Cutting the mists of the Black Mountain: *Cleavages in Montenegro's divide over statehood and identity*

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The two decades of Montenegro's transition that followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia were marked by the transformation of the ambitions of the ruling political elites, which pushed the republic that once sought to be a member in a federal state towards independence. The shift in the agendas of the political elites also changed the meaning of the notions of "Montenegrin" and "Serb". Hence, this paper looks at the cleavages that emerged during Montenegro's divide over statehood and identity. It asserts that elite competition in unconsolidated states prompts the emergence of ethno-cultural cleavages, which are necessary for establishing the identities of political elites and of their followers. The study first identifies the critical junctures for the emergence of functional and structural cleavages in Montenegro and associates these cleavages with the changing political context. It proceeds with an analysis of ethno-cultural cleavages, arguing that these emerged from the politicization of historical narratives. The study concludes by arguing that different types of cleavages supported the division over statehood and identity, and that as a result of the changes in identity in Montenegro, the political reinforcement of overlapping cleavages was essential in order to cement the ethno-cultural identities of the two camps.

Keywords: Montenegrin; Serb; identity; cleavage; ethno-cultural

Introduction

Statehood and nationhood has been in flux in Montenegro over the past two decades. Since 1992, Montenegro has been a republic in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), a member state in Serbia and Montenegro (from 2002–2006), and an independent state (from 2006 onwards). There has been a corresponding shift in people's ethnic/national identifications, largely as a result of the association of the category "Montenegrin" with independent statehood, and "Serb" with the preservation of the common state with Serbia. These dynamics are reflected in the contrasting referendum results of 1992 and 2006, as well as in the different census results of 1991 and 2003.

On 1 March 1992, when the first referendum on the independence of Montenegro was held, 95.4%[1] of voters (from a 66% turnout) opted for Montenegro to remain in a common state with the other former Yugoslav republics wishing to do so (ICG 2000, 6). At the population census conducted a year before, 61.9% of the population defined themselves as Montenegrins, 9.4% as Serbs, while the remainder were of different minorities (Federal Statistical Office 1992). Considering that in 1991, ethnic minorities boycotted the referendum, the data indicate that the majority of the people in Montenegro at the time defined themselves as "Montenegrins" and preferred a common state with Serbia to independence.

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The results of the second referendum on independence in Montenegro, held on 21 May 2006, were quite different, and not just because the turnout was higher (86.5%). Independent statehood was supported by 55.5%, while the preservation of the union with Serbia was supported by 44.5% (CDT 2006 "Referendum 21/05/2006"). At the population census of 2003, 43.2% of people in Montenegro declared their national identity as "Montenegrin", while 32% professed it as "Serb" (Zavod za Statistiku Crne Gore "2003 Population Census of Montenegro"). Given that – as a result of their instrumentalization in the pre-referendum years (Bieber 2003, 11–42) – minorities supported independence in 2006, the above data indicate that the majority of the population who voted for the preservation of the common state defined themselves as "Serb", and the lion's share of the people who voted for independence identified themselves as "Montenegrins".

As an epilogue to these swift changes of identity, the most recent population census indicates that the national/ethnic identification of the population has largely stabilized, although there is still some fluidity (Zavod za Statistiku Crne Gore 2011 "2011 Population Census of Montenegro"). In 2011, 28.7% and 45% of the population declared themselves as "Serb" and "Montenegrin" respectively (Zavod za Statistiku Crne Gore 2011 "2011 Population Census of Montenegro"). The aim of this paper is to explore how ethnic/national identifications have changed as a result of the deep structural conflict that emerged during the 15 years of Montenegro's transition and how this conflict was channelled both into the political arena and into social life. In terms of the former, the main source of conflict took place in 1997. The ruling Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), the heir of the Communist Party, split into two factions that quickly bifurcated the republic's political scene. While the DPS remained the dominant political actor in Montenegro, the opposition was formed through the coalescence of political forces around the Socialist People's Party (SNP). Initially, the conflict was over the issue of whether to support or oppose Milošević's regime, with the SNP choosing the former, and the DPS the latter. Yet, with the demise of the Milošević regime in 2000, the changing agendas of the political players offset the divide over statehood and identity in Montenegro. Gradually, the DPS became the proponent of Montenegrin independence and a separate Montenegrin ethnic identity, while the SNP promoted the common state with Serbia and a Montenegrin ethnic identity indistinct from that of the Serbs.

In examining this translation of conflict into politics, the paper focuses on the cleavages that emerged during Montenegro's divide over statehood and identity. It views cleavages in a Rokkanian fashion, which explains the formation of political parties in Western Europe (Rokkan 1970 "Citizens, Elections, Parties"; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan 1999 "State Formation"). Hence, cleavages are representations of conflict and divisions in democratic societies, which emerge as an outcome of structural processes, such as modernization, national awakening, or state building. Yet, cleavages "freeze" conflict in major transformative moments for a polity – so called critical junctures (Mair 2001, 27–44). As such, the notion of cleavage is equally applicable to post-communist societies, which underwent comprehensive structural transformations after 1989. According to Martin (2000, 11–50), cleavages are mobilized by political actors so that they can perpetuate political divides and crystallize the party structure of the state, thus establishing clear voter alignments. This institutionalization of divisions into durable political action is possible because cleavages contain either social elements, such as class, or identitarian aspects, such as gender, race, and ethnicity (Bartolini 2005).

Building on the Rokkanian notion of the cleavage (Rokkan 1970 "Citizens, Elections, Parties"; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan 1999 "State Formation"), this paper fosters the

broader argument that in transitional societies in which the processes of state and nation building are at the core of political activity, cleavages related to ethnic/national identity become politicized. As such, they prove to be quintessential for the establishment of the identity of both political elites and of their followers. This is because elite competition for power gains salience in societies facing recovery from a negative transition[2]. If such societies have suffered from previous divides (e.g. religious, tribal, class, ethnic) as has been the case with Montenegro, these divides emerge as cleavages in the new elite competition.

In constructing this argument, the study first identifies the critical junctures in the divide over statehood and identity in Montenegro, which are essential for understanding the emergence of different cleavages in the 20 years of Montenegro's transition. The paper maintains that the 1989 "anti-bureaucratic" revolutions (ABR) and the 2000 fall of Milošević were critical junctures in which different structural (mainly ethnic) cleavages were dominant, while the 1997 split of the DPS and 2006 Montenegro's independence brought about the prevalence of functional (i.e. class, economic) cleavages. Second, the paper argues that Montenegrin political elites revived ethno-cultural narratives in order to ensure the dominance of structural over functional cleavages, thus proving that cleavages in unconsolidated states are malleable. The study concludes by relating the different types of cleavages (overlapping, cross-cutting, independent) to the development of the political landscape in Montenegro.

Critical junctures in the divide over statehood and identity

In the recent political history of Montenegro, four critical junctures can be identified – the 1989 "anti-bureaucratic" revolutions; the 1997 split of the DPS; the fall of Milošević in 2000; and the declaration of Montenegro's independence in 2006. Each of these major events "froze" an existing societal divide and reproduced it within the polity's institutional setup as an ethno-cultural (i.e. structural) and/or political (i.e. functional) cleavage. Yet, the nature of political divisions in Montenegro has led to an overlap between these two types of cleavages thus making them complementary, rather than mutually exclusive. In other words, although either structural or functional cleavages were dominant at all four critical junctures, both types of cleavages have played a role in reproducing the political struggles in Montenegro.

The replacement of one set of communist elites with the ostensibly reformist leadership at the time of the ABR, and their affiliation with Milošević's policies, ensured the continuation of Communist Party rule in Montenegro during the the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The dominance of the communist heirs, who embraced Serb nationalist rhetoric, transferred ethno-religious cleavages into the political sphere. Parties with ethnic prefixes emerged, and religion became the key determinant of ethnic identity and political behaviour. At the second critical juncture, the split of the DPS in 1997, the societal division that was converted into cleavage was over the question of support or opposition to Milošević. The structural ethnic cleavages created at the time of the ABR continued to exist, but were overshadowed by these new divisions. The third critical juncture in Montenegrin politics, and the only one that was triggered externally – by the fall of Milošević in 2000 – caused the recalibration of goals of the Montenegrin political elites, which aligned into pro-independence/pro-Montenegrin and unionist/pro-Serb camps. Hence in addition to the already existing functional cleavages established at the previous critical juncture, new ethnic cleavages that differentiated Montenegrin and Serb identities resurfaced amidst struggles for political power. The

final critical juncture in recent Montenegrin politics was independence in 2006, which offset another reconfiguration of the country's political scene. The cleavages that were created previously were adjoined by new functional (in this case, socio-economic) divisions, particularly with the former unionist camp that needed to adapt to the new circumstances after the resolution of the statehood issue.

In sum, the critical junctures of 1989 and 2000 were characterized by the dominance of two different structural cleavages (both with an ethnic dimension), parts of which are still an issue in the country's politics. Those of 1997 and 2006 gave rise to mostly functional (class or operational) cleavages as they were marked with the prevalence of socio-economic concerns over nationalist rhetoric and practice. A full understanding of the interplay of these cleavages is necessary for the analysis of Montenegro's divisions over statehood and identity.

Dominance of structural cleavages at critical junctures

The emergence of structural cleavages at critical junctures is often supported by an active national movement which underpinned the events that marked that juncture. In the case of Montenegro, the first structural cleavages appeared in the late 1980s. The "anti-bureaucratic" revolution, which created the conditions for Slobodan Milošević's rise to power in Serbia, also produced a set of "reformed" communist elites in Montenegro, led by Momir Bulatović and Milo Đukanović. The new Montenegrin elites remained loyal to Milošević's nationalist politics, which created social and political divisions that require explanation.

Historically, ethnic/national identity in Montenegro has been dual, which has been entrenched in the notion of the "national *homo duplex*" (Darmanović 1992, 28). That is, the categories "Serb" and "Montenegrin" were not mutually exclusive and many of the people of the Christian Orthodox faith associated themselves with both identities. This historical duality emerged during the rule of the Petrović dynasty (Roberts 2007), when Montenegro's prince-bishops used both terms to refer to their population. A form of the divide between the "Serb" and "Montenegrin" ethnic/national identity in Montenegro emerged in the period immediately preceding the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and was related to the question of Montenegrin status in the new state. During 1917–18 Montenegro became an ideological and political battlefield between the proponents of unconditional unification with Serbia under the Karađorđević dynasty – the Whites – and the proponents of a union of equal members – the Greens (Rastoder 2003, 131). This dichotomy persisted throughout the following decades, until it became entrenched within the federal structures of the socialist Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav constitutional establishment considered republics as "states although self-determination was limited by the federal constitution, phrased in such a way as to make it appear that the right had already been exercised" (Shoup 1968, 115). The decentralized Yugoslav model allowed for the flourishing of separate identities in the republics, but proclamations of extreme nationalism were sanctioned in order to avoid the interwar and World War II Yugoslav experience (Hodson, Sekulić, and Massey 1994, 1534–1558). Nevertheless, during the socialist period, identity in Montenegro was far from consolidated. In fact, the political decision to grant Montenegro the status of a republic in 1946 was aimed at smoothing the differences that existed among the population in the interwar period, and at dampening the divide between Whites and Greens. Milovan Đilas – a high ranking communist official at the time

– claimed that Montenegrins were a part of a larger corpus of Serbs, and that their history of statehood made them "the best of Serbs" (Đilas 1947, 3–4). According to Đilas, it was the status of a separate republic that should be granted to Montenegro, but not the status of a separate nation (Đilas 1947, 5). Hence, during the socialist period, there were not many explicit manifestations of a distinct Montenegrin identity (Pavlović 2003, 90–104) – and if there were any, they were considered retrograde – prompting a general consensus among the people that Montenegrins were indistinct from Serbs. These dynamics reinforced the "national *homo duplex*" in Montenegro (Darmanović 1992, 28).

Yet, the collapse of communism moved the "Montenegrin pendulum from one nexus of power to another" (Radonjić 1998, 25). Due to the influence of the media and church, Montenegrin politics developed predominantly under the umbrella of Serbian nationalism. The galvanization of the people into a movement based on Serbian nationalism is largely attributable to the conundrum surrounding identity in Montenegro described above. The fact that the elites in the first half of the 1990s did not emphasize the difference between the two counterparts of Montenegrin identity helped preserve the populist movement driven by Serbian nationalism.

At the time of the economic embargo and isolationist policies of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, ideas of political populism and extreme (Serbian) nationalism resonated well with the people. In the parliamentary elections of 1990 and 1992, the DPS acquired control of the absolute majority of seats in the Parliament. Since political pluralism in the republic was still nascent at this time, the former communists had a sufficient majority to control most of the Montenegrin institutions. However, the doctrine of communism was no longer the main ideological pillar of the party. Rather, the DPS was a conglomerate of politically heterogeneous elements, held together by a common wish for political survival. During the uncertainty caused by the fall of communism and the wars in the former Yugoslavia, the DPS's political survival was only possible by upholding the ethno-religious cleavages that had emerged across the region.

These cleavages continued to reproduce themselves on the Montenegrin political scene in the following years. According to Darmanović (1992), "society was constantly diverted from the important political issues the party wasn't able to solve, and at the same time homogenized through the incessant production of enemies both without (Croatian, Slovenian) and within (Muslims, Albanian, 'Montenegrin secessionists')" (28). In the Montenegrin political context, a stark difference emerged between the ruling DPS, which predominantly attracted the Christian-Orthodox majority, and the parties of ethno-religious minorities, such as Albanians, Bosniaks, and Muslims. In addition to these, two further parties emphasizing predominantly structural cleavages appeared in the republic. The Liberal Alliance of Montenegro (LSCG), a Montenegrin nationalist Movement, and the People's Party (NS), which emphasized the Serbian origins of Montenegrins, represented political players which indicated the existence of the rift among the majority of the population as well. However, due to the mesmerization of most of the population by Serbian nationalism in the early 1990s, this cleavage remained subdued until the dominant political players changed their nationalist rhetoric.

The end of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia soothed the overall political context in Montenegro, thus decreasing the level of Serb nationalism among the political elites in general. As a consequence, the critical juncture represented by the split of the DPS in 1997 yielded predominantly functional cleavages based on support of and opposition to Milošević.[3] Yet, structural cleavages re-emerged following the

change of regime in Belgrade in October 2000. The two camps, which previously defined themselves through their relationship to the regime in Belgrade, became deprived of their primary meaning. The new political reality required the reinvention of their political agendas. Đukanović's DPS acquired the role of advocate of Montenegrin independence. By contrast, Bulatović's SNP came to epitomize the preservation of the common state with Serbia. As the identities of the two political camps evolved, these two wings of the former communists became two opposing poles for the Montenegrin population to identify with.

The consequence of this bifurcation of Montenegrin politics was the exacerbation of the structural cleavage among the population: that is, the differentiation between Serbs and Montenegrins, which arose from people's affiliation with unionist or pro-independence movements. This is illustrated in Table 1, which presents an overview of the first parliamentary elections after the ousting of Milošević.

If the Montenegrin parliamentary elections of 2001 are taken as the indicators of the societal division, it is notable that only 0.37% of the electorate remained neutral in the divide (CDT 2001 "Official results: Parliamentary Elections, 22 April 2001"; CDT 2002 "Official results: Parliamentary Elections, 20 October 2002"). The political players supported by that electorate were shaped by functional cleavages. One example of this is the parties concerned with the negative effects of transition, such as the loss of savings due to pyramid schemes in the early 1990s. The remaining parties revolved around two centres with slightly greater support for the independence than for the unionist cause, which is further proof of the dominance of the structural cleavages between the two camps after the removal of Milošević.

Table 1.   Polarization of Montenegrin political life in April 2001[i]

Party/Coalition	Affiliation	%
Liberal Alliance of Montenegro	MNE	7.9
Serbian Radical Party "Dr Vojislav Šešelj"	YUG	1.2
Liberal Democratic Party	MNE	0.1
Party of Democratic Prosperity – Osman Redža	MNE	0.4
Democratic Alliance of Montenegro	MNE	1.0
Bosniak-Muslim Coalition in Montenegro	MNE	1.1
Party protecting the savings and social security of citizens	N/A	0.05
Together for Yugoslavia	YUG	40.8
People's Unity for Montenegro – Dr Novak Kilibarda	MNE	0.1
Democratic Union of Albanians	MNE	1.2
Yugoslav left in Montenegro	YUG	0.05
Party protecting the savings in foreign currency	N/A	0.2
"Victory is Montenegro" – Milo Đukanović	MNE	42.4
Communist and Workers' Parties – for Yugoslavia and self-management	YUG	0.5
Party of the Law of Nature	N/A	0.1
People's Socialist Party – Momir Bulatović	YUG	2.9
	Summary	
	For independence	54.14
	For Yugoslavia	45.49
	Neutral	0.37

[i]Table constructed in line with data from: Centar za Demokratsku Tranziciju, *Official results: Parliamentary Elections, 22 April 2001.* http://www.cdtmn.org/dokumenti/zvanicni-rezultati-parlamentarni-izbori-2001.pdf [accessed: 25 June 2011]

Dominance of functional cleavages at critical junctures

When concerns other than the competition between ethno-culturally diverse groups prevail in a society, functional cleavages emerge at critical junctures. This, however, does not imply that they triumph over the existing structural cleavages. Rather, they complement them, and temporarily change the dynamics of inter-group competition in the polity, as was the case in Montenegro in 1997 and 2006.

The creation of two factions within the DPS in 1997 triggered the reorganization of Montenegrin party politics. This occurred through the rapprochement of Đukanović's wing of the DPS with the anti-Milošević, yet pro-Serb, People's Party (NS), the parties of ethno-cultural minorities, such as Bosniaks and Albanians, and the multiethnic Social Democratic Party (SDP). Thus, the mediation of the ethno-cultural cleavage is apparent in the way Đukanović's camp was established. At the time Đukanović's DPS made hardly any reference to national identity in Montenegro, while the remaining parties that coalesced around the DPS had very diversified agendas. The SNP, which became the major opposition player, retained some of the DPS's nationalist rhetoric from the early 1990s, which is attributable to its continued association with Milošević. Still, according to its founder, Momir Bulatović (2005, 238–242), the party was also significantly driven by a functional cleavage, i.e., it emphasized the corrupt nature of Đukanović's DPS, and the illegal enrichment of the elites at the time of the international embargo in the early 1990s.

The rift in Montenegrin politics created at this critical juncture was revealed on two occasions – the 1997 Presidential Elections and the 1998 Parliamentary Elections. Both elections produced extremely close results for the two factions of the former DPS. This reinforces the argument that two poles of critical mass were formed either in opposition to or in favour of Milošević's politics. This is illustrated in Table 2, which presents an overview of the parties and their affiliation in the 1998 Parliamentary Elections.

The dominance of functional cleavages at these elections is supported by the fact that the question of Montenegrin independence was not the main point on the agenda of either political bloc. Rather, it was the issue of support for or opposition to Milošević, and the future of political and economic reforms in Montenegro and in Yugoslavia. The degree of polarization is reflected in the election results, which reveal that a very small percentage of the political spectrum in Montenegro (0.4% of the electorate) was neutral on this issue. Kubo and Strmiska claim that this division was not based on the national sentiments of the population. They support this argument by looking at the 1991 census data, and by noticing the minimal support for the parties with "ethnic prefixes" (Kubo 2007, 163–180; Strmiska 2005 "The Making of Party Pluralism in Montenegro"). Hence, ethno-cultural cleavages were not captured and transplanted into party politics at the critical juncture in 1997.

Following the split in the DPS, the Montenegrin political scene remained polarized. Notwithstanding this, the shaping of the republic's political milieu was not finalized in 1997. Instead, the profiles of the political parties changed shape in the following years. This process took place in an environment created by the rupture in the DPS, Đukanović's detachment from Milošević, and the subsequent creation of the two opposed political blocs. By countering Milošević's policies from 1997 to 2000, the Montenegrin leadership embarked on a course of "creeping independence". The by-product of such a policy – which entailed detachment from the federal institutions – was that the DPS gradually transformed its opposition to the regime in Belgrade into a quest for statehood (van Meurs 2003, 63–82). This affected the nature of the 2000 critical juncture,[4] after which

Table 2. Polarization of Montenegrin political life in May 1998[i]

Party/Coalition	Affiliation	%
Liberal Alliance of Montenegro	AM	6.3
Serbian Radical Party "Dr Vojislav Šešelj"	PM	1.2
For Serbdom	PM	0.4
Serbian People's Radical Party in Montenegro	PM	0.2
Yugoslav United Left in Montenegro	PM	0.1
Democratic Alliance in Montenegro	AM	1.6
Bosniak-Muslim List in Montenegro	AM	0.1
Party of the Law of Nature	N/A	0.2
Socialist People's Party – Momir Bulatović	PM	36.1
Serbian People's Party	PM	1.9
Party protecting the savings in foreign currency	N/A	0.1
League of Communists of Yugoslavia – Communists of Montenegro	PM	0.5
"For a Better Life" – Milo Đukanović	AM	49.5
Party of Citizens having savings in foreign currency	N/A	0.1
Party of Democratic Action in Montenegro	AM	0.6
Democratic Union of Albanians	AM	1.0
Party of Human Ways	N/A	0.1
	Summary	
	Pro-Milošević	40.45
	Anti-Milošević	59.14
	Neutral	0.41

[i]Table constructed by this author with data from: Centar za Demokratsku Tranziciju, *Official results: Parliamentary Elections, 31 May 1998.* http://www.cdtmn.org/dokumenti/zvanicni-rezultati-parlamentarni-izbori-1998.pdf [accessed: 25 June 2011]

the structural cleavages prevailed over the functional ones until the resolution of the status question in the 2006 referendum on independence.

The referendum was the most recent critical juncture for Montenegrin party politics and it sparked the recalibration of the political scene. The DPS remained the major political player, having claimed victory at the referendum. However, prior to the elections in September 2006, the former unionists split into three factions of approximately equal size. The SNP – the pillar of the former unionist bloc – was the first party to show a willingness to change its political program and abandon its nationalist rhetoric. This change was generated immediately after the publication of the referendum results, and was manifested through attempts to balance the loss at the plebiscite with the preservation of the SNP's electorate. The continuing discord was mostly displayed by the SNS, which became the party representative of the Serbs in Montenegro. The SNS called for the formation of the "Serbian List" coalition. However, this call did not resonate well with the rest of the opposition bloc, since the SNP rejected the proposal as it considered itself a "civic" party. Moreover, new political forces entered the scene, the most notable example being the Movement for Change (PzP). The PzP grew out of an NGO focused on reforms and the development of economic policies different from the ones proposed by the government. Therefore, after the critical juncture of 2006, new functional cleavages emerged and changed the dynamics of political struggle in Montenegro.

Political agents and the rise of cleavages through ethno-cultural narratives

Since cleavages are representations of conflict in a society, looking at the way they are related to one another helps us to understand the political dynamics in that society.

Cleavages that emerge as a result of divisions in a polity can be independent, overlapping, or cross-cutting in relation to each other. If cleavages are independent, they are unrelated to other cleavages that have been created. For instance, in Albania the population is either Christian (Orthodox or Catholic) or Muslim. Although there are other cleavages in the country (e.g. class), the religious cleavage is largely unrelated to it and thus independent. If cleavages are overlapping, they reinforce one another and thus create deeper societal divisions and sharper distinctions among the population. Such is the case with Northern Ireland, whereby the religious cleavage overlaps with the political one, thus emphasising the distinction between nationalists and unionists. If a cleavage is cross-cutting, it is divisive but not in a neat fashion, as it can be associated with multiple groups. Such cleavages are often reinforced by other overlapping cleavages in societies with manifest ethno-cultural plurality. Switzerland is an example of a society in which the linguistic cleavage is supplemented by the religious one, and thus perpetuates the specificities of the different ethnic groups. In such cases, more often than not, the overlapping cleavage will have a manifest dominance in shaping the group, because it will make a clear distinction between communities.

In the case of Montenegro, some of these cleavages already existed, and were simply reinforced. Only after the political actors triggered the overlapping structural (ethno-cultural) cleavages did the inherent divisions among the people become apparent. The revival of ethno-cultural narratives that made a clear distinction between Serb and Montenegrin identities helped the two camps to shape their political identities. In the early 1990s, neither the religious, cultural, nor symbolic cleavages were markers that would distinguish "Montenegrin" and "Serb" aspects of identity in Montenegro. For this reason, and in contrast to the other successor states of the former Yugoslavia, identity in Montenegro was dual.[5] That is, a number of people felt "Montenegrin" and "Serb" at the same time. The divide over statehood in Montenegro eventually led to the reconstruction of "Montenegrin" and "Serb" identities and their association with pro-independence and unionist camps, respectively.

Religion: an ethno-cultural cleavage or a political epiphenomenon?

After the fall of the socialist regime, there was a reawakening of religious belief among the people of Eastern Europe. Some academics explain that phenomenon by focusing on the revival of religion (suppressed during the communist era) as a pillar of new identities across the region (Krastev and Mungiu-Pippidi 2004, 10–25). Although decades of socialist rule had created a strong attachment to the concept of "group" or "class", once socialism no longer exercised influence, people needed a substitute to recreate the nature of their group attachment, which could no longer be represented by "class". Thus, reverting to religion served as one of the tools that assisted the "re-imagination" of the identities of the newly formed states. Such was the case with the other republics in the former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, in Montenegro the religious cleavage was not initially a source of differentiation among the Christian Orthodox population. Until 2000, Orthodox Christianity was a means of differentiating the majority of the population in Montenegro from Albanian, Bosniak, Croat and Muslim minorities. After the bifurcation of the Montenegrin political scene into pro-independence/pro-Montenegrin and unionist/pro-Serb camps, the association with predominantly the Serbian (SPC) or, to a lesser degree, the Montenegrin (CPC) Orthodox Church became a politicized ethno-cultural cleavage. However, the DPS elite also sought to attract non-Christian Orthodox minorities to their cause and thus were very careful over the question of religion (Morrison 2009a, 47). Due to this ambiguity over the position of the CPC among the DPS, the religious cleavage only

reinforced the existing narratives when overlapping with other cleavages. In other words, the religious cleavage was never as dominant in Montenegro as it has been, for instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thus, the association with the Church as an epi-political institution became a layer of identity.

The CPC as it is today appeared in the early 1990s and claimed its historical existence in Montenegro until the unification of Yugoslavia in 1918, when it was subsumed by the SPC (Morison 2009a, 45–60; Ramet 2005, 255–285). Initially, the CPC was not recognized by the authorities of the state, who, throughout most of the 1990s, supported the SPC (*Pobjeda,* January 6, 1995, 2). Only when the identity of his camp was established as pro-independence did Đukanović acknowledge – yet not openly support – the existence of the CPC. The likely reasons for this were that 1) most of the DPS supporters identified with the SPC throughout the 1990s; and that 2) most of the historical religious buildings were owned by the SPC, which facilitated the identification of people with that church.

The complex relationship between the two churches – and their affiliation with the Montenegrin authorities – has roots in different interpretations of Montenegrin identity. The Metropolitan of the Serbian Orthodox Church claimed that "Montenegrin identity is a historical fiction. Serbs and Montenegrins are the same people, the same nation" (Santoro 1999, 8). The attitude of the SPC resonated strongly with the members of the opposition block who, according to the public opinion polls, identified primarily with this church, implying that the Metropolitan Amfilohije was the person they had greatest confidence in (CEDEM 2005). Public opinion polls further point to the importance of religion among the supporters of the pro-union bloc, who perceived the divide in Montenegro primarily as a rift in the Orthodox population (*pravoslavni življ*). Consequently, for the unionist/pro-Serbian opposition, the emphasis on Orthodox Christianity was an important marker of identity. It helped create the image of ethnic identity firmly rooted in the religious cleavage.

The opposite was only partly true for the members of the pro-independence/pro-Montenegrin camp as the position of the CPC is controversial in the DPS and among its supporters. As a consequence, the religious cleavage in this political camp was not emphasized to the same extent as among the opposition members. The supporters of the DPS, which advocated independent statehood in the 2006 Montenegrin referendum, often identified themselves with the SPC rather than the CPC. The CPC was endorsed by minor parties promoting the independence of Montenegro, such as the SDP and LSCG. Thus, religion had a largely political connotation for the pro-independence camp. As a political epiphenomenon, the CPC challenged the religious dominion of the SPC. The CPC provided a point of reference for those people in the pro-independence camp who cherished religion as a part of their identity, but did not wish to be identified with a church that had the prefix "Serb" in its name. Moreover – given the fact that orthodox Christianity does not have a centralized, but a national church system – for some members of the pro-independence camp, the existence of the CPC legitimized the separateness of Montenegrin identity and the quest for statehood. As a consequence, "the struggle for the church [became] essentially the struggle for statehood" (Santoro 1999, 8). Religion thus proved to be a political, rather than an ethno-cultural cleavage in the struggle over statehood and identity in Montenegro.

Revival of tribalism as an ethno-cultural cleavage

In Montenegrin society, the concept of the tribe is historically grounded in the collective memory, as a "military, political and moral collective" that controlled its members (Jovanović 1995, 65; Boehm 1983). However, the revival of a new form of tribal structure also

became an ethno-cultural cleavage in the battle over statehood and identity. Through the ascription of individuals to a particular tribe, and tribes to a particular political movement, the history and tradition of Montenegro became tools through which a political idea reached the population. Throughout history tribes never went to war against each other for ideological or political reasons, and although "tribes changed with history, they always bore the responsibility for government in a unified Montenegro" (Calhoun 2000, 38).

In the context of the divide over statehood and identity, tribes became reinvented as an emblem of folk culture, so as to generate a feeling of national belonging. However, within a different socio-political context, this historical symbol gained a completely different meaning. According to Popović, the revival of tribal structures in Montenegrin society was a means for Milošević's followers to "build some new, alternative, however false, source of legitimacy" after their political defeats in the previous years (Popović 2002, 23). Against such a view, the unionist camp maintained that during 1999 and 2000, the gatherings – sports competitions, political discussions, poetry evenings – were assemblies aimed at revitalising this camp's political strength (*Pobjeda,* October–November, 1999). They were most attended in the northern part of Montenegro, where the support for the pro-union bloc was dominant.

These gatherings resulted in the formation of the Council of People's Assemblies, the central association of these tribes. Its name was reminiscent of historical gatherings of tribal chieftains during the dynastic rule. Such a reproduction of history was criticized by the government for its distortion of history and its appropriation for the achievement of political aims (*Pobjeda*, September 19, 1999, 1). In addition, these gatherings also provoked the reinvention of pro-Montenegrin neo-tribes as a challenge to the supporters of the Yugoslav idea. These new tribes – associated with the idea of independent Montenegrin statehood – were located southwest of the Zeta River. Unlike their northern counterparts, united under a central association with a clear political purpose, the congregations of the southern tribes usually took the shape of more informal folklore or sports gatherings.

According to Calhoun (2000, 35), these differences marked a rift between the Old Montenegrin tribes and the Brda tribes, giving the struggle over statehood and identity a geographical dimension. This division was important, since the Brda tribes were incorporated into Montenegro only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, by the acquisition of territory following the weakening of the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, in light of the new political struggles, the Brda tribes associated themselves with unionist ideas and professed the idea of the Serbian origins of Montenegrins. This process was facilitated by a) these tribes' geographical proximity to Serbia; and b) the emphasis – in the political discourse – on these tribes' traditional ties with Serbia (Simić 1997, 124–131). Thus tribalism, as a politically driven ethno-cultural cleavage, helped to create new imagined lines of division such as regional differences between the North and South in Montenegro.

The divisive function of symbols

The "implicit meanings" of the symbols of the state, such as the flag, the coat of arms, or the national anthem, have often been connected to people's histories (Douglas 1975, 14). According to Andrijašević (1998, 28), "history, as an important element of the identity of a community, offsets the action, gives an example, strengthens hopes and reminds of a grand goal that needs to be achieved". Accordingly, symbols proved to be an important, politically generated, ethno-cultural cleavage in the polemic surrounding statehood and identity in Montenegro. Both camps reinterpreted history in order to give legitimacy to their claims in the eyes of the public. After 2000, the pro-independence interpretation of tradition

distanced Montenegro from Serbia and the common state with it. The opposition camp challenged this view and tried to preserve the old symbols and their meaning, seeking to remain in the common state with Serbia. Since both claims were to a certain extent historically justified, the state symbols of Montenegro all became a central part of the debate on statehood and identity. In particular, the ruling DPS "utilised emotive rhetoric intended to appeal to the romantic inclinations of the Montenegrin people, [...] as a brave, honourable, and independent people. Contemporary Montenegrins, they argued, were presented with a unique historical mission – to correct the grievances felt by their forefathers who had to bear the loss of Montenegrin independence in 1918" (Morrison 2009b, 46).

The present symbols of the Montenegrin state still prove controversial, and a source of on-going political divisions (Milošević 2012). Having been adopted at the time of the divide over statehood and identity by the ruling DPS-led camp, they bear references to the independent Principality and later Kingdom of Montenegro, and thus to the Montenegrin state tradition. This "rather romanticized reworking of history blended with contemporary arguments" (Morrison 2009b, 46) reinforced the ruling elite's rhetoric for the need of an independent Montenegro as the continuation of the long tradition of statehood prior to 1918.

Hence, the politicization of symbols as an ethno-cultural cleavage was very much rooted in the debates over their historical meaning and connotations. In fact, at the peak of the divide, the pro-independence/pro-Montenegrin government adopted a new Law on State Symbols in 2004, which redefined the coat of arms and the flag of Montenegro. The Law described the coat of arms of Montenegro as "a golden crowned double-headed eagle with its wings in flight, with a sceptre in its right and an orb in its left claw on a red base. On the eagle's chest is a shield with a golden lion passant" (art. 4). Following Article 5 of the Law, the flag of Montenegro was red, bordered in gold, and with the coat of arms in the middle. The unionists claimed that a departure from history had been made, since the traditional Montenegrin flag used to be red, blue and white (like the Serbian one), with a white eagle (also similar to the Serbian coat of arms) (Đurković 2007, 6). However, an examination of the Montenegrin flags and coats of arms indicates that the new Montenegrin flag is a combination of the background of the dynastic army flag (red background with a golden border), the coat of arms of the Principality of Montenegro prior to the arrival of King Nikola (white eagle) and the colour of the eagle from King Nikola's flag. Actually, the army flag of King Nicholas did not have a golden border, and although the eagle was – unlike in the previous Montenegrin flags – golden, it did not have a lion on its chest, but the symbols of the ruler (Andrijašević, 2004, 51). This implies that state symbols became an important element of the DPS-camp's attempts to romanticize the image of the nation, and that the continuing conflict over their meaning perpetuates an ethno-cultural cleavage in Montenegrin society.

There was a similar controversy over the national anthem, whereby the government attempted to eliminate all reference to what may have been interpreted as a Serbian aspect of Montenegrin identity. In 2004, the text of the national anthem *Oj svijetla majska zoro* ("Oh, the bright dawn of May") was altered by the ruling elite. The controversial text of the anthem has, similarly to the state symbols, been created out of several historical texts. A portion of the anthem's text existed in the folk tradition of Montenegro, and was reworked in 1932 by Sekula Drljević, the interwar leader of the Montenegrin federalists who later collaborated with the Italians closely allied with the Croatian *ustaša* movement (Marković and Pajović 1996). While the meaning of the anthem has never been contested in the political discourse, the fact that two of its verses were written by Drljević is still controversial. By using Drljević's version of the text, the DPS leaders sought to reinforce the idea of Montenegro's tradition of statehood and the

struggle for it, as the interwar federalist movement largely carried nationalist elements. However, the association of the federalists with fascism proved controversial not only between the two blocs, but also within the DPS itself. This has been emphasized in the recent statement by the Montenegrin President, Filip Vujanović, who noted

> I have no objection regarding the content of the two verses. On the contrary, I respect the content of those verses, and I am absolutely convinced that the final message is an excellent one: 'So may Montenegro live forever!', and I think that our anthem should end with that message. What is impossible to relate to the anti-fascist Montenegro is the authorship of those two verses. It is beyond any doubt that the authorship of those verses belongs to a man who does not belong to the anti-fascist movement in Montenegro, but who rather represents the negation of anti-fascism in Montenegro. (Vujanović 2011)

In this context, the discord over symbols in Montenegro points to the importance of history for the imagination of the nation. It also indicates how political elites can use those symbols and make them widely available to the public, yet wrapped up in their own agendas. Once such divisive symbols become a part of the polity's living reality, they bear in themselves a part of the political conflict and transform into another politically malleable ethno-cultural cleavage.

Language as an ethno-cultural cleavage

The question of language is inextricably related to education, the press, and the general transmission of ideas, as noted by most academic work on nationalism and identity (e.g. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Gellner 1994; Anderson 1991). In the Balkans, ever since the romantic ideas of the unification of the South Slavs in the mid-nineteenth century, language has been an important aspect of how people viewed themselves (White 2000, 170–188). As a consequence of the events in the region in the 1990s, language developed a political aspect and became related to territory, i.e. to the "political organization of space" (White 2000, 181).

According to Article 9 of the 1992 Constitution, the "language in official use" in Montenegro was the *ijekavski* dialect of Serbian. Prior to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the language was termed Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian. After the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, the successor states enshrined separate languages in their constitutional frameworks, named after the state or having reference to it (Radojević 1989, 7). In the FRY, and in Montenegro, the official language remained Serbian, which changed after Montenegro became an independent state. The constitutional provisions related to language are a further indication of the politicization of a cleavage, which reinforced the ethno-cultural narrative of the ruling elite.

In Article 13, the Constitution of Montenegro of 2007 stipulates that the "official language in Montenegro is Montenegrin", while "Serbian, Bosnian, Albanian and Croatian" are "officially used languages". During the constitutional debate, the denomination of the language as Montenegrin faced fierce opposition from the former unionist bloc, which deemed it a political move (*Pobjeda*, June 20, 2006). The unionist bloc supported the preservation of the name of the official language as Serbian, arguing that, in line with the 2003 population census (Zavod za Statistiku Crne Gore 2003), 59.7 % of the people spoke the Serbian language, while 21.5% spoke Montenegrin.

At the same time, for the former pro-independence camp terming the language as Montenegrin gave legal guarantees to the political prevalence of their concept of identity based on historical grievances. The revival of the discourse over the Montenegrin language has been reinforced by the activities of the pro-independence cultural organizations, such as

the Montenegrin PEN centre, and in the writings of the linguists Vojislav Nikčević and Borislav Jovanović. In the context of historical grievances, Jovanović claimed that "the Montenegrin language is still seen as linguistically deviant – as a variant, sub-variant [...]in line with the unitary and assimilationist philological conceptions. However, despite this suppression, the Montenegrin language is not a dead language" (Jovanović 2005, 10).

In addition to denominating the language as "Montenegrin", in July 2009, the Ministry of Education of Montenegro adopted new orthographic norms, according to which the Montenegrin alphabet no longer has 30 graphemes, but 32 (ś and ź have been added). Montenegro is the only former Yugoslav successor state that has changed the alphabet, which is another indicator of the politicization of language which has thus became a structural cleavage. The divisiveness of language has also been manifest in the 2011 population census (Zavod za Statistiku Crne Gore 2011), whereby 39.8% of the population declared Montenegrin to be their native tongue, against 42.9 % speakers of Serbian. Keeping in mind that 45% of Montenegro's population declared themselves Montenegrin and 28.7% as Serb in 2011, and the above-presented 2003 census results on language, there is an indication that the overlap between language and ethnic/national identity remains fluid. However, the process is largely unfinished, which points to the fact that the linguistic cleavage displays its ethno-cultural nature once politicized and adjoined to other structural cleavages.

Structuration and the typology of cleavages

In unconsolidated political contexts cleavages are particularly susceptible to manipulation by political actors. At the time of the divide over statehood and identity, Montenegrin political elites revived ethno-cultural narratives[6] and triggered the dominance of structural cleavages over the functional ones. In fact, in the late 1990s Montenegro was a society that was recovering from the effects of a negative transition, triggered by the instability that followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Popović 2002, 11–37). As a consequence of a series of political processes, Montenegro's political scene became highly polarized in 1997, and elite competition for power became significant. Given the dynamics of elite competition, and the change in the structure of opportunities and constraints generated by Milošević's departure from power, the politicization of cleavages became a major factor in attracting the electorate to the two camps. This politicization was possible due to the fluid cultural divides and the dual character of national identity throughout Montenegro's history (Roberts 2007). Consequently, old divides (e.g. religious, tribal, class, ethnic) became politicized and transformed into ethno-cultural cleavages. As such, they became quintessential for the establishment of the identity of both the leadership and the supporters of the pro-independence/pro-Montenegrin and unionist/pro-Serb camps.

Hence, the divide over Montenegrin statehood is therefore associated with a still on-going process in which cross-cutting ethno-cultural cleavages (the duality of national identity in Montenegro) are reorganized into overlapping ethno-cultural cleavages (Montenegrin vs. Serbian national identity).The overlapping cleavages that marked Montenegro's divide over statehood and identity helped in cementing ideas of the ethno-cultural particularity of Serbs and Montenegrins to the unionist and pro-independence camps respectively. That is, the more overlapping cleavages that were revived, the more it was possible to gather them round one political representation of identity. The fact that the two competing camps associated religion with ethnic and tribal belonging meant that the political competition occurred between two players and that these cleavages did not allow for the emergence of further competitors for power. In the case of Montenegro,

this is illustrated by *those* people who felt Montenegrin, associated with the idea of independence, neo-Montenegrin tribes, and the CPC; and by *those* people who felt Serb, associated with the idea of the preservation of the common state, pro-Serbian tribes, and the SPC. The divide between the two camps in Montenegro cut deep into society, because overlapping cleavages tend to reinforce perceptions of identity.

Yet, the overlapping cleavages were necessary to crystallize the difference between the two camps, largely because many of the pre-existing cleavages were cross-cutting. That is, a very similar language, or the same religion could be associated with more than one camp. The actual difference between the Serb and the Montenegrin language, particularly prior to the standardization of the latter in 2009, was merely denominative. Equally, whether an individual would affiliate with the SPC or the CPC was a matter of political rather than religious choice. In cases of cross-cutting cleavages, people's perception of their own identity is usually malleable in that it is likely that it will be associated with their political or economic interests. In such cases, the activities of political elites have a pivotal role in determining individuals' ascription to identity camps by reinforcing the cross-cutting cleavage with an overlapping one. In the case of Montenegro, this explains the cases of *those* people who felt Montenegrin and voted for independence, but associated with SPC and spoke Serbian; or *those* people, for example, who felt Serbian, associated with SPC and spoke Serbian, but voted for Montenegrin independence. Therefore, in Montenegro, the overlapping cleavages overcame the cross-cutting ones as the determinant of the individuals' political choice.

Conclusion

Studying political parties and political systems of different countries in the world assumes an awareness of those moments in history in which social conflicts were frozen and transferred onto the political plane. The role of political elites in freezing conflicts and thus in establishing, changing, or perpetuating cleavages has only recently become a prominent research topic among political scientists (Enyedi 2006, 228–238), and this is largely due to the rise of new democracies in Europe. Looking at how political parties emerged in the post-communist world, Zielinski (2002, 185) noted that the degree of the politicization of cleavages is largely dependent on the activities of political elites, who may opt for instituting a particular type of cleavage as the core of political competition.

Against this background, this paper has contextualized and analyzed the multifaceted and complex factors that have given rise to cleavages in the recent contests over statehood and identity in Montenegro. It has argued that in polities in transition, in which the processes of state and nation building are unfinished or unconsolidated, cleavages related to ethnic identity become salient in political competition. As such, cleavages become axes around which the political parties, which usually represent different ethno-cultural groups, compete for power. Moreover, looking in more detail at the case of Montenegro, this paper also showed that memories of historical divisions, particularly those related to structural cleavages (over religion, language, and culture), are recreated as catalysts of modern political struggles.

This study has identified the critical junctures in the divide over statehood and identity in Montenegro, by looking at those moments in recent history in which conflict was frozen and transformed into cleavages. The paper examined four crucial moments, and maintained that the 1989 "anti-bureaucratic" revolutions and the 2000 fall of Milošević gave rise to structural (ethno-cultural) cleavages, while the 1997 split of the DPS and 2006 Montenegro's independence generated predominantly functional (class and operational)

cleavages. The paper also outlined differences in the nature and intensity of the cleavages that emerged at different points in Montenegro's transition, and in the context of the division over statehood and identity particular attention was paid to the cleavages that took place after 1997. In fact, the split within the DPS in 1997 initiated a series of political struggles that had resulted in the establishment of two political blocs by 2006: pro-independence and pro-union. However, as no society functions as an isolated system, the shaping of people's identity and the divide into pro-independence Montenegrins and unionist Serbs that followed was a product of a larger process. This process entailed the interaction among elites, society and exogenous influences, such as the fall of Milošević in 2000, which triggered the reinvention of the agendas of political elites and prompted the rise of further ethno-cultural cleavages. The cumulative effect of the various cleavages helped the transition of Đukanović's camp from anti-Milošević to pro-independence and of the opposition camp from pro-Milošević to unionist. Montenegrin and Serbian identities, respectively, became hardened into these two camps.

The paper also looked at the different ethno-cultural narratives that were used to underpin the emergence of structural cleavages and their prevalence over functional ones. This susceptibility of cleavages to political agency gained prominence after the demise of the Milošević regime in Belgrade, when the focus of elite competition shifted towards the debate over statehood and identity. In that respect, past events provided enough reference for the Montenegrin leadership to find examples of historical justification for their claims related to either a) independent Montenegrin statehood and separate Montenegrin identity; or b) the unification with Serbia and the indistinguishability of Serbs and Montenegrins. The fact that the two competing camps selectively endorsed these narratives reinforced their arguments and made their claims "difficult to challenge, even to disbelieve" (Sinfield 1992, 33).

This transfer of historical memory has particular significance for societies undergoing a process of transformation after the fall of socialist rule. Old stories needed to be revived to justify social change. The memories of previous, living generations dated back largely to the period of socialist rule. Thus, historical narratives of the dynastic rule, heroism and glory gained salience in shaping people's identity because they transcended the period remembered by the living generations. The competing elites in Montenegro placed emphasis on these stories through their discourse, use of symbols, and erection of monuments. In this polarized environment, two competing streams of collective memory were revived in order to increase the appeal of the claims of the competing camps. The difference between these streams was not merely the selection of facts surrounding historical events. Rather, it was the interpretation of the facts that was used to justify the contemporary political claims.

The study concludes by arguing that different types of cleavage had different types of impact on political competition in Montenegro. Using Montenegro as a case-study, this paper argues that the number of identity camps depends on the type of cleavages (independent, overlapping, cross-cutting) in the polity. The more independent (unrelated to other cleavages) cleavages there are, the more identity camps will gain significance in the struggle for power; the more overlapping cleavages there are, the more likely they will coalesce around one political representation of identity. Yet, if the cleavages are cross-cutting (that is – cutting across several groups), then people's perception of their own identity is more likely to change. In such cases, the activities of political elites have a pivotal role in determining individuals' ascription to identity camps, as shown by the case of Montenegro.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. All factions are rounded to the first decimal.
2. Negative transition: stability to instability.
3. See section 2.2.
4. The 1999 Kosovo war did not feature as a critical juncture in Montenegro, because it did not cause any major political shifts. Rather, the handling of the Kosovo war by Đukanović's camp was a part of the policy of "creeping independence". For the pro-Milošević camp, the conflict reaffirmed the existing political beliefs based on close links with Serbia.
5. Identity in Slovenia articulated itself through both linguistic and religious particularities; in the case of Croatia, religion was a clear marker of identity from the identities with which it shared the same language; in Macedonia language was a marker of difference from identities with which it shared the same religion; and the case of the three conflicting identities in Bosnia and Herzegovina proved the importance of religious cleavages in the process of identity reconstruction after the break-up of Yugoslavia.
6. The party political cleavages that existed in Montenegro's history did not reproduce themselves during the divide (see Morrison). Rather, the narrative of the divide between Greens and Whites, opposing and supporting the unconditional unification of Montenegro with Serbia in 1918, became entrenched in the narratives that helped to establish the identities of the pro-independence and unionist camps.

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