacked systemic evidence and reports or any study (in these 30 decades of transition) regarding the depth and the spread of occurrence of this phenomena. In this regard, a wide array of academic/scientific research and frequent reports are needed to shed more light on this phenomenon.

Intense work and thorough analyses are needed to understand such influences and why they shape certain practices and outputs in people's lives. What are their needs and where they fail to have access, and why? A lack of thorough observation of society's needs and expectations can lead to policies or favoritism practices that effectively drive a wedge

between society by satisfying various public groups while estranging or sidelining others.

Feedback is a crucial element in democratic systems and failing to observe reality to dissect the dynamics that lead to specific practices and mindset lead to a failure to implement rational policies that people should and need to adhere to. It is important to understand, why feedback is countless and not signaling as it should in such systems?

Individuals reflect behaviors and perceptions shaped by the conditions around them. When the conditions are under basic needs levels, such short circuits' tendency to operate are greater.

There is also a lack of social programs and care, especially in the rural zones designed for the excluded community, and there are a few who hold political power that may contact the excluded ones, probably only in electoral periods. Rural areas need to be better controlled and construed because the community's concentration varies depending on the areas. In this regard, groups in extreme need should be identified, and thorough checking is needed of why the administration at the central or local level fails to allocate resources or distribute benefits. Why they deviate or are hijacked/ manipulated by those connected to the local administration. Understanding why in these areas, a significant asymmetry prevails, is important.

A more efficient claiming policy from the bottom level is needed. Initiatives and reforms are needed on how to build public trust and public reaction about irregularities and infringements as there is a lack of public trust toward institutions at the local and central level, and the bureaucracy works slow, sometimes giving unsound solutions. For people with connections, the reality is different. Something should be done to provide equal treatment and legal entitlements to fasten procedures and give solutions to the community asking for missed services and benefits the state should provide or other infringements that need to be fixed.

Political and social relations of clienteles prevail over routine fair access to essential goods and services because of connections and clientelistic ties. Measures should be taken to interrupt such ties by providing more institutions functionality and implement more efficient public policies and penalties for infringements. Also, ensure better living standards in marginalized rural areas, fight poverty and enhance fair political competition.

All in all, more significant analysis is needed to understand why there is a lack of political legitimacy, and over legitimacy, the authority of such

clans and groups prevails, and why viable capacity fails in such a degree to dearth necessary incentives.

Identifying clientelism and its various forms and practices and how it relates to or impacts corruption would lead to more sound, applicable, and efficient governance reforms, not only in Albania but also in other countries that face similar occurrences.

The education system also has a crucial duty - to implement in citizenship education courses – to early-stage lessons about certain contingent behaviors and practices and what obstacles they bring to the society and the democratization process.

Educative campaigns in the form of trainings on the subject driven by international organizations and the ministry of education or, in collaboration with these two, may give a thorough knowledge of the subject and raise awareness of how dangerous it is.

Public confidence needs to be constructed again in line with a fair and uncompromised judiciary reform, a process that needs to be kept away by political agendas of the day.

Although this phenomenon in Albania is rooted in practice and mentality, it may be dismantled by empowering institutions, enhancing political education in various levels of the society, and recognizing citizens as equals. Moreover, public administration professionals should be inviolable and not under political pressure while performing their duties. Meanwhile, investing in social programs that ensure inclusion is crucial. Thus with time, by taking necessary measures, short-circuits and negotiation through such links can be avoided.

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Varieties of Political Clientelism: A Typology of Clientelist Exchanges in the Western Balkans and Beyond

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Abstract

The literature on political clientelism has identified several dimensions of variation of clientelist exchanges. Some researchers of traditional clientelism have differentiated between short-term and long-term clientelist relationships (e.g. Scott 1972; Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984), with the former being understood as one-shot exchanges and the latter as iterated ones. A similar distinction has been recently applied in the contemporary democractic setting, with Nichter (2010; 2018) and Gans-Morse et al. (2014) differentiating between electoral (short-term) and relational (long-term) clientelism. Mares and Young (2016; 2018), on the other hand, differentiate between types of inducements deployed by patrons in political clientelism, establishing the distinction between positive (rewards) and negative inducements (threats, sanctions) in clientelist exchanges. Finally, some researchers differentiate between exchanges initiated by patrons and exchanges initiated by clients (Powell 1970; Nichter and Peress 2017; Nichter 2018). The previous research of political clientelism thus reveals a substantial variety of exchanges and under a single category, indicating the need for conceptual clarity when studying the phenomenon.

This paper develops a typology of clientelist exchanges applicable to the Western Balkan region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia). In doing so, the author relies on the previous conceptual work in the literature; as well as on empirical data from the Western Balkans derived from the project "Closing the gap between formal and informal institutions in the Balkans" (INFORM) (2016-2019) and on the author's own fieldwork (2018-2019).

The typology developed in the paper distinguishes between short-term (electoral) and long-term (patronage) exchanges which, as the typology reveals, serve different objectives for the two actors in the clientelist relationship. Following the typology, patrons in the

Western Balkan region engage in political clientelism through vote-buying, turnout-buying, abstention-buying, rewarding loyalists and request fulfilling; while clients through vote-selling, turnout-selling, abstention-selling, party serving and clientelist benefit-seeking. In outlining these different forms of engagement, the paper aims to contribute to conceptual clarity in assessing different types of clientelist exchanges forged between patrons and clients in the Western Balkans.

Keywords: clientelism, patronage, Western Balkans, typology

Introduction

The concept "misinformation" (Sartori 1970) is a common risk for any research in the field of comparative politics (see also Collier and Mahon 1993), and the concept of political clientelism is not an exception. As the study of the phenomenon progresses across national and temporal contexts, scholars face conceptual dilemmas, which, if not resolved in a satisfactory manner, pose significant challenges to scientific inference and interpretation. It has already been noted (see Hilgers 2012b, 161-162) that the recent contextual extension of the research on the phenomenon has brought to the jeopardy that clientelism is no longer clearly differentiated from "neighboring" phenomena. In addition, it has been argued (see Nichter 2014) that one sub-manifestation of political clientelism, vote-buying, has been often conceptually "stretched" in contemporary research to subsume other manifestations which do not hold the same characteristics (such as party patronage, for example). These two instances of conceptual stretching, both between clientelism and other phenomena and regarding one sub-manifestation of clientelism to another, are certainly challenging for any inquiry into the phenomenon. Moreover, and connected to the previous two challenges for contemporary research, there is a need for the development of a satisfactory concept that will be able to "travel" across contexts, in the spirit of Sartori's influential article (1970) on the conceptual problems when implementing cross-national research.

This paper represents a contribution towards conceptual clarity in the study of political clientelism and specifically concerning the problems outlined above: the need to conceptualize the phenomenon in a manner that would allow traveling between contexts; as well as in a way that would allow clear delimitation from other phenomena; and finally, in a

manner that would eschew conceptual stretching between different sub-varieties of political clientelism. The last is the primary concern of this paper, though a consideration of the previous two conceptual problems seems necessary before resolving the problems related to delimitation of the internal varieties.

The paper is based on a broader empirical multi-method research on political clientelism in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) (see Bliznakovski 2020). The main purpose of the research was to untangle why clients engage in political clientelism in different ways, i.e., why some clients limit their engagement to selling votes, and, on the other hand, why different clients engage in more demanding activities such as those conducted at the grassroots of party mobilization? Having such orientation, the research naturally prompted conceptual work, which resulted in the development of a typology of clientelist exchanges and corresponding patron and client strategies of engagement. The typology is, first and foremost, applicable to the Western Balkan region, but, as I will show through this paper, it manages to include all dimensions of variation of political clientelism which can be identified in the literature. The current literature operates in the background of different understandings on what political clientelism represents, and in addition, on empirical findings from different regions. Thus, even though my typology is constructed for a specific regional context, the fact that it includes different dimensions of variation previously noted in other contexts is promising for resolving the challenges related to conceptual traveling.

I will not offer extensive information on my empirical research in this paper as I want to limit the discussion on conceptual issues. I will only briefly state that the study includes nine-month fieldwork in the region conducted during 2018 and 2019, as well as survey and qualitative data (interviews with citizens) gathered by the team of the project “Closing the Gap Between Formal and Informal Institutions in the Balkans (INFORM)” (European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme grant agreement No 693537; period: 2016-2019). Thus, the typology offered in this paper relies on extensive empirical data on political clientelism in the Western Balkans.

The paper is organized as follows. In the first section, I offer a definition of political clientelism, for which I argue that it can be applied to any contemporary formal democratic context. I also attempt to show that my definition manages to successfully delimit clientelism from other phenomena with which it can sometimes be empirically conflated.

Prior to presenting the definition, I provide a brief overview of the other approaches of conceptualization present in the literature. The second section is devoted to the dimensions of variation noted in the literature on political clientelism. The identified dimensions are further utilized in constructing a typology on the variations of clientelist exchanges. The typology is presented in the third section of this paper. The paper concludes with brief remarks on why the consideration of the varieties of political clientelism is important for any research on the phenomenon, disregarding whether it is limited to one or more national contexts.

Conceptualizing political clientelism

This section provides a definition of political clientelism, for which I argue that it is useful in eschewing both the jeopardy of conceptual stretching and the inability for conceptual traveling. Prior to outlining my definition, I will present the conceptualizations that are available in the literature to highlight the main conceptual dilemmas a scholar may have when studying the phenomenon.

In contemporary literature, political clientelism is conceptualized on several different grounds: as an exchange relationship, as a political mobilization strategy, as a strategy of political participation; and as a specific form of distributive regime. This diversity in conceptualizations is at odds with the literature on traditional (and not necessarily "political" clientelism), which in the decades following the Second World War developed a certain consensus on the main defining elements of the phenomenon (e.g., Powell 1970; Lemarchand 1972; Scott 1972; Landé 1973; Graziano 1976). The early scholars of "traditional" pre-mass-democratic clientelism have primarily conceptualized it as an exchange relationship characterized by a dyadic structure, where the two actors (the patron and the client) hold a different level of material resources and/or social standing (asymmetry; inequality), and where the relationship is contingent on the behavior of both actors (contingency). These four characteristics (exchange, dyadic structure, asymmetry of power, and contingency) are sometimes seen as less present in the contemporary mass-democratic political clientelism. The last is especially the case with the characteristic of asymmetry: some scholars (Piattoni 2001, 7; Hopkin 2006) argue that contemporary political clients are much less dependent on their patrons, in comparison to traditional clients, and that contemporary clients can even switch between patrons or completely abandon them when the exchange ceases to fulfill its instrumental function. The dyadic structure of the exchange is also altered, and one might say made more complex when

moving from traditional to contemporary political clientelism. Empirical research has highlighted the role of clientelist brokers (the middleman between patrons and clients) as crucial for contemporary political clientelism (Stokes et al. 2013; Camp 2015), and, from this perspective, the dyadic structure as a defining element may be outdated when moving from traditional to political clientelism.

Some conceptualizations in the literature still use the element of the exchange as a central defining element when approaching political clientelism, just as it is the case with traditional clientelism, though, as stated above, other conceptualizations are also at play. One example of an exchange-centered definition with a principal-agent theory undertone is provided by Kitschelt and Wilkinson, who define political clientelism as a "particular mode of 'exchange' between electoral constituencies as principals and politicians as agents in democratic systems" (2007, 7). The particularity of the exchange is seen in the following three characteristics, which, according to Kitschelt and Wilkinson, allow us to distinguish political clientelism as a specific form of non-programmatic politics from other political practices which fall in the category of programmatic politics: contingency, predictability of the behavior of actors and heightened monitoring of principals (voters, constituencies) by agents (politicians). As one can easily note, these additional characteristics (apart from contingency) are much different from the characteristics embraced by the scholars of traditional clientelism. Another exchange-centered definition is provided by Hilgers, who conceptualizes clientelism as an exchange "through which individuals maximize their interest" (2012, 162). Hilgers, however, attaches the characteristics of longevity, diffuseness, face-to-face contact, and inequality as defining elements of the clientelist exchange, thereby producing a narrower definition in comparison to the one offered by Kitschelt and Wilkinson. State more succinctly, for Hilgers, clientelism is a "lasting personal relationship between individuals of unequal sociopolitical status" (Ibid.).

Other scholars (e.g., Shefter 1994; Stokes 2007) opt to approach clientelism as a political mobilization strategy pursued by political parties. In these conceptualizations, political clientelism is one of the available strategies for political mobilization, which is typically pursued alongside other mobilization strategies, both non-programmatic and programmatic. These conceptualizations also highlight the normative dubiousness of political clientelism: it is seen as a mobilization strategy that runs contrary to the normatively desired form of democratic politics - programmatic politics. Stokes (2005) argues that clientelism turns

democratic accountability on its head while making voters accountable to politicians rather than the other way around. An example of an electoral-mobilization-centered definition is found in Stokes (2007), which conceptualizes clientelism as the "proffering of material goods in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution that the patron uses is simply: did you (will you) support me?" (2007, 605). The disadvantage of the mobilization-centered conceptualizations of political clientelism is in their predominant focus to the point of view of political parties engaged in clientelist exchanges, thereby limiting the possibilities for more comprehensive analysis, which would also include the point of view of citizens (clients).

A third thread in the literature corrects the above limitation while conceptualizing clientelism as being both a strategy of political mobilization (from the point of view of political parties) and a strategy of political participation (from the point of view of citizens). This idea has been most explicitly articulated in the definition of Piattoni (2001), though several other studies (Auyero 2001; Nichter and Peress 2017; Nichter 2018; Bliznakovski 2018) have also acknowledged that clientelism can also represent a strategy through which voters/citizens may attempt to fulfill their interests and needs. Piattoni defines clientelism and patronage as "strategies for the acquisition, maintenance, and aggrandizement of political power, on the part of the patrons, and strategies for protection and promotion of their interests, on the part of the clients" (2001, 2).

Finally, a fourth approach can be identified in the literature, which conceptualizes clientelism as a specific form of distributive politics. Stokes et al. conceptualize clientelism as a distributive politics in which 1) the rules of distribution are not public, or the practice of distribution deviates from the public rules; and 2) the distribution of benefits is contingent on political support (2013, 7). When these two conditions are fulfilled, we encounter clientelist distributive regimes, and when they are not, we are dealing with other forms of distribution, which can be non-programmatic or programmatic. As in the case of the mobilization-centered definition, this approach also reduces clientelism to what office-seekers and office-holders do and loses sight of the important role of citizens/clients in political clientelism.

While overviewing the different approaches in conceptualizing political clientelism which are available in the literature, one may build an idea on what is useful to be included in a conceptualization, as well as on what should be avoided when defining political clientelism. First, any useful definition should make a clear delimiting line with traditional

(and not necessarily "political") clientelism practiced at the pre-mass-democratic rural setting. Second, the definition also must be successful in drawing a delimitation between political clientelism and other practices connected to political mobilization and participation, disregarding whether they belong to the categories of programmatic or non-programmatic politics. Third, the definition also has to offer a satisfactory solution in terms of delimiting political clientelism from other phenomena with which it can sometimes be empirically conflated, such as corruption and nepotism. Finally, the definition must be adequately broad to include the internal variety of practices within political clientelism. I argue that most of these challenges can be successfully resolved with three moves: 1) inclusion of the characteristic of contingent exchange in the conceptualization; 2) inclusion of the unique perspective of clients; and 3) specification of the benefits and services exchanged between patrons and clients.

Regarding the first move, there is already a certain consensus in the literature that the element of contingency (i.e., dependency on the behavior of the actors) successfully delimits political clientelism from other forms of politics, both programmatic (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Nichter 2018) and non-programmatic (Stokes et al. 2013, 7). When political clientelism is conceptualized as a contingent exchange, we manage to eschew conceptual stretching to other forms of programmatic and non-programmatic politics. Programmatic politics does not rely on a contingent exchange between agents and principals but on ideological/programmatic congruence between the two. In addition, many forms of non-programmatic politics which involve partisan bias are either non-conditional or are not targeted at individuals (e.g., in the case of pork-barrel politics), as Stokes et al. point out (Ibid.).

Second, political clientelism can be delimited from traditional clientelism when we specify that clients in the former offer political services (and not other types of services). Observing the post-World War Two rural societies in Southeast Asia, Scott noted that clients offer different services to patrons, i.e., labor services and economic support; military/fighting services; and political services (1972, 98-99). The former two are not characteristic for political clientelism but rather for the earlier forms of clientelist exchanges practiced in pre-industrial societies. On the other hand, political services are characteristic for the exchanges of political clientelism. The same approach is useful when attempting to delimit clientelism from the "neighboring" phenomena of corruption and nepotism. Corruption does not rely on the exchange where one

of the sides performs political services but could involve a monetary transaction for a service connected to public office (however, the two types of services are quite different). Nepotism, on the other hand, does not rely on exchange but on solidarity between individuals belonging to the same social networks.

In a third move, the specification of benefits and services exchanged between patrons and clients will allow us to include the internal variations of political clientelism within the conceptualization. The reader should take note that this idea will be developed in more detail in the remaining sections of this paper.

Taking the above points into consideration, I propose a definition of political clientelism for which I argue that it manages to escape all the two problems of conceptual stretching - the external and the internal, and for which I argue that it can successfully travel across different contexts where political clientelism operates. For successful "traveling", it is crucial to understand political clientelism by its most basic characteristic, i.e., as a contingent exchange and not as a strategy of actors per se, and, in addition, not as a characteristic of regimes, parties, states or other organizations. My definition of political clientelism runs as follows:

Political clientelism represents the contingent exchange of particularistic material benefits (goods, favors, information, and opportunities) distributed by political parties, office-seekers, and holders, in return for political services (voting and participation in elections, engagement in party mobilization activities and, most broadly, promotion of party interests) performed by citizens. Political clientelism is thus an exchange, just as is traditional rural clientelism, with a crucial difference that the former is practiced in the formal mass-democratic context and with the goal to obtain political services from the side of clients. The benefits distributed in the two types do not need to differ, though in the contemporary democratic context, they often (but not exclusively) take the form of benefits that can be distributed by one's command of public office.

Defined as above, political clientelism may represent one of the available strategies for political mobilization performed by political parties; and may represent one of the available strategies for political participation which can be practiced by citizens. However, this outlook depends on the specific point of view of the two sets of actors forging the clientelist exchange. First and foremost, political clientelism is an exchange, and only secondary, a mechanism through which one actor may seek to fulfill its interests and needs.

Dimensions of variation

The several decades of research on political and traditional rural clientelism have brought an understanding that the clientelist exchange empirically varies in several important aspects. This variation within clientelism is important for scientific inference and interpretation, as well as for policy intervention, as it reveals that the actors within the exchange may hold different strategic calculations depending on the specific variety. This section of the paper provides an overview of the most important dimensions of variation identified in the literature and which will be used to specify the categories from the typology outlined in the next section.

Scholars of traditional clientelism have established that clientelist exchanges may vary in their durability (Scott 1972, 100; Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984, 252-256) and that a basic distinction between short-term and long-term clientelist exchanges can be made. Scott has argued that patrons who are able to provide for the multitude of needs of their clients are able to establish a more durable and strong relationship with their followers. Conversely, patrons who are limited in their ability to service the needs of their clients are more likely to forge short-term relationships (Scott 1972, 100). Additionally, Eisenstadt and Roniger have argued that short-term relationships are likely to emerge when the resources exchanged via clientelism are not "critical" for any of the actors in the relationship, i.e., when the benefits provided towards clients are not of first-order importance towards their livelihoods, and when the services provided towards patrons are not essential for their social and political standing (1984, 252). On the other hand, when the exchanged resources are "critical" from the point of view of both actors, then the relationship tends to take on the durable pattern (Ibid., 253). The last analysis suggests that patrons and clients are in a mutually dependent relationship, and this is best seen in the case of long-term relationships, where, according to Eisenstadt and Roniger, the exchanges are more critical. Moreover, Eisenstadt's and Roniger's analysis also suggests that patrons and clients tend to exchange resources of a comparable relative value, i.e. (non-)critical benefits for (non-)critical services, and that this is in tune with the durability of the relationship.

The distinction based on durability has recently been refined in the context of political clientelism practiced in contemporary settings. Nichter (2010; 2018) and Gans-Morse et al. (2014) have proposed the distinction between electoral and relational clientelism, the former

being short-term and taking place exclusively during election campaigns, while the latter being long-term and taking place irrespective of election campaigns. Gans-Morse et al. (2014) conceptualize clientelism as a strategy of political mobilization, and within electoral clientelism include the sub-strategies of vote-buying, turnout buying, abstention buying, and double persuasion. Their argument states that political parties employ a diversity of sub-strategies and that political parties build a portfolio of sub-strategies towards different types of voters as a part of a unified strategy of clientelist mobilization. Vote-buying refers to the exchange of benefits for votes; abstention buying to the exchange of benefits for abstention, and according to Gans-Morse et al. these strategies are employed with voters who are indifferent to the party (in the case of vote-buying) or favor the opposing party (abstention buying) but which are inclined to vote at the polls. Turnout buying refers to the exchange of benefits for turnout, and this strategy is employed with voters who are favoring the clientelist party but are inclined not to vote. Finally, double persuasion involves the exchange of benefits for both turnout and votes simultaneously, and this strategy is employed towards voters who are simultaneously indifferent or favor the opposing party and are not inclined to vote. In the strategy of relational clientelism, Gans-Morse et al. include the sub-strategy of rewarding loyalists, which is directed towards voters who simultaneously favor the party and are inclined to vote, i.e., which would vote for the party anyway.

Nichter (2018) argues that electoral and relational clientelism differ in one crucial aspect. Because the transactions in electoral clientelism are simultaneous (benefits and electoral services are simultaneously exchanged), this type presents a single credibility problem: elites distributing benefits are concerned with the opportunistic defection of voters. In contrast, because transactions are asynchronous in relational clientelism, this type presents a dual credibility problem: both elites (patrons) and citizens/voters (clients) are concerned with opportunistic defection. This crucial difference reveals divergent dynamics towards both sets of actors in short-term and long-term exchanges in contemporary democracies, and as Nichter's analysis holds, offers a view of extended role for clients in relational clientelism. In a way, relational clientelism thus stimulates a specific type of clientelist accountability directed at patrons, but this is not also the case with electoral clientelism.

In another dimension of variation, noted by Kopecký and Mair (2012), political parties hold divergent motivations to engage in political clientelism. They argue that parties utilize clientelism as a resource in

the electoral arena (congruent with what Gans-Morse et al. designate as electoral clientelism) and as an organizational resource for building the party and state organizations (congruent with what can be designated as relational clientelism/patronage). This distinction stems from an understanding that political patrons may use clientelism to achieve different objectives: either they would focus on achieving electoral gains, or they will rely on clientelism to establish a party base and as a principle of organization. There are no limits for political parties to pursue both objectives simultaneously through political clientelism, and perhaps this is more a frequent real-life scenario for clientelist parties than otherwise.

Another dimension of variation which receives significant attention in recent studies is the type of inducements employed by patrons. Mares and Young (2016; 2018) establish the distinction between positive inducements (promises and rewards) and negative inducements (threats and sanctions to cut access to benefits). The study of Mares and Young on political clientelism in Hungary (2018) has found that patrons rely mostly on positive inducements when practicing electoral clientelism and on negative inducements towards "core" voters during election campaigns. The idea behind this argument is that political parties find it most cost-effective to stimulate the short-term clients with rewards while disciplining their long-term clients with threats (given that the latter enjoy clientelist benefits over an extended period).

My own empirical research in the Western Balkans (Bliznakovski 2020) has found that contemporary political patrons and clients exchange benefits and services of different values. For example, extended party engagement and activism are valued more highly by political parties than the act of mere voting at elections, while, on the other hand, stable employment in the public sector is valued more highly by clients than the vote-buying handouts, such as small amounts of cash and other lower-value material benefits. Consequently, I argue that the benefits and services exchanged via political clientelism can be differentiated by grand and petty, and this represents an additional dimension of variation, which is worth noting in this section. In Table 1, I offer examples of grand and petty benefits/services, and I introduce this dimension of variation in the typology in the next section of this paper. Moreover, based on my empirical findings, I argue that patrons and clients tend to exchange grand benefits for grand services and petty benefits for petty services, or put in other terms, that there is a certain congruence in the value of benefits and services being exchanged.

Petty benefits	Petty services	Grand benefits	Grand services
Cash Food Clothes House appliances Transportation to the pols Access to petty public funds Other petty favors in dealing with state institutions Medical checks Medicine Covering utility bills	Voting in elections Turnout in elections Abstention in elections	Access to employment Access to high level positions, such as seats in managerial boards of public companies Access to grand public funds: scholarships, subsidies, public procurement contracts Other grand favors in dealing with state institutions	Party activism Participation at party rallies and meetings Participation in political mobilization activities Clientelist brokering and monitoring of co-citizens and voters Defending the interests of the party in the state institutions Promoting the interests of the party on the online social networks

Table 1. Examples of petty and grand benefits and services exchanged through political clientelism (adapted from Bliznakovski 2020, 37)

In the category of petty benefits, I thus include the small amounts of cash, food, clothes, house appliances, transportation to the polls (practiced frequently in turnout buying), access to petty public funds such as social benefits and services as well as other petty favors in dealing with state institutions. For these benefits, clients perform petty services, which are limited to electoral behavior: voting, turnout, and abstention at the polls. In the category of grand benefits, I include employment in public (and sometimes even in the private) sector, access to grand public funds, such as educational scholarships, subsidies, and public procurement contracts, as well as other grand favors in dealing with the state institutions. To gain access to these benefits, clients perform grand services, such as party activism, participation at party rallies, and other mobilization activities. These clients also may participate

in clientelist brokering and information hoarding (monitoring) of the preferences of co-citizens. Finally, these clients, when employed in the state institutions, may conduct services that are relevant to the party while relying on their public authority.

Lastly, we can make a distinction between different clientelist transactions by the actor initiating them: the patron or the client (Powell 1970; Nichter and Peress 2017; Nichter 2018). This dimension of variation is often overlooked in the literature but should not be dismissed because it is frequently present empirically. When patrons reply to client's demands, according to Nichter and Peress (2017) they employ the strategy of request fulfilling. When clients proactively request benefits, they employ the strategy of benefit-seeking (see Bliznakovski 2018).

Clarifing the variations: A typology of exchanges, and corresponding objectivities and strategies of actors in political clientelism

The typology presented in this section is built while relying, from one side, on the available literature on the varieties of political clientelism and, from another, on the specific context of the Western Balkans region, as derived from my empirical research. It should be noted straight away that the Western Balkans context presents all dimensions of variation that I managed to identify in the literature and thus offers a distinct opportunity for scholars to inquire in the specifics of different subtypes of exchanges. Having this in mind, it seems suitable for a scholar of political clientelism to build a typology against this specific contextual background. Moreover, the fact that the typology is built with reliance on the dimensions of variation identified in the literature suggests that it can successfully travel to other contexts beyond the Western Balkans. At a minimum, the typology may serve as a basic heuristic device through which a scholar of clientelism may identify the specific variety with which he/she is dealing, as well as the corresponding objectives and strategies of actors involved.

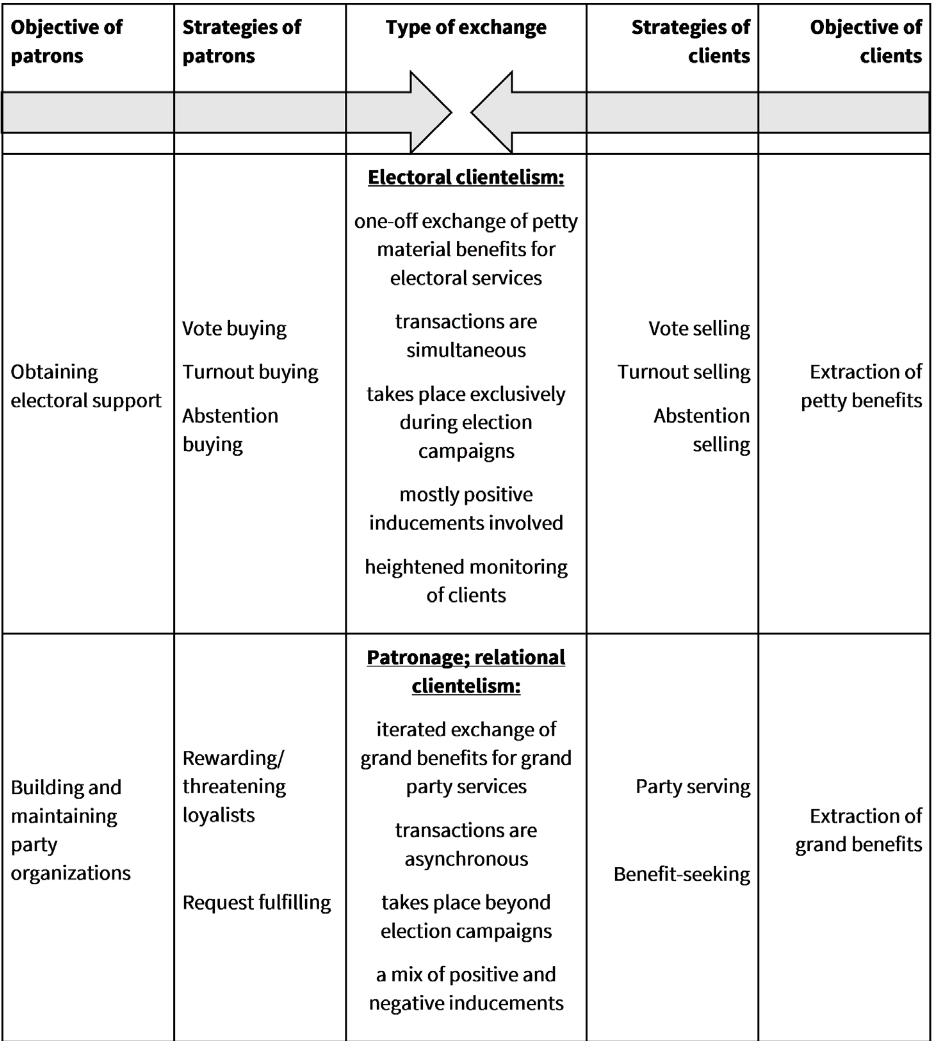
It should also be underlined at the onset that the typology is built on the understanding that political clientelism represents an exchange conducted in the political arena and in the mass democratic context (as conceptualized in the first section of this paper). Conceptualizing political clientelism as an exchange consisting of an internal variety of sub-exchanges to which actors may align with corresponding objectives and strategies provides a distinct advantage. Such conceptualization

allows us to include the points of view of both actors simultaneously and their strategic interaction within one unified framework - an advantage that is not available when we consider clientelism solely as a strategy of any of the two sets of actors.

The reader should take note that the typology presented in this paper addresses the relationship between political parties/candidates and citizens/voters, and is thus limited in it scope. It does not address the relationship between between political and economic elites and/or political parties and private companies which are sometimes branded as "clientelistic" acrros the Western Balkans (see Pešić and Milošević, in this Volume). In addition, the categories developed in the typology are conceived as ideal types: in real-life situations actors may combine different exchanges, strategies and objectives when practicing political clientelism. The derived categories should thus, first and foremost, be seen as analytical tools in assessing the varieties of political clientelism, with a caveat that they apply only to the relationship between political parties/candidates and citizens/voters and not to relationships between other actors which can also be dubbed as "clientelistic". These two points are important to be taken into account when approaching the typology offered in this paper.

The typology is presented in Table 2. It establishes a first-order differentiation between exchanges of electoral clientelism and exchanges of relational clientelism or patronage. The former is characterized by short-term duration, i.e., they represent one-off exchanges of petty material benefits for electoral services (petty services), which are always conducted during election campaigns or in close proximity to elections. The transactions in these types of exchanges are simultaneous (benefits and services are exchanged at almost the same time), and patrons engage in heightened monitoring of the electoral behavior of their clients, as the latter are deemed much less trustworthy than the clients who have established long-term relationships with the clientelist party. Finally, the dynamics of short-term exchanges prompts higher reliance on positive inducements by patrons and simultaneous expectations of rewards by clients, but a little possibility for the application of negative inducements (threats and sanctions).

Patrons engage in short-term electoral exchanges solely for electoral gains, and to fulfill their objectives, they have several strategies at their disposal: vote-buying, turnout buying, and abstention buying. Clients engage in short-term electoral exchanges to obtain benefits, which can, however, be designated as benefits of the petty type in comparison to the



Objective of patrons	Strategies of patrons	Type of exchange	Strategies of clients	Objective of clients
Obtaining electoral support	Vote buying Turnout buying Abstention buying	**Electoral clientelism:** one-off exchange of petty material benefits for electoral services transactions are simultaneous takes place exclusively during election campaigns mostly positive inducements involved heightened monitoring of clients	Vote selling Turnout selling Abstention selling	Extraction of petty benefits
Building and maintaining party organizations	Rewarding/ threatening loyalists Request fulfilling	**Patronage; relational clientelism:** iterated exchange of grand benefits for grand party services transactions are asynchronous takes place beyond election campaigns a mix of positive and negative inducements	Party serving Benefit-seeking	Extraction of grand benefits

Table 2. Typology of exchanges in political clientelism (adapted from Bliznakovski 2020, 39)

benefits distributed via relational clientelism/patronage. Clients have several strategies at their disposal to obtain such benefits: vote-selling, turnout selling, and abstention selling. The reliance on any of the listed strategies for both patrons and clients would depend on the specific electoral goals of the actors and on the characteristic of clients in terms of their proximity to the party and propensity to vote at a given electoral contest.

The second type of exchanges - those of relational clientelism or patronage - are of long-term duration, consist of iterated transactions conducted irrespectively of election campaigns, and involve grand benefits and grand services. The transactions within this type are often asynchronous, benefits and services are exchanged over a longer period, and patrons do not need to invest in the monitoring of clients as this is the case with electoral clientelism. The reduced electoral monitoring is due to the characteristics of the clients within long-term relationships: because such clients are designated as party supporters from the onset, there is no need for extensive tracking of their electoral behavior. These clients are assessed as more trustworthy than clients involved in short-term exchanges. Finally, these exchanges rely on a mixture of both positive and negative inducements, with the latter being intended to "discipline" the clients who have extracted clientelist benefits in the past and/or who enjoy the access of benefits which can be cut in the present (and the negative inducements are especially present during election times).

Political parties utilize relational clientelism/patronage with the primary objective to build and maintain stable party organizations, with the electoral gain being a corollary to the fact that the relational clients are fierce party supporters who also often devote time and other individual resources to build support for the party (and with high certainty vote at the elections for the party). Two strategies that political parties pursue can be identified here: rewarding (and sometimes threatening) loyalists and request fulfilling (i.e., acting upon clients' requests for benefits). Relational clients, on the other hand, engage in clientelism with a goal to extract grand resources and have two strategies at their disposal: party serving and clientelist benefit-seeking. By party serving, I denote the extended engagement of citizens in the party organization with a goal to obtain political capital, which is relevant for the extraction of clientelist benefits. By benefits-seeking, I denote the practice of requesting specific benefits from the holders of the patronage resources, the political parties.

Conclusion: Why are the varieties important?

In this paper, I attempted to contribute to conceptual clarity in the study of political clientelism in comparative politics. In doing so, I resorted to conceptualizing political clientelism as an exchange relationship, and I circumvented a trend currently prominent in political science to overview political clientelism primarily as a strategy of actors. Instead, I argue that the actors fine-tune their specific objectives and strategies according to the logic of the contingent exchange, which represents the

main defining element of political clientelism. The specific objectives of actors, however, prompt an internal variety within the clientelist exchange, and the specific strategies (aligning to objectives) further allow us to differentiate between different types of sub-exchanges in political clientelism. In a first-order classification, I thus differentiate between electoral and relational clientelism or patronage, each holding specific characteristics corresponding to the main dimensions of variation identified in the literature. These two subtypes of clientelist exchange relationships are in line with the specific objectives of the actors and by contextual factors which inform the actors on the relative value of the benefits and services which can be included in the exchange. In a second-order differentiation, we can thus distinguish between different sub-exchanges: exchanges of petty benefits for votes, turnout, and abstention at the elections (within electoral clientelism); and exchanges of grand benefits for extended party services (within relational clientelism). Within these sub-exchanges, we can crystallize different actors' strategies. When practicing electoral clientelism, patrons thus employ the strategies of vote-buying, turnout buying, and abstention buying, while the clients employ the strategies of vote-selling, turnout selling, and abstention selling. When practicing relational clientelism, patrons employ the strategies of rewarding loyalists and request fulfilling, while the clients the strategies of party serving and clientelist benefit-seeking.

All these levels of variety are important for both scientific inference and interpretation, as well as for policy intervention. Conflating the identified varieties may bring to faulty conclusions and/or ineffective policies for prevention and suppression of clientelism, as it is quite straightforward that the strategic calculations of actors differ from one sub-variety to the next. A research conducted during an electoral campaign that conflates relational with electoral exchanges might establish an incorrect conclusion that clientelism is not significantly present in that context, when, in fact, clientelist exchanges might be forged continuously and irrespective of elections. Study conflating abstention buying for vote-buying could arrive at all sorts of confusions when depicting the dynamics of clientelism, as the abstention clients do not visit the polls on election day, and vote-buying clients do the opposite. Misrecognizing that the clients may indeed request participation in political clientelism in their own volition (clientelist benefit-seeking) leads to a faulty understanding that clients perform a largely passive role in political clientelism – a hindrance that is frequently present in contemporary political science studies on the phenomenon.

Regarding policy, it is reasonable to assume that legislation targeting vote buying and selling, as well as public campaigns against vote-buying and selling (both of which are frequently implemented in many countries around the world), would be ineffective in prevention and suppression of relational clientelism. In a similar way, legislation targeting to obstruct party employments in the public sector which are focused on establishing formal safeguards in the employment process, lose sight of the demand for clientelism from the citizens, and can thus be only partially effective in dealing with political clientelism in its relational form.

The point of all these examples is to underline the need for an approach in both science and policy that would be sensitive to the varieties in political clientelism. This is particularly relevant for a policy where a nuanced approach in dealing with some varieties might be indispensable. The key in untangling the puzzle of political clientelism perhaps lies in the acceptance that the phenomenon is characterized by internal variation and that thus, a one-size-fits-all solution for both scientific inference and policy intervention is impossible.

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