Think Croatian, Act Slavonian: HDSSB as a Regionalist Patriot

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Abstract

There has recently been an upsurge of the territorial party competition in Europe, and Croatia has followed the trend. However, considering the strong tendencies of national homogenization during and in the aftermath of the Croatian war for independence, a success of a regionalist party is surprising. Following the framework of external and internal resources in studying regionalist parties, this paper aims to study the strategy of Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja (HDSSB), a regionalist party developed in the ethnically homogeneous Croatian region of Slavonia and Baranja. To better capture the different strategies of regionalist parties, a new typology of regionalist parties is proposed, relying on the two dimensions of territorial party competition, self-government and ethnonational. Juxtaposing those two dimensions produces four theoretical types of regionalist parties. To place the HDSSB in one category, the qualitative content analysis of newspaper articles and self-produced content is performed. The results suggest that HDSSB falls into the regionalist patriot category of regionalist parties, as it argues for territorial restructuring of the state, but is attached to the population in the center. The reasons for such a placement are found in the opportunity of HDSSB to refer to the poverty of Slavonia and centralization, as well as in constraints that HDSSB faced: present cleavages, territorial history of Croatia, the role of Slavonia and the party leader in the war for independence and HDSSB organizational features. The case study also presents and tentatively accounts for the party electoral fortunes from 2005 to the last national elections on November 8, 2015. Future research should focus more on the rise of regionalist political parties and their demands for self-government in poor regions and centralized states.
1 Introduction

Among the primary tools of modernization and consolidation of Western European states, that took place during the 18th and the 19th century, was the abolishment of rights of sub-state entities (Keating 1997; Bartolini 2000). They were often seen as an impediment to nation- and state-building processes, since having separate identities combined with self-government was seen as incompatible with the ultimate aim of modernization process, namely a homogeneous nation-state whose undivided sovereignty spans throughout its territory. As Jović (1992, 178) argues, regionalist movements demanded partiality where unity should be the strongest, namely in the control of a national territory.

A similar pattern can be observed in Croatia since 1990, as the nation- and state-building processes, coupled with the war, gave way to unifying tendencies (Petak 2012, 73-74). In order to build national identity and create a sense of national unity, nationalist parties were strongly against any claim of particularity. Crucially, the fiercest opponent of ‘autonomism’ was the president of Croatia and Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Franjo Tudjman, treating every resistance as subversive and traitorous (Ashbrook 2006, 625-629).

Before 2005, only the Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS) managed to get around this constraint, yet by facing a favorable environment. But in 2005, the relatively peaceful waters of territorial party competition were once again muddled. Seeing that he was not in favor of the HDZ leadership, Branimir Glavas founded the Croatian Democratic Assembly of Slavonia and Baranja (HDSSB), a group of prominent Slavonians concerned over the backwardness of their region. As he was the most prominent Slavonian member of HDZ, the Assembly attracted a large number of Slavonian HDZ members who formed the basis of the party (Alliance) that later on emerged from the Assembly. Soon the party recorded its first major electoral victory at the local level (local elections in Osijek in 2005), which was followed by the success at the national level, where the party held 7 out of 150 parliamentary seats in the peak of its popularity. Considering the unfavorable stance toward territorial party competition in Croatia, this paper aims to shed light on the strategy of HDSSB which was applied to surpass this hurdle, thus going beyond the focus on electoral results, which dominates the literature on regionalist parties.

To systematize the strategies of regionalist parties, this paper proposes the new conceptual tool. Following the work of Türsan (1998), I rely on the two most important aspects of territorial party competition. The first major dimension of the center-periphery cleavage is the protectionist-secessionist dimension, where parties take their position with regard to the level of self-

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1 Being for a long time separated from the rest of Croatia and being very close to modernizing tendencies of its western neighbors, as well as having a mixed ethnic composition, Istria was able to resist the nation-building process that Tudjman’s regime carried out by developing an effective regionalist movements embodied in the Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS).

2 The party has the same acronym as the (HDSSB), but the first S stands for Alliance (savez) rather than for Assembly (sabor).
government sought (De Winter 1998, 204-208). The second dimension is based on the perceived exclusiveness of appeal of regionalist parties to inhabitants of their own region, and is named ethnonational dimension.

This paper uses the framework of internal and external conditions (De Winter & Tursan 1998) to track down the sources of HDSSB strategy. Unlike in Istria, the rise of regionalism in Slavonia and Baranja was not very likely given the opportunity structure that was in place. Being directly involved in the Croatian war on independence, Slavonians developed the discourse on martyrdom and victimhood for Croatia, two notions strongly interwoven with their identity. This was later transposed in the strong support for the right-wing parties and ‘anti-autonomist’ attitudes. On the other hand, poor economy and high degree of centralization, such as those in Slavonia, are often mentioned as valuable structural conditions which regionalist parties combine in crafting their strategies (Hechter 1973; Brancati 2007; Lublin 2009). The research question that will guide this study is: how did HDSSB respond to the internal and external conditions while devising its strategy of mobilization of Slavonian voters?

This study, however, goes beyond placing the HDSSB into the proper category, as it uses the case of HDSSB to argue for an understudied type of regionalist parties: regionalist patriots. One characteristic of this type of regionalist party is a reliance on economic status of their region in regional mobilization, in the absence of ethnic divide. Because of their non-ethnic nature, another characteristic of regionalist patriots is the possibility to thrive in any region, irrespective of its ethnic composition, and demand a territorial reform.

The next section briefly discusses the concept of regionalist parties, and proceeds to propose a typology of regionalist parties as a certain ‘dependent variable’ of the paper. After that, the paper moves on to apply the framework of external and internal conditions to the case of HDSSB. The fourth section discusses the method applied, namely qualitative content analysis, as well as the data collection process and the coding scheme. The analysis and discussion of the results in light the framework of external and internal resources follows the two dimensions of territorial party competition, and discusses the regionalist patriot category in more detail. The concluding section offers an overview of the study, states its relevance, as well as prospects for the future research.

2 The concept and typology of regionalist parties

The literature on political parties that claim to represent the population of a certain territory suggests various labels for these parties. At the beginning of his analysis, Massetti enumerates no less than 16 different labels, the number which makes it very difficult to engage into a comparative study on those parties (2009b, 4). Each of those labels might carry a slightly different policy content, follow a different theoretical approach, and serve different research purposes. On a less pessimistic note, one distinctive feature of those parties runs through
most of the literature: territoriality. Rather than spanning the entire territory of a country, regionalist parties intentionally organize, run elections and win votes only in a certain sub-state territory, which is a plausible criteria for their differentiation from statewide parties (Jović 1992, 174; Miodownik & Cartrite 2006, 2; Dandoy 2010, 197). Apart from the organizational aspect, another distinctive feature of regionalist parties is the salience of the center-periphery dimension of political competition in their appeals. They aim to defend the interests of a territorially defined population, usually against those of the central state and/or other regions in a country. By that, they differ from other regional parties, which may be territorially organized, but do not stand for the regional population specifically (Strmiska 2003; Massetti 2009a, 503; Hepburn & Hough 2012, 78).

Comparative work on regionalist parties is impeded not by the lack of categorizations of regionalist parties, but by their relatively big number. Sticking to the programmatic aspect, there are several dimensions of competition along which regionalist parties can be placed, such as the traditional left-right (Dandoy & Sandri 2007, 10-14), the European integration (Jolly 2007, 111-114; De Winter & Cachafeiro 2002, 490-491) or value (GAL-TAN) dimension. Studying regionalist party positioning on multiple dimensions of party competition is useful and necessary, given the fact that they are increasingly diversifying their policy platforms, in response to decentralization reforms and multi-level governance (Hepburn 2009, 479). Being often thought of as regionalized copies of statewide parties, however, the distinctiveness of regionalist parties is sometimes overlooked, which has led to ‘nationalization’ of the regionalist party literature and strong focus on class-politics.

Neither of the aforementioned dimensions refers directly to the ‘core business’ of regionalist parties, the territorial politics. With the aim of studying the territorial aspect of HDSSB and contributing to the literature on territorial politics, this study predominantly focuses on the center-periphery dimension of political competition. However, much like the left-right dimension, which usually subsumes economic and value components, the center-periphery dimension also subsumes multiple components. Nevertheless, two aspects of the center-periphery dimension have been identified as crucial by the literature on regionalist parties: demands for self-government and identity politics (Jović 1992, 176-177; Tursan 1998, 5; Dandoy 2010, 196; Massetti & Schakel 2015, 867). Regionalist parties often demand some institutional protection or increase in the level of self-government, and use identity politics to mobilize the regional population behind their demands. Even though those two dimensions of competition are arguably the most salient in territorial appeals of regionalist parties, this study is, to the best of my knowledge, the first to develop a typology of regionalist parties that combines them.
2.1 Attitudes on self-government: the protectionist - secessionist dimension

Claim for regional self-governance has been the most important issue of regionalist parties, and they are often considered to have an 'issue ownership' over those claims (Hough 2000; Dandoy & Sandri 2007, 6; Gómez-Reino 2008, 7). On the demand for decentralization, De Winter notes that "the defining characteristic of ethno-regionalist parties' programs is undoubtedly their demand for political re-organization of the existing national power structure, for some kind of 'self-government'" (De Winter 1998, 204). The level of self-government sought depends on the already achieved level of self-government, which makes this dimension country- and region-specific. For that reason, it is necessary to define the end-points and the content of the dimension.

Dandoy (2010, 203-214) offers a useful categorization of regionalist parties based on self-government dimension. He distinguishes between the three main categories. First, protectionist parties do not question the territorial distribution of state power, and only aim to protect the cultural or economic rights of a regional population. Those regionalist parties either work actively on achieving a desired level of protection (participationist) or maintaining a status quo (conservative). Secondly, decentralist parties challenge the present territorial structure of state power, and demand fiscal, administrative and political autonomy. They can either argue for autonomy of only their territorial unit (autonomist), all territorial units (federalist), or view regions as sovereign entities with the right to transfer competencies to the central authority (confederalist). Thirdly, secessionist parties seek independence from a state, and consist of parties aiming to form a new state (independist); carving out a piece of other country’s territory (irredentist); and parties proposing their region to join a kin state (rattachist). As the aim of this paper is to propose a typology of regionalist parties, cutting points have to be determined. On the self-government dimension, the crucial jump happens when a regionalist party decides to go beyond seeking more participation, and starts to demand transfer of powers. Therefore, the cutting point is between Dandoy’s 'protectionist' and 'decentralist' categories.

2.2 Appeal towards the population in the center: the ethnonational dimension

Türsan (1998, 5) plausibly argues that exclusive group identity is common in regionalist party programs. Regionalist parties aim to represent or, if necessary, construct a group of people who are tied together by either primordial bonds or idea of belonging (Urwin 1983, 225). In relation to their surroundings, they will be exclusionary and argue for distinctiveness of a group they are aiming to represent, as this strategy is instrumental in seeking some degree of territorial reorganization of state power (Hepburn 2011, 505-506). However, regionalism has been unjustly equated with the exclusive group identity (Strmiska 2002, 2; Gómez-Reino 2008, 13; Hepburn 2009, 481; Dandoy 2010, 197). As Gomez-
Reino argues, notions of struggle between two exclusive territorial identifications (dominant against peripheral culture), such as the one of Türsan, no longer correspond to reality. Regionalist parties can construct a common identity for instrumental reasons, yet this identity can be inclusive towards the members of the dominant group. Therefore, it is analytically more plausible to think of a continuum, rather than dichotomy when trying to grasp the position of a party on the ethnonational dimension (Miley 2007, 1-4).

As Moreno argues, people in multinational societies tend to have a dual identity, meaning both ethno-regional and national (Moreno et al. 1998, 1; Moreno 1999, 65), and used the famous ‘Moreno question’ to capture this duality of identity at the individual level (2006, 6-9). Even though being designed for the individual level, this approach will inspire this study in proposing the following five points as reference in placing HDSSB on the ethnonational dimension: (1) exclusive regional; (2) more regional than national; (3) equally regional and national; (4) more national than regional; and (3) exclusive national. On the ethnonational dimension, the middle point of mixed identity is a plausible cutting point.

To test the relationship between the two dimensions empirically, I will rely on the dataset by Edina Szöcsik and Christina Isabel Zuber (Szöcsik & Zuber 2012b). The data on center-periphery dimension of party competition in 22 states (210 parties) were gathered using an expert survey, and the results show that those two dimensions are strongly correlated $r(208) = .85$, $p < .01$ (Figure 1). The more the parties emphasize the distinctive and exclusive identity, the more self-government they demand.

### 2.3 The four types of regionalist parties

Juxtaposing the two dimensions proposed above produces four types of regionalist parties (Figure 2). In the first quadrant, there are regionalist parties who despite having a predominant appeal to the regional population, do not demand territorial restructuring of state power, but only more protection of linguistic or cultural distinctiveness of their region. These parties are labeled ethnoprotectionist regionalist parties. One notable example is Front Democratique des Francophones (FDF). FDF is a Brussels-based party of Brussels French-speakers which initially opposed the transformation of Belgian state into a federation, since that would leave Brussels trapped in Flanders. Nevertheless, Brussels did stay in Flanders, and requirement of bilingualism among state servants was introduced. FDF has opposed this and other policies arguing for the freedom of French speakers to use their language only (Buelens & Van Dyck 1998, 58-59; Van Haute & Pilet 2006, 300-301; Deschouwer 2009, 570-572).

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3The ethnonational dimension was operationalized slightly different than in this work, namely whether a party seeks full congruence of ethnonational identity with borders of a current state or with borders of a new state (Szocsik & Zuber 2012a; Szöcsik & Zuber 2012b). The territorial dimension was operationalized similarly as here, by asking an expert about the extent of self-government that a party seeks (Szocsik & Zuber 2012a).
Figure 1: Correlation matrix between ethnonational and territorial dimension of party competition in 22 countries

The second type is labeled *regional protectionist* party. These parties aim at defending the interests of their region, without seeking any territorial restructuring of the state. On the ethnonational dimension, they are not exclusive to the population in the center, in the sense of evoking a distinct regional identity. The mobilization of regional population is usually based on economic status of their region, general peripheral protest against the center, or low-salience regional identity. Likely regionalist parties that fall into this type are Severočesi and Party for Zeeland, operating in the north of Czech Republic and the southwest of Netherlands, respectively.

The third type, which demands territorial reorganization of state power, but does not restrict its appeal to a regional identity, is labeled *regionalist patriots*. An example of such a party is Tierra Comunera-Partido Nacionalista Castellano (TC-PNC) which runs elections only in Castilla region by demanding the creation of a distinct Castilian region (Miodownik & Cartrite 2006, 16). However, they evoke Castillian identity which for a long time represented the basis for constructing the Spanish nation.

The fourth, and also the most studied, type is labeled *ethnoregionalist parties*. As the label suggests, those parties will emphasize exclusive distinctiveness of their identity, as well as demand substantial territorial restructuring of state power, or even secession (Tursan 1998, 5). One of the most radical demands were put forward by the Scottish National Party (SNP), which seeks independence from the Great Britain, invigorated by participation in the devolved Home Rule institutions and oil reserves in the North Sea (Hepburn 2007a, 65).
This paper goes beyond describing the strategy of HDSSB by uncovering some of the elements of the party’s opportunity structure that guided the party towards adoption of such a strategy. Even though the leaders of HDSSB had some leverage in crafting a new strategy, they were severely constrained by their environment. This section, relying on the tradition of research in territorial politics, outlines the opportunity structure, which steered the party towards the strategy that it adopted. Those elements can be roughly grouped into those that are external and those that are internal to party’s organizational boundaries.

The division between external and internal resources of regionalist parties was elaborated and operationalized in Sydney Tarrow’s book ‘Power in Movements’ (Tarrow 1998), and was adopted by the two volumes on regionalist parties edited by Lieven De Winter, as well as by the subsequent research on the topic (Hepburn 2007b; Massetti 2009b, 8-11; Hepburn & Hough 2012, 79-80). However, the framework was predominantly applied to study the success of regionalist parties. In this paper, I turn one of the ‘independent variables’ laid out by the framework, the party strategy, into a ‘dependent variable’, and trace its sources. Starting with the external approach, elements such as the history of the region, territorial history of Croatia, economic performance, level of decentralization, common culture and the structure of Croatian party competition will be explored with regard to HDSSB.

3 Opportunity structure of HDSSB

Figure 2: Typology of regionalist parties
3.1 External conditions

Croatian war on independence  Past historical developments are an important external resource in region-building efforts, as they often serve as repositories of regional identity (Rokkan & Urwin 1983, 131-134; Hroch 2009). Common history of a territorially concentrated group of people adds to their cohesiveness and enables them to define their identity, to position themselves in relation to other regions, as well as towards the nation-state. Additionally, from a constructivist point of view, Liu and Hilton argue that social representations of history, and not only history itself, have an important effect on group identity (2005, 1-2). Liu and colleagues find that there exists a shared cross-cultural representation of history, and the content which is dominant in the surveyed countries is warfare and political violence in general (2005, 176-179).

Being directly exposed to the 1991-1995 Croatian war of independence and suffering significant casualties and destruction of infrastructure, while serving as a buffer for the rest of Croatia, Slavonian population developed strong feelings of victimhood\(^4\) and martyrdom\(^5\). Those two symbols are the strongest representations of Slavonian history, and constitute the basis of Slavonian identity, which is also reflected in popular culture, such as music (Baker 2009). However, the notions of victimhood and martyrdom were also adopted as the main pillars of the overall Croatian nation-building process orchestrated by the Tudjman’s regime, blurring the boundaries between Slavonian and Croatian identity (Banjeglav 2012, 12-19).

Territorial history of Croatia  The literature on regionalist parties hardly ever mentions the territorial history of a country when accounting for their strategies. The fact that a country lost a part of its territory (either through war or peaceful secession) might trigger strong anti-regionalist (unionist) sentiments among the population in the center. As Ackren and Lindström argue, Finnish people were very sensitive towards separatist demands coming from Åland islands, since Finnish history is marked by foreign domination and annexation of Finnish territory (Ackren & Lindstrom 2011, 15). Similarly, Serbian recent loss of Kosovo and constant demands for strengthening the autonomy of Vojvodina have turned the Serbian population against the peripheral territorial demands (Djordjević 2012, 188).

As the response to the projects of nation- and state-building led by Tudjman regime, rebellious minority Serbs took control of parts of Croatian territory

\(^4\)The notion of victimhood particularly stems from the Ovčara massacre that happened after the fall of Vukovar. In days following the fall, around 200 patients from the city’s hospital were taken to a nearby farm, tortured and executed. This event is commemorated every year in Vukovar at the event known as the ‘memory walk’.

\(^5\)The notion of martyrdom originates in the participation of Slavonia in the defense system against Turks (Vojna Krajina), when it was given the flattering epithet of *antemurale christianitatis* Holjevac 2006, 104-105; Grgin 2003, 88. During the Croatian war for independence, Eastern Slavonia was able to hold the attacks, which gave some space to Croatian military to recruit new volunteers and to regroup
around the town of Knin, in the so called 'log revolution', which has subsequently grown into the full-blown war, leaving the third of Croatian territory occupied (Bjelajac & Žunec 2007, 15). Those events only reinforced the unitary discourse, discouraging any movement seeking any self-governance. With those circumstances in mind, there is no wonder why the emergence of Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS) in Istria was by Tudjman effectively equated with Serbian secessionism (Jović 1992, 178-179). IDS was portrayed as 'autonomist', or even as a traitor, after they decided to proclaim a demilitarized zone in Istria (Ashbrook 2006, 636).

**Economic performance of Slavonia**  Economic situation in a region is argued to be one of the most important sources of regionalist mobilization, and surely to be exploited by regionalist parties if the opportunity arises (Rokkan & Urwin 1983; Fitjar 2007; Fitjar 2010). There are two main strands in the theory on the link between state of economy and rise of regionalism, reflecting the notion of unequal territorial diffusion of economic resources (Geller 1964, 166 in: Williams 1977, 275).

The first maintains that inhabitants of rich regions are the ones likely to develop regional sentiments (De Winter 1998, 217; Keating 1997, 389; Fitjar 2006; Fitjar 2010, 528). By being more productive than their 'lazy' compatriots in other regions, they develop a sense of pride about their accomplishments, and refuse to share their wealth with the rest of the country. On the other hand, the 'poor region' account drawing on the 'internal colonialism' literature, has emphasized the exploiting nature of central government rule over peripheral territories, and depicts the central government as the one to blame for underdevelopment of a peripheral territory (Hechter 1973, 323-324; Hechter 1975, 8-9; Williams 1977, 273; Beatriz & Chaloult 1979, 86; Massetti & Schakel 2015, 867).

The two macroeconomic measures that are most commonly used in the literature on political economy of elections are GDP per capita and unemployment (Roberts 2008, 539). The Figure 3 illustrates the fluctuation of GDP per capita (in EUR) in five Slavonian counties, and compares it with the overall GDP per capita of Croatia. It is easily noticeable that the GDP per capita of the five Slavonian counties was constantly under the national average. Moreover, it has varied with the overall GDP of Croatia, which testifies that the economy of Slavonia is deeply embedded into the economic system of Croatia. Figure 4 reveals the similar pattern for unemployment, since the number of unemployed started to drop from 2002 and the trend reversed its course in 2008 when the global economic crises started to affect the Croatian economy. Being fairly developed region before the war, Eastern Slavonia lost 90% of its pre-war industrial capacity, which led to the rise in unemployment rate of 50% (Smoljan 2010, 29-30).

**Decentralization**  As will be argued in the next section, territorial restructuring of state power is the 'core business' of regionalist parties, and those parties
will react if there is an incongruence between the actual and their preferred level of decentralization (Muller-Rommel 1998, 25; Bochsler 2010b, 809-811). However, the literature on regionalist parties is not completely at terms about the direction of self-government demands that a regionalist party will apply.

The first strand of the literature argues that political and fiscal decentralization facilitates the rise of regionalist parties, as regionalist parties can get representation (and therefore visibility and experience in office) once decision-making functions are devolved from the central state to the regional and local levels (Chhibber & Kollman 1998; Brancati 2006, 681; Brancati 2007, 158; Mas-
setti & Schakel 2013). On the other hand, Keating (1997, 389) argues that it is not necessarily the case that all regionalist parties will prefer more decentralization. Relying on the notion of ‘integrative regionalism’, he argues that poor regions will seek more centralization to tie themselves even closer to the national treasury. Therefore, there is an overlooked interaction between wealth and decentralization that was not given enough credit.

Since 1990, Croatia has been a unitary and centralized state, mostly due to the challenge of the war that it faced (Petak 2012, 77). More importantly, powerful local and regional governments are often seen as an impediment to modernization, as well as to nation-building process (Keating 2008, 61-62). The new government elected in the 2000 elections passed the ‘decentralization package’, with an aim to decentralize decision-making and administration of several policies (Ott & Bajo 2002, 12; Jurlina-Alibegović 2002, 6; Jurlina-Alibegović & Slijepčević 2012, 5). However, sound fiscal decentralization did not follow, and the reform failed. Figure 5 shows the level of decentralization in comparison with various CEE states, indicating that the Croatian fiscal decentralization index is among the lowest, and has sunk even lower after the 2001 reform.

![Figure 5: Fiscal decentralization index in CEE (1993-2010) (Source: Aristovnik 2012, 12)](image)

**Ethnicity** Presence of a distinct ethnic community in a region is likely to lead to emergence of regional sentiments and, consequentially, will make it easier for a regionalist party to get a grip in a region ((De Winter 1998, 214-219); Paasi 2009, 126). As Bochsler shows empirically, party system nationalization is negatively and substantially influenced by the existence of divisions around ethnic lines (Bochsler 2010a), and a rational strategy for a regionalist party is to mobilize those ethnic grievances when no mediating incentives are in place. As can be seen from the Table 1, however, the substantial majority of inhabitants of Slavonia declare themselves as ethnic Croats.
## Table 1: Ethnic composition of Slavonia and Baranja County 2001 census 2011 census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2001 census</th>
<th></th>
<th>2011 census</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virovitica-Podravina county</td>
<td>93389</td>
<td>83554</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>84836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Požega-Slavonia county</td>
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<td>76118</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>78033</td>
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<tr>
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<td>166129</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>158575</td>
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<tr>
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<td>330506</td>
<td>277245</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>305032</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vukovar-Srijem county</td>
<td>204768</td>
<td>160277</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>179521</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Past cleavages

Another external aspect in studying strategies of regionalist parties are the existing cleavages. Existing cleavages may structure party competition to an extent that it is too costly to break loose from a well entrenched pattern of party competition (Enyedi 2005, 700; Bornschier 2008, 5). Even though parties are capable of opening up new cleavages, as well as downplaying old ones, a structural account of party system can provide a plausible toolkit for analyzing persistence of party system formats. The Croatian party system is strongly influenced by the long-term historical developments (Zakošek & Čular 2003, 2). The basic cleavage originates from the split between sympathizers of ustasha\(^6\) regime and those who sympathize with the communist-led resistance movement\(^7\) during the Second World War (Henjak 2007, 72-73). While frozen during the communist rule, this issue was early after Croatian independence politicized and set the course for future operation of Croatian party system (Čular & Gregurić 2007, 13). The costs of defection from this pattern are substantial, as politicizing new cleavages was a futile strategy for most of the new and splinter parties (Čular & Henjak 2013, 18).

### 3.2 Internal conditions

Apart from external conditions, increasing number of studies is devoted to studying internal resources of regionalist parties, which are more open to manipulation by those actors. In line with the renewed interest in the role of agency in cleavage formation (Enyedi 2005; Deegan-Krause & Enyedi 2010), there is an increasing awareness that structural factors alone go only half-way in explaining the process and the outcome of regionalist party mobilization strategy. Internal approach looks primarily at the party leadership, which has often been the strong wind in the sails of regionalist parties (De Winter et al. 2006, 253). Another commonly studied internal resource is party organization (De Winter et al. 2006, 253-255). Those parties also differ in their origin, as they might either rise autonomously or be a splinter party from a larger regional or even a national party (Strmiska 2003, 4).

\(^6\)Fascist regime which held power from 1941 to 1944, supported Axis powers.
\(^7\)Led by Josip Broz Tito, who later became the president of Yugoslavia.
Leadership role of Branimir Glavaš  

Regionalist parties often rely on a strong charismatic leader who is the founding father of the party and is the main resource to those parties in the early stages of development (De Winter et al. 2006, 253). Referring to the Harmel and Svasand label of 'father and preacher', De Winter argues that those leaders usually not only founded the party, but have been the main developers of ideology, organization, and more importantly, they were effective in transmitting the ideology to common people using simple and inflammatory language. In a way, a leader becomes an embodiment of the movement, and the main reference point for party supporters and opponents. Lega Nord's Umberto Bossi, who was once reported to say 'The League is me' (Agnew 1995, 160-161), is a telling example of a successful strategy development through authoritarian leadership and effective communication (Giordano 2000, 458; Tarchi 2002, 125-126).

The 'founder and preacher' of HDSSB is Branimir Glavaš, who was arguably the most important internal resource in devising party's strategy. Glavaš has been a very intriguing figure in Croatian politics, but the constrains of space allow me to highlight only some of the most relevant events from his career that have a bearing on the strategy of HDSSB. His legitimacy stems both from his military and political roles. During the war of Croatian independence, Glavaš served as the commander in chief of defense of Osijek in times when the city was surrounded, and managed to keep the enemy forces out of the city. Politically, his career as the county governor of Osijek-Baranja County, from 1992 to 2000, allowed him to further reinforce his charisma, as well as to build extensive clientelist networks that will come handy in the early years of HDSSB development.

After a fierce conflict with then-president of HDZ Ivo Sanader, Glavaš was expelled from the party in 2005, but went on to start his regionalist initiative in form of HDSSB\(^8\). With his background as a leader of Slavonian HDZ and charisma of a decorated war general, he was able to bring together a group of Slavonia 'noblemen', also known as Initial Circle of the Initiative. Moreover, he managed to attract high number of Slavonian HDZ members and voters, and soon the electoral results followed the organizational consolidation.

Yet, only couple of months after his first electoral success, Glavaš faced serious war crime allegations put forward by one of his subordinates, and soon ended up in remand prison. After a long trial, during which Glavaš held several hunger strikes to protest against 'politically constructed allegations by PM Sanader', he was sentenced to a 10-year prison in 2009. Feeling that he might be sentenced, he escaped to Bosnia and Herzegovina few days before. Until September 2010, Glavaš was in Drinovci, where the presidency of the party visiting him on monthly basis. However, in June 2010, the prison sentence for Glavaš was confirmed by the Croatian Supreme court, and the contract on judicial cooperation between Croatia and BH was signed. Glavaš was arrested in

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\(^8\)This initial initiative was named Croatian Democratic Assembly of Slavonia and Baranja, unlike the party which is called Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja, yet the acronym stayed the same. Those two organizations exist in parallel.
September 2010, and was imprisoned in Mostar. During that period, the party changed the president, as Dragan Vulin replaced Vladimir Šišljačić. In January 2015, the Constitutional Court overruled the sentence by the Supreme Court, which opened the opportunity for him to stand as a candidate at the 2015 and 2016 parliamentary elections, as well as to be more involved in the party.

Organizational features and electoral performance

Another internal resource of regionalist parties noted by De Winter and his colleagues is their organizational structure. Even though there is no uniform organizational framework that those parties follow, there are some features that they have in common (De Winter et al. 2006, 253-254). With regard to degree of encadrement (ratio of members to voters), they tend to perform rather poorly compared to nationwide parties. Consequentially, they often have to rely on clientelist linkages, which are feasible since the clients are concentrated on a small territory, allowing for effective monitoring and enforcing of clientelist contracts (Kitschelt 2000, 865-866).

The most decisive organizational feature of HDSSB is its origin, since this party is a splinter of HDZ. When Glavaš formed the party in 2006, he attracted many Slavonian HDZ members, and they can be found at the leading positions within the party (Glavaš himself, president Šišljačić and MP Drmić). Being a splinter party in Croatia is a mixed blessing: they certainly crippled HDZ in Slavonia and managed to attract experienced cadre needed to form a young party. On the other hand, as Ćular and Henjak argue, splinter parties of HDZ are often struggling to keep their heads above water when they go alone. They see HDSSB as the only splinter party of HDZ that managed to ‘survive and thrive’ (Ćular & Henjak 2013, 25). Unfortunately, there are no reliable figures on the number of party members.

Aiming to focus on the strategy of HDSSB, this paper will present the electoral performance of HDSSB only in passing. Even though different criteria of electoral success should be applied to regionalist parties (Schakel & Jeffery 2012, 7-8), HDSSB managed to become relevant even in the national politics. Their first success at the national level was at the 2007 elections, where they managed to keep the three MP’s they had before the elections to the 151-member Croatian parliament (Table 2). At the 2011 elections, they managed to increase their vote share in both 4th and 5th electoral district by 6 and 5 percentage points, respectively. Since they were joined by another MP after the elections, they held 7 seats during the 2011-2015 parliamentary term, making them the fourth largest party. At the 2015 national elections, their vote share dropped in both Slavonian constituencies, resulting in 2 parliamentary seats. At the 2013 EP elections (Croatia as a single electoral district), as a part of their first-ever coalition (with a Dalmatian sister party and Croatian Greens), HDSSB obtained 3.01% votes. In 2014 regular EP elections, they widened the coalition, surpassed the threshold but fell short of receiving a seat.

The results of local elections in the five Slavonian counties allow for a more fine-grained analysis, revealing important spatial patterns of HDSSB organiza-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>EP</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Votes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>31795 (15.23%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>44687 (21.66%)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>21849 (11.6%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Regional organizational capacity and electoral support. One strategy of regionalist parties is *de facto* demarcation of ‘their’ territory by contesting the municipalities belonging to the region they aim to represent (Miodownik & Cartrite 2006, 17). Even though it is obvious that the electoral base of HDSSB is the Osijek-Baranja County (upper-right quadrant on the map), they nevertheless compete in all five counties in order to establish themselves as representatives of the whole region. Comparing the results of 2011 elections with those from 2009, it is visible that besides strengthening their performance in the core county, HDSSB spread to nearby counties. However, the best results outside of the core county were achieved in municipalities bordering the core county, while performance at the western edge of the region is modest. Such results could indicate limited party organizational capacities, as well as an imperfect correspondence between *de jure* county borders and *de facto* identity of the inhabitants at the western edges of the region.

Figure 6: Local elections in 2009
4 Methodology

The analysis of the strategy of HDSSB along the two dimensions relies on qualitative content analysis of newspaper articles, as well as of self-produced content, such as party press releases, prison letters from Glavaš, and official party documents (party manifestos and statutes). This procedure goes more in depth than usual quantitative measures of party placement through manifesto coding or expert surveys, which allows for capturing the complexity of responses that HDSSB offered, in face of the structure of opportunities surrounding the party.

The newspaper articles are selected from one major national newspaper (Večernji list) and the largest regional newspaper (Glas Slavonije). Sampling techniques in qualitative content analysis aim to be purposeful, rather than random (White & Marsh 2006, 36-37; Forman & Damschroder 2008, 43). Therefore, the timing of newspaper articles is restricted to one month before the 2005 local elections and the 2007 national elections. For the 2011 national elections, only articles that were published 15 days before the elections were collected. The self-produced content was downloaded from the webpages of the party and from the personal website of Glavaš.

The typology developed in the conceptualization section will guide the data collection process and will be useful for initial coding of the text (deductive approach), but it cannot capture fully the specific components of the strategy (specific issues) that a particular party on this two-dimensional space has developed. To allow for this fine-tuning (inductive approach) (Adcock & Collier 2001, 533-534), qualitative analysis requires only ’sensitizing concepts’, rather...
than a sharp conceptualization used in quantitative studies. Therefore, the analysis is a mix of inductive and deductive approach (White & Marsh 2006, 34; Elo & Kyngäis 2008, 111), or more technically, directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, 1281).

The coding scheme follows the two dimensions, self-government and identity, as well as several subthemes, and those codes are then applied to the statements found in the content being analyzed. The self-government theme is divided into the following subthemes: poverty of Slavonia and Baranja; centralization of Croatia; solution of the poverty issue via decentralization; ‘anti-autonomism’. The ethnonational theme is divided into the following subthemes: defending the ‘civil war’ narrative; Slavonia as the ‘birthplace’ of Croatia; decriminalization of generals; invoking Slavonian identity.

5 Analysis and Discussion

5.1 HDSSB on the self-government dimension

To better understand the position of HDSSB on the self-government dimension, the analysis starts with references of HDSSB to the economic status of the region of Slavonia and Baranja. As discussed earlier, economic status has a great potential for regionalist mobilization, both in cases when a region in question is richer, and when it is poorer than the rest of the country. Together with a distinct identity, economic inequality is a strong base for demands on territorial restructuring. Indeed, HDSSB did not miss to emphasize the relative poverty of Slavonia noted earlier. In one of his interviews, Šišljagić claims that:

Slavonia and Baranja is the poorest Croatian region, full of minefields, with devastated agriculture, backward economy, with the highest percentages of unemployed that results in young highly educated people leaving to Zagreb or even abroad.

(Glas Slavonije, 17 November 2007)

Relative centralization of Croatia, which was shown empirically by Aristovnik’s fiscal decentralization index, was also decried by HDSSB. Heavy fiscal dependence of local government, where majority of revenues come from taxes and grants, neither controlled by the local government, led former MP, Ivan Drmić, to voice his concerns over the budgetary process:

From 90 billion kuna in the state budget, only 10 billion goes to local government, out of which 5 billion goes to Zagreb. Remaining 5 billion is divided among all other towns and municipalities, which means that local government does not even get back the funds that were taken from it.

(Glas Slavonije, 6 May 2005)

Consistent with the ‘poor region’ account, HDSSB successfully linked fiscal centralization of the country with the relative poverty of Slavonia, thus offering
rational discourse that goes beyond simple claims of a region to its 'right of self-government'. The main target of their complaints are the counties whose number (21) and functions have proven to be short of the developmental tasks set before them:

Existing counties as the forms of territorial (sub-regional) self-government are inadequately equipped for taking over significant decentralized functions, they are too narrow, which leaves them without the capability to lead the developmental policy which requires regional scope.

(HDSSB manifesto, 9 October 2007)

The solution offered by the party goes beyond the 'protectionist' category offered by Dandoy, as they promote territorial restructuring of state power in favor of lower tiers of government. There are several demands that point to this conclusion. First, the goal of regionalization includes abolishment of counties and establishment of five regions: Slavonia and Baranja, Northwest Croatia, City of Zagreb, Southwest Croatia and Dalmatia. The regions that would be created should be equipped with the more extensive powers than those of the current counties, to be capable of performing their developmental tasks. Secondly, they demand the reestablishment of the second chamber, the House of Regions, which would co-decide on the state budget. Thirdly, since Slavonia is an agricultural region, transferring the Ministry of Agriculture to Osijek is also considered. Next, when seeking more political powers, they often invoke the principle of subsidiarity, where regional political institutions would be modeled on 'historical Italian and Spanish regions':

Subsidiarity with regard to vertical division of state power stands for the transfer of powers to low order group of people or institutions. Democratic articulation and representation of region’s interests should be carried out through ‘regional parliament’, House of Regions and state parliament... Regional assembly would be elected at the elections. Head of region executive would be directly elected.

(Manifesto of Assembly, 2005)

Finally, since poverty of Slavonia is perceived to be caused by the limited fiscal resources of the region, major fiscal decentralization is sought to facilitate developmental efforts by newly formed regions. Thus, solution to the poverty of the region is sought in political, fiscal and administrative decentralization, rather than in ‘integrative regionalism’ discussed by Keating:

The state has to allocate to the local government at least 30% of total government revenues, so that the future five regions with significantly more powers than present counties could initiate the development of the whole of Croatia.

(Glas Slavonije, 26 November 2011)

Candidates from HDSSB list in 4th electoral district... sent a message that Slavonia has its own party that demands for 20% of state budget to be invested in Slavonia, since this is the percentage of Croatian citizens that lives in this area.
However, despite the demands for more extensive self-government put forward, the HDSSB leaders hesitate from using the word ‘autonomy’. On the contrary, one of the most often repeated phrases in the articles and self-produced content is: ‘we are against autonomism’. The external constraint at play here is the territorial history of Croatia, with occupation in 1990 being the most traumatic experience that led to ‘anti-autonomist’ feelings among Croatian public. Pointing out the non-separatist nature of his movement while responding to his critics (most notably HDZ), Glavaš was particularly clear on the issue:

They have been calling us ‘autonomists’, destroyers of the Croatian state. Our idea of a strong region that demands higher proportion of transfers from the central state treasury was portrayed as the intention of secession… five years ago, this sick project was led by Ivo Sanader.

(Address of Glava, 28 August 2010)

Going beyond defense against accusations, the party uses inflammatory language to condemn what they perceive as selling off parts of Croatian territory:

HDSSB once again expresses its sharp opposition to the arbitration agreement with the Republic of Slovenia, as this represents the severe threat to the national interests of the Republic of Croatia. Signing the agreement in this form stands for the shameless selling of the Croatian territory, which can be compared to the act of treason committed by the chief of Independent State of Croatia (NDH) Ante Pavelić when he signed the Rome treaties in May 1941.

(HDSSB press release, 8 October 2009)

The strategy of HDSSB along the self-government dimension has the characteristics of a decentralist type, since they argue for scrapping the old counties and introducing regions that would be larger in size and equipped with more fiscal resources. On the other hand, HDSSB does not go further by seeking autonomy, and does not reach the threshold of the ‘autonomist category’. On the contrary, they strongly denied the accusations of being ‘autonomists’, thus imposing upon themselves a restriction on how far they can get close to the secessionist pole of the self-government dimension, which is a rare feature of the regionalist party strategy.

5.2 HDSSB on the ethnonational dimension

The ethnonational dimension captures the attitudes towards a population in the center, which range from exclusive regional to exclusive national appeal. The argument put forward here is that the attitude of HDSSB towards the symbols of the modern Croatian identity, such as the Croatian war on independence (Banjeglav 2012, 10-11) and Croatian generals is strongly positive. The attitude of HDSSB towards the official narrative about the war on independence is a nice illustration. This narrative emphasizes the international, rather than civil character of the war, according to which Croatia as an independent country
was attacked by Yugoslavia. The former Croatian PM Zoran Milanović gave a statement where he drew the parallel between the war in 1990s and the 1917 Finnish Civil war, provoking a harsh critique from HDSSB:

The statement of the Prime Minister Zoran Milanović, where he regards the war destruction and the atrocities committed towards Croatian people by Great Serbian and četnik aggressors during the Homeland war as the consequences of a ‘civil war’, and not as the criminal aggression of Serbia, Montenegro and the so-called JNA (Yugoslav National Army) on Republic of Croatia, is an act of national treason.

(HDSSB press release, 17 March 2013)

Not only is the party strongly attached to the Croatian state, but portrays Slavonia as the ‘birthplace’ of Croatia, drawing from its martyr role during the war on independence described earlier. The ethnic composition of Slavonia, with almost 90% of Croatians, is also a constraining factor. At the HDSSB rally in Djakovo, Vladimir Šišljagić pointed out:

We were dreaming about the rich Croatia, where education is available to all, we were dreaming about the Croatia where our children will find a job after their education and be decently paid for that, and then deservedly retire. In Slavonia, where Croatia was created, we have to bring pride to Croatian people after 20 years, after it has been destroyed by left and right who stole from their people.

(Glas Slavonije, 28 November 2011)

Generals of the Homeland war are usually portrayed as heroes among the Croatian public, but recent trials that were led against some of them (such as the case of Glavaš) raised suspicion about their role in crimes committed against Serb civilians (Soldić 2009, 1-5). While the imprisonment of Ante Gotovina was decried by the majority of the Croatian public, Glavaš was not in such a favorable position. However, in the party statements, achievements of generals, as well as their possible guilt, are usually collectivized to include Glavaš into the ‘heroes’ narrative, with the aim of legitimizing his struggle against war crime allegations. Issue of sentencing Glavaš is therefore framed as a witch hunt against all Croatian generals:

We were not dreaming of such Croatia, with 300000 unemployed, where people work without getting paid, or cannot live from their salary. Those who gave lives for this country did not die so that Croatian generals would be imprisoned; such as Ante Gotovina in the Hague and Branimir Glavaš in Mostar.

(Glas Slavonije, 28 November 2011)

However, despite its strong attachment to the identity of the population at the center, the statements of the HDSSB do contain appeals to Slavonians, thus moving the party away from the exclusive national pole of the ethnontational dimension. The reasons for adopting the strategy of Slavonian identity construction should be fairly obvious, since construction of a regional identity usually follows the demands of self-government: in the short run, they aim
to homogenize their electorate to establish their presence in the Croatian parliament; in the long run, reference to the Slavonian identity is a part of the region-building process. The next two quotes show reference to Slavonians:

Between the mechanical raising of hands with a sticking plaster on our mouth and the struggle for a better life of Slavonian people and our entire region, we have chosen the more difficult path.

*(Glas Slavonije, 22 April 2005)*

It is time that Slavonians and Baranians raise their voice and say that they no longer want to live in the misery, with a high level of unemployment.

*(Glas Slavonije, 12 May 2005)*

As on the self-government dimension, where HDSSB had to repeatedly refute the accusations of being ‘autonomist’, the ethnonational dimension produces the same paradox. Even though they consider Slavonia as the cradle of Croatia, they do attempt to construct a Slavonian identity, which is instrumental for their demands of territorial restructuring of state power. However, advocating Slavonian identity becomes a serious credibility constraint that has to be surpassed, which is the main point of this paper.

One does not have to go further than the party’s name and symbols to see this tension. As Ishiyama and Breuning argue in the recent study, by adopting a certain name, ethnic parties signal to voters the extent to which they are ready to include different identities in their program (2011, 231). In the case of HDSSB, both identities are present in the party’s name (Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja), which sends an important message about its dual identity. Moreover, the statements of party leaders, which inspired the title of this paper, add to this argument.

'Slavonia deserves more and Croatia deserves better’, said Dinko Burić.

'HDSSB knows how to use the wealth of Slavonia and Baranja for the advancement of the country’

*(Glas Slavonije, 25 November 2011)*

The proverb ‘Think globally, act locally’ I translate as ‘Think Croatian, act Slavonian’. In other words, without the strong Slavonia, there is no strong Croatia.

*(Glas Slavonije, 28 November 2011).*

As the analysis shows, HDSSB has a strong reference to the Croatian state and its population, even to the point where they might be considered Croatian nationalists. Particularly strong are the references to the symbols of the Croatian statehood, where the war on independence and the generals who led some of the military operations are defended against the ‘civil war’ thesis and the criminalization tendencies, respectively. This has positioned them strongly on the TAN pole of the GAL-TAN dimension, and is also reflected in their pre-electoral coalition with the Croatian Conservative Party in 2016 parliamentary elections, first ever in national elections.
On the other hand, HDSSB does not appeal exclusively to the Croatian identity, as they resorted to construction of the Slavonian identity. Nevertheless, Slavonians are considered at most as a subpopulation of the population in the center. In those shifts between the two identities, however, tensions to tend to emerge to the surface. Similarly to the English region of Cotswolds, which was portrayed as the ideal version of England (Brace 1999, 90-92), those tensions are addressed by presenting flourishing of Slavonia as the precondition for flourishing of Croatia, and the Slavonian identity is portrayed as the essence of the Croatian identity.

5.3 Regionalist patriots category and its implications

The argument of the previous section suggests that HDSSB falls into the regionalist patriot category of regionalist parties, for its demands for territorial restructuring of Croatia and ceding more powers to lower tiers, as well as for its adherence to Croatian identity. Since the two dimensions underlying the categorization of regionalist parties are strongly correlated (r = 0.85), it is no surprise that this category was overlooked by the previous literature.

One injustice done to regionalist parties has been equating them with ethnoregionalist parties. Paradoxically, Miodownik (2006, 2) argues for bringing the territoriality back into the study of territorial politics, but his units of analysis are ethnoregionalist parties, thus effectively eliminating non-ethnic regionalist parties from the discussion. One reason might be that those parties are usually seen as having an exclusive group identity, which is up to a point understandable, since there is a high correlation between the two dimensions (0.85). Nevertheless, this work responds to the call of Gomez-Reino (2008, 6), who argues that not all parties have exclusive group identity, and a new categorization of regionalist parties is developed to allow for non-ethnic parties from ethnically homogeneous states to be included into the study of territorial party competition.

Rather than on ethnic basis, regionalist patriots often mobilize on the basis of economic grievances with the central state. Although economic aspect of regionalism has been put forwards in the past by the ‘internal colonialism’ literature (Hechter 1975), the contributions to the special issue of Regional & Federal Studies on regionalist parties still describe economic dimension of territorial demands as the area which has been neglected by the literature on regionalist parties (Hepburn 2009, 484; Jeffery 2009, 642-643). As Jeffery argues, sometimes it is the economic issues which are the main drivers of territorial mobilization, while ethnic ones are inexistent. Regionalist parties in both rich and poor regions, whose populations are not ethnically distinct from the center, might adopt the strategy of regionalist patriots. With that, they would avoid the accusations of ‘autonomism’ set forth by statewide competitors, while still bringing up economic issues and demanding self-government on that basis.

Most of the Western European states were exposed, yet to varying degrees, to the wave of decentralization reform. One consequence is that decentralization
is no longer seen as the dependent variable, caused by the success of regionalist parties, but as the independent variable which affects the strategies, organization and electoral fortunes of regionalist parties (Massetti & Schakel 2013, 5; Brancati 2006, 657-660). This resulted in centralized countries and regionalist parties that operate within those countries being left out of the mainstream literature. However, many federalized states were once centralized, and the development of regionalist parties was one of the main causes of this decentralization (e.g. Belgium). This process was nicely shown in the study by Alonso (2012).

This type of regionalist party may have policy implications for Croatia and other centralized states of Central and Eastern Europe, whose peripheries are not ethnically distinct from the center. Development and strengthening of regionalist parties in those countries may in future compel their statewide counterparts to initiate devolution reforms, thus responding to the ‘peripheral threat’. Theoretical implication of this possible course of events is that the scholarship on territorial party competition might have to return to its roots, and rediscover decentralization as a consequence of success of regionalist parties. Studying the category of regionalist patriots is worthwhile, since they have already proven themselves as important actors in bringing up the issue of territorial reform in centralized states (e.g Serbia), and might be a crucial link to future non-ethnically driven decentralization reforms.

6 Conclusion

Europe has witnessed an upsurge of territorial politics in the last couple of decades, and Croatia, even though being a young democracy, followed the trend. While the rise of Istrian regionalism (in form of IDS) was not unexpected, the rise of another regionalist party, Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja, came like a bolt from the blue. To circumvent many obstacles standing in its efforts for regional mobilization, the party developed an interesting strategy. To better capture the strategy of HDSSB, this paper proposes a new typology of regionalist parties based on the two most salient dimensions of center-periphery cleavage. The first dimension is the self-government dimension, where regionalist parties take position depending on the scope of territorial restructuring of the state power that they seek. The second dimension, namely ethnonational, captures the appeal toward the population in the center. Juxtaposing those two dimensions produced four types of regionalist parties.

To systematize the opportunities and constraints that HDSSB faced while devising its strategy, I apply the framework of external and internal resources (De Winter & Tursan 1998). From the resources that are external to HDSSB, this work covers Slavonia’s history, Croatia’s territorial history, Slavonia’s economic relationship with the center, level of decentralization, presence or absence of different culture in the region and the strength of existing cleavages. Among the internal resources studies there are leadership role of Branimir Glavaš and
HDSSB organizational features.

The position of HDSSB on the self-government dimension is the demand for creating new regions, accompanied by devolution and substantial fiscal decentralization, as well as for the revival of the second chamber. On the other hand, the degree of self-government sought is not high enough to place the HDSSB in the autonomist group. This positioning is the result of the external opportunities, such as the unfavorable economic relationship of Slavonia with the center and the heavy centralization, which was framed as the facilitator of economic downturn of Slavonia. As for the constraints, the HDSSB inherited both party organization and voters from HDZ, which coupled with anti-autonomist atmosphere among Croatians, kept HDSSB away from demands for autonomy.

The position of the HDSSB on the ethnonational dimension is marked by its dual identity, where the appeal towards the population in the center is combined with the appeal to Slavonians. The major external constraint against appealing more to the inhabitants of Slavonia is that they are not ethnically and linguistically different from the rest of the population, followed by the narrative of Slavonian victimhood and the role of martyr of Croatia in the war. As for the internal constraints, they maintain strong nationalist rhetoric of defending the war on independence against criminalization in their struggle to prove the innocence of Branimir Glavaš.

This study adds to the literature on regionalism and regionalist political parties in several respects. To my knowledge, this is the first systematic study of the HDSSB, and one of the few that explored regionalism and regionalist parties in Croatia. The HDSSB is a case of economic regionalism, since the most common explanation of regionalism, namely the ethnic distinctiveness, is not present in the case of Slavonia. But contrary to the mainstream study of rich regions and their demands for self-government, this study aimed to show that not only there can be a rise of regionalism in poor regions, but this regionalism can lead to demands for self-government.

On a more conceptual note and with an aim of bringing the territoriality back in, this study proposes the new categorization of regionalist parties, based on two of the most important dimensions of territorial party competition. Using the case of HDSSB, this study elaborates on an understudied category of regionalist patriots, regionalist parties that are most likely to rise in ethnically homogeneous countries. Future research should give more prominence to those regionalist parties, since their predecessors have already proven themselves capable of putting the territorial reform on the agenda in centralized countries, even while facing the constraint of ethnically homogeneous nation.

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