How Cleavage Politics Survives despite Everything: The Case of Croatia

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Introduction

It is striking with how much stability the basic pattern of party competition in Croatia has been surviving since the founding democratic elections in 1990, despite the troublesome circumstances and unfavorable prerequisites the transition process could build on. Not only that the countries democratic transition had to cope with the dual transformation of the political and economic system, but it also had to manage a nation and state-building process, with the creation of non-existing state institutions, whose mere existence were simultaneously challenged in the Croatian-Serbian war. The fact is even more striking having in mind that since then, almost everything, that political science literature names as possible and probable sources of the party system changes, has actually changed in this way or another.

Firstly, the countries pre-communist democratic tradition is rather modest. Although the history of modern parliamentarism can be traced back to 1848 within the Hapsburg monarchy, its development was hindered by the highly restrictive and discriminating electoral law, as well as by periods of absolutist suspensions of parliamentary institutions (Zakošek, 1997: 34). It was not until the creation of post-World War I Kingdom of Yugoslavia, when universal male suffrage was realized, that some sort of multiparty system came into being. But due the unsettled circumstances in the first Yugoslavia, this period was rather short (around 10 years), political parties were not well-established and rather soon multipartism turned into a plebiscitary support for one party – the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS). Though exactly this party re-emerged in the 1990s as the only opposition party that could point to its pre-communist organizational persistence, this fact did not play any crucial role in the development of the Croatian party system. Secondly, significant demographic changes as a consequence of the war that Croatia passed through from 1991 to 1995 did not affect the basic pattern of party competition to the extend that one could expect. If anything, the war sharpened the party positions on certain sue, but once these issues objectively lost its significance (as in the case of the position of the Serbian minority in Croatia), the underlying conflict did not cease to shape the main traits of party competition.

Changes happened at the institutional level as well. In 2000, after the replacement of the HDZ government from 1990s by oversized left-centre coalition, the semi-presidential system of government was constitutionally turned into a parliamentary model with directly elected president of the state. Since the newly elected president is a rather independent figure without his party base, the effects of the changes can be observed also at the behavioral level. The electoral system underwent during the 1990s the most frequent and radical changes of all new Central and Eastern European democracies, running the gamut from an absolute majority, via segmented, to a proportional electoral model for the first chamber of the parliament (Kasapović, 2000: 5).

Together with dramatic discrete political events these processes contributed to changes at the level of party system. After 2000 the Croatian party system turned from a system with a dominant party to a sort of multipartism and single majority governments from 1990s to coalition and (formally) minority governments in 2000 and 2003 respectively. This all together did not stay without echo in the way the main parties led their campaigns in the last 2003 elections. In new circumstances, marked with drastically lower ideological polarization compared to the beginning of the 1990s, the parties played with the valance issues, not engaging in any remarkable direct confrontations apart from those personal and "mussels-building" ones.
In the rest of the paper we are developing arguments with the principle purpose to show why and how despite all the historical, social, institutional and political innovations and changes, the basic underlying pattern of party competition in Croatia has not been altered. Furthermore, we claim that the answer should be found in the rather strong cleavage structure of the contemporary Croatian society and politics. Initially politically mobilized and formulated by the newly emerging opposition to the communist regime at the beginning of 1990s, these cleavages continue to determine political perceptions and put major obstacles to both political elite and voters in their attempts to test alternative models of party competition.

In doing so, we introduce in the first part of the paper, in a rather brief way, a conceptualization of the cleavages, that we found the most convincing and suitable to a newly developed, peripheral East Central European (ECE) democracy as in the case of Croatia. Furthermore we develop the theoretical founding of a “postmodern inter-subjective cultural approach” (Ross, 1997) to the study of the countries political cleavages, which will be operationalized in terms of a sociology of knowledge approach to discourse. The second section is completely devoted to the initial phase in which the cleavages actually emerged. Namely, we found that initial phases in cleavage politics, usually connected with overwhelming historic events and changes, are of a particular importance for our understanding of how cleavages work and survive later on. The third part deals with the stability of the existing divides throughout time with the last part devoted to the attempts of political elites to "jump out" from the existing pattern of competition.

A peculiarity, and a possible innovation of the paper, is that we develop arguments in a parallel way from two quite different political science approaches and epistemological starting positions. While the notion of cleavages is present in both approaches, analytical tools differ quite a lot. On the one side, the narrative case study is approached from the "classical" and rather dogmatically followed concept of cleavages like it is developed in Lipset and Rokkan work, hard methodology and statistical reasoning. On the other side, in attempting a “cultural view on political phenomena” (Schwelling, 2004), we propose a social constructivist approach to the explanation of cleavage politics in Croatia. It will confirm the findings of the aforementioned structuralist one, proving thereby its usefulness for a complementary in-depth understanding of the way how cleavages come into being and how they work. In doing so, we will introduce discourse analysis as a suitable method in analyzing cleavages, especially in regard to the process of cleavage change.

Towards a reformulated model of cleavages

One of the most influential and most fruitful theoretical models for analyzing the structure of the party systems in the political space is given in Lipset and Rokkan's chapter *Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction* from 1967. The Lipset-Rokkan model of the multidimensional political space - by the help of Parsons' conceptual instruments - starts from the experiences in the formation of the party systems during the centuries long nation-building and democratic institutions building process in Western Europe. Its basic hypothesis claims that West European party systems are rooted in deeper structures of the social and political conflicts - in so called cleavages or cleavage structures. These structures act in the long run and continue to shape the party systems much after the initial historic circumstances in which the systems had emerged were changed. "It is however theoretically disputable if the same analytical model could be successfully applied
in research of the post-socialist societies in Central and Eastern Europe, in which democratic order has only been establishing since recently and whose historic development, generally speaking, essentially differs from the West European one" (Zakošek, 1998: 12). Is it possible, starting from the classic, primarily comparative and historical approach to the cleavage theory and newer approaches to party systems in Eastern Europe, which rest on the deductive model of the construction of the political community, to arrive at an integrated model of cleavages suitable to the analysis of East European societies? How to connect historic generalizations based on the comparative analysis of a century long development and logical rigour of the deductive theoretical model?

For the purpose of applying the original model outside its West European context, Zakošek (1998: 19-20) formulated his own critical objection. He thinks that there is a certain inconsistency in linking the theoretical analytical instruments with generalization of the historic development. Four main structural cleavages, historically present in Western Europe, can not consistently be aligned with poles on the two axes presumed by the theoretical model: the territorial and the functional one. Having in mind the inconsistencies in the Lipset-Rokkan model, he suggested a reduced triangular model with clearly defined cleavage poles: the territorial-cultural cleavage (center-periphery), the ideological-cultural cleavage (with the opposition religious-secular as only one of all possible variants of the cleavage) and socio-economic (functional) cleavages (capital-labor, rural-urban) (Zakošek, 1998: 30-31). This threefold model perfectly corresponds to Kitschelt's model (Kitschelt, 1992; 1995) of, as he calls them, political cleavages which arose around three hierarchical types of conflicts: the one around political community, the second around liberal values and the third one linked to the redistribution of the welfare in a society (Kitschelt, 1992: 12-14).

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<th>Lipset and Rokkan's model</th>
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<td>the center-periphery opposition</td>
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<td>the state-church opposition</td>
<td>conflicts about values of political and social liberalism</td>
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(Zakošek, 1998: 32)

Based on the above-presented scheme, we follow a conceptualization of a three-dimensional political space (Zakošek/Čular, 2004), which could suffice for the explanation of both genesis and contemporary variations of the party systems. It is however quite possible that in certain societies and historic constellations we find dimensions of polarization that overlap and consequently lower the number of dimensions in the political space. The three basic cleavages we define as:

1) The **territorial-cultural cleavage** (center-periphery) is the result of the oppositions generated in the process of nation-state building around the definition of both real (territorial) and symbolic (political, cultural, law) boundaries of the political community. This definition includes also polarization between advocates of different types of the state (complex or simple, multiethnic or monoethnic), between ethnic (cultural) majority and minority and finally between polarized interests with regard to the internal territorial organization of the state (centralization vs. decentralization). Developing regional interests
and identities as well as the EU issues, both are the expressions of the territorial-cultural cleavage.

2) The **ideological-cultural cleavage** refers to polarization of interests advocating two different conceptions of cultural identities in the process of nation-state building as well as in the process of modernization. Therefore, the basic form of this cleavage is religious-secular, but also includes all the dimensions captured by the concepts of political and social liberalism.

3) The **socioeconomic cleavage** is a result of polarization produced in the process of modernization by spreading market mechanisms of resource allocation and by efforts of different groups to approach and control these resources. This cleavage can take different forms depending on the existing distribution of resources and on dominant mechanisms of allocation in the status quo. In post-socialist societies this cleavage embraces the conflicts which are consequences of market liberalization (between market beneficiary and handicapped groups) as well as the conflicts emerged as the result of new allocation of resources in the process of privatization (between winners and losers in privatization).

For the purpose of our empirical analysis we think that theoretical presumptions and historical accounts by Lipset and Rokkan as well as Kitschelt can be combined with the operationalization designed by Oddbjørn Knutsen and Elinor Scarbrough (1995). For them, cleavages include structural, value and political dimensions. They are rooted in a relatively persistent social division, i.e. groups according to class, religion, economic, or cultural interests. Furthermore, cleavages engage(s) some set of values common to members of the group, who share the same value orientation: of which they distinguish three basic types in West European societies: religious-secular, left-right materialism and materialism-postmaterialism. Finally, they are institutionalized in some form of organization – most commonly a political party, but also in churches, unions, and other associational groups (Knutsen/Scarbrough, 1995: 494).

Conceptually grounded in Bartolini/Mair (1990), the theoretical framework is somewhat refined at the operationalization level by Tóka (1998). However, on its way the theory has been losing its historical dimension and has been almost completely turned into a statistical model for assessment of the strength of each dimension in maintaining the stability of party preferences of voters. In this way, a crucial element of the cleavage theory - its potential to account for long-lasting effects of the social and political development on the party system stability - is withering away. Aware of these problems, Markowski (2001) in presenting the cleavage politics in post-socialist Poland equally emphasizes both aspects, trying in the same moment to offer an alternative statistical design in order to measure the strength of cleavages. Conceptually still following Bartolini/Mair (1989), Knutsen/Scarbrough (1995) and Tóka (1998), he introduces a new research design that tries to avoid a highly abstract way of statistical reasoning that asks about motives of voters' electoral behavior and assigns different probabilities at the level of each individual. Quite contrary, Markowski rightly suggested that, when it is about statistical analysis of cleavage-politics, individuals should be treated unitary and the probabilities should be calculated only at the aggregate level of different types of voters.

Based on everything said up to now we propose that a concept of cleavages should include several elements. Firstly, cleavages are lasting political divisions that constrain and stabilize party competition and voting behavior over time, and are rooted in deeper socio-historical and political processes. The results of these processes are presently embedded in different socio-cultural citizen's identities. The historical role of political institutions and process (political parties, political elites, electoral development) in creating such socio-
cultural identities can be, and often are, of a crucial importance (meaning that socio-cultural identities very often are politico-historical identities, indeed).

There must as well be a certain match between socio-cultural identities and lines of party competition if we want to talk about cleavages. Thus, we cannot say that socio-cultural identities, though strong, constitute cleavages unless they are one way or another represented in, in principle, inter-party blocks divisions. (Alternatively, in such situations we can use the concept of latent cleavages - they do not yet define political competition, but have a potential to do that in the future.) Similarly, party competition that is not determined by any socio-cultural division lines, but it is rather perpetuated from within politics cannot be considered as cleavage-based politics (e.g. explanation of party competition in the USA driven by party identification thesis).

Each socio-cultural identity has two aspects: structural (demographic, organizational aspect) and ideological (value aspect). Ethnicity, region, religious denomination, class, religious-secular division, rural-urban division (possibly gender) are examples of the former, while various attitudes on political community, liberal principles and socio-economic reality of the latter. Although some identities can rest eternally on either structural or value aspect, we assume that the more structural aspect correspond to a value aspect the stronger socio-cultural identity is. This match rests on an additional theoretical assumption: certain structural aspects are matched with certain value aspects only. Thus, ethnicity, region or religious denomination should correspond to attitudes on political community, unitarism-federalism, minority rights etc., religious-secular division to the liberalism-conservatism value dimension, and class and rural-urban division to the socio-economic value dimension. Of course, any empirical departure from the assumed theoretical match, particularly if the match seems uncommon (e.g. ethnic groups displaying different attitudes on socio-economic value dimension), deserves a special historical or contemporary explanation, presumably country-specific one.

A socio-cultural identity has its counterpart, (e.g. majority ethnic group vs. minority ethnic group; working class vs. middle class, etc.) meaning that for one type of socio-cultural identity one should always find two segments in a society. Dividing the society more and more (combining the socio-cultural identities) we can come to four, six, eighth or more segments. On the other hand, different socio-cultural identities can sometimes more or less overlap. For instance, ethnicity and religious denomination almost perfectly overlap in Croatia (very rarely one can find an orthodox Croat or a catholic Serb). It is very important to realize when such an overlapping happened already at the level of socio-cultural identities.

Bringing Culture into Structure

After having outlined our understanding of cleavages, we are now turning our attention to an essential component of them, namely culture. In his review of Attila Agh’s objections to the application of the cleavage model on the new ECE democracies, Zakošek underlines the social-constructivist character of social identities, emphasizing thereby the dominance of cultural based cleavages (i.e. territorial-cultural and ideological-cultural cleavage) instead of the socioeconomic one for the ECE countries, as a consequence of their peripheral geopolitical position, which resulted in a partial and belated participation of the modernization process caused by the Industrial Revolution (2002: 85 f; Zarycki, 2000: 862 f ).

1 See Zarycki (2000) for a thorough argumentation of the impact of the peripheral geopolitical position of ECE countries on the characteristics of their cleavage systems.
A peculiarity of the developing Croatian political culture is the importance of a highly politicized and embattled discourse about the countries role in World War II, and the atrocities committed by fascist Ustaša on the one side, and antifascist and predominant communist Partisans on the other. While it’s enormous impact on Croatia’s politics has been recognized by most scholars and experts about the country and it’s region (e.g. Pusić, 1995: 57-61; Goldstein, 1997: 195-199; Banac, 1997: 212-215; Županov, 1997: 200-211; Grdešić, 1997: 130; Hoepken, 1999; Bet-El, 2002; MacDonald, 2002; Brkljačić/Sundhaussen, 2003; Ramet, 2005; Behtke/Sundhaussen, 2006; Jambrešić-Kirin, 2007), it was not been thoroughly analyzed in terms of its structuring quality for the developing party system. Although being clearly entrenched in the territorial-cultural cleavage, which became embraced by the ideological-cultural cleavage during the 1990s (as described in the following paper section), Zakošek did not elaborate on this topic, except of mentioning it in passing (2002: 94). An exception is the work of the social psychologist Ivan Šiber (1998, 2001), which proves convincingly, that family background regarding the hostile parties in WW II has an significant impact on the nowadays party support and voting preference of the electorate. His family "political biography" approach, underlines the relevance of the WW II legacy issue divide, and shows the utmost capabilities of "classic" quantitative methods in analyzing it. Namely, even Šiber’s work does not explain how exactly the competing memories were translated into (party) politics, to say nothing of its dynamics and the role of the defining and thereby also defined agents. In a more general objection to the shortcomings of quantitative approaches, we have to agree with Ross that survey data alone cannot build a rich understanding of political culture, for it is rooted in social practice and shared understandings. Being therefore inherently limited as a tool for studying political culture, they must be used in conjunction with other data to provide a coherent portrait of a single culture (1997: 63).

Thus, the restraint of social scientist regarding the WW II legacy issue divide is not to be wondered at, as it can only hardly be grasped by quantitative analytical tools. It asks rather for an interpretative approach, which is central to a cultural analysis of politics. But exactly because of the rightly criticized fuzzy and vague feature of the notion culture, it remains left out in political analysis. Therefore dealing with cultural phenomena of politics requires a clear definition of the unit of analysis, as well as the key properties of the applied denotation of culture, and last but not least a sufficient explanation of the linking mechanism between it and the performances of political action, institutions and interests.

In order to make the WW II legacy issue divide an operable unit of analysis, we are providing a definition of culture starting with Ross’ ”postmodern intersubjective understanding of culture” (1997: 42 f). It highlights two related features of culture, namely that of being a system of meaning used by people to manage their daily worlds, and that of being the basis of social and political identity that affects how people line up and how they act on a wide range of matters. Defined in this way as system of meaning and identity, culture frames the context in which politics occurs; links individual and collective identities; defines boundaries and organizes action within and between them; provides a framework for interpreting the actions and motives of others, and finally provides resources for political organization and motivation (Ross, 1997: 44). While the emphasis in this definition is at the system character of culture one should not oversee, that it also contains the perspective of culture as practice². This perspective is especially valuable for our analysis about how the WW II legacy issue divide came into being and influenced the development of the Croatian cleavage structure. Therefore we will follow this trail by sharpening our definition of culture

² For a detailed discussion of the different definitions of culture and their divison into concepts of culture as system and practice, see Sewell’s “The Concept(s) of Culture” (1999).
in the sense of Ann Swidler’s (1986) influential conceptualization, that proved to be very helpful in analyzing the big structural, political and socioeconomic transformations in East European societies after 1990 (Tatur, 2003; Tatur, 2004; Baga, 2004; Bukowski, 2004; Cybula, 2004; Šabić, 2004; Zimmer, 2004). Culture is given the image of a tool kit of diverse and often conflicting symbols, stories, rituals, habits, skills and world-views on which people can draw on in order to construct strategies of action when solving different kinds of problems. This becomes particularly visible in unsettled cultural periods, when people learn new ways of organizing individual and collective action (Swidler, 1986: 278). In such situations actors are selecting differing pre-fabricated pieces from their tool kit, for constructing new lines of action. The advantage of this approach for our concern is that it focuses on the mechanism how (political) action is shaped. It also provides a more complex definition of the actor as being independent in his choice of tools, and in his ability to create new one, but on the other side also being dependent on the content of his tool kit, that provides the repertoire of cultural components from which he can build lines of actions. Finally it emphasizes the constructivist nature of culture, that leads to the next level in our theoretical grounding for the analysis of the WW II legacy issue divide, that is the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse.

It has become a common place in social sciences to regard the phenomenon nation as “an imagined political community” (Anderson, 1983: 6), that is build on the “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm, 1983: 1) and strongly linked to the development of the modern nation state. Croatia’s struggle to come to terms with its WW II past is to be seen in this context of nation- and state-building, that requires a common “memory image” (G. H. Mead). The theoretical grounding for the understanding of human reality as socially constructed is given in the classic work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman (1966), into which the aforementioned conceptualization of Ann Swidler can be translated, by putting the notion of the collective “stock of knowledge” instead of Swidler’s “tool kit”. In the same way Swidler’s concept of actors who actively shape culture while simultaneously being constrained by it, is complementary to the dialectic relation between man and his product, the social world summed up in the famous quote: “Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product.” (Berger/Luckmann, 1966: 61).

The advantage of employing Berger and Luckmann’s sociology of knowledge as the theoretical grounding for our purpose is twofold: it is an established discipline in the field of social sciences and therefore easier accessible especially for political scientists, and thus it provides the methodical toolbox of qualitative social research. This was also a reason why Reiner Keller chose to draw upon this theory in order to develop a coherent research program in which he adopts Foucault's theory of discourse, that offers general proposals for grasping discourse as a social phenomenon. (1997, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). In this way he combines the complementary advantages of both approaches, that is the analysis of “practices of power/knowledge” relationship and meaning production on social macro-levels, with the methodology of empirical social research, avoiding thereby its’ limitedness to local micro-data analysis, that disregards societal and historical context (Keller, 2001: 142-126). Although they do not label themselves in this way, and although they develop their theoretical grounding based more on Foucault’s work and that of others (like Bourdieu, Giddens, Billig, Harré, just to name some), there is a number of political scientists and sociologists whose work can be compared with Keller’s research program (Nullmeier, 2001; Donati, 1992; Viehöver, 2001; Majer, 1995; Schwab-Trapp, 2001; Zifonun, 2004). Following Kellers’ insight (2004: 79-89), that discourse analysis is rather a perspective on qualitative methods, than a defined method that provides ultimate devices for analyzing discourses, we will focus on central proposals and definitions that are common to all the
mentioned social science discourse approaches, and which will enable us to move on in the analysis of the nature and impact of our unit of analysis.

As a starting point we will take Hajer’s definition of discourse, as a “specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices (...) through which meaning is given to physical and social realities.” (Hajer, 1995: 44). In this perspective discourse entails the constitutive and classificatory devices of political reality and constitutes the societal perception of the world, collective identities, subject positions or institutions. Then politics is conceived as a struggle of discourse actors for power, legitimacy and recognition, by imposing certain ways of meaning and interpretation (Schwab-Trapp, 2001: 265-268). They have to become institutionalized in order to be successful in structuring action and the perception of reality, which in the realms of politics means, that a given discourse is translated into institutional arrangements and concrete politics (Hajer, 1995: 61).

Language in use (although not the only form of performing social practices) is not only a mere instrument to describe reality, but it defines it. Hence it influences the way how interests and perception are constituted. This points to the central role of the socially constructed actor. This points to the central role of the socially constructed actor. Following the theoretical outlines given above in the discussion of Swidler and Berger/Luckmann, social actors and discourse structure are related to each other in a dialectic way (Keller, 2001: 136). On the one side, actors' positions do not evolve on a tabula rasa, but in a historical given discursive field with institutionalized symbolic orders, that pre-constitute discourse agency. On the other side they are not powerless slaves of social structures, but (inter)active and creative agents, who are able to engage in social power plays and struggles for interpretation. Moreover, following Hajer, the interests of social actors are intersubjectively constituted through discourse. Therefore, discursive interaction can create new meanings and new identities (Hajer, 1995: 63). This said it becomes clear why discourse analysis is a suitable tool for analyzing the dynamics of either political or cleavage change.

Additionally this perspective corroborates those cleavages studies, that emphasize the interaction between elites and society, instead of proposing either a top-down role of political elites or a bottom-up role of society in the explanation of the development of cleavages (Hagopian, 2004: 5 according to Deegan-Krause, 2006: 19).

Finally we want to mention two basic approaches by which discourses can be analyzed: through the reconstruction of frames or story lines. Frames are defined as “Shemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences meaningful.” (Snow, David A., 1986: 467). This concept refers to typified clusters of disparate elements of meaning production, the core configuration of signs, sentences and symbols, which create a coherent ensemble of meaning (Keller, 2001: 133f.). Story lines are essential political devices that allow the overcoming of fragmentation and the achievement of of discursive closure. Thus by uttering only a specific element one effectively reinvokes the story-line as a whole.

Mobilization of the historical cleavages in the 1990 founding elections in Croatia

Already in the initial transition phase of transition and in the founding elections the evident impact of historical conflict lines suggested the existence and great impact of long-term
polarization structures, i. e. of cleavages. In earlier studies there have been developed a model which depicts main features of cleavages in Croatia (Zakošek, 1991; 1998). Traditional conflict between the center and the periphery constitutes in Croatia, the territorial-cultural cleavage. It is a political division based on the issue connected with the establishment of the national state. It can be traced back to the 19th century and to the very beginning of modern politics in Croatia. The beginning of party politics in the then part of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy was clearly structured according to that cleavage line. Later on, in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia the same conflict shaped the overall political specter in Croatia and a big part of the Yugoslav politics. Since Croatia until 1991 was a part of larger states, this cleavage includes a dual opposition: an external opposition against the state centers to which Croatia was subjected and against which it advocated the interest of a periphery, and an internal opposition against minority or regionalist collective actors, which formed a periphery against the center of Croatian state building. In its contemporary form these two branches were the relationship between Belgrade and Zagreb and the relationship between Zagreb and the regions populated mostly by Serbian minority in Croatia. During democratic transition it emerged in the form of opposing national identities (Croats – Serbs, Yugoslavs) (Zakošek, 1998: 47). The center-periphery cleavage has also a cultural component generated by opposed ideological concepts of Croatian national and state integration: center symbolizes an exclusive concept of the Croatian nation, which is hostile to minority cultures and external cultural influences, while periphery describes both minority cultures and concepts of a non-exclusive national identity (mainly variations of Yugoslavism). The latter concept also includes an ide of an open national culture.

The ideological-cultural cleavage in Croatia was in the first place based on strong religious and secular identities. It is a product of cultural modernization and emergence of a secular culture in the Croatian society and is an expression of the historical conflict over the role and status of the Catholic Church, especially in the field of education and moral instruction. This cleavage has been deepened during socialist regime due to its explicit anti-Catholic politics and its radical secularization of all cultural segments. Also, the ideological-cultural cleavage progressively overlapped with the center-periphery cleavage, when the Catholic Church became one of the main proponents of Croatian national autonomy, strongly connecting in such a way Catholic religious identity with anti-communism and Croatian nationalism. After the decline of the socialist system the cleavage expresses the divide between religious-traditionalist and secular-modernist concepts of culture, which is very eminent in the Croatian society. This dimension showed the biggest correlation with the “left-right” spectrum which, if taken as an indicator of general one-dimensional political conflict, convincingly proved that in the case of Croatia the voters did not meaningfully connect the terms left and right with the socio-economic dimension of the political conflict (“classic” left-right), but with the ideological-cultural dimension, modern (liberal) – traditional (conservative) (Šiber, 1991:116-128; Šiber, 2001:85-88, Čular, 2004:139; Henjak, 2005).

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3 Emphasizing only importance of the Catholic religious identity and Croatian nationalism and not of the Orthodox Church is justified by the empirical results which showed an exceptionally low level of religious identity among Croatian Serbs and Yugoslavs. While in 1990 about 34% of Croats were considered to be neither committed nor traditional believers, 80% of Serbs and 90% of Yugoslavs were not in those categories. Although the intensity of religious identity among the Serbian population in Croatia partly explains their choice to vote for the SKH-SDP or the SDS (Serbian ethnic party), it is still a marginal phenomenon considering mainstream party competition in the 1990 elections.
Figure 1: Ethnic and religious determinants of mass attitudes on the Yugoslav federation, multiparty system, and self-management in 1990

Note: Percentages of respondents grouped as Croats devout Catholics, Croats atheists and Serbs or Yugoslavs. ‘CRO/YU’: support for Yugoslavia as a confederation or for Croatian independence; ‘multiparty system’: unconditional support for a multiparty system; ‘self-management’: support for the abolishment of the system of self-management in the economy. Croats traditional Catholics not shown.
Source: FPS 1990.

The territorial-cultural and ideological-cultural cleavage significantly determined the pattern of political competition in the first elections in 1990, not only because the citizens were mobilized around the issue of the relationship between Croatia and Yugoslavia, but also because the cleavage determined the attitudes of the citizens on the “post-socialist” dimension of rejecting the communist regime and accepting democratic and market institutions (Zakošek, 1991:182-184). Figure 1 clearly shows up to what extent Serbs/Yugoslavs in Croatia were ideologically connected not only with the Yugoslav federation but with the socialist institutions as well. These figures should not be so strange if we have in mind that, due to the genocide Croatian Serbs suffered in the fascist Independent State of Croatia from 1941 to 1944 and to the fact that this group became main beneficiaries of the regime afterwards, they emerged as one of the most loyal ethnic groups to the regime during the socialist Yugoslavia.

As it could also be observed, a rather large difference existed within the majority (Croat) ethnic group between the most religious segment and the least religious one. In the CRO/YU issue this is even more pronounced if the Croatian independence option is treated separately from the support to confederalization of the existing Yugoslavia. Thus, while around 27% of strong believers supported Croatian independence (which was more than half of all the independence advocates at that time), only 5% of Croats atheists and virtually none of Serbs/Yugoslavs opted for the Croatian independence (not shown).

In this way, as a consequence of the communist mediation of the historical cleavages, two types of socio-cultural identity lines crosscut at the structural level creating four unequal segments within Croatian society. However, when value dimension is added it became obvious that belonging to the ethnic majority religious segment reinforces to a high percentage the pro-independence and anti-system attitudes. In 1990 the HDZ used exactly this symbiosis and from this segment it mobilized the bulk of its voters. Thus, around 70% of all the Croats devout Catholics voted for HDZ, and out of the overall actual popular
support to HDZ in the founding elections (42%), around 90% were either devout or traditional believers. On the other side, the SKH-SDP combined Croats atheists with Serbs and Yugoslavs (mainly atheists) as the main reservoir of its public support. One half of each segment was attracted by SKH-SDP, which amounted to three-fourths of all the SKH-SDP voters (actual electoral figure was 29%).

While the overall cleavage structure clearly distinguished the SKH-SDP from the HDZ and the KNS (see Figure 2), it was primarily structural component of the ideological-cultural cleavage that distinguished HDZ from the center-oriented KNS (c. Zakošek, 1991: 185). Namely, unlike the HDZ and SKH-SDP voters who were dominantly concentrated in the opposing ethno-religious segments, a half of the KNS voters were traditional believers with the rest equally dispersed in the "devout believer" and the "atheist" segment, which mostly resembled the religious structure of the majority nation. Therefore, the KNS voters were the only group of voters within which the already observed differences in attitudes on the multiparty system and self-management in the three segments (Figure 1) were annualized and lost. This fact speaks convincingly enough that, apart from the overwhelming "confederation" option, the KNS voters were unified by a high and internally balanced support to liberal-democratic values and institutions (Figure 2). In this way the KNS was a representative of a rather small segment of "national liberals" (actual electoral result of KNS was 15%), for whom value and issue voting was much more important than the impact of their structural position.

Figure 2: Party preferences and attitudes on the Yugoslav federation, multiparty system, and self-management in 1990

Note: Percentages of respondents grouped as the HDZ, the KNS and the SKH-SDP voters expressing the following attitudes: 'Cro/YU': support for Yugoslavia as a confederation or for Croatian independence; 'multiparty system': unconditional support for a multiparty system; 'self-management': support for the abolishment of the system of self-management in the economy.
Source: FPS 1990.

In this section we will also explain how the WW II legacy issue cleavage came into as a constitutive component of the territorial-cultural cleavage, and by this means helped to structure the Croatian cleavage-system, by applying a discsours analytic approach to this phenomenon. For this empirical case I will rely on some central features of Schwab-Trapp’s (2001) highly acclaimed case study on the discourse of the Green Party in regards to the
NATO-Intervention in the War in Bosnia (i.e. the impact of the speech made by party leader Joschka Fischer on a special party convention, in which he supported the military intervention, re-framing thereby the frame “pacifism”), because its’ focus and starting point is a clearly defined “discourse event” that resembles in it’s intensity to the way in which the WW II legacy issue divide popped up. The term discourse event, as Schwab-Trapp describes it following Foucault, is an extraordinary historical event in the sense of emerging problematisations of established regimes of practices, that are seen as unintended power effects of heterogeneous practices performed by social actors, which marks a turning point in content (Ibidem: 266).

Croatia’s democratic transition in its first years could be summarized in the words of a “fast transition and postponed consolidation” (Čular, 2000). The fast transition refers to the circumstances in Croatia which resulted in a very short liberalization phase from 1989 to 1990. During this time period political parties who would rival the reform-communist SKH-SDP had to be founded and build up from the scratch. Hence it is no wonder that in the election campaign, the new established parties and their leaders where too busy in defining themselves and presenting the basic of their programs, than focusing on the programs of their competitors (which often had first to be written) and getting in interaction with them and their ideas. After checking the course of the campaign on the basis of two Zagreb based newspapers (the broadsheet Vjesnik, and the high-circulation Večernji List), we found out, that the only situation in which the SKH-SDP and the nationalist HDZ had a direct hefty exchange, that was covered by the press, evolved about parts of Franjo Tuđman's speech at the first congress of the HDZ on 25th of February 1990, that deals with Croatia's past in WW II. On that occasion, when the HDZ presented itself and its' program for the first time in grand style to the Croatian publicity, Tuđman stated:

“The intercessors of a hegemonial-unitarian conception of Yugoslavia see nothing in the HDZ but the claim for restoration of the Ustasha Independent State of Croatia (NDH). Thereby they forget, that the NDH was not only a mere quisling formation and a fascist crime, but it was also an expression of the historic aspirations of the Croatian people for an independent state of their own, what was also realized by international factors, in this case Hitler's Germany. Therefore the NDH was not only a crazy idea of the Axis Powers but it was also a consequence of specific historical factors.” (V 1)

The newspaper article also notes, that his statement was tumultuous approved with frenzied applause by the congress participant. This quotation showed immediate impact in the press, being often quoted in articles in the following days and taken as a proof for the extreme nationalistic, revisionist and even fascist nature of the HDZ.

One day after the congress has finished, Ivica Račan, the leader of the SKH-SDP, took a stand towards this statement on a press conference. Among other things he said:

“(...) The Croatian people never accepted the NDH as an expression of historic aspirations for an independent state of their own, what today Franjo Tuđman claims, and we have heard this long before as well from Ustashas as from Greater Serbian chauvinists. The leader of the party that claims to appear for the interests of the Croatian people insults it in the worst possible way. (…) We feel the responsibility, not as party, and even less as the party in power, but as a part of the democratic public, to stand up in the defense of the Croatian people and its’ traditions of freedom. After several centuries of life under foreign rule, after the bad experience with the NDH, that in its first move sold off Croatia and then went on in organizing a pogrom of the Serbian people and a merciless requital with all Croats who did not accept it, and those have been the overwhelming majority, the antifascist struggle gave after long time freedom and a state to the Croatian people. The fact, that it opted for a federal
Croatia and again for Yugoslavia – of course a different one – federative and equal – while fighting together with the Serbian people, is a result of legitimate peoples choice. The appropriation of the Antifascist Council of the Peoples' Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) and its Croatian matching piece (ZAVNOH), and bringing them into some relation with the NDH, is not only a fraud. With revived intercessions of an independent Croatian state, (...) with a legitimization they did not get from the people, the representatives of the HDZ depict themselves as a party of dangerous intentions. (...) (V2)

The article appeared in both analyzed newspapers with the headline “HDZ - party of dangerous intentions”, on the front. This headline, as well as Tudman's sentence of the “NDH being also an expression of the historic aspirations of the Croatian people for an independent state”, became outstanding metaphors (signifier, tropes or figures of speech that rationalize a specific approach to what seems to be a coherent problem), that were used in countless texts in Croatian media, forming the upcoming “discourse field” (that is the public arena in which the discourse takes place) about the (re-)interpretation of WW II in Croatia until nowadays. But back on it's inception: The reason why exactly those three sentences out of a very long speech, in which he was proposing a program full of radical changes, ranging from the political to the economic sphere, developed such an impact, lies in the fact that Tuđman draw upon an element of a story-line or frame, we could call “brotherhood and unity”, altering it thereby dramatically. In this particular case we can use Schwab-Trapp's term “basic narrative” instead of story-line, because the former means more specifically the fundamental legitimate interpretation on history in a political community, developed in the context of a work on political conflicts in Germany with regard to its Nazi-past (Schwab-Trapp, 1996: 95 f).

Although it is a matter of fact that during WW II in Croatia (but also in other former parts of Yugoslavia, only with different actors on one side) a very bloody civil war (inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic) took place, in which both sides, being on a par, committed numerous cruelties (Goldstein, 1999: 131 -157), the Yugoslav historiography proposed a highly ideologized official memory image on all social levels of institutional and organizational circulation of knowledge (Hoepken, 1999: 196-205, Behkte/Sundhaussen, 2006: 207 ff). This officially prescribed memory showed the war in a strictly dualistic, Manichaean, way (Hoepken, 1999: 200; Sundhaussen, 2004: 373 ff). On the one side there were heroic and disciplined Yugoslav partisans equally composed out of all Yugoslav nations and supported by the overwhelming majority of the civil population, who fought under the wise guidance of Josip Broz Tito against cruel German and Italian army forces who occupied the country and who were supported by small quisling groups, thus betraying their own country. This basic narrative constituted the founding myth of socialist Yugoslavia, explicitly mentioned in the preamble of its constitution as the grounding of the societal order (Behkte/Sundhaussen, 2006: 208), thus serving as the central legitimation of the state, it's political system, and its ideology of 'brotherhood and unity'. With the disintegration of Yugoslavia, this basic narrative, whose aim was also to provide a common political identity, also disintegrated, becoming nationalized, by the emerging nation-states.

With his relatively short remark in regard to the nature of the NDH, Tudman questioned the foundation of Yugoslavia's legitimacy; that is he questioned the discourse hegemony of the basic narrative, revealing it's flaws and opening an alternative way of structuring the symbolic order, by which the story line gave rise to new political claims (e.g. independence). Thereby the importance of the WW II Issue divide for the territorial-cultural cleavage becomes clear, being the legitimation force for Yugoslavia's unity.

Considering the importance of the basic narrative, it is no wonder, that Tudman draw on it, and that the response was so strong. With the reaction of Ivica Raćan, Tudmans
challenge was accepted and two competing discourse elites came into being, that would struggle for the power of definition of the story line. Thus this had a deep impact on the formation of the party cleavages, because a story line is not only a ordering device for clustering knowledge, but it also a device through which actors are positioned. This is the second aspect, through which the WW II legacy issue divide helped in the formation of the left-right camp identities, and therefore in the formation of the cleavage structure. Consequently, in analyzing articles in the checked newspapers, the commentators underline, that after the Tuđman-Račan exchange, the party system became structured in two clear different political options, between the voters now have possibility to choose (V3, V4, VL1).

Finally, this discourse event shows that Tuđman acted inside the Yugoslav/Croatian meaning structure, revealing thereby that the collective stock of knowledge contained besides the highly selective Yugoslav basic narrative, much more competing private memories, that were contradictory to the official.


As it was described earlier, historically developed cleavage structure was politically openly mobilized for the first time at the founding democratic elections in 1990. It was also the time of emergence of the Croatian political parties (1989-1990) and the formative years of the party system. Therefore, mobilization of the public support based upon the existing cleavage lines and with the emphasizes on such critical issues as national independence, a new way of economic organization and the regime change, built the social divides in the very institutional development of the Croatian party system from the beginning. Not only that the parties that entered the political arena in 1989-1990 virtually occupied the political space and survived as the only relevant political parties fifteen years later, but they have also been recognized and associated in a great deal just by the position they exhibit at the founding elections. Thus, despite some ideological changes or changes of leadership and policy positions parties experienced in latter years, formative moments have played a crucial role in maintenance the political identity of parties.

The combination of cleavages that was imposed on the political scope has served as a fundamental constraint of the voters’ party preferences during the entire development of the party system including the last parliamentary elections in 2003. The overlapping nature of

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4 In the 2003 parliamentary elections two things happened that could challenge this rather "frozen" party system. Croatian Party of Pensioners (HSU) entered the parliament for the first time and got three seats with a tendency to increase its public support in future. Croatian Social Liberal Party (HLS), the main opposition to the HDZ in the mid 90s, won only two seats with no so bright future. However, all other relevant parties (HDZ, SDP, HSS, HNS, HSP and regional IDS) were established in 1990 the latest and since 1992 won the vast majority of all the cast votes and parliamentary seats.

5 This opens a question on the relationship between party identification and cleavage structure. If party identification is developed mostly within strong cleavage voters (as Lipset-Rokkan hypothesis suggests), then the party identification thesis is a part of cleavage politics thesis and a building element of the organizational aspect of cleavages. However, if one finds that party identification is an independent phenomenon capable to account for the variance in voting behavior not covered by cleavage theory, than the party identification hypothesis should be considered rather as a rival hypothesis to cleavage politics. It seems that Croatia is a strong case for the former assumption.
the territorial-cultural and ideological-cultural cleavages will by time be intensified by the force of the regime divide and will make, like pair of scissors, the national liberal segment even smaller. The regime divide entailed the problems of democratic development in Croatia and was organized around the attempts of the ruling HDZ to informalize institutionalize a specific sort of substantially authoritarian regime within the framework of newly designed democratic institutions (Čular 2000; 2001). Though the regime divide emerged almost simultaneously with the democratic changes in 1990, its full political expression will get in the second part of 1990s, when the opposition parties started opposing the HDZ and the regime itself in forms of partial pre-election coalitions and common electoral strategies. Apart from the partial exception of the HSS (analyzed later), all other parties occupied positions consistent to their voters' ideological positions on both dimensions.

As Zakošek and Čular (2004) showed earlier, the ideological-cultural cleavage is the most pronounced one. Its socio-structural strength coincides with the impact of political parties on value preferences and it seems that these two aspects reinforce ideological-cultural value cleavage. As there is virtually no pair of segments that do not differ with regard to liberal-conservative values, so there are strong religious-secular identities that entail center-periphery value orientations, too. It is already observable at this point that just ideological-cultural cleavage is the overarching determinant and the main supportive element of the cleavage structure in Croatia. In this respect, its emerging strength from 1990, when the cleavage played an important but still a secondary role, has nowadays turned into the most important cleavage line.

Contrary, territorial-cultural cleavage line partly lost its significance in shaping the overall space of political competition after 1990. Apart from the already mentioned effect of depopulation of the Serbian minority, national independence ceased to be real and major political issue, and its symbolic impact on later ideological and political debates got a somewhat more complex expression. Also, what should not be neglected is the actual type of political mobilization, which by time made the center-periphery value dimension more close to, and almost a part of the liberal-conservative value scale. Namely, HDZ, who still attracted part of liberal voters in 1990, changed as soon as of the second elections to a more authoritarian and conservative oriented party. At the same time, SDP gradually, though in a rather traumatic way, got rid of the Yugoslav conservative part of its electorate inherited from the socialist past and opened to younger and more liberal voters who accepted national independence as the matter of fact. The political divide around the nature of the HDZ regime, developed especially after the war finished, contributed in later years to the fact that ideological scope, at the time of founding elections occupied mostly by the KNS voters (namely, liberals oriented to national independence) has been gradually withering away. As a result, ideological-cultural cleavage in later years has also embraced the center-periphery value dimension. At the same time, there has been a certain shift from dominantly ethnic to dominantly regional socio-structural base of the center-periphery cleavage. The clearest political expression of the observed changing trend is the appearance of a strong regional party - IDS in Istria, a western Croatian region.

With regard to the socio-economic cleavages, they have been the least pronounced ones. Moreover, differences of the rural-urban and class lines on center-periphery and liberal-conservative value orientations were greater than on the economic left-right dimension. Nevertheless, unlike in 1992, a certain strengthening of the value aspect happened in 1999 and 2003 with both socio-structural cleavage lines. It is also important to notice that it is the only cleavage that shows greater differences at the socio-structural level than at the level of political preferences, which points to the fact that the existing political divide actually neutralizes rather than mobilizes the cleavage. On the other hand, it gives to
the cleavage latent potential to serve as a base for the future competitive attempts of political parties.

In order to make it more illustrative we compare positions of the electorates of the main parties on the value dimensions that correspond to the three types of cleavages in 1992, the first year after the initial mobilization, and 2003, the most recent point in time for which we have the data\(^6\) (Figure 3 and Figure 4). The overall picture shows a rather stable situation with regard to both attitudes of the voters of different parties and the competing party blocs (party elite behavior indicated by circles). Also, while the order of the parties on the first dimension (centre-periphery) resembles the one on the second dimension (liberal-conservative) in both points of time, indicating very clearly the overlapping nature of the two cleavage lines, the third dimension (economic left-right) has been almost equally poorly pronounced in 2003 as well as at the beginning of the 1990s.\(^7\) The fact that meanwhile the Social-democratic Party (SDP) and the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) did make remarkable shifts on the first two dimensions does not change much with regard to cleavage-based pattern of party competition. These shifts can certainly be interpreted as the lowering ideological distance between two most distant parties in the first part of nineties: the SDP has been gradually leaving the position of the most leftist party which has been now occupied by more liberal and smaller Croatian Peoples' Party (HNS), and the rightist HSP significantly softened its radical ideological drift after 2000. However, both parties have continued to play on the same side of the bloc pattern of party competition as earlier.

The bloc pattern of party competition was at least since mid nineties explicitly exercised in forms of pre-electoral coalitions formed by the then opposition parties. Even if these coalitions did not contain all the parties in the bloc, there was a clear public split between the parties of the regime and the opposition. This split eventually got its strongest and clearest political expression after the 2000 elections, when two pre-electoral coalitions of the then opposition parties formed an oversized government coalition of six parties under leading position of the SDP. In the 2003 elections the bloc pattern of party competition was rather implicit and could be detected in the ways parties led their electoral campaign, in an (unsuccessful) attempt of the HNS leader to push the incumbent parties to block formation of the HDZ coalition government and, by the help of the President, to stay in power or in the resistance of the HSS leadership to positively respond to the HDZ offer to form two-party government. On the other side, rightist HSP openly or tacitly supported the HDZ from at least 1995 to 2000, and after the 2003 elections was ready to become its government

\(^6\) For the way in which the value dimensions are constructed see Appendix.

\(^7\) In 2003, for instance, the first two dimensions explain around 21% of the variance in the left-right self-identification of the voters and 34% of the one-dimensional scale of the party sympathies. The contribution to the explained variance of the third dimension is either not significant or completely negligible.
Figure 3: Party positions at the three value dimensions 1992

Figure 4: Party positions at the three value dimensions 2003
coalition partner. In this way, the bloc pattern of party competition was informally institutionalized during second part of nineties and after the critical elections in 2000 survived as the only element of continuity with the previous regime. It is true that there were party elites under the impact of the regime divide who decided upon and determined the two competing blocs. However, these blocs were not randomly dispersed on the parties regardless their roots in the electorates, but followed and also reinforced the already existing socio-political identities, mobilized in the initial situation of the founding elections.

There are nevertheless individual party positioning and movements that deserve a special attention, the Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLS) and Croatian Peasants Party (HSS). Since both parties, but in different ways, tried to resist the existing cleavage structure and bloc pattern of party competition, they are cases that clearly show all the opportunities and constraints for political elites in such a setting.

Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLS) emerged as the first registered opposition party in 1989 and in the 1990 founding elections competed as a part of the KNS coalition. Since 1992 the party competed individually and, particularly in the first part of 1990s, was seen as the main opposition to the ruling HDZ. The peak of its electoral success the party reached in 1992/93 parliamentary elections when its popular support went to more than 20%. In later years its popular support stabilized around 10-12%. The whole period the party was unambiguously situated within the left party bloc, seen together with the SDP as a bearer of the opposition attempts to neutralize the ruling party. In 2000 the party entered pre-electoral coalition with the SDP and the coalition won relative majority of the votes (41%) and seats (45%). The oversized government comprised of 6 parties lasted about two and a half years, when the HSLS left the governmental coalition. The main reason for the breakdown of the coalition government was ideological conflict between HSLS and the other parties in the coalition, primarily SDP, about governmental policies towards Hague Tribunal (Kasapović, 2005: 201). The HSLS adopted attitude that Croatia should not be completely cooperative when it is about arresting and extraditing Croatian war generals to the Hague Tribunal, since it can endanger the “historical truth” of the defence war that Croatia fought against Serbia and Yugoslav Army. The coalition government survived with HSLS now in opposition, but in next year and half HSLS prepared the terrain for the quite sharp reformulation of its own ideological position. As a result the HSLS voters in the 2003 elections found themselves on the opposite side of the spectrum on both main dimensions of party competition (Figure 4), compared to 2000 when their ideological positions resembled the one from 1992 (Figure 3). The radical change was confirmed also after the 2003 elections when the party joined the governing coalition of HDZ and several other smaller parties. However, the cost of the crossing the cleavage lines of the bloc competition was enormous. The party won only four percents of the vote (together in pre-electoral coalition with the equally small DC) and two seats in the parliament.

Quite unlike the case of the HSLS, whose positions of the electorate and the party elite corresponded to the great extend during days of success as well as during days of the loss, the case of Croatian Peasants Party refers to the party elites that has been pooling its electorate to the one side of the party space much more than it would be suggested by the position of the electorate on the relevant value dimensions. As one can see form the Figure 3 and 4, the HSS electorate is positioned somewhere in between the main parties of the two competing blocs, and on the liberal-conservative dimension and in 2003 much more to the right bloc than to the left one. In structural terms the HSS voters are even more similar to the HDZ voters, for instance, since there is no significant difference between them in ethnic/regional characteristics or in the intensity of religious feeling. The party elite actually tried in the beginning of the nineties to play an independent role and offer sort of the central
competitive position, not belonging to any of the party blocs. It was especially clear in the 1995 elections when the HSS engaged in the pre-electoral coalition with several smaller parties that were ideologically quite diverse. However, due to the growing conflict on the regime type that has been emerging in Croatia, the HSS party elite very soon become part of the left, opposition bloc and has identify the party with the “wrong” side of the cleavage line. This party position became institutionalized in latter years so that the collective image of the HSS, among the HSS voters as well as among the others, was that HSS is a genuine opposition party belonging to the left bloc. This image reached its peak in the 2000 elections when the HSS was part of the pre-electoral coalition of four parties and postelectoral winning coalition. However, during its stay within the governing coalition the HSS raised some issues that went directly to the core of the ideological debate with the main coalition partner SDP (opening hours of shops on Sundays), emphasizing the proximity of party and the Church positions. In addition, in the 2003 campaign the party did not clearly opt for the coalition partner after the elections, leaving space for the postelectoral coalition with the HDZ, too. However, when the party got in the position to accept the offer from the HDZ to form common government, the party leadership turn this offer down at the very first moment, being afraid that the change of the coalition partner and the choice of the HDZ as a coalition partner would cause split in the party as well as the loss of the support from the HSS electorate.

These two cases nicely show how the established political identities impose constraints on the elite behavior and their attempts to alter their bloc positions or to escape from the existing bloc pattern of party competition. This is true even, as in the case of HSS, if the party leadership strategy to posit itself as the central, and possible pivotal, party is to the great extend in compliance with the structural or/and value positions of the party electorate. The creation of the identifiable political identities in initial phases of the proces, regardless of the way they are established, can make additional costs to party leaderships once they want to change it, even if there were the same party leadership that contributed to their creation at the very beginning. While the case of the HSLS convincingly supports the statement, the case of the HSS teaches us that it is not always neccessary for cleavages to have corresponding and strong structural and/or value base in order to institutionalize in the forms of clear political identities. Nevertheless, even if party elites are decisive actors in maintaining cleavage-based images, it does not mean that such cleavage lines are easier to break.

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VL1: Večernji List, 03.03.1990: Nacionalno i konzervativno, pp. 6
Appendix: Construction of the variables used in the analysis

Value dimensions

1. Centre/periphery:

Attitudes on the relationship between centre and regions in Croatia

Attitudes towards position of Serbian minority in Croatia

Attitudes on Croatian priorities in cooperation with other states in the region (including EU integration)

Standardized values (range 0–1) on each variable are summed up
New index variable was transformed into z-scores with positive values indicating periphery

2. Liberalism/conservatism:

q91–q101 (1992) items tapping the dimension
q83–q92 (1995) (attitudes on church, nation, freedom,
q24 (1999) social harmony, tradition, women and
q26a-g (2003) critical worldview)

Values (range –1– (+)1, in 1999 and 2003 1–5) are summed up
New index variable was transformed into z-scores with positive values indicating conservatism

3. Economic left/right:

q73 (1992) attitudes on the role of the state in the economy
q73 (1995) no items tapping this dimension
q29 (1999) attitudes on the role of the state in the economy
q42a-i (2003) attitudes on the role of the state in the economy

New variable was transformed (for 2003 values 1-5 for each original variable first were summed up) into z-scores with positive values indicating economic left