

## Minority Political Parties and Ethnic Voting in Subotica

BOJAN TODOSIJEVIĆ

---

The article analyses the dimensionality of political party preferences, and the strength of the 'ethnic voting' on a sample of respondents from Subotica, Yugoslavia. Ethnic heterogeneity of the district of Subotica facilitated the proliferation of parties and organizations claiming to represent national minorities, primarily Hungarians, Croats and Bunejvci. Factor analysis of preferences for parties participating at local elections in 1996 showed a three-dimensional structure. Party preferences are differentiated according to (1) civic orientation, (2) Serbian nationalist and pro-(Milošević's) regime orientation, and (3) pro-minority orientation. Ethnic voting dominated preferences particularly for parties high on the Serbian nationalist dimension and pro-minority dimension. The results are discussed with reference to their implication for the quality of democratization.

---

Throughout centuries, the territory of present-day Vojvodina, an autonomous province of Serbia, Yugoslavia,<sup>1</sup> has been a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-confessional area. According to the *UN Special Report*,<sup>2</sup> 26 different ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups live in Vojvodina. Contrary to the often expressed belief that Vojvodina has been traditionally peaceful and tolerant region, historical record shows it as a scene of various severe and violent conflicts, many of which were based on, or included, ethnic divisions. On the other hand, there have been periods of peaceful coexistence. Various institutional arrangements existed under different regimes and authorities aimed at preventing ethnic conflicts and securing various degrees of self-governance for the ethnic groups. For example, a particularly high standard of minority rights protection was achieved in the former socialist Yugoslavia.

A decade ago, the general expectation was that democratization of the country, that is, introduction of the competitive multi-party political system, would further improve the situation of minority rights. The emerging ethnic minority-based political parties were expected to be particularly helpful in this regard through further improvement of laws pertaining to ethnic minorities and surveillance of their implementation – at least those parties claimed so.

---

Bojan Todosijević, Central European University, Budapest

Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, Vol.8, No.3, Autumn 2002, pp.95–109  
PUBLISHED BY FRANK CASS, LONDON

However, subsequent events in the former Yugoslavia engendered various unanticipated consequences for the state of the minority rights and inter-ethnic relationships in Vojvodina. In the early 1990s, the autonomy of Vojvodina was legally reduced, and even though various legal provisions for the protection of minorities were not formally abolished their implementation had been worse than ever. Although it often taken for granted that democratization of politics and minority protection are inseparably tied, it appears that the 'democratization' of Yugoslavia brought not so sweet fruit to minorities.

This apparent contradiction is due to the ambiguous meaning of the term 'democratization'. Democratization in the sense of a multi-party political system is not the same as democratization in the sense of the adequate representation of various interests of the population. This article will examine to what extent a single-party mono-ideological political space of the former Yugoslavia was replaced by pluralistic politics. Given the recent history of the country, the examination should reveal that a formerly dominant official socialist ideology was replaced by another dominant ideology – nationalism. That is, that the new system was multi-party but still mono-ideological. Within the framework of the intensive ethnification of politics nationalism became the central political issue. As a consequence, other interests could not achieve political articulation, and cross-ethnic coalitions were, and still seem to be, impossible to form. Ethnically based parties virtually monopolized political power, each one claiming that it was a genuine representative of its 'own' ethnic group. Numeric ratios between groups became essential. For example, Hungarian minority parties throughout the 1990s dominated local self-government in Vojvodinian towns with a predominantly Hungarian populace and this domination continues to the present.<sup>3</sup>

The present research is based on a case study of Subotica. It is located on the north of Vojvodina, autonomous province of Serbia. Population is ethnically mixed. Among approximately 150.000 inhabitants, relative majority are ethnic Hungarians (about 42%), settled there since Subotica was a part of Austro-Hungary, about 15% are Serbs and Montenegrins, many of whom migrated after the World War II, about 23% are Croats and Bunjevci, and the rest includes declared Yugoslavs, Gypsies, Germans, and others (see Table 1). Post World War II development was characterized by quite peaceful coexistence of these ethnic groups. Unlike many other ethnically heterogeneous regions of the former Yugoslavia, this region and broader Vojvodina as well have remained untouched by armed conflicts. It seems that in Vojvodina ethnic groups have lived together rather than besides each other. For example, the rate of interethnic marriages in Vojvodina was the highest in former Yugoslavia, considerably higher than

in Bosnia or Croatia.<sup>4</sup> Turbulent 1990s witnessed increased strain in the interethnic relations also in Subotica. However, the latent conflict has been largely channelled into the realm of party politics. Relative numerical majority of Magyars in Subotica enabled their parties to control the local government, usually in coalition with parties of local Croats, ever since the introduction of the multiparty system. Election results generally reveal strong tendency to vote according to one's ethnic background, while nationalist discourse predominate both the public sphere and activities of political parties. Thus, Subotica is characterized by most of the features that have made the case of Yugoslavia infamous globally, except for the armed conflicts. It could be seen as a microcosm of multiethnic Yugoslavia and Serbia, and therefore it is taken into focus of this analysis.

The focal question of the research is to what extent the emergence and proliferation political parties, including minority parties, contributed to the more substantive, as opposed to formal, democratization of politics. The argument is that multiplication of political parties has meant the diversification of political options if there is evidence of multidimensional competition of political parties.

The empirical analysis will focus primarily on the dimensionality of political space in Subotica, Yugoslavia. Dimensionality of political space refers to interrelatedness of respondents' preferences for different political parties. Instead of examining respondents' perception of each party separately, the focus is on general perception of the entire menu of political parties.

In Western countries, political parties are commonly differentiated along a single dimension – from political Left to political Right. However, there are scholars who found this simple image of politics inadequate, and argued for more complex models.<sup>5</sup> Western models are seldom straightway transferable to post-communist contexts. Therefore it is not certain that post-communist parties can be ordered along a single dimension, and even less that this dimension would correspond to the classical left-right distinction.<sup>6</sup> It could be hypothesized, for example, that nationalism gained greater political weight in countries such as Yugoslavia than, for example, the issue of progressive taxation. Hence, it is also of theoretical relevance to examine what are the most relevant political dimensions in a multi-cultural and multiethnic environment, for decades dominated by a socialist ideology.

In order to investigate the sources of differentiation and support of political parties, it will be examined to what extent ethnic background determines party preferences. If a large proportion of variance in voting preferences is attributable to ethnic background, it can be interpreted as an indicator of the relevance of group memberships for political preferences, and further as an indicator that the proliferation of political parties does not

necessarily result in broadening the political spectrum. Different parties, in this case, do not represent different interests but rather compete for a monopoly over political representation of a single political issue (nationalism), a so called 'valence issue'.<sup>7</sup>

The implications of the obtained results for the actual democratization of politics in Subotica will be discussed, especially in the light of multiplicity of existing political parties.

### Method

This study is based on a survey conducted in Subotica, Vojvodina, in early 1996.<sup>8</sup> This is a *secondary data analysis*, that is, the items in the survey were not specifically designed for the problems addressed in this article.

The survey included questions about voting/party preferences. Respondents were asked how likely they were to vote for each of eleven political parties participating in local elections in Subotica district.

The following political parties are included:

1. BŠS: Party of Bunjevci and Šokci
2. DSHV: Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina
3. DZVM: Democratic Community of Magyars of Vojvodina
4. LSV: League of Social-Democrats of Vojvodina
5. Golubovi: Citizens' Movement for Subotica 'Golubovi'
6. RDSV: Reform-Democratic Party of Vojvodina
7. SVM: Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina
8. SPS: Socialist Party of Serbia
9. SPO: Serbian Renewal Movement
10. SRS: Serbian Radical Party
11. SSJ: Federal Party of Yugoslavs

Since the respondents were allowed to express readiness to vote for more than one party it is possible to analyse the 'similarity' of different parties as the respondents perceive them. The questionnaire also contained items concerning socio-demographic background, including respondents' nationality.

### Respondents

The sample was constructed on the basis of census lists, and consisted of 548 respondents of mixed age and sex (46.5% females). Since the survey was focused on Croats and Bunjevci, they are intentionally over-represented, while Hungarian speakers are under-represented in the sample design. Distribution of ethnic groups in Subotica according to the 1991 census, and in the sample can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE AND OF SUBOTICA COUNTY

Ethnic group	1991 Census frequency	1991 Census (%)	Sample frequency	Sample (%)
CROAT	16369	10.9	179	32.7
BUNJEVAC	17439	11.6	133	24.3
SERB	22335	14.8	80	14.6
MAGYAR	64277	42.7	70	12.8
YUGOSLAV	22746	15.1	78	14.2
Other	7368	4.9	8	1.4
All Groups		.0	548	.0

Census data source: *Popis '91: Stanovništvo, Vol. 10* (Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1994), p.204.

## Results

### *Structure of Political Space*

According to the Scree-test and taking into account theoretical interpretability, three factors are extracted from the matrix of intercorrelations of voting probability items, accounting for 53% of total variance. It means that three dimensions are sufficient to explain basic differences between political parties in Subotica in terms of respondents' voting preferences.

The extracted factors are rotated into Oblimin position to enhance their interpretation. Structure matrix (correlations between factors and variables) of the rotated factors is presented in Table 2.

The first factor is defined by preference for the following parties: RDSV, LSV, GOLUBOVI, and to a lesser extent SPO, SSJ and SVM. The first two

TABLE 2  
STRUCTURE MATRIX OF THE THREE EXTRACTED FACTORS

Party	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
RDSV	.77		
LSV	.77		
GOLUBOVI	.70		
SPO	.49		
SPS		.73	
BŠS		.65	
SRS		.57	
SSJ	.46	.51	
DZVM			.89
SVM			.79
DSHV			.76

Note: Loadings above .40 shown.

parties are best known for their support for the autonomy of Vojvodina. GOLUBOVI is a local organization with a similar, though less militant, programme. SPO (Vuk Drašković's party) was at the time turning from a nationalist towards a more civic orientation. SSJ was a minor pro-regime party recognized by its emphasis on 'Yugoslav' identity and favourable attitude towards the former Communist period. Its specific feature was anti-nationalist rhetoric, and therefore respondents' perceptions of it were split between a pro-regime and a civic, non-nationalist image. Thus, the basic differential characteristics of the parties with the highest saturation on the first factor are their support for a non-nationalist political option and for increased autonomy of Vojvodina. Therefore, it seems appropriate to interpret this factor as the *Civic-regional* political dimension.

The second factor is represented by SPS, BŠS, SRS and SSJ. This cluster of parties could be interpreted equally as a pro-regime and a Serbian nationalist orientation. However, because SPS (Milošević's party) has the highest loading, followed by BŠS (local pro-regime puppet-party ostensibly on behalf of the Bunjevci ethnic group), and with somewhat lower loadings by the SRS (Šešelj's party) and SSJ, it seems that the more relevant aspect is the pro-regime orientation rather than Serbian nationalism. Of course, Serbian nationalism was the major feature of the SPS and the regime politics, so it is impossible to separate these two orientations. Therefore, this factor is interpreted as *Pro-regime* orientation, and secondly as *Serbian nationalism* factor.

The third factor is clearly represented by ethnic minority parties: DZVM, SVM and DSHV, that is, the ruling coalition on the local level in Subotica during the 1990s. The former two represent the Hungarian minority and the third represents ethnic Croats. Therefore, it is easy to interpret this factor as *Pro-minority* political orientation.

The benefit of the Oblimin rotation is that it does not impose independence among factors. Information about correlation between factors can further illuminate the relationships between the extracted political dimensions. Table 3 shows the correlation coefficients between the three factors.

TABLE 3  
CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN PERCEIVED POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS

	Pro-regime nationalist orientation	Pro-minority orientation
Civic-regional orientation	.23**	.27**
Pro-regime nationalist orientation		.03

\*\* p<.01

These coefficients are interesting for further speculation about the structure of *perceived* political space in Subotica. The highest coefficient is between the Civic and Pro-minority orientations ( $r=.27, p<.01$ ). This is an expected finding: parties of civic orientation are expected to be more democratic and tolerant in religious, ethnic and other respects. On the other side, it is desirable, but not theoretically or ideologically necessary, that minority parties are also democratic and tolerant in various respects, especially regarding ethnicity. The results suggest that there is a slight tendency for minority parties' supporters to extend their support also towards the civic non-ethnic dimension.

More interesting and more difficult to interpret is the correlation between the Civic and Pro-regime orientations ( $r=.23, p<.01$ ). It was not expected that preferences for the pro-regime parties would correlate with their major political alternative on the level of Vojvodina. However, it is possible that both clusters of parties were perceived somewhat ambiguously. Pro-regime parties were probably also perceived as supporting the *status quo*, that is, stability and order, while at the same time the goals of order and stability could also be attributed to the Civic group of parties. The connection between the two blocs could also be based on their common opposition to minority nationalism, or based on loyalty to the Yugoslavian state. However, it is not possible to offer a decisive explanation on the basis of the available data.

It is important to note that the results do not refer to differences and similarities between political parties in their programmes, ideologies or the policies they conduct or advocate. They pertain only to the perception of similarities and differences between parties in terms of respondents' voting preferences. Emergence of certain parties on a single factor therefore does not mean that these parties have similar programmes, or advocate similar policies; it means only that they are *perceived* by the respondents as being similar. In terms of voting, it means that respondents were much more likely to vote for parties from the same cluster (factor) than for parties belonging to the other factors.

#### *Ethnic Voting*

After defining the dimensions of perceived political space, it is interesting to examine to what extent the model of 'ethnic voting' – that is, voting for parties that claim exclusive representation of one's own ethnic group – was applicable to the voting preferences of the respondents. If a large proportion of variance was attributable to ethnic voting it could mean that the mono-ideological politics of socialism was simply replaced by a mono-ideological politics of nationalism. On the other hand, if ethnic voting was a relatively weak predictor of party preferences, it could mean that parties were

TABLE 4  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNIC BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL  
DIMENSIONS: ANOVA RESULTS

Dependent variable	Mean Sqr. Effect	Mean Sqr. Error	F(df=1/2) 4.535	p-level
<i>Civic orientation</i>	2.589	0.977	2.650	.03258
<i>Pro-Regime orientation</i>	20.679	0.864	23.940	.00000
<i>Pro-Minority orientation</i>	36.169	0.747	48.387	.00000

perceived as representing a wider variety of political options, many of which cut across ethnic lines, a development that could be interpreted as a sign of substantive democratization.

Results of a one-way analysis of variance are presented in Table 4. As expected, national background was significantly related to preferences for all three political party dimensions. Again as it could be expected, the effect was smallest but still significant ( $p < .05$ ) for the factor of Civic parties.

This result shows that for preferences of parties of civic orientation, ethnic background is far less important (but still relevant) than for the other dimensions. In other words, supporters of parties from this cluster are more ethnically mixed than supporters of the other two orientations.<sup>9</sup> A much stronger effect is obtained for the pro-regime dimension and especially for the pro-minority orientation. Hence, the ethnic background proved to be a major determinant of the support for these two groups of parties.

Table 5 shows the means of ethnic groups on each of the three factors. The smallest differences are on the Civic factor, where Croats and Magyars were slightly more likely to support parties of this orientation than Bunjevci and Serbs, while declared Yugoslavs were in between. It is not surprising that minority members were more likely to support non-nationalist parties than the majority, but the difference is minimal.

Parties of a pro-regime orientation were more positively perceived by Serbs, Bunjevci and to a certain extent declared Yugoslavs, and more negatively by Croats and Magyars. The result is expected, since the pro-

TABLE 5  
ARITHMETIC MEANS OF ETHNIC GROUPS ON THE POLITICAL PARTY FACTORS

Ethnic group	<i>Civic</i>	<i>Pro-Regime</i>	<i>Pro-Minority</i>	Valid N
CROAT	.136	-.459	.434	179
BUNJEVAC	-.179	.349	-.390	133
SERB	-.147	.497	-.551	80
MAGYAR	.125	-.273	.838	70
YUGOSLAV	-.001	.222	-.471	78
All Groups	-.0048	.004	.007	540

regime orientation was closely intertwined with the Serbian nationalism. This naturally made minorities more critical of pro-regime parties. It is noteworthy that declared Yugoslavs perceived pro-regime parties more positively than Croats and Magyars. This could mean that support for pro-regime parties came not only from Serbian nationalism, but also from the perception of these parties as being more loyal to the Yugoslav state than minority parties have been. This interpretation is also supported by the distribution of means on the pro-minority factor. There, Yugoslavs similarly evaluated these parties as Serbs and Bunjevci – that is, negatively. Magyars and Croats were primary supporters of these parties.

'Ethnic voting' obviously explained a major part of the support for pro-regime and pro-minority parties, and this particularly applied to Magyars, Croats and Serbs. Parties of the civic orientation were more evenly supported by different nationalities, but still supported relatively more by members of national minorities. Declared Yugoslavs were quite evenly distributed among the three basic orientations, though they were less likely to support pro-minority parties and somewhat more likely to support pro-regime parties. It seems that for declared Yugoslavs it was of prime importance whether a certain party was perceived as promoting loyalty to the existing state, suggesting that the very declaration of a person's national identity as Yugoslav is accompanied by increased identification with the state of Yugoslavia.

The case of Bunjevci seems particularly interesting.<sup>10</sup> Although they are an ethnic minority, their evaluation of political parties appears much more similar to that of Serbs than of Croats or Magyars. The most applicable explanation seems to be that their declaration as Bunjevac is an expression of primary loyalty to Yugoslavia and of weak identification with the Croat nation. Hence, they did not see their interests represented by anti-regime pro-minority parties, but by parties of the perceived pro-Yugoslavian and therefore pro-regime orientation. When parties loyal to the federal state *and* of anti-regime orientation appeared as a sufficiently strong political force, as in the decisive 2000 elections, Bunjevci abandoned their support for the pro-regime parties. Bunjevci and Yugoslavs seem to be a particularly interesting example of the complexity of relationships between a voter's ethnic/national identification and political behaviour.

In terms of the support for specific parties, results are also suggestive of the predominance of 'ethnic' voting in Subotica. *Bunjevci* were most likely to support BŠS (65% of Bunjevci would vote for them) and SSJ (37.9%), and least likely to vote for SRS (3%), SVM (3.8%) and SPO (4.5%). Only 15.2% of Bunjevci in our sample would vote for DSHV – a pro-Croatian party. *Serbs* were most likely to vote for SPS (41.8%), SSJ (35.4%), and SRS (29.1%), while least likely to support DSHV (1.3%), DZVM and SVM

(both 2.5%). *Croats* perceived most positively DSHV (64.4% would vote for), and RDSV (43.0%), and most negatively SRS (0%), SPO (7.9%) and BŠS (11.3%). *Magyars* were supporters primarily of SVM (54.3%), DZVM (50.0%), DSHV and RDSV (35.7% each), while they would not likely vote for SRS (2.9%) SPS and BŠS (7.1% each). *Yugoslavs* were potential voters of SSJ (61.5%) and SPS (26.9%), and unlikely voters of DSHV (2.6), SPO (3.8) SRS and DZVM (5.1% each). Detailed ethnic composition of potential votes for different parties is given in the Appendix.<sup>11</sup>

## Discussion

Factor analysis of party preferences showed that political space in Subotica was organized along three basic dimensions: *civic*, *pro-regime* and *pro-minority*. Thus, these were the three basic issues that divided political party preferences in Subotica at the time of the survey. The obtained three-dimensional structure and evidence on the predominance of 'ethnic voting' are the basic results of the descriptive part of the study. The next problem is to assess how the obtained results reflect on the character of democratization and the role of political parties in it.

Evidence on the multidimensionality of the political space could be interpreted as a sign of substantive democratization. Different existing political orientations presumably mean greater diversification of available political options and better representation of various interests and groups. However, it is not necessarily the case: it is possible that different parties are representing conflicting positions concerning a single issue, and that parties are mainly competing within their own isolated electorates for a monopoly over representation concerning that single issue.

Results pertaining to the relationship between ethnic background and party preferences indicate that ethnicity is a major determinant of party preferences. Thus, implications for the diversification of political options in Subotica are ambiguous. The most optimistic interpretation is that the three defined dimensions represent different political options: civic values and tolerance, support of the authorities and their politics, and concern for political position and the power of ethnic minorities.

Another possible interpretation is that the obtained structure was expression of two basic political cleavages. One cleavage was represented by the opposition of Serbian (pro-regime) nationalism and minority nationalism, while the other was based on general nationalism (including both minority and majority versions) and a civic alternative. However, the predominance of 'ethnic voting preferences' in the sample suggests a third interpretation. Namely, it is possible that three obtained political party dimensions represented *three different positions* concerning a *single issue*:

nationalism. The pro-regime factor represented Serbian nationalism, the pro-minority factor represented its mirror image – minority nationalism. In this model, the civic option would simply represent the middle-of-the-road option or rejection of both majority and minority nationalisms. In other words, this model suggests that nationalism was the only (or the most important) political issue in Subotica. If this model is accepted, then it is disputable to what extent the proliferation of political parties is a sign of the democratization of politics, when economic, cultural and other issues are virtually irrelevant in a political sense.

From a particular normative point of view, increasing the number of political parties could be welcomed because more parties are more likely to represent different interests, at least potentially. However, the reactions of minority party leaders in Yugoslavia were ambiguous in this respect. While the introduction of a multiparty system in Yugoslavia was welcomed, their reactions to the multiplication of parties inside their own domain were somewhat less positive. Moreover, it is possible to discern tendencies to centralize or monopolize political decision-making concerning minorities within single respective parties. As a consequence, a large part of minority parties' activities is directed towards competition with other parties claiming the exclusive right over the political representation of that same minority.

An example of such a tendency can be found in a programmatic document issued by the *Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina* (SVM), the dominant political party of ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina since 1994–95, entitled the *Proposal for and Agreement on the Self-Organisation of Hungarians in the Vojvodina*.<sup>12</sup> The main goal of its proposed five councils and territorial autonomy<sup>13</sup> seems to be to achieve a monopoly over decisions concerning the Hungarian minority and maintain control over their entire political, social and cultural life. Although it is claimed that such organization of the minority is 'above party level', implicitly there is a tendency to achieve dominance of a single party over a particular minority's affairs. It was evident in the disagreement between the SVM and DZVM over a common election strategy, which resulted in the loss of several seats in the federal parliament for Hungarian minority representatives in the 1996 elections.<sup>14</sup> The fact that a great deal of political activity of the leaders of DZVM and SVM has been about who will be the 'true' representative of the Hungarian minority may have led to voters' dissatisfaction.<sup>15</sup>

The most recent example of this sort comes from the Croat national minority leaders. Within a period of only a few hours, two versions of the 'Temporary Croat National Council' were established, one by HNS (Croat National Alliance) and one by DSHV (Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina). This occurrence was greeted by mutual denunciation in the local media.<sup>16</sup>

The observed relationships can be put in the context of larger macro-political processes, using the concepts of Rogers Brubaker<sup>17</sup> and Claus Offe.<sup>18</sup> Brubaker's concepts of nationalizing states (in this case Serbia) and mobilizing minorities (Magyars and Croats) seem to capture well the macro-political dynamics which is reflected in the obtained political dimensions. The pro-regime factor represented views of those to whom the nationalizing policies of Milošević's politics are addressed. The pro-minority factor is a reflection of the mobilized minorities. Heavy support of targeted nationalities for their respective parties (that is, of Serbs for SPS, Magyars and Croats for SVM, DZVM and DSHV) indicates that the political agents of both sides were quite successful in their tasks. In the context of the clash between nationalizing the state and mobilizing the minority, it was difficult for civic parties to attract a more significant proportion of voters.

Political processes in Subotica, as well as in Vojvodina and Yugoslavia, have been a clear example of the 'ethnification of politics',<sup>19</sup> meaning the situation when ethnicity becomes a dominant political cleavage. Although such politics may lead to tragic consequences, it should not be forgotten, as Offe argued, that in the East European context it is actually a rational politics (for example, autonomy for a minority can result in an exclusive labour market, or ethnicity can be seen as a resource for political elites).

One possible objection to the presented findings and interpretations might point to the timing of the survey. Namely, it was done less than a year after the war in Croatia ended, and hundreds of thousands of refugees had fled into Serbia, many of whom ended up in Subotica. In this situation one would expect a kind of natural increase in nationalist attitudes and in the corresponding citizens' evaluation of political parties. However, this does not invalidate the central argument of the study. Predominance of ethnic voting is clear for basically all elections in this locality, even in the post-Milošević period. For example, the results for the failed Serbian presidential election of October 2002 show that Magyars voted nearly unanimously for a candidate supported by the SVM.<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

Factor analysis proved to be a useful methodological approach for the descriptive analysis of the dimensionality of the political space in Subotica. Instead of an analysis of a number of specific political parties with often similar characters, it was shown that the analysis could focus on fewer theoretically meaningful and empirically founded political dimensions. Respondents' preferences for 11 parties active in Subotica can be viewed along three dimensions, representing broad political orientations: *Civic*

*orientation*, *Pro-regime orientation* (including Serbian nationalism), and *Pro-minority orientation*. Various possible interpretations for such a structure of political parties were discussed. It was suggested that they represented three different positions concerning the single issue, nationalism, rather than three substantively different political options.

Further analysis showed that the ethnic background of respondents was the major predictor of preferences for these three political dimensions. Although proliferation of political parties can be a sign of increasing democratization, this was hardly the case in Subotica. The 'ethnification of politics' brought the problem of ethnicity in the focus of politics so that every political actor had to take a stand on it.<sup>21</sup> The style of politics utilized by majority and minority political leaders only contributed to this process. Political actors have been concerned primarily with achieving a monopoly over the representation of 'national' interests of 'their own' ethnic groups. Instead of genuine political pluralism, we observed conflicting group-centrisms (or nationalisms of majorities and minorities). Thus, both minority and majority political elites practise a 'rent-seeking' style of nationalist politics.<sup>22</sup>

In such political circumstances the principal political competition is not between different parties over different solutions to various *issues* in politics, but mainly within a few groups of parties claiming the exclusive right to represent their target groups (nationalities). Hence, the main political competitor for, say, the SVM was not the SPS, but the DZVM, and for DSHV it was not SRS but BŠS. In this sense, although the analysis resulted in three dimensions of political space, it could be argued that there actually did not exist a common political space in Subotica (and possibly in Vojvodina and Yugoslavia as well). Instead, there existed separate political spheres or domains for each politically significant group – for each minority and for the majority. If that is democratization, it is rather a specific kind of democratization. Two or three monologues do not constitute a discussion.

However, we also observed the existence of the pro and contra regime dimension. This was obviously an issue that showed some tendency to cross ethnic boundaries, although the impermeability of ethnic boundaries seems rather typical for the local politics in Subotica during most of the 1990s. The 2000 elections showed that the salience of the issue of regime change increased greatly, resulting in the total defeat of the pro-regime parties in Subotica county. Thus, at least for that moment, local parties were able to focus on a broader issue.

What are the consequences of the obtained findings for the future prospects of minority–majority relationships? As Brubaker argues, ethnic conflicts are *in principle* irresolvable.<sup>23</sup> They either escalate or fade away. In comparison with Kosovo, ethnic conflicts in Vojvodina have always had a

greater chance of fading away peacefully. However, intensification of segmental isolation may aggravate or perpetuate the conflicts.<sup>24</sup> Room for optimism is encouraged by the regime change in Belgrade. More accommodative politics concerning minorities may decrease the salience of ethnicity and create opportunities for the cross-ethnic representation of interests.<sup>25</sup>

APPENDIX  
CROSS-DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONALITY BY VOTING PREFERENCE (%)

	BŠS	DSHV	DZVM	LSV	SVM	SPS	SPO	SRS	SSJ	RDSV	GOLUBOVI
Bunjevci	65.2	15.2	5.3	14.4	3.8	25.0	4.5	3.0	37.9	22.6	13.5
Serbs	15.2	1.3	2.5	15.2	2.5	41.8	15.2	29.1	35.4	11.3	16.3
Croats	11.3	64.4	26.6	28.2	20.3	11.9	7.9	0.0	27.1	43.0	21.2
Magyars	7.1	35.7	50.0	27.1	54.3	15.7	7.1	2.9	27.1	35.7	22.9
Yugoslavs	21.2	2.6	5.1	14.1	7.7	26.9	3.8	5.1	61.5	19.2	21.8

*Note:* Respondents were allowed to indicate more than one party. Therefore, cumulative percentages in rows and columns do not equal 100.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am thankful to an anonymous reviewer for a number of helpful comments.

#### NOTES

1. *Yugoslavia* refers to contemporary Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which is to change the official name into *Serbia and Montenegro* (see [www.mfa.gov.yu/agreement\\_e.html](http://www.mfa.gov.yu/agreement_e.html)).
2. *UN Special Report. Situation of Human Rights in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia: Special Report on Minorities*, submitted by Ms. Elizabeth Rehn. (UN Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, 1996).
3. Zoran Lutovac, 'The Participation of Minorities in Political Life', in V. Goati (ed.), *Elections to the Federal and Republican Parliaments of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) 1990-1996: Analyses, Documents and Data* (pp.126-39) (Berlin: Ed. Sigma, 1998).
4. Nikola Botev, 'Where East Meets West: Ethnic Inter-marriage in the Former Yugoslavia, 1962 to 1989', *American Sociological Review*, Vol.59, No.3 (1994), pp.461-80.
5. E.g., Herbert Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); C.P. Middendorp, 'Models for Predicting the Dutch Vote along the Left-Right and the Libertarianism-Authoritarianism Dimensions', *International Political Science Review*, Vol.10 (1989), pp.279-308.
6. Cf. Herbert Kitschelt, 'The Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies', *Party Politics*, Vol.1, No.4 (1995), pp.447-72; Zsolt Enyedi & B. Todosijević, 'Organisation of Mass Political Attitudes in Hungary', to appear in *Polish Psychology Bulletin* (Summer 2002).
7. D.E. Stokes, 'Spatial Models of Party Competition', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.57 (1963), pp.368-77.
8. The data are generously made available by Prof. Zlatko Šram, Center for Social Research, Subotica.
9. See also Appendix.
10. Bunjevci are Slav Catholics, speakers of a particular Serbo-Croatian dialect, inhabiting

northwestern Vojvodina and southern Hungary. They are descents of seventeenth century migrants from western Herzegovina and Dalmatia. Approximately 100,000 Bunjevci live in contemporary Vojvodina, while the largest single group can be found in Subotica. In official censuses and in surveys, approximately half of them declare a primarily Croat ethnic/national identity, and the other half declares Bunjevci identity. During socialist times, they were officially regarded as Croats and were categorized as such in official documents. The census of 1971 for the first time introduced the category of Bunjevac, and this practice was followed in the 1991 census. Although there have been attempts to establish Bunjevci as a distinct south-Slav nation, they have never really achieved formal minority status recognition either on the federal or on the local level. At the same time they have remained only partially integrated into the greater Croat nation. For more details on the national self-understanding of the Bunjevci, see B. Todosijević, 'Why Bunjevci did not Become a Nation: A Case Study', *East Central Europe*, Vol.28, No.2 (2002).

11. The importance of national background for party preferences is also indicated by the results of an analysis of party by nationality contingency tables. Chi-squares are significant for all parties, and  $C$  coefficients are quite high for most parties, except for parties of civic orientation. Additionally, discriminant analysis showed significant differences in support for party factors among different nationalities. Coefficient  $R_c=0.65$  suggests that national background is really a major determinant of preferences for political parties of different orientations. More detailed results of these analyses are available from the author upon request.
12. Adopted by the Council of the Alliance of Hungarians in the Vojvodina (Subotica, 18 January 1996).
13. To be sure, it deals with the territorial autonomy of the region predominantly inhabited by Magyars, not with the autonomy of Vojvodina, even though a substantial part of the Hungarian minority would remain outside of the borders of the so-established territory (Lutovac).
14. Lutovac.
15. All this applies in an even more extreme way to the politics of the Croat DSHV. See, for example, *Žig*, Vol.IV, p.81 (1997), for a critique of DSHV leader Tonković's attempts to monopolize the politics of the Croats in Vojvodina. As a result of such politics, DSHV became almost completely marginalized in terms of votes obtained. Ironically, in the 2000 elections, when Milošević's regime was crushed, Tonković was rewarded for his 'achievements'. By representing DSHV in the winning DOS coalition he was elected as a representative in the provincial parliament of Vojvodina.
16. See *Subotičke novine*, No.43, 25 October 2001.
17. Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
18. Claus Offe, 'Ethnic Politics in East European Transitions', in J. Jensen and F. Mislivetz (eds.), *Paradoxes and Perspectives* (Szombathely: Szavaria University Press, 1995), pp.23–52.
19. Ibid.
20. Detailed election results available at [www.cesid.org](http://www.cesid.org).
21. Offe.
22. Cf. Ugo Pagano, 'Can Economics Explain Nationalism?', in A. Breton, G. Gaeloti, P. Salmon and R. Wintrobe, *Nationalism and Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
23. Rogers Brubaker, 'Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism', in J.A. Hall (ed.) *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
24. By way of an example, the *Proposal* by the SVM asks for the complete segregation of schools for the Hungarian minority, not only for studying Hungarian.
25. Cf. P.R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991).