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Elite- or mass-driven democratic consolidation?

Western Balkans in comparative perspective

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To my parents

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Abstract

Since the fall of the communist regime in the beginning of the 1990s, Western Balkan states (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia) have been striving to build democratic governments, market economies and pluralist societies. Although certain progress has been made, more than two decades later the Western Balkan states are still 'stuck' in an extended form of democratic transition, and as such are labeled as 'hybrid' or 'semi-consolidated' regimes. In contrast, most of the other post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have displayed greater success in institutionalizing democratic pluralism, and have hence consolidated their democracies at a much faster pace. Taking the actor-based approach as a point of departure in explaining democratic consolidation, the aim of this dissertation is to empirically examine what are the effects of citizens' participation and elite contestation on the advancement of the fragile Western Balkans democracies. By employing a time-series cross-section statistical model, I statistically assess the effects of citizens' political participation and party competition on the democracy levels in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. However, the focus of my research interest is primarily on the Western Balkan states, while the CEE EU member states serve just as a term of comparison.

Weak participation in politics by ordinary citizens in the new European democracies is considered to be one of the main causes of the peculiar practices of illiberal democracy in these countries. However, I argue that while low levels of citizens' participation leads to hollow or stagnant democracy in most democratic systems, higher levels of civic engagement is not necessarily an indication for better democracy in post-communist Europe. The statistical test confirms that indeed there is a strong negative and statistically significant correlation between all four types of political participation examined in this study (voter turnout, party membership, signing petitions and attending demonstrations) and the levels of democracy when controlled for the Western Balkan region. I contend that clientelist practices that are widely spread in the Western Balkans account for this relationship.

The relationship between political competition and the levels of democracy in the Western Balkans occupies the second part of my thesis. The empirical data reveals that CEE EU member states score higher in almost all dimensions of political competition compared to the Western Balkans. At the same time their party systems seem to be less institutionalized, more volatile, less distinguishable along ideological stances, as well as fragmented and ethnically polarized. Taking this into consideration, I argue that enhancing political competition would provide an impetus to the democratic development in the post-communist countries in Europe, including the

Western Balkans. The large-N statistical test basically confirms this hypothesis. I consider three factors as most accountable for having the Western Balkan states unsuccessful in developing more robust political competition compared to their post-communist neighbors. These are: absence of an organized opposition to the former political order in the first years of their democratic transition, strong ethnic cleavage and party corruption.

Introduction

> "Whether democracy becomes 'the only game in town' depends on the *quality of democratic interactions and processes* the consequences of which affect the legitimacy of democracy in the eyes of citizens and political elites alike" (Kitschelt et al., 1999, p. 1)

More than 20 years after the overthrow of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)[1], most of the countries in this region are considered consolidated democracies. The transition from authoritarian to democratic rule has opened many new opportunities for growth of a peaceful civil society and political activism, as well as possibility for competition among the political actors.

Nevertheless, some of the CEE countries which underwent democratic regime transformation within the last two decades have seemingly stalled. A clear-cut example of such unconsolidated democracies that are still

[1] Central and Eastern Europe, (abbreviated CEE) is a political definition for a region which encompasses the following former communist countries in Europe: Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

facing the challenges of pursuing market liberalization, democratization and rule of law are the countries in the Western Balkans (WB)[2]. They "are engaged in an extended form of democratic transition with open prospects for eventual consolidation… Indeed, Freedom House (2013) does not identify any states in the region as 'consolidated democracies'. Instead, the study groups Croatia, Serbia, FYR Macedonia, and Montenegro in the category of 'semi-consolidated democracies'. The same report then classifies Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina as 'transitional governments' or 'hybrid regimes', and labels Kosovo a 'semi-consolidated authoritarian regime'" (Balfour and Stratulat, 2011, p. 4). The transition fatigue and the skepticism regarding the responsiveness of their governments have just further raised the frustration and disappointment towards the political elites. Thus, finding a solution to this growing elite legitimacy problem should be of an utmost importance. Besides the effective implementation of the rule of law, it is the vibrant civil society and other non-institutionalized forms of citizens' involvement that are fundamental for monitoring and censoring the government activities, i.e. for providing the system with legitimacy. As Balfour and Stratulat (2011, p. 51) would note: "The mobilization of civil society can breed civic values that motivate people to act in the name of

[2] Western Balkans, (abbreviated WB) is a political definition for a region of South-Eastern Europe which encompasses the following countries: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania.

substantive democratic demands, putting pressure on their elites to supply adequate levels of effective democracy."

Most of the literature on democratic transition and consolidation is dominated by two types of approaches: structure- and actor-based approach. The structure-based approach developed by the modernization theorists in the 1950s and 1960s (see Lipset, 1959), emphasizes the importance of structural properties of the society (like socio-economic development, educational opportunities, social or ethnic divisions etc.) as the most favorable factors to democratization. On the other hand, actor- or process-oriented approach pioneered by Dankwart Rustow (1970) emphasizes the decisions of the political actors as the most important factors for democratization. Linz and Stepan (1978) further recognized the importance of political processes and elite choices arguing that cultural and socioeconomic factors should be seen as conditioning variables. Taking the actor-based approach as a point of departure in explaining the democratic consolidation in the Western Balkan countries, this dissertation focuses on the role of the strategic choices of political leaders regarding basic institutional arrangements, as well as on the mass public commitment to the democratization process.

It can be said that there are two very broad conceptions of democracy (Riker, 1982). One is the so-called liberal democracy, while the other is populist or participatory democracy. Liberal democracy is considered to be elitist because it values the role of elites as legitimate representatives of the people. Participatory democracy on

the other hand emphasizes popular participation, i.e. the active engagement in public life. Dahl (1971) argues that democracy, or what he calls polyarchy, is present when both, contestation and participation in the political process, exist in a society. Following this line of reasoning, the aim of this dissertation is to empirically examine what are the effects of citizens' participation and elite contestation on the advancement of the Western Balkans democracies. By focusing on the institutional change, this study raises doubt on the assumption that a strong and unified opposition, accompanied by high popular mobilization would promote democratization in the region. This is mainly because the traditional clientelistic relations that are still very much present in the countries of the Western Balkans continue to erode their democratization and to negatively impact their prospects for democratic consolidation. By investigating this aspect, I hope to clarify a number of empirical and analytical issues critical for comprehending the complexity of the Western Balkan's democratic transformation. As 'democratization' is rather loose term to describe the process in-between the collapse of the communist regime and establishment of liberal democracy, for the purpose of this thesis I use the explanation given by Pridham and Vanhanen (1994, p. 2). According to them, 'democratization' is "the overall process of regime change from beginning to end, including both stages of what are generally called in the comparative literature 'transition' to a liberal democracy and its subsequent 'consolidation.'"

In order to confront the theory on actor-centered democratic consolidation with empirical evidence, I compare two separate regions in post-communist Europe. The 10 new CEE EU member states[3] which have had remarkably successful transitions to democracy represent the first block of analysis in this thesis and serve just as a term of comparison. Western Balkan countries that have faced many difficulties in consolidating their democracies will be in the focus of my cross-national investigation. With the aim of conducting the empirical inquiry into causal relationship, I rely on the large-N quantitative analysis.

So far several good studies have examined the dynamics of political activism of the masses[4] and strategic choices of the political elites in post-communist societies[5]. Just a few studies deal with the relationship between the

[3] "CEE EU member states" here and further in the text refers to the 10 countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. These are: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Although Croatia is also an EU member, it is not included in this group, as it was still an EU candidate country at the time that most part of this thesis was written.

[4] Among the studies that have analyzed the citizens' political behavior and participation in post-communist Europe are the following: Bernhagen and Marsh (2007); Howard (2003); Karp and Banducci (2007); Kitschelt et al. (1999); Kostadinova (2003); Kostadinova and Power (2007); Kostelka (2010); Letki (2003); Mierina (2011); Pierobon (2010); Pollack et al. (2003); Vachudova (2005a, 2011).

[5] Among the studies that have analyzed strategic choices of the political elites in post-communist Europe are the following: Hanley et al. (1998); Innes (2002); Karp and Banducci (2007); Kitschelt et al. (1999); Lagerspetz (2009); Mierina (2011); Vachudova (2005a, 2011).

political culture and the state of democracy in post-communist Europe[6]. At the same time, there are practically no empirical investigations dealing with this important aspect of democratization in the Western Balkans. Consequently, this PhD thesis attempts to fill this gap in the literature and to give a better understanding of the specifics of the political culture in the Western Balkans. This is particularly important because addressing this issue could encourage people to overcome the main challenges which confront the civil sector in the Balkans, and at the same time the international community to take proactive approach in strengthening and promoting substantive democracy in the region.

The main conclusion of this thesis is the following:

Democratization in the Western Balkan countries seems to be mainly elite-driven, as they still haven't developed sufficient levels of genuinely democratic mass participation capable to induce political institutions to be responsive and accountable to societal interests. What is even more, clientelist-inspired political participation, rather than deepening and advancing the principles of representative democracy, only undermines further the democratic legitimacy and accountability.

The first chapter deals with the theoretical framework and is organized in three main sections. The first section provides an overview of the democratic

[6] Some of the studies dealing with the relationship between the political culture and the state of democracy in post-communist Europe are: Klingemann et al. (2006); Pollack et al. (2003); Vachudova (2011).

consolidation theories. The second section contains a detailed analysis of the process-centered approach in explaining democratization. More specifically, this chapter gives an overview and analyzes the processes of mass mobilization and elite interaction as two competing concepts in explaining democratization. The third section gives and overview to the literature on the dynamics and determinants of democratization in the Western Balkans. The second chapter of this thesis provides an insight into the peculiarities of the Western Balkans transition. The main focus here is the development of the civil society sector and the state of the respective political systems. However, it also gives a brief overview of the political and economic challenges that these countries faced in their process of democratic regime-building. The empirical part is embedded in the next two chapters (chapters Three and Four), which actually represent the main body of the thesis. Chapter Three is concerned with the relationship between political participation and democracy in the Western Balkans. After giving an overview of the theoretical framework and development of the hypotheses, I describe in more details the data this chapter is based on, as well as the methodology that is used. The emphasis is on the analysis of the results of the empirical investigation. Chapter Four is concerned with the relationship between political competition and democracy in the Western Balkans and it basically follows the same format as the previous one. The thesis ends with a conclusion, where I summarize the main results, outline the practical and

scientific importance of the findings and present concepts and ideas for future research.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. Democratic consolidation: theories and concepts

Guillermo O'Donnell (1988) rightly asserted that the overall change from authoritarianism to democracy contains not one but two transitions: the first leads to the 'installation of a democratic government', and the second to the 'consolidation of democracy'. As the new democracies in Europe have overthrown the authoritarian rule during the seventies and the eighties of the last century, the focus of the political scientists has shifted from the analysis of democratic transition to problems of democratic consolidation. Most of the previous studies were focused on the transition pathways starting from the dismantling of the authoritarian system to the inauguration and early operation of the new democracy, as well as on the determinants of political system change. Nevertheless, as the overall emphasis of this thesis is on the process of democratic consolidation of the Western Balkan countries, the theoretical framework is rather focused on this concept. Having said that, it is important to initially provide a working definition of democratic consolidation. Based on the postulates of Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 5), democratic regime is consolidated when 1) there are no significant actors engaging in secession or regime change; 2) the majority of the population holds the belief that democracy

is the best form of government and 3) when the governmental and nongovernmental actors of the state become subjects and act according to the democratic institutions. More specifically, as Morlino (2011, p. 110) emphasizes, there are three phenomena that should be observed more closely when analyzing whether consolidation is actually taking place. These are: stabilization of electoral behavior, emergence of recurring patterns of party competition and stabilization of the leadership. It is because "they give an immediate picture of the stabilization of the relationship between parties and civil society, i.e. some of the basic elements in the whole process of consolidation…"

There are two main questions to address here: why some countries experience faster democratic consolidation than others and which are the destabilizing elements that prevent democracy to advance and eventually consolidate? To answer these questions we should take into account the influence of the domestic political, economic and social changes, as well as external transnational influences. Two of the most important factors for democratic consolidation are: the commitment of the government in power to pro-democratic changes of the political order and the mass public commitment to the democratization process. In addition to this, political institutions should create rules which will support that political order. Morlino (2011, p. 113) refers this as a process of democratic anchoring, that is, the existence of "intermediary institutions… able to provide alternative choices and, on some occasions,

solutions to actual problems people have." More specifically, anchoring refers to those intermediate entities capable to politically bind citizens and associations, as very often there is an asymmetrical relationship between elites at the center of those anchors and the citizens. This is consistent with the Huntington's view that "organization is the road to political power, but it is also the foundation of political stability" (Huntington, 1968). According to Morlino (2011), besides the parties with their organization which are the most important anchors in a society, there are several other aspects that shape other anchors and anchoring effects. These are related to: organized associations which have the gate-keeping function, non-organized, but active elites bound in a patronage or clientelist relationship and organized interest bound in certain form of neo-corporatist arrangement. As it seems a counterintuitive that a clientelist relationship can create a specific process of anchoring, I will elaborate this a bit further. Namely, (Morlino, 1998, p. 253) argues that "in the absence of an inclusive legitimation of the new regime, party organization, party control of organized groups, and forms of party patronage may be necessary if the system is to become sufficiently consolidated. Under these circumstances, party structures… constrain the behavior of individuals and groups in civil society, channeling that behavior into democratic institutionalized arenas with the capacity to contain conflict." However, this holds true as long as the governing parties "provide incentives to groups to work within the [democratic] system and deny rewards to those who overtly challenge its legitimacy." Yet, very

often these parties become so dominant and are themselves tempted to misuse their position and to start ruling in a relatively non-competitive manner. Although in such political systems, other political parties are tolerated, the incumbents abuse the state power to intentionally undermine the ability for an effective opposition to flourish. With the aim of keeping the opposition from power, they are using different methods such as placing media under their control, restricting the free speech, lawsuits against the opposition etc. These conditions are no longer considered a source of stability supportive to the consolidation of democracy, but rather a possibility of reverting to more authoritarian forms of rule.

Apart from anchoring, the second sub-process that characterizes democratic consolidation is legitimation of the democratic institutions, i.e. citizens' belief that "in spite of shortcomings and failures, existing political institutions are better than possible alternative ones" (Morlino, 2011, p. 112). Mainwaring (1989, p. 13) also observes that legitimacy may not be present in the initial stages of democracy, but if a commitment to democracy fails to emerge over time, democracy is in trouble. In the context of this analysis, the two sub-processes that characterize crisis within democracy are de-anchoring and de-legitimation.

Bandelj and Radu (2006) add that one of the institutions that shape the democratic process is the electoral system. The discussion here is which system is more democratic: majoritarian or proportional. Most analysts (Linz, 1990; Lipset, 1979; Riggs, 1993) hold the belief that majoritarian

systems are more stable and efficient. However, Lijphart (1999) challenged this idea and argued that proportional systems are more democratic because they offer fair representation of the minorities.

Svolik (2013) tries to explain the divergent post-transition trajectories in the new democracies by developing a new theoretical model of electoral accountability. He presupposes that after the transition to democracy, some candidates enter politics for personal gain which raises doubts among the people about the value of democracy as a political system. Therefore, democracy consolidates when candidates that run for office only to exploit it conclude that their chances of gaining power are too small compared to their competitors, and consequently withdraw from politics. However, "this only occurs when sufficiently attractive, non-political careers are available. In poor democracies, where politics may be 'the most profitable game in town,' even increasingly competitive elections may not discourage such bad candidates from running for office" (Svolik, 2013, p. 7). This argument offers a new explanation for the positive correlation between the survival of democracy and economic development – most prominent empirical finding initially outlined by Lipset (1959).

The proposition that "democracy is related to the state of economic development" made by Lipset (1959, p. 75) has generated probably the largest body of research in the field of political science and has been the subject of extensive qualitative and quantitative empirical research up to date

(see Bollen, 1979; Dahl, 1989; Haggard and Kaufman, 1995; Huntington, 1991; Jackman, 1973; Przeworski et al., 2000; Przeworski and Limongi, 1997). More specifically, Lipset argued that "the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy" (1959, p. 75). Przeworski et al. (2000) further developed this concept, offering "endogenous" and "exogenous" explanations.[7] They strongly contend that democracies are more likely to be found in the highly developed countries. Still, however democracies emerge "... they are more likely to survive in countries that are already developed" (Przeworski et al., 2000, p. 106).

Social factors such as ethnic and religious fractionalization are often considered to influence the democratic development, particularly in post-communist countries which were historically fragmented along cultural and ethnic lines. The classical view on this issue supported by Robert A. Dahl (1971) is that the high level of ethno-linguistic and religious fragmentation is a major impediment to democratization, especially in countries where nationalistic policies are being used with the aim of dominance of the largest ethnic group over the others. However, a slightly different explanation on the issue has been presented by Beissinger (2007) who examines the relationship between ethnic diversity and democratization

[7] According to Przeworski et al. (2000), a distinction should be made between the democracies which result from economic development under authoritarianism (endogenous effect) and democracies which are more like to survive in developed countries (exogenous effect).

in the countries of the post-Soviet Union. He comes to the conclusion that "ethnic diversity does not affect the outcomes of democratization directly, but does so only indirectly, through its interaction with and influence over other processes … that do have a direct effect on democratic outcomes" (Beissinger, 2007, p. 78). In addition to this, unresolved questions of national sovereignty and territorial integrity present serious obstacles to democratic stability. Robert Dahl (1989, p. 207) correctly observes that "the democratic process presupposes a unit … If the unit is not considered proper or rightful – if its scope or domain is not justifiable – then it cannot be made rightful simply by democratic procedures." Linz and Stepan have also emphasized the importance of "stateness" for the democratic development. According to them, "democracy is a form of governance of a modern state. Thus without a state no modern democracy is possible" (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 17). When they refer to "stateness", they presuppose the existence of the following three elements: territorial borders, national identity and the right of citizenship in the state. Thus, in the case of multinational states, the democracy consolidation is hardly possible if the state leaders neglect the multinational character and the different identities residing within the state, simply because that usually leads to violence and political instability. In other words, state and nation building process can be particularly problematic in ethnically fragmented countries.

In addition to the domestic context for democratic consolidation, there are also external forces that shape this

process. They can be divided into "transnational phenomena, regionalism, non-governmental organizations, and state as well as international institutional actors" (Zielonka and Pravda, 2001, p. 7). Morlino (2011, p. 145) proposes the term 'external anchoring' to denote the interaction between external influence and domestic change processes and distinguishes four key methods of influence: imposition, example, conditionality and socialization. Governments' main course of action aimed at democracy consolidation, marketization and stability is developing economic and political relations with the countries in transition. The most important international actor that shapes and fosters the process of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe is the European Union. The aspirations for membership in the EU not only provided the impetus to break from the old communist structure, but also an institutional framework to support the democratic development. The most powerful EU's tool to induce policy change in the candidate and potential-candidate countries is conditionality. "It is regional, sub-regional, bilateral and project-specific and relates to economic, political, social and security related criteria" (Anastasakis and Bechev, 2003). Yet, the objectives of democratic consolidation and market transformation in some post-communist countries are often hard to reach mainly as a result of lack of strategic direction on the EU side, and deficit of commitment on the other. Many researchers have analyzed the EU conditionality, as well as its democracy promotion and assistance targeting the post-communist countries in Europe for it to be necessary to review all major contributions here. NATO is

another international organization that uses its conditionality leverage and influence to encourage states to settle outstanding disputes and relieve tensions. However, its influence for encouraging democracy is less considerable than the EU's. It is important to note here that, although the international factors may induce, condition or constrain the course of democratic development, it is the domestic dimension that is critical. Therefore the analysis of the democratization processes remains essentially within the domestic political, economic and social context (Morlino, 2011; Zielonka and Pravda, 2001).

Before proceeding any further, I would like to point out that 'democratic consolidation' and 'quality of democracy' denote different things, though the two concepts do overlap in some aspects. Because of that, there often is a conceptual confusion regarding the use of these two terms. The main reason is that the definition of democratic consolidation has varied greatly in terms of coverage of civil and political rights. As we saw earlier, minimalist concepts compete with more demanding classifications. Still, "consolidation is not just a new phase after the end of the transition and institutionalization, as it has been seen by many. It is a different process the beginnings of which overlap with the second phase of the transition (after the founding elections) and which in most cases continues after the end of the transition until a characteristic threshold is reached after which the new democracy can be considered to be consolidated" (Puhle, 2005). This suggests that 'consolidating democracy' doesn't refer only to the

survivability of the new democratic regime, but also to the moving toward some higher stages of democratic performance. And apparently this is where 'democratic consolidation' often intersects with the term 'quality of democracy'. Leonardo Morlino has put forward one of the most systematic conceptual scheme that describes quality of democracy. According to him, a 'quality democracy' i.e. 'good democracy' is "first and foremost a broadly legitimated regime that completely satisfies citizens (quality in terms of result); is one in which the citizens, associations, and communities of which it is composed enjoy liberty and equality, even in different forms and degrees (quality in terms of content); and the citizens themselves have the power to check and evaluate whether the government pursues the objectives of liberty and equality according to the rule of law (quality in terms of procedure)" (Morlino, 2011, p. 196). And again, "the use of gradation is essential to understand the extent to which the quality under scrutiny is present in a democracy" (Morlino, 2011, p. 35).

The above said implies that 'quality of democracy' is a more demanding concept, and as such requires broader framework of analysis which combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Still, taking into consideration the plurality of concepts that describe both the democratic consolidation and the quality of democracy and their eventual overlapping, I am aware of the risk to create a conceptual confusion at some point. This might be particularly relevant when it comes to the empirical part of

this thesis, as the data that measures the level of democracy besides operationalizing democratic consolidation, also captures certain qualities of democracy.

1.2. Process-oriented approach in explaining democratization

For quite a long time, political scientists have tried to explain the dynamics of democratic transition and consolidation through the lenses of two alternative approaches: structural- vs. process-oriented approach. Structure-oriented scholars (Almond and Verba, 1963; Lipset, 1959; Moore, 1966) typically assume that democracy is more likely to emerge and endure in countries with higher levels of socio-economic development. However, the Third Wave of democratization challenged the structural approaches in explaining transitions to democracy. Namely, formal transformation to democracy took place in countries where it was not expected based on the low level of socio-economic development. As a result, new literature on democratic transition and consolidation emerged in the 1980s. It adopted the so-called agency- or process-oriented approach which advocates that the establishment and advancement of democracy is rather a product of strategic interactions and arrangements among political actors (see, among others O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Przeworski, 1988; Przeworski and Limongi, 1997).

Although process-oriented scholars agree that the process of democratization and consolidation largely depends on the actions of individuals, they depart on the view whether it is the elites or the masses that have the decisive role. While some analysts emphasize the role of the ruling elites in consolidating the democracy (O'Donnell et al., 1986; Przeworski, 1991; Rustow, 1970), others claim that active citizens' engagement in politics provides the system with legitimacy, which is crucial for the survival and consolidation of the democratic governance (see Almond and Verba, 1963, 1989; Diamond, 1999; Linz and Stepan, 1996; Paxton, 2002; Pollack et al., 2003; Putnam et al., 1993; Shils, 1991). However, there are also analysts who argue that both participation and competition are qualities that can affect all other dimensions of democracy[8] (see Morlino, 2011). With regard to the post-communist countries in Europe, Morlino (2011, p. 137) suggests that the political legitimation is largely inclusive and that it has three characteristics that need to be emphasized. The first one is the strongly negative attitude towards the former authoritarian regime; the second one is the firm decision of East European elites to join EU and NATO as a means to

[8] Morlino (2011, p. 197) indicate eight possible dimensions or qualities on which democracies might vary. These are: rule of law, electoral accountability, inter-institutional accountability, political participation, political competition, freedom, equality and responsiveness of government. With regard to the claim that participation and competition are qualities that can affect all other dimensions of democracy, please see the results on the research conducted by Diamond and Morlino (2005).

achieve all possible political and economic advantages; and the third one is the preference of the masses to adopt the Western European democratic patterns. With regard to anchoring, however, Morlino (2011, p. 137) notes that "the mobilizational authoritarian past left an unarticulated and poorly differentiated civil society". Consequently, the civil societies in Eastern European countries are very vulnerable to political pressure with a widespread party patronage and a prevalent practice of political appointment in all relevant bureaucratic positions.

In this study I take as a point of departure the process-oriented approach in explaining democratization and accept the assumption that democracy can survive and advance when both, mass public and political elites are committed to meet the challenges of democratization. However, because for the most part there is a lack of consensus to uphold democracy as the only viable system of rule, hybrid regimes tend to be particularly unstable (Levitsky and Way, 2005). Further on in the chapter I discuss both, the process of mass mobilization and the elite interaction.

1.2.1. Democracy from below: process of mass mobilization

Mass participation in elections and other forms of political engagement is considered essential for vital democracy. Verba et al. (1995, p. 38) defined political participation as an "activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action—either directly by effecting the making of implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies." Political theory distinguishes between conventional (institutional), unconventional (protest-oriented) and illegal political participation.[9]

The classic works by Bendix (1964), Moore (1966) and Cardoso and Faletto (1979) describe the development of the civil society as a result of the demands of the working class for integration into the socio-political system. In the words of Bendix (1964, p. 73): "Rather than engage in a millenarian quest for a new social order, the recently

[9] The most prominent example of conventional political participation is voting. However, it also includes other institutionalized activities such as: party membership, involvement in electoral campaign, belonging to different activist groups etc. Unconventional political participation includes activities that are legal, but often considered inappropriate such as: signing petitions, joining in boycotts, attending peaceful demonstrations, joining in strikes. And finally there is illegal participation which among others includes activities such as: occupying buildings or factories, vandalism, terrorism etc.

politicized masses protest against their second-class citizenship, demanding the right of participation on terms of equality in the political community of the nation-state." While the elite-choice approach has become the leading paradigm in transition literature, several democratization theorists (Foweraker and Landman, 1997; Markoff, 1996; McAdam et al., 2001; Paxton, 2002) emphasize that elite actions do not happen in social vacuum. Rather, it is the mass mobilization and other forms of public involvement that make democratic outcome more likely. However, as this section is rather aimed at determining the impact of citizens' engagement in democratic consolidation, I will further elaborate only this aspect. Having said that, as soon as democracy becomes 'the only game in town', two very different schools of thought collide on whether citizens' participation is an essential ingredient for the success of the advanced democracies. Schumpeter and Dahl are the most prominent supporters of the concept that vibrant civil society is of limited importance to democracy. Dahl (1956, p. 89) for instance argues that the active citizens' participation in politics, especially among the lower socio-economic classes can be dangerous and can lead to authoritarianism. Hence, citizens' role is only to produce a government, i.e. to vote. Huntington (1991, p. 9) on the other side emphasizes that such a definition of democracy is ultimately a 'minimal definition.' Some of the most outstanding modern critics of electoral democracy such as Pateman (1970), Verba et al. (1978), Verba et al. (1995), Putnam (2000) argue that active participation of citizens in political decision making is vital for the advancement of

democracy. It can be said that these two very different schools of thought coincide with the two different models of democracy: participatory (or direct) and representative (or indirect) democracy.

The introduction of democracy in CEE at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s created a space for civic and political activism. However, it is questionable whether citizens of these states adopted the mindset, attitudes and behaviors of a civic, participatory culture. During the last two decades, scholars have argued that civil society in post-communist Europe is particularly weak (see Bernhagen and Marsh, 2007; Howard, 2003; Karp and Banducci, 2007; Letki, 2003; Mierina, 2011; Pierobon, 2010). This persistent deficit of civil society in CEE is seen as a great obstacle to building strong and stable democratic systems. The main factors contributing to the low levels of political engagement are believed to be part of the communist past such as low levels of social capital and anti-democratic norms and attitudes (Letki, 2003), as well as skepticism regarding the responsiveness of the political authorities (Mierina, 2011). At the same time, there were cases where the institutions and laws were constructed in a way that didn't leave much space for genuine political participation and fair political competition.

It is important to point out that most of these scholars analyze post-communist Europe as a coherent group, without paying much of their attention to the variation among the countries or regions within the group. However, the empirical analysis indicates that there is a fairly wide

variation in the levels of political participation among the Western Balkans and the rest of Eastern Europe. To be precise, Western Balkan states have distinctively higher levels of citizens' engagement in politics than their Eastern European neighbors and yet lower levels of democracy. The fourth chapter aims to assess and explain this discrepancy statistically.

1.2.2. Democracy from above: process of elite interaction

As previously mentioned Rustow (1970) and Linz and Stepan (1978) were among the first theorists who stressed the importance of political processes and elite choices as key elements for countries' democratization. Rustow (1970, p. 356), for instance, has argued that democracy "is acquired by a process of conscious decision at least on the part of the top political leadership... A small circle of leaders is likely to play a disproportionate role." In other words, if the political elites lack a firm commitment to democracy, prospects for democracy are dim. As the third wave of democratization gathered momentum in the 1970s and the 1980s, the scholarly attention to elite behavior continued to expand (see Di Palma, 1990; Higley and Gunther, 1992; O'Donnell et al., 1986; Przeworski, 1992). Scholars have mostly focused on whether the institutional changes that have occurred with the collapse of the

communist regime have altered the composition of the new elite (Adam and Tomšič, 2002; Dobry, 2000; Hanley et al., 1998; Szelényi and Szelényi, 1995). There are basically two general theoretical approaches to this issue: circulation vs. reproduction of the elites. The elite reproduction theory suggests that the changes in CEE did not have an impact on the social composition of the elites. In other words, the previous elites managed to adapt and remain at the top of the social order. According to the theory of elite circulation, however, the institutional changes resulted in a structural change at the top of the social hierarchy. More precisely, the new elite has overtaken the command positions in the society (Szelényi and Szelényi, 1995, p. 616).

A prominent feature of all the Western Balkan states is that the collapse of a one-party regime was characterized by a wide-ranging 'reproduction' of the old regime elites, which was in a sharp contrast to the evident 'circulation' of elites, typical for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.[10] At the same time, the deep and persistent ethno-political polarization has weakened the influence of reformist movements that was expected to remove old-regime officials from positions of power.

It is a well-accepted fact that when the elites are willing to work within the democratic constitutional rules, the chances of survival of the liberal democracy are quite high.

[10] For more information on the incumbent party configuration in the first decade of the pluralist rule in the Western Balkan states, please see Table 1 in Appendix 1.

However, very often the political elites in the Western Balkans perceive that compliance with the rules of the democratic political system is not in line with their interests and might undermine their political power. As a result, the Western Balkan democracies suffer from a widening gap between the interests of their elites and citizens. Cohen and Lampe (2011, pp. 234-236) observe that: "the weak economic performance of political party elites during the post-communist period, and also their role in fueling social and ethnic divisions in many cases, along with the continued presence of extensive corruption in political life, has reinforced negative perceptions about political parties. [And] "the deep mistrust of political party organizations and party leaders… in recent years may have crossed the threshold of skepticism that is productive for democratic consolidation."

The academic debate on democratic deepening as a factor of the political processes in the society goes beyond the composition of the elites and their behavior. It also encompasses the patterns of political competition between and within political parties (Birch, 2001; Filho et al., 2012; Grzymala-Busse, 2006; Innes, 2002; Kitschelt et al., 1999; Stojarová and Emerson, 2010; Vachudova, 2005a; Wright, 2008). Vachudova (2005a, p. 11) for instance, proposes that the countries which after the fall of the communist regime managed to establish genuine competitive political system had relatively rapid progress in building liberal democratic political institutions, whereas the countries where the collapse of communism was followed by the creation of

noncompetitive democratic system experienced suppression of liberal democratic institutions. She also emphasizes that the alternation of political parties in power is the most important factor contributing to the quality of political competition.

In most of the Western Balkan states the real political competition is rather weak and the ruling elites are free to develop rent-seeking strategies at the expense of the society as a whole. At the same time, there is a low degree of intra-party democracy, strong personalization of the parties, clientelism, corruption etc. The fourth chapter of this thesis deals with the question whether the political competition among and within the political actors in the Western Balkans is capable to limit the rent-seeking and patronage opportunities of the governing parties, as well as to accelerate the pace of democratic consolidation.

1.3. Previous research on democratization in the Western Balkans

As the third wave of democratization swept across the globe, the research on democratization processes has occupied the central place of the comparative politics field. However, the interest in democracy was at its peak by the end of the 1980s, as the wave of democratization reached those countries which practically have never experienced a

democratic rule (as it was the case with most of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe). As the political scientists failed to anticipate the collapse of the communist systems in Eastern Europe, they faced a real challenge to explore the causes and patterns of democratization in the region. Having said that, one should not lose sight of the fact that, the process of transition to a liberal democracy and its subsequent consolidation are far from complete in some of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The most prominent example of this are the Western Balkan countries. Having in mind these interregional differences, dividing the post-comunist Europe in smaller study units would provide us with a more profound understanding of the transition and democratization processes of these countries (Stojanova, 2013, p. 52).

Bunce (2000), for example, classifies the post-communist countries in Europe with regard to their transitional modes – whether they contain elements of pacting (i.e. bridging strategy) or elements of mass mobilization (i.e. breaking strategy). Namely, she argues that the most successful democracies in the post-Socialist world – Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia and the Baltic states have used a breaking strategy. That is to say, they managed to overrule the ex-Socialist elites in the founding years of their democratic governance. On the other hand "…when the electoral strength of the communists versus the opposition forces was roughly equal or tilted to the advantage of the communists, the costs for both democracy and economic reform were high" (Bunce, 2000, p. 717). That strategy, as

Bunce calls it, is a bridging strategy. Analyzing the first years of the transition period in the Western Balkan countries where the transformed communist parties won the first elections, we see a clear evidence of bridging over the communist past. This is evidently illustrated in Table 1. What we see in the table is that the old regime parties[11] won the first parliamentary elections in all the Balkan countries (with the exception of Croatia), while the new regime parties[12] won the first parliamentary elections in all the other CEE countries (with the exception of Lithuania).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

However, besides the fact that the Western Balkans is acknowledged as a separate political unit in terms of its specific democratic transition, there is a substantial gap in the literature dedicated to the democratization of the region. That is, most of this literature is focused on EU democracy promotion in separate countries of the region or in the Western Balkans as a whole (see Balfour and Stratulat, 2011; Belloni, 2009; Bieber, 2011; Mikovic, 2005; Panebianco and Rossi, 2004; Vachudova, 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Yenigün, 2008). Most of these authors agree that the EU has played an important role in stabilizing the region, helping to build democratic states and transforming the

[11] The old regime parties are the parties most closely associated with the prior non-democratic communist regime.

[12] The new regime parties are the parties most closely associated with the movement away from communism.

formerly state-socialist institutions.[13] Therefore, if the pace of the EU accession of the Western Balkan states slows down, this will almost certainly lead to a deterioration of their fragile democracies. As a result "Europe might 'lose' the Balkans once more to nationalism, violence and further breakdowns of agreed states and borders, or it might lose its leverage to other actors who may not share similar views and values with the EU" (Balfour and Stratulat, 2011, p. 10).

Nevertheless, some scholars question the effectiveness of the EU conditionality in these countries and contend that the EU's leverage as a driving force for policy change is quite limited in the Western Balkans (see Djordjevic, 2008; Freyburg and Richter, 2008). Arguing that the national identity strongly impacts the effectiveness of democratization driven by political conditionality, Freyburg and Richter (2008, p. 1) wrote: "It is questionable whether the EU will be able to repeat the story in South Eastern Europe (SEE), where again, it made the membership offer conditional on democratic criteria. Recent developments in the remaining candidate countries – Serbia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and also

[13] The Balkan countries were offered a clear prospect of EU membership at the Thessaloniki Summit held on 21 June, 2003. *'The Thessaloniki agenda for the Western Balkans: Moving towards European Integration'* proclaimed that "The Western Balkans and support to their preparation for future integration into European structures and ultimate membership into the Union is a high priority for the EU. The Balkans will be an integral part of a unified Europe" (Council of the European Union, 2003).

Turkey – raise doubts about its impact on democratization processes." I also contend that the success of the EU conditionality in the Western Balkan countries is limited by the strength of their citizens' ethnic national identities. In other words, there is an inconsistence compliance with the accession conditions, which eventually leads to façade implementation of the democratic principles.

Some of the studies analyze the EU's influence on the domestic political change (see Cierco, 2006; Dolenec, 2008; Hoffmann, 2005; Papic, 2006; Trauner, 2008) or state-building process (Bieber, 2011; Pickering, 2011) in separate countries of the Western Balkans. Investigating the impact of the EU's approach to democratic state-building in three of the Western Balkan countries - Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia, Pickering (2011) argues that the EU's leverage is inadequate in facilitating the process of building democratic states in the region. Bieber (2011, p. 1783) also demonstrates that the EU's conditionality approach towards the Western Balkans "has been largely ineffective in regard to state building, in part due to the lack of commitment of political elites to EU integration and the persistence of status issues on the policy agenda."

Several political scholars focus their attention on political and economic conditions and perspectives for democracy consolidation in the Western Balkans (see Bugajski, 2001, 2010; Jano, 2008; Škuflić, 2010; Woodward, 2007). Recognizing the differences between individual states, Bugajski (2001, p. 9) observes that "a political culture of dialogue, tolerance, and compromise has shallow roots in

much of the Balkans [and that] …in such conditions, political life and social interaction can become rapidly polarized and intolerant." Close to this view, Jano (2008, p. 12) implies that "…the common element of the region is the weakness/failure of the state to respond to the plurality and needs of its communities."

The democratic consolidation of the Western Balkans is the central question in the study of Nyenstad (2006). However, he tries to explain the developments of the region through the legacies of the communist past and to identify the defects in the emerging democracies. Similarly, Balfour and Stratulat (2011, p. 6) try to assess the extent to which the Balkan countries are effective democracies and demonstrate that "apart from Croatia, all of the countries in the region exhibit a clear gap between formal and effective democracy, whereby existing democratic rules are not properly implemented in practice. Finally, most of the literature covering the democratic transition of the Balkans deals exclusively with the transition and democracy building in one specific country of the region (see Bičanić and Franičević, 2003; Bieber, 2003; Bolcic, 2003; Edmunds, 2009; Gurdulič, 2010; Hagan and Ivković, 2006; Pantic, 2008; Ramet and Matic, 2007).

Very few studies have dealt with the patterns of citizen participation and particularly with the relation between citizen participation and democracy in the Western Balkans. The growing body of literature analyzing citizens' political behavior in Central and Eastern Europe generally does not include the Western Balkan region (e.g. Bernhagen

and Marsh, 2007; Duch and Palmer, 2002; Karp and Banducci, 2007; Kostadinova, 2003; Kostadinova and Power, 2007; Kostelka, 2010; Letki, 2003; Pierobon, 2010). Several of these authors (Bernhagen and Marsh, 2007; Karp and Banducci, 2007; Pierobon, 2010) have conducted a systematic analysis on the comparability of citizens' political participation in new democracies in CEE on one hand and the established democracies of the West on the other.[14] A frequent finding is that the third wave of democratization didn't narrow the gap between Eastern and Western Europe with regard to political participation, i.e. Eastern European citizens participate less than their neighbors in the West. There are basically two approaches that try to explain and predict the cross-national variations in citizen political participation. The first one emphasizes the importance of current political and economic features and policies, while the second stresses the historical and cultural context of the communist past. Only few studies that deal with Eastern Europe include some of the Western Balkan states in their analysis (e.g. Guérin et al., 2004; Tavčar Krajnc et al., 2012). However, the aim and the research methods of these studies differ substantially from my research. For instance, the study of Tavčar Krajnc et al. (2012) is rather concerned with the comparison of the protest participation in these three regions: seven post-Yugoslav countries, nine CEE EU member states and

[14] None of the above mentioned studies (Bernhagen and Marsh, 2007; Karp and Banducci, 2007; Pierobon, 2010) include the Western Balkan countries in their analysis. They rather deal with the CEE EU member states. The study of Pierobon (2010) also includes Ukraine and Russia.

seventeen established EU democracies. At the same time, they analyze the relationship between protest participation and pro-democratic political culture in all three regions. Their results indicate that mainly democratic motivations are behind protest engagement in the post-Yugoslav states. This is rather in contrast with my assumption that it is purely the self-interest that motivates people in the Western Balkans to be politically active within their societies.

The study of Guérin et al. (2004) is concerned with the interplay between tolerance and protest, and how it affects democratic consolidation in 13 post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.[15] Although their results are inconclusive, they support the view that the involvement in protest activities increases the tolerance between radically opposed popular groups. That on the other hand provides an environment for accelerating the pace of democratization.

A substantial literature gap also exists with regards to the relationship between political competition and democracy in the Western Balkans. Furthermore, the growing literature on the Western Balkans has rarely even dealt with the party politics in the region. The book "Party politics in the Western Balkans" by Stojarová and Emerson (2010) represents an important contribution in this regard. The authors analyze the specific features of party politics in

[15] Only two Western Balkan countries (Serbia and Croatia) are included in the analysis.

the region and provide a comparative analysis of Western Balkan electoral and party systems. However, they do not examine the role of the political parties in determining the durability and quality of democratic performance in the region. On the other side, the study by Cohen and Lampe (2011, p. 223) touches upon this question, acknowledging that "progress toward fuller democratic consolidation depends on… the institutionalization of competitive party systems and the establishment of legitimated and uncorrupted electoral systems." More specifically, they examine how the Western Balkan parties and party systems have changed over the years and if the negative legacies are strong enough to impede the process of democratic change. The authors suggest that the high levels of distrust toward the political parties and electoral systems throughout the Balkan region are counter-productive for the democratic consolidation. Additionally, they conclude that "political corruption and the failure of ruling parties and coalitions to achieve faster reform and economic progress are key reasons for the lack of confidence in party organizations and their leaders" (Cohen and Lampe, 2011, p. 295).

This study takes advantage of the political definition of the Western Balkans as a region of South-Eastern Europe which is not yet a part of the European Union in order to address the issue of the delayed democratization in the region. It does this by utilizing the actor-based approach in explaining democratization while comparing two regions in post-communist Europe: CEE EU member states and the Western Balkans. Two areas of contribution to the existing

literature can be identified in this study. First, I will compare the political participation and the political competition patterns in the two abovementioned regions. Second, I will statistically assess whether there is a substantive and significant relation between the levels of democracy and proactive citizenry on one side, and levels of democracy and inter-elite competition on the other. In addition, I will further elaborate and explain the positive or negative correlation between these two variables. To the best of my knowledge, no one has yet undertaken similar research. Eventually, this study could represent a benchmark that might catalyze further research on the subject.

2. Understanding the peculiarities of the Western Balkans transition

After the fall of the communist regime at the end of 1980s, the new established states which emerged from the former Czechoslovakia, U.S.S.R and Yugoslavia, faced the challenge of economic transformation and political democratization. Because these states were under communist domination for over five decades, they were similar in many aspects such as economic structure, state ideology, and institutional settings. However, when comparing the Western Balkan states with the rest of post-communist Europe one cannot help noticing the varieties of transition from authoritarianism to democracy. That is to say, Western Balkan countries were far less successful in building and consolidating liberal democracy than most of the other countries in CEE. As a result, for a quite long time they were left in a state of „prolonged transition", and "the political culture of statism and authoritarianism remained deeply embedded in the region. These negative trends have been particularly evident in several former Yugoslav republics, even though their points of departure in the late 1980s were comparable to that of Central Europe" (Bugajski, 2001, p. 7). The elements of nationalism and ethnic division were manipulated by the policy makers for reaching their political ends. The wars within and between

the former Yugoslav states and growing international isolation in the 1990s further reduced the opportunities to institutionalize democratic pluralism in the region.

However, it is important to note here that besides the commonalities cutting across a shared communist past, the republics that once made up the post-communist bloc in Europe varied considerably from each other with respect to their political environment. As a result, some of them were far better positioned to pursue a democratic transition following their disintegration than others. According to Bunce (2003, p. 172), the most successful transitions to democracy (such as in Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) began with mass protests, which "reduced the uncertainty of the transition - by providing a clear reading of mass sentiments, by strengthening the bargaining power of opposition leaders, and by forcing the communists to give up their defense of the old order…" At the same time, "the consequences of armed struggle… strengthened antipluralist resistance at both the elite and mass levels" across the region of the Western Balkans (Cohen and Lampe, 2011, p. 2). This lack of broad consensus to support democracy as the "only game in town" among public, as well as among elites has left the Western Balkan states 'stuck in transition', with some even reverting to more authoritarian forms of rule, as it is the case with Macedonia. The democratization of these states is also challenged by the unfinished nation-building process. Namely, the borders of several WB countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Macedonia) are still

contested. Noutcheva (2006) classifies the Western Balkan countries into several groups depending on their internal and external sovereignty. The first group comprises the countries that can be characterized as sovereign, both internally and externally (Albania and Croatia). The second group of countries lack both internal and external sovereignty (that is Kosovo). The third category can be described as semi-sovereign countries: those with compromised external sovereignty (Serbia and Montenegro until their "split" in 2006) and those with compromised internal sovereignty (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia). The above said indicates that "the regime change in the Balkans has continued up to the present time to evolve around primary problems of political change, suggesting that in most cases these countries are still somewhat engaged in democratic transition… with open prospects for eventual democratic consolidation" (Pridham, 2008, p. 58).

In addition to the political problems and challenges, democratization of these countries has been taking place in a harsh economic environment. Namely, the transformation of the centrally-planned to market economies was accompanied by deep and long recession. The dynamics and the magnitude of the crisis varied across different countries, but the common trend was drastic decrease of GDP, disinvestment, increase of unemployment and inflation rates and decrease of monthly salaries. The distorted economic structures that developed during the years of war resulted in highly unequal distribution of

social chances and resources (Brusis and Thiery, 2006). The economic troubles that the Western Balkan states faced since the fall of the communist regime have been instrumentally used to uphold political unrest, extremist and populist political agendas and inter-ethnic tensions.

The specific political, economic, social and cultural context in the Western Balkans played an important role in the development of the civil society sector in the region. Despite the fact that the disintegration of the authoritarian regime allowed substantial space for development of pluralist political activity, it remained largely limited during the first years of the Western Balkans transition. This was partially due to the suspicion and distrust towards the organizations outside traditional networks, as well as the low political culture among the citizens. However, by the end of the 1990s civil society in the Western Balkans had expanded quickly and there was a striking increase in the intensity of the NGOs activity. Yet their actual influence to the democratic process remained largely limited. That was mainly because most of the NGOs in the region were established for the purpose of obtaining financial resources, rather than to respond to the societal problems and needs. At the same time, political elites perceived NGOs as disloyal and anti-governmental and thus tried to put their activities under state control. This resulted in development of clientelist-inspired participation which seriously undermined the fundamental principles of democratic transparency and accountability. Cohen and Lampe (2011, p. 169) note that although there is an

intraregional variation in the development of the civil society sector in the Western Balkans, it is still possible to differentiate three distinct phases: (1) emergence of the civil society in the years before, during and immediately after armed conflicts in the region (1990-98/99); (2) rapid expansion of the NGOs following the war in Kosovo in 1999 and major leadership changes in Serbia and Croatia (1999-2000); and (3) more recent (2005-11) efforts to normalize the relations among the civil society organizations and state policy-making bodies.

The specific economic and political context in the Western Balkans has also played an important role in the establishment and development of party systems, as well as on the elite's behavior in the countries that constitute this region. As Stojarová and Emerson (2010, p. 1) have noted, the development of party politics in the Western Balkans "was influenced by the turmoil of war, the subsequent installation of non-democratic regimes in several countries, and the delayed process of nation and state building in several of them." As such, it lagged significantly behind Central and Eastern European party transformation and for a long time disrupted the process of democratic change. At the same time, while the collapse of one party rule was characterized by pronounced "circulation" or "replacement" of elites in most CEE, a prominent feature of all WB states was the extensive "reproduction" or "continuity" of the old elites.

Further below follows a brief overview of democratization problems in the five separate WB states with the emphasis

on the civil society development, as well as the state of the respective political systems.

2.1. Macedonia

I am starting the analysis with Macedonia, as with the latest political crisis is causing by far the most concern. Namely, the political crises erupted on December 24, 2012 when opposition MPs and journalists were forcibly removed from the parliament and government parties passed the budget for 2013 only minutes after the dramatic event. Following the mediation effort by European Union officials, the opposition ended its two-month boycott and agreed to participate in the upcoming local elections. The compromise between the government and opposition has offered a temporary reprieve of the crisis. However, since the violent unrest broke out between paramilitary Albanian groups and Macedonian security forces in 2001, the country remains fragile. The ongoing name dispute with Greece is further undermining Macedonia's democracy and its prospects for joining the EU and NATO. Economic stagnation, staggering unemployment, institutional inefficiency, deterioration of the independence of media, high-level corruption and politicization of almost all segments of society remain the biggest challenges for further democratic transformation of the country.

With regard to the civil society in Macedonia, it can be justly claimed that it is still underdeveloped and as such does not exert substantive influence on the democratic development of the country. The reasons for this are numerous, starting from a highly politicized, ethnicized and incompetent civil society community. Macedonian civil society report prepared by the Blair et al. (2003) for the needs of USAID has identified a very unfavorable view of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Some of the criticisms were:

- NGOs activities are largely irrelevant to calculations of political power in the community;
- Rather than addressing the real problems of Macedonia society, they are more interested in serving the needs of the donors;
- Although they request support from the government, they are not democratic, not accountable, not transparent and not representative of the people;
- They are corrupt;
- They are highly politicized, personalized and ethnicized.

This lack of general trust in the civil society sector has resulted in a quite low rate of involvement of citizens in Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). According to a survey conducted by CIVICUS[16] in 2011, only a small minority of citizens are engaged (14.9% participate and 17.5%

[16] Klekovski et al. (2011)

volunteer) in at least one socially-based organization. However, the level of political engagement (protests, petitions, boycotts) is significantly higher compared to the participation in CSOs. "In total, 49.4% of citizens have participated in political non-partisan activities in the course of the last five years (2005-2010)" (Klekovski et al., 2011, p. 27). It is also important to note that citizens in Macedonia are most likely involved in political parties (37.5%).

The Macedonian party system is a relatively stable one and is divided by an ethnic cleavage between Macedonian and Albanian parties. The Macedonian side is divided into two large coalitions (formed around two parties: SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE) and the Albanian in two unaligned parties (DUI and DPA). Parties outside these two blocks have managed to survive on the political scene only for a short period of time. Under the terms of the Ohrid Framework Agreement that ended the conflict in 2001, Macedonian electoral system was changed into fully proportional. Nevertheless, besides the high degree of inclusiveness of the proportional representation system, there is still a deep elite division between Slavic Macedonians and Albanian party leaders. Also, the weak economic performance of the political elites, the extensive corruption of parties and low accountability further undermine the political party system in Macedonia and reinforce the deep mistrust towards the political parties and their leaders.

2.2. Serbia

The democratic transition of Serbia has also proved to be quite slow and complex. The country started its true transition to democracy no earlier than 2000 after Slobodan Miloševič was removed from power. However, the illiberal legacies of his regime proved to be difficult to overcome. A new coalition government formed by the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) committed itself to breaking the past political practices and democratizing the country. Yet, the lack of consensus on how to implement the basic democratic principles and to some extent the lack of political skills and personal rivalries among top leaders led to failure of the democracy consolidation in Serbia. Since then, there is a sharp contrast between radical-conservative parties (which ideologies are based on Serbian nationalism) such as the incumbent Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) on one side, and more moderate parties, particularly the Democratic Party (DS) led by Boris Tadič on the other. Stefan Ralchev (2010b, p. 113) observes that "the fall of Miloševič was a turning point in Serbia's political development, but what has kept the country on the track to real democratization are the governments led by the Democratic Party (DS) - first the cabinet headed by Prime Minister Zoran Đinđič, assassinated in 2003 by organized crime groups for his decisive crackdown on criminality, and then by the (former) president and party leader Boris Tadic." The extradition of the last two suspected war

criminals Goran Hadžič and Ratko Mladič to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) seemed to be the closure of a dark chapter that will move the country toward pro-European democratic future. However, the victory of the nationalist Tomislav Nikolič on the last presidential election in 2012 and his firm rhetoric against recognition of Kosovo's independence might endanger the progress in relations with the European Union. At the same time faced with economic recession, the most important challenge before the Serbian government is undertaking major economic structural reforms which may lead to social unrest. Also, prevailing corruption and organized crime remain serious causes for concern and major challenges to security, democracy and European integration of the country.

The communist regime had a profound influence over the development of civil society in Serbia. This is manifested particularly through the mentality and passivity of the citizens who do not possess the habit and skills to organize themselves believing it to be the responsibility of the state to solve their problems. On the other side, the state only strengthens this attitude by marginalizing the civil society sector and exhibiting paternalistic attitudes toward its citizens (Milivojević, 2006, p. 36). When considering the development of the civil society in Serbia since the disintegration of Yugoslavia, there are practically two main periods: before and after the collapse of Miloševič regime. During the 1990s, the authoritarian populist movement supported by the autocrat Slobodan Miloševič created

highly unfavorable political environment and negative public attitude toward CSOs. As it is stated in the CIVICUS report (2006, p. 37): "during the 1990s, the relationship between CSOs and the state was dominated by conflict, with the exception of the 'governmental' non-governmental organizations…" The main CSOs during this period were formed to oppose the war and the regime, to assist the victims and to protect the human rights. As such, they have certainly played an important role in ousting the authoritarian regime of Miloševič in 2000 and helped installing democratic political system. Cohen and Lampe (2011, p. 17) observed that "Serbia's civil society organizations after October 2000 had shifted from a 'fight against' the regime, to a 'fight for' democracy." Nevertheless, the progress in establishing a successful partnership between the civil society sector and the state is still very slow. As a result, the civil society role in Serbia is minimal, and its impact on key political and social processes is largely unrecognized. On the other hand, the non-partisan political participation is still significantly higher compared to the other form of citizens' activism. Namely, during the Miloševič regime 45% of the citizens took part in some form of political activism. Although the number of those politically active almost halved (25%) after the regime was overthrown in 2000, it still remained relatively high.[17] At the same time, political parties are

[17] It is interesting to note here that before the so-called "Bulldozer" revolution of 5th October 2000, the main form of political activism in Serbia was participation in protests and demonstration (39%), while

among the organizations that attract most of the people. It is therefore clearly evident that Serbian citizens consider political involvement to be the best way to serve their interests and needs.

Serbia developed a fully autonomous party system in the early 1990s, besides the fact that Serbia and Montenegro remained united in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until 2006 when they both became independent states. Miloševič decade was characterized by "nationalist ideology, aggression against its neighbors and internal minorities, and an authoritarian system with elections that fell short of democratic standards" (Bochsler, 2010, p. 99). Consequently, Serbian political elite during the 1990s was divided between those close to the ruling party and those outside this network. This changed in 2000 with the 'Bulldozer revolution' when Miloševič was forced to resign from power. A new coalition government formed by the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) committed itself to breaking the past political practices and democratizing of the Serbian politics. However the lack of consensus on how to implement the basic democratic principles and to some extent the lack of political skills and personal rivalries among top leaders led to failure of democracy consolidation in Serbia. In the very same year, the electoral system was changed from TRS (Two Round System) to proportional with a 5 per cent threshold. However, it was even in 2007 when Serbia implemented a major change in

after this date signing petitions has become the most frequent form of political action (21%) (Milivojević, 2006, p. 47).

its electoral law: it was not necessary for the parties of national minorities to pass this threshold. According to Bochsler (2010, pp. 103-104), there are four main political conflicts that seem relevant for voters and addressed by political parties in Serbia. These are:

- The *regime conflict*, i.e. the conflict between politicians and political parties close to the authoritarian Miloševič regime (SPS and SRS) versus the democratically oriented reform parties (DS, SPO, DSS, NS, G17+);
- The *nationalist-authoritarian values*, i.e. the authoritarian rejection of civic liberalism and promotion of the Serbs as the dominant ethnic group have been highly salient on almost all Serbian political parties' agendas in the 1990s;
- Serbian *foreign policy*, i.e. pro-EU and NATO oriented political parties on one side of the spectrum (DS, G17+ and SPO) and anti-EU and NATO oriented political parties on the other (DSS and NS);
- Parties positioning on the *economic conflict*, i.e. parties that advocate strong role for the state in the economy (SPS) and parties that favor radical liberal economic reforms (G17+).

2.3. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was the country which suffered most severely from the painful disintegration of the Yugoslav federation. Being the most ethnically diverse Yugoslav country, Bosnia was devastated by civil war, severe ethnic violence and population displacement. The Dayton peace agreement ended the conflict in November 1995 and established the framework for a new confederal state composed of two entities: Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (predominantly Bosniak and Croat) and Republica Srpska (predominantly Serb), as well as Brčko District. The new country's constitution was and still is an annex of this Peace Agreement. Ever since, Bosnia's domestic political processes have developed along ethnic lines strengthening the ethnic divisions in the country. "This makes the Bosnian political system rather burdensome, diffused and unable to consolidate decision-making at a central level because of ethnic voting and vetoes interplaying there" (Ralchev, 2010a, p. 43). In other words, rather than establishing liberal democracy, Dayton established a constitutional order designed to balance the interests of the country's three main ethnic groups. "And what the European Union has made clear is that it needs a single authority to talk to in Bosnia – an authority to take responsibility of reform and adoption of the acquis communautaire" (Ralchev, 2010a, p. 43). Therefore, the EU is now using its membership conditionality to enforce

reform of the Dayton constitution. That is, EU's approach to constitutional reform is rather elite-focused, and excludes the civil society actors to a large degree. At the same time, as it is the case with almost all WB countries, corruption remains one of the most serious problems in Bosnia. The judiciary system is also heavily influenced by the political parties and not in line with EU standards and acquis.

As mentioned above, the civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina is underdeveloped and largely marginalized from decision-making processes. During the war in the beginning of the 1990s, sizeable financial resources mainly by foreign donors were allocated to domestic CSOs in order to address the humanitarian needs and to work on reconciliation and transition to democracy. However, since then the civil society has developed in a post-Dayton ethnic institutional framework, and as such has become a factor which has further contributed to the ethno-nationalist polarization. It is perceived by many that the role of the civil society in Bosnia to build "a more inclusive, prosperous and democratic country is significantly hindered by the country's multilayered governmental, political and legislative structures defined along the lines of three 'ethnic' groups or 'constituent peoples'" (Siebenmann and Kolić, 2011, p. 7). At the same time, there is a very limited collaboration not only within the civil society sector, but also between civil society and governmental actors. The processes of government funds allocation to CSOs are not entirely transparent and free from larger

political interests. As a result, most civil society actors in Bosnia lack the financial and technical capacity to effectively develop and implement projects and initiatives. At the same time there is a negative perception among the public regarding the CSOs and their activities.

As nationalism and ethnicity were and still are very significant factors in the Bosnian society, the parties that emerged following the country's independence represented one or other of the three ethnic groups. The three main nationalist parties were: SDA found by Alija Izetbegovič (Bosniaks), SDS (Serbs) whose first leader was Radovan Karadžič, and HDZ (Croats). The initial electoral system TRS (Two Round System) allowed voters to express only one preference, which resulted in an inaccurate expression of the collective opinion. The post-Dayton 1996 elections were also based on a single-preference system, closed-list PR. After being reviewed by the NWG (National Working Group), the electoral system has been changed to a PR open-list format (Emerson and Šedo, 2010, p. 11). However, the nationalist rhetoric and demands for independence of the separate entities are still widely used with the aim to mobilize voters. This confirms the strong ethnic character of the parties in Bosnia. (Šedo, 2010a, p. 88) observed that "parties in BiH are very personalized, with the party leader playing a crucial role (especially in Serb parties, which present the name of the leader as part of the party name). [As a result] the intra-party democracy is very limited." The deep ethnic division in the country does not allow for

the reformist elites to emerge in the political arena, but rather support the rent-seeking activities.

2.4. Albania

Albania is one of the most backward countries in Southeast Europe, both socially and economically. However, the biggest problem of the country is in the political sphere. Namely, the Albanian political elites are characterized by authoritarian propensities which results in a very weak dialogue among the political parties (Stojkovski, 2010, p. 30). At the same time, since 1992 none of the elections held in Albania have been considered to be free and fair and almost all have been contested by the losing party. A certain progress with regard to the voter registration and the legal framework has been made in the last parliamentary elections held in June 2009. However, both OSCE and EU raised concern over the politicization of the vote count and other procedural issues. The political crises following the 2009 elections when Albanian Socialist Party (ASP) launched its protests and boycotted the parliament for six months, has hampered Albania's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Nevertheless, Albania joined NATO in 2009 and is irreversibly oriented toward integration in the European Union. In order to fulfill its responsibilities with regard to the EU and at the same time to consolidate its democracy, Albanian political elite needs to make further

progress in reforming the judicial system, fight against organized crime and corruption, strengthening the state institutions and decreasing the media politicization.

Although Albania's democratization process started more than 20 years ago, there is still low level of civic activism in the country. The civil society sector is burdened by more or less the same problems as in other states of the Western Balkans. Namely, the communist legacy has left Albania unprepared for the development of vibrant civil society and genuine civic activism. Human rights organizations and women's NGOs were among the first CSOs that were established in the beginning of the 1990s. Most of the NGOs were established in the years before and after the war in Kosovo (1997-2001). Following 2005 there has been a decline in the Albanian civil society sector. A CIVICUS 2010 report observed that: "generally, Albanian citizens display high levels of 'indifference' towards involvement in various social actions, which is a common feature of societies in transition or early stages of post-transition with a relatively unsettled middle class and high levels of inequities" (Vurmo, 2010, p. 12). At the same time, most of the NGOs in Albania are donor dependent, and thus very often biased. There is also lack of trust and cooperation between the civil society and government mainly as a result of the widespread corruption in the country, as well as because CSOs are one of the main criticizers of the governmental policies. It is interesting to note here that there is a slightly higher number of people who reported to be members or involved in various political organizations

or actions compared to the social ones. One possible explanation for the higher levels of political engagement is the expectation for personal benefits given the nature of these organizations/actions, i.e. the "desired impact on the involved individuals' lives" (Vurmo, 2010, p. 14).

The first pluralist elections in Albania after the fall of the communist regime were held in 1991. However, they were rather semi-democratic and the communists under the leadership of Ramiz Alia managed to retain control of the government. His government fell two months later and the Democratic Party of Albania (PDSh) under the presidency of Sali Berisha won the next national elections in 1992. However, the widespread corruption and the so-called pyramid schemes resulted in disorder and anarchy throughout the country and eventually to collapse of the government. The next elections, organized with the assistance of the OSCE were won by the Socialist Party of Albania (PSSh) which was the governing party until 2005 when it was replaced by a coalition of parties under PDSh leadership. The current electoral system in Albania is fully proportional with a 3 per cent threshold for parties and 5 per cent for coalitions at constituency level. As can be seen, the Albanian political system has been highly polarized since the beginning of the transition dominated by two large political parties: the Socialist Party of Albania (PSSh) and the Democratic Party of Albania (PDSh). "The polarization is accompanied with a distrust of the political actors, who only communicate with each other via the media or the other channels" (Stojarová, 2010, p. 182). This

division of the Albanian political elite seriously hinders the democratic, as well as the economic development of the country.

2.5. Croatia

Croatia stands out in terms of economic and political performance compared to the other WB countries. The country started its real democratization process later than the rest of Central and Eastern Europe – after the death of the autocrat president Franjo Tuđman in 1999 and is scheduled to enter the European Union by the summer of 2013.[18] However, the transition path of Croatia was far from smooth and painless. After the first democratic elections in 1991 and with the first constitution Croatia declared itself as semi-presidential democratic republic. However, as a result of all the political problems that the country was facing after its independence, it "existed in an authoritarian regime with 'corny capitalism' for almost a decade after its independence" (Gurdulič, 2010, p. 33). More specifically, Croatia faced the rise of nationalist forces and subsequent war which had numerous adverse effects on the country and the economy as a whole. However, in the early 2000s

[18] Croatia actually joined the European Union as its 28th member state on 1 July 2013. However, at the time that most part of this thesis was written Croatia was still an EU candidate country. Therefore, any reference to it further in the text is under this consideration.

with "the formation of a coalition government of Social Democrats and Liberals under former Prime Minister Ivica Račan, Croatia became an exception regarding the situation of states of former Yugoslavia. Issues like economy, rule of law, functioning of the state administration and civil freedoms superseded others like national identity, statehood and sovereignty" (Cierco, 2009, p. 179). That was mainly because of the relative ethnic homogeneity of Croatia compared to Bosnia or Macedonia, for instance. Taking into consideration the above said, it would not be wrong to claim that Croatia has entered the final phase of consolidating its democracy.

Re-emergence of civil society in Croatia corresponded with the outbreak of war which to a large degree determined its development during that time. CSOs main course of action was assisting the specific social needs in the context of the war. However, by the end of the 1990s, the political environment was considerably unfavorable for the development of the civil society and the civil society sector in Croatia faced a negative public perception. Although the new government that was elected in 2000 has committed to enhance and institutionalize its cooperation with the civil society, there were many weaknesses which undermined the effectiveness of the sector. Some of them were: lack of capacity and expertise, inadequate cooperation with the government and poor impact on public policy making. Nevertheless, CIVICUS 2011 report observed that since 2007 there has been an upward trajectory in the development of the civil society in Croatia and "…so-called

cognitive Europeanization has taken place. The principles of openness, accountability, participation, consultation and others have become an integral part of the public discourse on civil society" (Bežovan and Matančević, 2011, p. 15). With regard to the extent of political engagement, the individual political activism score ranges the highest within this sub-dimension (39.8% of citizens undertake political activism). However, only 13.2% of citizens in Croatia are active members of at least one political organization. Therefore, there is a need for further improvement of the institutional and legal framework that will enhance citizens' engagement within the civil society sector.

As previously mentioned, during the first years after its succession from Yugoslavia, Croatia underwent a period of dominance of strong nationalism which served as a ruling strategy of Tuđman's government. Besides the fact that the development of political party system, the emergence of party competition and political plurality became evident, Croatia entered into the trap of partial democratic reform. As a result of the uninterrupted rule of only one party - Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and the autocratic behavior of Tuđman, Croatia's democracy during the 1990s remained unconsolidated and was characterized by postponed economic and political reform, clientelism and corruption. The elections held in January 2000 and the winning of the center-left coalition led by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) under the leadership of Ivica Račan are considered as the beginning of consolidation of democracy in Croatia. During the so-called second Croatian

transition, the semi-presidential system was changed to a parliamentary one. At the same time, the previous FPP (First Past The Vote) electoral system was abandoned altogether. (Šedo, 2010b, p. 74) has observed that "the return of HDZ to power in 2003 did not mean the return of authoritarian practices; the 'second' democratization in Croatia was successful, and the country was offered membership in NATO in 2008 and became and EU candidate country." The two largest parliamentary parties in Croatia remain HDZ and SDP. The current electoral system is PR-list with ten regional constituencies each electing 14 representatives with a 5 per cent threshold.

All of the above clearly indicates that out of the five countries studied here, only Croatia can be considered a functioning democracy in the process of consolidation. Based on the findings of the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (Donner et al., 2012), the other four countries (Bosnia, Macedonia, Serbia and Albania) can be considered defective democracies with most pronounced weaknesses in the areas of rule of law, institutional stability and political and social integration. The gap between Croatia and other Western Balkan countries is also particularly large for the criteria measuring the state of market economy (see Table 2 and Table 3).

[Insert Table 2 and Table 3 about here]

Regarding the state of the civil society sector, the NGO Sustainability Index[19] developed by USAID (2012) for the period 1997-2011 reveals that there is also a gap in the development of the civil society between Croatia and the other four countries in the Western Balkans. This gap is even more striking if we compare Western Balkans with the CEE EU member states (see Table 4). However, it seems that the citizens of the Western Balkans prefer to be politically engaged rather than to be involved in activities of a social or recreational nature. At the same time, they favor membership in politically-based organizations before the membership in socially-oriented CSOs. Therefore, I contend that the citizens in the Western Balkan states observe civil society through their political preferences and participate mostly in collective community actions that match those preferences. Hence, political participation in the region is in the focus of my theoretical and empirical analysis.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

When it comes to the political party development in the Western Balkans, it also lags behind the rest of Eastern European parties' transformation. Specifically, although the political environment seems to have stabilized in the last

[19] The NGO Sustainability Index developed by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) assesses NGO activity along several complementary dimensions: legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, public image, service provision and NGO infrastructure.

few years, there is still a higher volatility and fluidity in the party systems compared to the newer EU member states. At the same time, there are some different forms of informal power networks which paralyze the democratic progress of the region. Cohen and Lampe (2011, p. 225) note that there are several important factors responsible for the retardation and distinctiveness of post-communist party development in the Western Balkans. Some of them are: "limited tradition of democratic experience, the disruptive consequences of radical nationalism in several countries afflicted with deep subcultural cleavages, the direct and indirect impact of warfare and sectarian violence that occurred during the 1990s and beyond, and the persistent uncertainties and insecurities in the region with regard to the process of European Union enlargement."

It is clearly evident that the dissolution of the multinational communist federation of Yugoslavia has led to reassessing and strengthening of the national identities in almost every state of the former federation. Serbia's denial to recognize the independence of Kosovo, Macedonia's anxiety over its territorial integrity that was seriously questioned in 2001 ethnic conflict, Bosnia's ethnic intolerance and inexistent common national identity only confirms that even today, the factor of ethnicity and nationality still shape to a great extent the politics in the region. Furthermore, strengthening of nationalism within the society driven by ethnically motivated policies usually leads to perpetuation of undemocratic principles. Pridham (2008, p. 58) rightly claims that: "…the Balkan countries may be collectively

described as difficult democracies in terms of their legacy problems imposed on regime change, their actual functioning as political systems, the extraordinary effort required to construct and maintain domestic consensus behind political reform and, of course, the magnitude of socio-economic problems with an obvious potential for political impacts." Therefore, it is highly probable that the only way to prevent the WB countries from shrinking into further political and economic instability is to keep the EU aspirations alive. Meeting the EU's accession criteria would ensure better control over their government's behavior. However, the question remaining is whether the EU conditionality policy is well suited to deal with the sovereignty, statehood and national identity issues still present on the Western Balkans agenda.

3. Political participation and democracy

3.1. Introduction

Democratization and citizens' participation in politics have occupied a central place in the comparative politics field since the 1960's (see Almond and Verba, 1963; Parry et al., 1992; Pateman, 1970; Verba et al., 1978). As the collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe in the beginning of the 1990s has brought an economic and political opening of these societies, the discussion on the "citizens' awakening" became even more prominent, especially in the context of the new democracies (see Howard, 2003; Lipset and Lakin, 2004; Morales and Geurts, 2007).

The steady and continuous decline of voting turnout and other forms of political participation are considered to be the main malady of the modern mass democracies: "where few take part in decisions there is little democracy; the more participation there is in decisions, the more democracy there is" (Verba and Nie, 1972, p. 1). Although elections are regarded as a primary expression of the sovereignty of the people, electoral participation is just one dimension of political participation. Therefore, this study is not confined only to voting in national elections, but it is rather concerned with more regular patterns of citizens'

political activity in the post-communist countries of South Eastern Europe.

As long as the high levels of involvement by the citizenry is perceived to be critical to democratization process and deepening of democracy, the weak participation in politics by ordinary citizens in the "young European democracies" is considered to be one of the main reasons for the peculiar practices of illiberal democracy in these countries. Several studies have tried to identify the reasons for the different levels of citizens' participation between the established democracies of the West and the post-communist East (Bernhagen and Marsh, 2007; Howard, 2003; Mierina, 2011; Pierobon, 2010). Most often, the weakness of civil society in CEE is considered to be due to the distrust among the citizens in the political authorities and institutions, less opportunities for participation and skepticism regarding the responsiveness of their governments. In a similar way, there are also differences in political participation rates between the different blocks of post-communist countries. The 10 new CEE EU member states which have had remarkably successful transitions to democracy represent the first block of analysis in this study and serve as a term of comparison. Western Balkan countries that have faced many difficulties in consolidating their democracies will be in the focus of my cross-national analysis. Contrary to the expectations for higher levels of citizens' participation in the first block of countries, Figure 1 clearly shows that the levels of almost all dimensions of political participation are higher in the Western Balkans. Taking into account this

empirical evidence, I would argue that while low levels of citizens' participation leads to hollow or stagnant democracy in most democratic systems, higher levels of civic engagement is not necessarily an indication for better democracy in post-communist Europe. Therefore, the following question emerges: which kind of political participation (if any) is particularly relevant for the advancement of democracy in Central Eastern Europe and particularly in the Western Balkans?

This chapter is structured as follows: first, I compare the political participation rates among the Western Balkan countries and 10 CEE EU member states. In the third section I review the theoretical background on citizens' participation and democratic deepening. Further on, I give detailed description of the variables, methodology and data. In the fifth section I test whether a proactive citizenry exerts significant positive or negative influence on the levels of democracy in the regions of Central and Eastern Europe and Western Balkans. After discussing the results of the analysis, I offer several possible explanations for the phenomenon of having higher levels of political participation in the Western Balkan countries in comparison to their post-communist neighbors, and yet lower levels of democracy. Finally, in order to illustrate this chapter's propositions, I conduct a case study analysis by comparing two countries (one of each block of countries). Hopefully, these explanations will represent subjects that might catalyze further research on the topic.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

3.2. Political participation in comparative perspective: Western Balkans vs. CEE EU member states

In this section I present and analyze recent empirical data by comparing the level of political participation among the regions of Central Eastern Europe (part of the EU) and Western Balkans, as well as among the countries of these regions as separate units. In order to ensure country level comparability, I concentrate here on the ten CEE countries that became members of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and the five Western Balkan states: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia. I purposefully exclude Kosovo and Montenegro from the analysis because they have gained their independence only recently (Montenegro in 2006 and Kosovo in 2008) and there is practically no data for them as separate units before independence. Official election turnout data is taken from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IIDEA, 2011) and consists of voter turnout figures for national parliamentary elections since 1994 expressed as a percentage of the Voting Age Population (VAP) that actually voted. The data for the other dimensions of political participation such as party membership, signing petitions and attending peaceful demonstration is taken from the European Values Study

(EVS, 2011) and World Value Survey (WVS, 2009) – two major survey projects executed in five waves of surveys, from 1981 to 2009. However, for the purpose of this study, I use only data that covers the period 1994 – 2009. That is because in the first few years of the transitional period the political participation rates were unrealistically high as the collapse of the communist regime was regarded as highly emotional event, prone to maximize participation. That is particularly relevant for the electoral participation (see Kostadinova, 2003; Kostelka, 2010).[20]

Table 5 lists the average levels of political participation in each of the 15 European post-communist countries, along with the group averages, thus providing a general reference point for comparison both between countries and groups. Close inspection of the scores on Table 5 makes the puzzle immediately evident when the new democracies of the Western Balkans score higher than the other consolidated CEE democracies in all dimensions of political participation.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

The most striking difference within the two groups is party membership. Namely, all Western Balkan countries show much higher rates of party membership than the average rate of the other post-communist countries in Europe. Therefore it can be argued that the countries of CEE that

[20] Please see Section 4 and Appendix 2 for more detailed information on the data used in this study.

were much more successful in consolidating their democracies follow the Western trends of decreasing number of party members. But the question here is why the level of party membership remains on such high level in the Western Balkans? There are several reasons for this. First, after the collapse of the communist regime in the Western Balkan states, the parties that won the first democratic elections and held the power for almost a decade were either the Old Regime Parties[21] (Macedonia), parties with strong nationalistic agenda (Serbia and Croatia) or ethnically based parties (Bosnia and Herzegovina). That resulted in an "inherited" value of loyalty to the political party among the citizens. Second, the Western Balkan societies remained highly politicized for almost two decades after the fall of the communist regime, mainly as a result of limited electoral competition. The most prominent example is the politicization of the public administration where civil servants employed by any previous government were replaced by members or loyalist of the ruling party. Therefore, in a situation of very high unemployment rates, having a party membership card was seen as the best guarantee for becoming a civil servant. At the same time the politicization practice did not stop at the threshold of public administrative bodies, but embarked

[21] Tucker (2006) in his study on Regional Economic voting in five European post-communist countries distinguishes between Old Regime and New Regime Parties. The Old Regime Parties are identified as the parties that are most closely linked to the prior non-democratic communist regime, while New Regime Parties are those most closely linked to the newly emerging democratic world.

almost all socio-economic layers of the countries (Sulejmani, 2011; UNODC, 2011).

I must also pay due attention to the evolution of electoral participation in national contexts in the post-communist states of Europe since voting is considered as one of the central forms of political participation in contemporary democracies. Figure 2 shows the trends of voter turnout in parliamentary elections in the CEE EU members and Western Balkan states for the period 1990-2009. Similarly to the phenomena observed in established democracies, there is a trend of decreasing voter turnout in post-communist countries, as well. But what is interesting about this region is that almost all of the countries (with few exceptions) experienced abrupt rather than a gradual turnout decline following the first or second parliamentary elections. Kostadinova (2003) and Kostelka (2010) point out that the first democratic elections in these countries were depicted as strongly emotional and euphoric events, prone to maximize electoral participation. However, as the expectations of the electorate are unrealistically high, the dissatisfaction with government's economic performance, as well as with democratic processes prevails and eventually leads to turnout decline in the subsequent elections.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

It is also interesting to note that the Western Balkan states show more consistent trend of voter turnout than the new EU members. The specific political conditions in two of the

Western Balkan countries explain the sudden jump of the voter turnout in the period of third parliamentary elections. Namely, the 2002 elections were basically the first legislative post-conflict elections in Macedonia and they were an integral component of the Ohrid Framework Agreement that ended the crisis in 2001. To a great extent this contributed to the high voter turnout in the elections held the subsequent year. On the other side, the elections held in January 2000 in Croatia (following the death of Tudjman) are considered as the beginning of consolidation of democracy in Croatia. That might explain to a certain extent the increased voter turnout in the country compared to the previous legislative elections.

The next section presents the different views on the relationship between participation and democracy. The exposition of several different schools of thought will be directed towards demonstrating the differences between the theories trying to explain the relation between political participation and democratic governance.

3.3. Citizens' participation and democratic consolidation

According to Linz and Stepan (1996), a democracy is consolidated when it has become "the only game in town." More specifically, a democratic regime becomes consolidated when: 1) there are no significant actors

engaging in secession or regime change; 2) the majority of the population holds the belief that democracy is the best form of government; and 3) when the governmental and nongovernmental actors of the state become subjects and act according to the democratic institutions. In addition to this, a consolidated democracy should display sufficient levels of input and output legitimacy. The input legitimacy is produced when citizens are able to articulate their will in the political decision-making process, while the output legitimacy results from political decisions based on the common preferences of the citizenry (Scharpf, 1997, 1999).

As long as we accept that legitimacy is a core component of democratic consolidation and that it is the political participation that provides the system with legitimacy, we cannot ignore the importance of citizens' political activism for sustainability of democracy. Nevertheless, some theorists of democratic transition (O'Donnell et al., 1986; Przeworski, 1991) put much greater emphasis on the role of elite commitment for the consolidation of democracy, than on the mass political culture. According to Pollack et al. (2003, p. 92), the concept which neglects the role of mass political activism in the early stages of shaping the character of democracy is a "minimalistic" concept. By contrast, "maximalistic" concepts include political support as a key indicator of consolidation" (Pollack et al., 2003, p. 92). Diamond (1999, p. 172) for example argues that while the commitment among the political elites is crucial for the emergence of the democratic polity, "mass political culture becomes increasingly important in shaping the character

and viability of democracy." Almond and Verba (1989) and Linz and Stepan (1996) are also among the scholars who consider citizens' political participation as one of the crucial elements for the course of democratic consolidation. As Almond and Verba (1989) would note, democracies are able to persist and consolidate only if there exists a congruency between their political culture and political structure. This means that the stability of democracy can be achieved only when a critical mass of the citizenry develop an active commitment to it. "This does not imply so much a permanent active participation of each single member of a society in the process of consolidation but rather the marginalization of forces working against the democratic system…" (Pollack et al., 2003, p. 93). This is consistent with Linz's view (1978: 18) that "a legitimate government is one considered to be the least evil of the forms of government. Ultimately, democratic legitimacy is based on the belief that for that particular country at that particular historical juncture no other type of regime could assure a more successful pursuit of collective goals."

Once the democracy is consolidated, it is considered that political engagement is an important indicator of the health of democracy and at the same time the development of democratic institutions creates conditions for larger citizen involvement in decision-making. The continuous decline of voting turnout and disengagement in politics is considered to be a serious threat to the modern democracy. That is mainly because it severely undermines the political culture and appeals to democracy. However, although high

electoral turnout usually signals a healthy and vibrant democracy, it would be misleading to claim that low voter participation is always a sign of flawed democratic regime. Namely, "low election turnouts can signal a lack of confidence in the electoral system—but may also signify apathy or satisfaction with the status quo. Meanwhile, strong voter turnout may hint at a vibrant democracy, but it could also indicate intense propaganda, authoritarian rule, and false reports…" (Zelenko, 2012).

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, there are two very broad schools of thought on the role of participation in the advanced democracies. According to the classics of participatory democratic theory (such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill) maximum political engagement by the citizens is essential for the advancement of the modern, democratic states. In Rousseau's view, direct involvement of each citizen in political decision making constitutes an essential element of democracy, i.e. for him participation is more than just voting in elections (Rousseau, 1762). In Du Contrat Social, he describes a political system in which the social contract constitutes a basis on which a proper society can be built. Under this social contract citizens assemble in one place to debate and to create rules and policies that will be beneficial and acceptable to all. Similarly like Rousseau, John Stuart Mill (1861) also argues that politically active citizens can better protect their interests. However, it is highly doubtful that this form of representative democracy is actually functional in the context of the modern complex

societies. Some of the recent scholars who recognized the limitations and drawbacks of direct political involvement of the ordinary citizens are Pateman (1970) and Barber (1984). Although still arguing that high degree of citizens' engagement in political decision making is essential for the democratic performance, they offered a somewhat moderate view on modern participatory democracy. They are portraying a political system where people express interest in politics and display high levels of engagement in different forms of political participation (such as voting, protesting, contacting politicians, etc.). Pointing out that 'strong democracy' requires more than elections, Barber (1984, p. 267) contends that "if all of the people can participate some of the time in some of the responsibilities of governing, then strong democracy will have realized its aspirations."

According to the 'realist' theory of democracy, participation plays only a limited role and can even be harmful for the stability of democracy. Therefore, citizens' role in the political process should be limited to voting only. Joseph Schumpeter is the main protagonist of this theory. In his view: "the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter, 1943, p. 269). In other words, democracy is an instrument for competition among the rival leaders and the role of citizens is to choose between them. This implies that mass participation is not essential to democracy and even

undesirable in certain aspects. Among the recent theorists who are critical of the participatory model of democracy are Dahl (1956) and Sartori (1962, 1987). Dahl (1956, p. 89), for instance, also argued that an increase in citizens' engagement in politics, especially among the members of lower socio-economic classes may not always be beneficial for democracy. That is because they tend to be more authoritarian-minded. This suggests that contrary to the participatory democrats, the so-called 'realists' do not measure the strength of democracy by high levels of citizens' engagement in politics, but rather by its capacity to perform checks on the leaders (Parry et al., 1992, p. 5).

Finally, there are scholars who argue that participation should be seen as quality of democracy. That is, without citizens' participation in politics, it would be inconceivable to have 'a government of the people'. Diamond and Morlino (2005, p. xvi) for instance, argue that political participation is one of the dimensions of the democratic quality and point out that: "No regime can be a democracy, unless it grants its adult citizens formal rights of political participation, including the right to vote." Merkel (2011, p. 9) adds that a democratic quality is high when citizens have equal rights to participate and at the same time, when these rights are used in an equal manner. That said a distinction between the quality and the level of democracy is being made. While the level of democracy is concerned rather with consolidation of democracy, the quality of democracy is about the norms and legitimacy of the democratic system.

3.4. Democratic reform as an engine for political participation

As much as democracy is inconceivable without citizens' participation, it is also a mechanism that can engineer more political participation. The recent decline in electoral participation, as well as the decrease in party membership and other forms of citizens' engagement in politics in the old, as well as in the newly-established democracies throughout the world generated a discussion of whether there is crisis of the democratic governance. Therefore it was suggested by some scholars that different types of democratic systems or institutional framework can increase or decrease the opportunities for political participation (Baglioni, 2007; Jackman, 1987; Jackman and Miller, 1995; Zittel and Fuchs, 2007). It is considered that participatory democracies are more prone to foster citizens' participation in the public sphere than representative ones (Baglioni, 2007, p. 91). Zittel and Fuchs (2007) argue that the upsurge of the policies that would provide new opportunities for political participation, particularly in the advanced democracies is actually an answer to the perceived crisis of democracy. It is believed that such policies are examples of 'participatory engineering' that will counter downward trends in citizens' engagement (Zittel, 2007). Therefore, according to the participatory theory, the more advanced the democracies are, the bigger their capacity to implement institutions of participatory democracy. Nevertheless, Fuchs (2007) is rather skeptical that the modern democracy

can allow the implementation of the model of participatory democracy that implies broad mass participation.

From the above mentioned theories of democracy, several different relations between participation and democracy can be distinguished. Those are:

- Politically active citizenry is crucial for consolidation and advancement of democracy;
- Mass political participation can be harmful for democracy;
- Political participation is dimension of the quality of democracy; and
- Different democratic settings can increase/decrease the level of political participation.

As can be seen, the causality between political participation and democracy does not run in one direction only, but is rather a multi-directional one. As a result, an endogeneity problem might arise, which will eventually lead to inconsistent estimates. Being aware that there is no obvious way to unambiguously determine the cause-effect relationship in this case, I focus my attention in determining the correlation between these two variables in CEE and Western Balkans, rather than in establishing a causal link between them.

3.5. Methodology, variables and data

3.5.1. Dependent variable

Coming up with an appropriate definition of democracy is important in order to decide which democracy indicator to use as a dependent variable for my first model. Even though the concept of democracy is highly contestable, the choice of leaders through conduct of "free, competitive and fair" elections appears in almost all definitions of democracy. Such a minimalist definition of democracy or a definition of electoral democracy is offered by Lipset (1981) and Schumpeter (1943). Lipset (1981, p. 27), for example describes democracy as "a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office." Nevertheless, Dahl (1989, pp. 112-114) argues that the concept of democracy extends beyond constitution of government and he considers the presence of the substantial array of civil rights as crucial. Following the argument that the political rights cannot be effectively exercised in the absence of some civil liberties (such as freedom of association, expression and belief) and rule of law, I come up to the concept of liberal democracy. Thus, a country can be considered 'democratic' if there is free and fair elections based on universal suffrage, as well as

political and civil freedoms of speech, press, assembly and organization (Dahl, 1971).

So far a number of strategies were adopted to operationalize and measure democracy: scale measures, objective measures, perceptions of democracy etc. Nonetheless, the two democracy indicators with the broadest coverage of the above mentioned concepts are the Polity democracy score (Marshall et al., 2012a) and the Freedom House political rights and civil liberties indicator (Freedom House, 2013). The Polity democracy score described in Marshall et al. (2012b) and based on work by Ted Robert Gurr (Gurr, 1974; Gurr and Jaggers, 1990) is constructed after the evaluation of the following components: competitiveness of participation, regulation of participation, competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, and constraints on the executive. It ranges from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy). Although the Polity democracy score (Marshall et al., 2012a) is the most commonly used democracy index among the political scientists that became even more attractive after the introduction of the new variant of the polity score (polity2)[22], it has one important limitation for this study. That is, it doesn't provide a democracy score for the cases of so-called foreign

[22] Polity2 or the Revised Combined Policy Score is the modified version of the Polity IV variable. It is intended to convert the instances of "standardized authority scores" (so-called ''interregnum'' and ''transition" periods, coded as -77 and -88, respectively) to conventional polity scores (i.e., within the range, -10 to +10).

'interruption', i.e. they are treated as system missing. This is the case with Bosnia (one out of five countries of the Western Balkans) for the period 1994-2009.

Based on the work of Gastil and Sussman (1987), the Freedom House project provides a measure of democracy based on evaluation of two broad categories: political rights and civil liberties. Political rights ratings combine the average of the following three subcategories: electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and functioning of government; civil liberties ratings are based on an evaluation of four subcategories: freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights. The Freedom House scale assigns each country a numerical rating from 1 (most free) to 7 (least free) for both political rights and civil liberties.

For the purpose of this study I believe that it is most appropriate to use the average Freedom House/Polity Index based on the work of Teorell et al. (2011) and incorporated in the Quality of Government Dataset. There are several reasons for this. First, this composite index of democracy has imputed values for countries where data on Polity is missing by regressing Polity on the average Freedom House measure. Second, it is composed of two sub-indexes which do not capture certain context-specific features of democracy, such as political participation. And finally, I believe that this average index would perform better both in terms of validity and reliability than its constituent parts (as it is argued and showed in the work

by Hadenius and Teorell (2005). In order to construct this index both, Freedom House and Polity2 democracy scores are averaged and transformed to a scale of 0 (least democratic) to 10 (most democratic).

Before proceeding any further I would like to point out that the data that measures the level of democracy besides operationalizing democratic consolidation, it also capture to a certain extent the quality of democracy. In other words, the observable chronological gradation of democratic development might reflect both, democratic consolidation and quality of democracy. Yet, it is my belief that assessing the quality of democracy requires a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. For that reason and being aware of the fact that it is often difficult to draw a strict differentiation between what really determines consolidation and quality of democracy, I allowed myself certain degree of freedom when selecting the indicator for my dependent variable.

3.5.2. Independent variables

As one of the aims of this study is to investigate the influence of political participation on the levels of democracy in the regions of Central Eastern Europe and Western Balkans, the key independent variable to test the above hypotheses is political participation. More specifically, four different forms of political participation

(voter turnout, party membership, signing petitions and attending demonstrations) will be considered as independent variables. I focus specifically on them because (as Figure 1 shows), most of the people in Eastern Europe who take part in the political life engage in these four modes of political participation. The influence of all four independent variables on the levels of democracy in CEE and Western Balkans is tested in four separate independent models.

Voting in parliamentary or presidential elections is considered to be one of the most common political actions that citizens can take part in. As almost all countries in Eastern Europe are parliamentary democracies (except Romania and Ukraine which are semi-presidential republics and Belarus which is presidential republic), I take into consideration only the variation in parliamentary elections. As mentioned in Section 2, the data for the first key independent variable – voter turnout is taken from International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IIDEA, 2011) and consists of voter turnout figures for national parliamentary elections since 1994 based on the Voting Age Population (VAP)[23].

The data for the other three key independent variables (party membership, signing petitions and attending peaceful demonstrations) is taken from the European Values Study (EVS, 2011) and World Values Survey (WVS,

[23] The voting age population (VAP) includes all citizens above the legal voting age.

2009). This data collection contains survey data from five waves of the World Values Survey and European Values Study, carried out in 1981-1984, 1989-1993, 1994-1999, 1999-2004 and 2005-2007. During each wave, surveys are conducted in a variety of countries with the aim to enable a cross-national comparison of values and norms on a wide variety of topics, such as environmental issues, religion and morale, politics and society, working conditions etc. However, for the purpose of this study, I take only the data starting from the third wave (1995-1997), as in the first few years of the transitional period the political participation rates were unrealistically high as a result of the euphoria of the newly gained freedom of communism. I believe that taking them into consideration will produce unreliable results.

The questions used to measure the percentage of political party membership are:

- In WVS: "Could you tell me whether you are a member, an active member, an inactive member or not a member of a political party?" The possible responses and the corresponding codes are: "Don't know (-1)", "Not a member (0)", "Inactive member (1)" and "Active member (2)."
- In EVS: "Do you belong to political parties or groups?" The possible responses and their corresponding codes are: "Don't know (-1)", "Not mentioned (0)" and "Mentioned (1)."

Since I am interested only in the total number of respondents that are members of a political party, I take into consideration both responses: "Inactive member" and "Active member" from the World Values Survey and only the response "Mentioned" from the European Values Study.

The questions used to determine the percentage of individuals who have engaged in a political action by signing a petition and/or attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations (for both WVS and EVS) are:

- "I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it:
    - Signing a petition
    - Attending lawful demonstration."

The possible responses and their corresponding codes are: "Don't know (-1)", "Have done (1)", "Might do (2)" and "Would never do (3)". The only response that I am taking into account for both questions is "Have done."

Besides including the measures of four modes of political participation as independent variables, the first statistical model (Models 1a-1d) also includes several control variables that according the democratization theory are commonly regarded as correlated with the levels of democracy. Therefore the following variables have been

identified in the literature to have certain impact on the level of democracy: lagged levels of democracy, GDP per capita based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)[24], average years of schooling in the population aged 25 and above, trade openness, ethnic fractionalization, religious fractionalization, political stability and absence of violence.[25]

3.5.3. Methodology

The main implication of my theoretical analysis is that an increase in the political participation rates has significantly positive impacts on the levels of democracy. This implication, however, does not seem to hold for all post-communist states in Europe. The empirical evidence shows that the levels of almost all dimensions of political participation (voter turnout, membership of political parties, signing petitions, joining in demonstrations etc.) are higher in the Western Balkan states compared to their Eastern European counterparts. Yet, they have distinctively

[24] GDP per capita might be an effect rather than the cause of the democracy level, which might result in underestimating the effect of the political participation variables. Nevertheless, I have decided to include it in the models because the robustness check has showed that there is no statistical change in the other explanatory variables when GDP per capita is omitted from the regression analysis.

[25] For more information about the data and the sources used for the control variables, please see the Appendix 2 at the end of the thesis.

lower democracy levels. Thus, it appears that the citizen's participation in politics is negatively correlated with levels of democracy in the Western Balkan region. With the aim to test this hypothesis I constructed a dataset which consists of panel data for 18 post-communist countries in Europe for a period of 16 years (1994-2009). The countries can be divided in three groups. The first group comprises five Western Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia. The second group includes the ten CEE EU member states: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. And finally, the third group comprises the other three Eastern European countries: Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, which I use as controls. That said, I use pooled-OLS with a constant term as a method of estimation. More specifically, to formally test my first hypothesis, I estimate four variants of the following time-series cross-section regression model (TSCS):

$$dem_{i,t} = \beta_1 + \beta_2 dem_{i,t-1} + \beta_3 part_{i,t} + \beta_4 wb_{i,t} + \beta_5 (part_{i,t} * wb_{i,t}) + \sum_{k=6}^{K} \beta_k x_{k(i,t)} + e_{i,t}$$

The subscript $i = 1, 2 \ldots N$ denotes a country; $t = 1, 2 \ldots T$ denotes a year; $k = 6, 7, \ldots K$ denotes a specific control variable; while *wb* is the regional dummy that takes a value of one for the Western Balkan countries and zero otherwise. Including the regional dummy for Western Balkans in the regression will allow controlling for the effects caused by the countries that belong to this group on the dependent

variable. dem, $part$ and x_k refer respectively to dependent, independent and control variables for unit i and time t; $e_{i,t}$ is a random error and β_1 and β_k refer, respectively, to the intercept and the slope parameters. I include interaction terms between the key independent variables and the Western Balkan dummy in order to check if the effects of political participation are different depending on whether a country belongs to the Western Balkan region or not.

As said, four separate statistical investigations will be conducted. The intention behind this is to capture the isolated effects of the four main explanatory variables: voter turnout, political party membership, signing petitions and attending peaceful demonstrations while controlling simultaneously for other explanatory factors. The regression results will eventually show whether there is indeed a negative and statistically significant correlation between the citizen's participation rates and the levels of democracy in the Western Balkans. Table 6 (Model 1a-1d) reports the estimation results of the four models.

[Insert Table 6 about here]

3.6. Results and analysis

The results in Table 6 suggest that generally citizens' participation in politics represents a supportive component to the democratic deepening in post-communist Europe.

However, the results on the interaction terms reveal that the effects of political participation on the levels of democracy significantly differ on whether a country belongs to the Western Balkan region or not. In other words, high levels of political participation in the Western Balkan states turn the coefficient from positive, non-statistically significant into negative, statistically significant. This basically supports my argument that a high level of political participation is not necessarily an indication for better democracy in post-communist Europe. I elaborate this in more details further below.

Low electoral turnout is often considered detrimental to democracy because it puts legitimacy into question and could result in enacting certain egalitarian policies (McAllister and White, 2007; Patterson, 2002; Piven and Cloward, 1988, 2000; Teixeira, 1992; Verba and Nie, 1972; Wattenberg, 2002). As Verba and Nie (1972, p. 1) put it: "where few take part in decisions there is little democracy." Thus, the usual hypothesized relationship between election turnout rates and democracy levels is a positive one. Nevertheless, contrary on what one would expect on the basis of the recent empirical findings, the results in Table 6 (Model 1a) indicate that the turnout rates and democracy levels in Western Balkans are negatively correlated. Moreover this relationship proves to be a strongly statistically significant one.

Here I will offer several possible explanations for this puzzle. First, over the last several decades, studies have consistently acknowledged that there is a decline in the

voter turnout in the established democracies (Franklin, 2004; Ghobarah, 1998; Gray and Caul, 2000; Jackman, 1987; Jackman and Miller, 1995; Powell, 1986). It seems that in less democratic regimes people are much more likely to use electoral participation to express the dissatisfaction with the policy course of the current government. However, that does not necessarily lead to the deepening of democracy in the first place. Sometimes (as it is often the case in the Western Balkans countries), as a result of the ineffective exercise of the rule of law, politicians abuse the power by engaging in a corrupt relationship with the lawmakers. Second, very often the citizens of selected Western Balkan countries are subjects of vote-buying practices before the elections. That can have a serious impact on the fairness and transparency of the electoral process. In the survey conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2011), citizens of six Western Balkan states (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia) were asked if they were exposed to a vote-buying at the last general elections in their countries. The findings showed that "…an average of 8 per cent of citizens were asked to vote for a certain candidate or political party in exchange for a concrete offer, such as money, goods or a favor." Unfortunately, to the best of my knowledge there are no surveys that measure the trend of vote-buying in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Third, turnout tends to be higher in nations where political commitment is closely linked to class, ethnic, linguistic, or religious loyalty (Powell, 1980). Bochsler (2007, p. 7) also argues that "ethnic minorities are a relevant

political factor in terms of voting power all across Central and Eastern Europe; their parties have frequently been included into governing coalitions in many countries of the region" with the "Southeast European countries [being] among the front-runners with regards to ethnic minority representation." In other words, considering the region's recent past in which the ethnic tensions and nationalism are prominent features, the ethnic minority parties manage to mobilize much larger part of their minority members to vote for them than the parties of the ethnic majority.

Looking at the second type of political participation (political party membership – Model 1b) analyzed in this study, we can also see a very strong and statistically significant negative correlation with the democracy levels in the Western Balkans. That was expected taking into consideration that without any exceptions, Western Balkan countries have much higher rates of party membership than the average rate of the other post-communist countries in Europe, and distinctively lower democracy levels. However, this result also exhibit a very different pattern from the one described by the conventional theories of political participation, according to which political parties are one of the core institutions of democracy (e.g. Diamond and Gunther, 2001).

I argue that the main explanation behind this puzzle is the clientelist linkage building between politicians and their voters – a practice very common for the Western Balkan states. Namely, the very close intertwining of party building and state building in these countries created

conditions for patronage politics.[26] What is quite particular for this region is that party's monopoly on the state apparatus and politicized party administration remained strong features long after the fall of the communist regime and is still present in most of the Western Balkan states. "… Public administration in the Western Balkan regimes entered the post-communist period with one historical legacy in common. They all lacked the experience of sustained democratic consolidation, i.e., transparency and separation of powers sufficient to make their bureaucracies responsible to legal norms and standards of efficiency, as well as external oversight. They were burdened instead with a heritage of clientelism and corruption not open to public view" (Cohen, 2010). Practically, little has changed in the countries of the Western Balkans since then. Despite the EU conditionality pressures to reform the public administration in these countries, the recruitment of the civil servants continues to be based more on party loyalty than on professional merits. Therefore, in a situation of high unemployment, becoming a party member is seen as one's guarantee for securing a job. And as long as the democratic state-building rests on establishing administrative institutions accountable to the elected officials and the public and at the same time capable to

[26] This is the main argument made by O'Dwyer (2004) in his study on political parties and states bureaucracies in post-communist Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, his analysis is constrained on three cases only: Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia. I argue here that the patronage-led state building is a particularly significant feature for the Western Balkans region.

perform its duties effectively, politicization of the bureaucratic agencies constantly undermines that process in the region.

In the cases of signing petitions and attending peaceful demonstrations, the analysis also confirmed my initial intuition that they are not likely to encourage the deepening of democracy in the Western Balkans. Models 1c and 1d confirm the strong negative relationship between these two types of unconventional political participation and the levels of democracy in the Western Balkans.

If we allow ourselves to suppose that the political participation in the countries of the Western Balkans is motivated primarily by a self-interested desire to gain the political benefits promised by a certain political party or candidate, then the above mentioned puzzles resolve themselves. However, it is difficult to measure and quantify clientelism, or create any sort of index which I would be able to incorporate into the regression analysis as a control variable that will capture some part of the variation between the levels of democracy and political participation in the Western Balkans. Therefore, more exact mechanisms of the clientelism argument will be investigated through a small-N analysis (SNA), where I will compare two ex-Yugoslav countries that represent two of the most different cases in terms of popular movements, clientelism and democratization process.

3.6.1. Clientelist linkages and public political participation: comparing Macedonia and Slovenia

This section aims to assess the commonalities and differences found in Macedonia and Slovenia with respect to clientelism, party patronage and vote-buying practices and their impact on the political participation levels. I have purposefully chosen these two former Yugoslavian republics as for almost half a century they shared common political, economic and institutional settings, but after the fall of the communist regime they have pluralized and democratized in most opposite directions.

While the traditional clientelist relations have been eroded by the democratization process in most CEE countries, clientelism and patronage politics continue to impact political participation in the Western Balkans. "Clientelism denotes such social relations where personal loyalty to the patron prevails over democratic decision-making, professional duties and ethical behavior" (Kotchegura, 2008). A large percentage of the Western Balkans' political class has emerged from the lines of the former regime, formed by people who had inside knowledge and were willing to continue to use the power for their own personal profits, rather than for public interest. In order to achieve this, they formed different networks of interest-driven alliances. Ethnic division in some of the Western Balkan

countries (such as Macedonia and Bosnia) serves as a tool to legally cement the positions of certain political parties and figures. Western Balkan countries proved to be too weak, fragmented and polarized to resist these practices and as a result were, and some of them still are, held hostages of large clientelist and patronage groups. I contend that clientelist-inspired participation seriously undermines the democratic process of the region, as well as its capacity to make elected officials accountable to citizens. Having said that, "the political space has to be opened for new forces. Society has to find the strength to do away with the patronage groups, overcome ethnic division and think of politics as a competition of ideas if not ideologies… It has to take the initiative from the patronage groups and bring it to the centre of society, to the people" (Schenker, 2012). Further bellow I will try to explain the development of the divergent patronage paths and their effect over the political participation rates in two ex-Yugoslavian countries: Macedonia and Slovenia.

After the collapse of the communist regime in CEE, the political parties became the dominant actors of the democratic processes. However, in some countries of the region, parties managed to penetrate both the state and the society to a much larger extent than others. This became a particularly evident feature for the Macedonian society. Namely, the inherited value of loyalty to the political party gave rise to a tendency of strong politicization of the Macedonian public administration. Although party membership is not an official requirement for employment,

it is a best guarantee for getting a job. "Hence, there has been no discontinuation of political interference in Macedonia's public administration after its succession from Yugoslavia in 1991. Indeed, political intrusion has remained a practice taken for granted by politicians ever since" (Sulejmani, 2011, p. 2). The economic hardship and poverty have made the political parties the main employees which assign state positions on the basis of political affiliation and activism, rather than professional qualifications. This trend is particularly evident before any elections in the country. A promised job in the public administration became a powerful tool in the hands of the ruling party for obtaining more votes on the upcoming elections. According to the survey conducted by the UNODC (2011), about three quarters of the applicants not recruited in the public sector in Macedonia believe that somebody else was employed either due to cronyism, nepotism or bribery (70%), or due to the payment of money (5%). These percentages are higher than the average for the Western Balkan region (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).

[Insert Figure 3 and Figure 4 about here]

This tendency in not only manifested on a national level, but also at the level of the local government directed by the party the mayor belongs to and reaches even the lowest ranking positions. The consideration of the administration as a possession of the ruling party has resulted in de-professionalization and oversizing of the public sector and at the same time opened more space for further political intrusion and manipulation. There have been several

efforts to reform the public administration in Macedonia, which however, did not give the expected results mainly due to the ruling party's desire to maintain the status quo. The other countries of the Western Balkans are in quite similar position regarding the politicization of the state administration. In the Policy Report made by Analytica (2011, pp. 11-12) is suggested that "the problem with the administration of states in the Western Balkans is not the absence of strategies for reforms, rather the failure to execute those strategies."

At the same time, Slovenia managed to implement reforms to the public sector even under the communist regime and had an already functioning system of public administration since its independence in 1991. However, since 1996 the public administration reform has been a priority task for the Slovenian government. More specifically, the government adopted a strategy which main goals were to increase the efficiency of the Slovenian public administration and to harmonize its functions according to the European standards. Special governmental strategies for further development of the public sector were passed in 2003 and 2005. Contrary to the practice adopted by the Macedonian political figures, the staffing decisions in the Slovenian public sector are not part of the patronage politics, but are rather based on the merit principle. As such, they do not exert influence on the levels of political participation in the country. However, the main difference between the two countries regarding the public administration reform is that whereas the Macedonian

government failed to effectively implement the adopted reforms, the Slovenian government took a pro-active stand and provided consistent political support. Since there is no available data on the public sector recruitment for Slovenia, I use the Corruption Perceptions Index developed by Transparency International (2013) which ranks countries based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be. As Figure 5 shows, Slovenia proves to be much better with regards to the transparency, accountability and performance of the public bodies.

[Insert Figure 5 about here]

The second modality on how clientelism impacts the political participation is through vote-buying between patrons and their clients. Namely, vote-buying is a frequent practice before and during elections in the countries of the Western Balkans. In this regard, in the survey conducted by the UNODC (2011), citizens were asked whether they were exposed to vote-buying on the last national and local elections. The findings show that "an average of 8% of citizens were asked to vote for a certain candidate or political party in exchange for a concrete offer, such as money, goods or a favor"[27] (UNODC, 2011, p. 9). Figure 6 shows that this practice seems to happen almost twice more often in Bosnia than in the other three ex-Yugoslav countries. Macedonia is somewhere in the middle, with

[27] Data do not include Albania since the topic was not covered in the Albania survey.

about 5% of its citizens being exposed to vote-buying at the last national and local elections. Croatia ranks the lowest.

[Insert Figure 6 about here]

Unfortunately, to the best of my knowledge there is no data available for the vote-buying practices in Slovenia. For that reason, I am using the Electoral Process Rating made by Freedom House (2013) which practically captures the fairness and transparency of the electoral process in the country.[28] As it can be seen on Figure 7, Slovenia ranks much higher than the rest of the Western Balkans states in terms of the transparency of the electoral process.

[Insert Figure 7 about here]

Taking into consideration the above mentioned facts, it can be said that the elections in the Western Balkans are not entirely centered on policy accountability, but to a great extent on the exchange of favors and services between patrons and clients.

Finally, clientelist practices in public sector recruitment and vote-buying before and during elections "are two areas that can have a serious impact on both the development of an independent, professional public administration and the

[28] The Electoral Process Rating by Freedom House (2013) is based on evaluation of the answers of the following three questions: (1) Is the head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections? (2) Are the national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections? (3) Are the electoral laws and framework fair?

fairness and transparency of the electoral process" (UNODC, 2011). In other words, clientelism and patronage politics continue to erode the democratic process and to negatively impact the legitimacy of the political system in the Western Balkan countries. Therefore, it can be justly claimed that clientelism represents the intermediary variable which explains the negative correlation between political participation and levels of democracy in the Western Balkans.

3.7. Summary of the main conclusions

It is beyond any doubt that survival of democracy requires not only mass support, but also free and vibrant civil and political society. Empirical studies have confirmed that citizens in post-communist countries in Europe participate less in politics than their Western European neighbors. Several different factors that account for this difference have been identified in the literature. Some of them are: lack of political culture, low levels of social capital, as well as the state of civil society in the country. Yet, if we take a closer look at the variation among the countries within the post-communist Europe, we would note that the Western Balkan states have particularly higher levels of citizens' engagement in politics than their Eastern European neighbors. At the same time, their levels of democracy are distinctively lower. Thus, I have argued that higher

political participation does not necessarily guarantee that democracy will flourish. This argument is reflected in concern about the possible negative implications of purely self-interest driven political activism on democracy consolidation and system stability in the fragile democracies of the Western Balkans. The statistical analysis has indeed confirmed that all four types of political participation (voting, political party membership, signing petitions and attending peaceful demonstrations) are negatively correlated with the levels of democracy in the Western Balkan region. Even more, this relationship is strongly statistically significant. I argue that in a situation of severe economic hardship, politicization of almost all spheres of the society, as well as widespread corruption (as it is in the Western Balkans), the self-interest is the primary motivator for citizens' participation in politics. More specifically, the clientelistic relations that existed during the authoritarian period in the Western Balkan states have continued to impact political participation even after their democratization. The clientelist linkage building between politicians and voters in this region usually takes several forms, some of which are: vote-buying, employment in the public sector, illegitimate acquirement of tenders etc.

Finally, I can conclude that this clientelist-inspired participation seriously undermines the democratic process of the region, as well as its capacity to make elected officials accountable to citizens. In other words, when the self-interest is the primal force for political attitudes and behaviors of the citizens, usually the final result is

strengthening of the corruptive practices, rather than reinforcement of the democratic attitudes and democratic quality.

4. Political competition and democracy

4.1. Introduction

As elaborated in the previous chapter, genuinely democratic political involvement of the citizens plays an important role in the advancement of the democratic polity. But the progress towards fuller democratic consolidation also depends from the development of a competitive and uncorrupted party system. Even more, some democratic theorists emphasize the robust political competition[29] as the most important determinant for the democratic stability. Dahl (1971), for example argued that democracy is most likely to endure when the advent of political contestation precedes the extension of political participation. This is clearly evident if we take into consideration that in a democratic polity it is the parties that should "provide the connective tissue between citizens and civil society actors on the one side, and state institutions on the other" (Cohen and Lampe, 2011, pp. 223-224). Huntington (1968) and Przeworski (1992) are also among the scholars who acknowledge that a robust political competition enhances the democratic stability and legitimacy.

[29] Anna Grzymala-Busse (2004, p. 2) defines the robustness of the political competition as "the degree to which party competition presents a credible threat of replacement to governing parties."

Numerous studies have dealt with the development of political party systems and patterns of party interaction in post-communist Europe (see Birch, 2001; Filho et al., 2012; Grzymala-Busse, 2006; Innes, 2002; Kitschelt et al., 1999; Kostelecký, 2002; Lane and Ersson, 2007; Lewis, 2006; Vachudova, 2005a). Almost all scholars dealing with this issue agree that post-communist party systems during the 1990s were less consolidated than those in the established Western democracies. However, since the beginning of the new millennium this gap has narrowed, and today the party systems of CEE resemble much more those of Western Europe (Kostelecký, 2002). At the same time, not many studies analyze the extent to which the party system stability and the political competition are critical factors for democratic consolidation in post-communist Europe.

Another critical aspect in the literature on this topic is that many scholars ignore the fact that party system development and patterns of party competition are some of the features which, among others, distinguish the ten new EU members from the rest of post-communist Europe. Having said that, despite the vast body of theories about party systems and political competition that emerged from the experience of the post-communist democracies, they often failed to capture and explain the distinctiveness of the party development and patterns of political competition in the Western Balkans. Among other distinctions, party systems in the Western Balkans seem to be less developed

(Ágh, 1998)[30], more volatile and less institutionalized (Abuş, 2003), less distinguishable along ideological stances (Cohen and Lampe, 2011) as well as fragmented and ethnically polarized (Cohen and Lampe, 2011; Stojarová and Emerson, 2010). Consequently, political competition is based around ethnic cleavages making the ideological dimension less important. In most of the Western Balkan states (Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia) elections are still centered to a large degree on nationalism and territory. At the same time, electoral competition takes place both within and between coalitions.

The first aim of this chapter is to track the differences in political competition rates between the two different blocks of post-communist countries in Europe. In a same way as in the previous chapter, the 10 CEE EU member states represent the first block of countries and serve just as a term of comparison. Apparently, in the focus of my cross-national analysis are the Western Balkan states. Competition will mainly be analyzed with regard to the two main salient empirical sub-dimensions as suggested by Morlino (2011, p. 205):

1. On the input side: competition among political actors, that is, freedom for all political parties to

[30] In his book "The Politics of Central Europe", Attila Ágh (1998) does not concentrate exclusively on the party system development in the Western Balkans, but in the Balkan region as a whole.

compete with each other and fairness of political competition; and

2. On the output side: competitiveness of participation, that is, the extent to which alternative preferences in the formation of government and different potential choices among policy alternatives can be pursued in the political arena, as well as potentiality of alternation.

However, several other sub-dimensions that capture certain specific aspects of political competition will also be included in the empirical analysis.

The empirical data indicate that with the exception of government fractionalization, Western Balkan states score lower in all quantitative dimensions of political competition compared to the CEE EU member states (see Figure 8 and Figure 9). Consequently, I expect a positive correlation between political competition and the level of democracy in CEE, as well as in the Western Balkans. More specifically, I suggest that political competition represents supportive component of democratic development and without genuine political competition democracy cannot survive in the Balkans.

This chapter is structured as follows: first, I compare political competition rates among Western Balkan countries and 10 CEE EU member states and analyze the observed variations. The third section gives an overview of the theoretical framework on party system development and political competition. Further on, I give a detailed

description of the variables, methodology and data used in this chapter. In the fifth section, I statistically test the correlation between political competition rates and levels of democracy in the regions of Central Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. After reviewing the results from the statistical test, I offer several possible explanations for the variation in the political party development among the Western Balkans and Central Eastern Europe, through which I will try to explain the previously established relation between political competition and democracy.

[Insert Figure 8 and Figure 9 about here]

4.2. Political competition in comparative perspective: Western Balkans vs. CEE EU member states

In this section I present and analyze the empirical data by comparing the levels of political competition among the regions of Central Eastern Europe (part of the EU) and the Western Balkans, as well as among the countries of these regions as separate units. As previously mentioned, the five Western Balkan states (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia) are in the focus of my cross-national and cross-regional analysis, while the ten CEE EU member states (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and

Slovenia) serve just as a term of comparison. Once again I exclude Kosovo and Montenegro from the analysis, as there is a lack of empirical data for them as separate units before becoming independent states.

To compare the levels of political competition among and within the two regions, I use several indicators that capture different aspects of this dimension. Those are: opposition share, opposition fractionalization, government fractionalization, legislature fractionalization, electoral success of smaller parties and effective competition. However, the two indicators that evaluate most closely the input and output side of political competition are 'opposition share' and 'effective competition', consequently. The data for the variable 'effective competition'[31] is taken from Polity IV dataset (Marshall et al., 2012a). This index is a five-point ordinal scale (5 being the highest) that measures the extent to which alternative preferences for policy and leadership can be pursued in the political arena. The data for the variable which portrays the electoral success of smaller parties is taken from Vanhanen (2011) dataset. Finally the data for the remaining four political competition variables used in this study is taken

[31] The original name of the variable 'effective competition' is 'competitiveness of participation (Marshall et al., 2012a). However, the name was changed in order to avoid confusion and overlapping with the independent variable from the previous chapter (i.e. political participation).

from the Database of Political Institutions (Keefer, 2012).[32] For the purpose of this study I use only the data that covers the period 1992-2009. There are two reasons for this. First, the ex-Yugoslav countries gained their independence only in 1991. Second, although the communist regime in the rest of Eastern Europe fell two years earlier (in 1989), several years were needed for constituting a multi-party system.[33] I don't take into consideration the last few years as there is also missing data for some of the variables.

Table 7 lists the average levels of political competition in each of the 15 European post-communist states, along with the group averages, which allows comparison both between countries and groups. Close inspection of the results in the table reveals that with the exception of government fractionalization, the CEE EU member states score higher in all dimensions of political competition compared to the Western Balkans. Interestingly enough, this difference is most obvious in the two sub-dimensions that capture the input and output side of political competition: opposition share and effective competition. Namely, the share of the opposition parties in parliament in the Western Balkans in the period 1992-2009 was about

[32] Please note that the variable 'opposition share' is calculated by the author as a ratio between the number of seats assigned to opposition and total seats in the legislature, and then converted in percentage. For more information on the variables definitions and data, see Appendix 2.

[33] For that reason, most of the indicators show zero in the first few years of democratic transition in the CEE.

37%, while in the rest of CEE almost half of the seats belonged to the opposition parties. As for the effective competition dimension, Western Balkan countries had an average score of 3.5 for the same time period. That means that most of the time they had factional or transitional arrangement of competitiveness. CEE EU member states on the other hand, scored on average somewhere between transitional and competitive competition. Thus, it is clearly evident that the quality of political competition in the Western Balkan states is lower compared to the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. There are several factors which I consider to be the most essential reason for this variation.

[Insert Table 7 about here]

First, the initial political competition in the new democracies in Europe was determined by the presence or absence of an opposition to the communists in the founding years of democratic governance (Vachudova, 2005a). More specifically, right after the fall of the communist regime in the Western Balkans, there was an absence of an organized opposition to the former political order, which allowed the old rulers to win the first elections and to conduct the transition. This has allowed the old-regime elites to concentrate even more political power in their hands. Consequently, their initial strategies were to block the entry of competing political groups, so they would be able to govern in a relatively noncompetitive political manner. The only exception was Croatia where an anti-communist right wing party (HDZ) under the rule of Franjo Tuđman won

the first multi-party elections. However, Croatia under Tuđman was far from being a functioning democracy. On the contrary, he enforced a noncompetitive political system which resulted in a decade of uninterrupted rule of his party. Thus, the communist regime change in these countries was followed either by illiberal democracy (Albania, Macedonia) or by authoritarianism (Serbia and Croatia). Thus, it becomes clear that the first critical ingredient for a vigorous political competition was absent in all Western Balkan states. This was not the case with the other countries of post-communist Europe where the old regime parties were dismantled and ousted from power in the first democratic elections, or where they 'survived', they transformed themselves into moderate left-wing parties. The new elites that took over the power were dedicated to dismantle the elements of the communism, to transform the economy and to create democracy.

Another factor that shapes the political competition in the Western Balkans is the ethnic cleavage. This is mainly because the ethnic self-identification in these states is very salient, with people perceiving the actions of another ethnic group as threatening to their own interest and identity. Therefore, voters are very susceptible to appeals of ethnic nationalism. On the other hand, political elites take advantage of this fact and use therefore ethnic scapegoating to win votes. This practice is constantly harming the quality of democracy and increasing the chances of conflict along ethnic lines. The intense polarization along ethnic lines characterizes in particular the party systems in Macedonia

and Bosnia. This has "obstructed state cohesion in both cases during the 1990s and beyond, and also led to violence and to sharp political-ideological differentiation between the major parties [and eventually] undermined the basis for the emergence of moderate party pluralism functioning within broadly legitimated states" (Cohen and Lampe, 2011, p. 231). On the other hand, most of the CEE EU members have no large ethnic minorities. Consequently, their parties could not make use of ethnic nationalistic rhetoric against minorities to win or maintain power.

Party corruption is considered to be yet another factor that shapes the party competition in the region. Although all Western Balkan states have established laws on the financing of political parties, several recent surveys indicate that political parties are considered by the public as most corrupted of all political institutions (Cohen and Lampe, 2011, p. 237). Many agree that in order to concentrate more political power in their hands, the political elites of the Western Balkan region engage in corrupt activities. At the same time, some of them have systematically used the following methods to constrain the political competition: placing media under their control, changing electoral laws to their advantage, diverting state funds from the opposition parties, blocking the registration of rival political parties etc. And the more control that the ruling party exerts over state institutions, media, private sector and society as a whole, the lower the level of party competition. Eventually, the perceived party corruption has seriously undermined public trust and led to voter

skepticism, thus threatening the viability of democracy in the region. Blechinger (2002, p. 3) has rightly observed that "long term high-level corruption may also provide a powerful incentive for political parties to secure political power, thus producing authoritarian regimes, one-party monopoly states, and non-democratic governments." In contrast with this practice, most of the states in CEE created a solid institutional basis for party competition since the early years of their democratic rule and have thus reduced opportunities for corruption. On the other hand, as a result of higher party competition, as well as functioning checks and balances, political actors in these states faced a high risk of exposure and consequently losing power if they engage in corrupt transactions. At the same time, the presence of an organized opposition to the ex-communist party officials has restricted them in using their political power to monopolize former state resources.

I strongly believe that the above mentioned factors are the key variables that account for the still relatively uncompetitive democratic political system and the unconsolidated democracies in the countries of the Western Balkans. Subsequently, they will be analyzed in more details further in this chapter.

4.3. Political competition and transition to democracy

When speaking about transition, O'Donnell (1988) makes a difference between two types of transition: a transition to democracy, and then transition to a consolidated democracy. The first one is basically the current momentum of breaking with the authoritarian rule and the second - the process of institutionalization and entrenching of the democratic rules and principles. As scholars began asking what factors make democracy emerge and consolidate, besides the structural factors, they too found that competition between relevant political actors and elite strategic choices to be crucial factors. This chapter gives an overview of some key comparative and theoretical issues in the literature on political competition and transition to democracy and democratic consolidation.

Dahl (1971) argued that democracy is most likely to endure when the advent of political contestation precedes the extension of political participation. In other words, a competitive politics first develops among small group of elite and then includes more people. This scenario, according to Dahl laid the foundation for some of the world's most successful democracies, such as England and Sweden. Later generation of transition scholars believed that restricting the political competition in the early years of a new democracy would make the democracy more

stable (see Gasiorowski, 1995; Karl, 1995; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Valenzuela, 1992; Zakaria, 1997). Namely, they start from the premise that the new regimes would not be able to cope with the large variety of demands and interests of the competing political actors. Haggard and Kaufman (1995, p. 152) for instance, argued that: "new democratic governments face exceptionally strong distributive pressures, both from groups reentering the political arena after long periods of repression and from established interests demanding reassurance." Others claim that unrestricted political competition in emerging democracies might allow the election of 'illiberal' democrats who will eventually subvert democracy (Zakaria, 1997). Nonetheless on the degree of competition they consider beneficial for democracy, all scholars agree that political parties and party competition play a particularly important role both during the transition and consolidation phases of the democratic development.

The debate about parties, political competition and democracy took on renewed importance as new democracies emerged following the collapse of the communist regime in Europe. The competition in a post-communist transitional setting was usually a contest between the old regime and those most opposed to it. What determined whether these states would develop a competitive or a noncompetitive democratic political system in the first years of transition, was the presence or absence of an organized opposition to the previous regime. Specifically, the most favorable conditions for developing a

competitive political system is when the electoral support following the transition was given to a faction opposed to the communist elites (see Bunce, 2000; Fish, 1998; Kitschelt, 2003; Vachudova, 2005b; Vachudova and Snyder, 1997). Consequently, the post-communist countries which suppressed the initial political competition had relatively slower progress in building liberal democratic institutions and market economy. The debate on the quality of political competition determined by the presence or absence of an opposition to the previous regime has built on and contributed to the literature on elite recruitment. This literature distinguishes between two theories: the reproduction of elites theory and the circulation of elites theory (see Adam and Tomšič, 2002; Dobry, 2000; Hanley et al., 1998; Szelényi and Szelényi, 1995). According to the theory of elite reproduction, the old elite preserves its power (there is no elite change), while the theory of elite circulation suggests that new people are recruited for command positions (there is an elite turnover).

Elite interactions in the 'third wave' democracies have also been in the focus of the research interest of the notable political analysts such as Huntington, O'Donnell, Schmitter, Whitehead, Przeworski, Kaufman etc. Huntington (1984, p. 212), for instance wrote that "democratic regimes that last have seldom, if ever, been instituted by mass popular action. Almost always, democracy has come as much from the top down as from the bottom up; it is as likely to be the product of oligarchy as of protest against oligarchy." Mainwaring (1989, p. 10),

on the other hand argues that transition to democracy involves interaction between elites and masses. Namely, according to him "transitions usually begin with splits within authoritarian regimes, but over time more and more actors become involved… As liberalization proceeds, governments and oppositions alike attempt to win popular sympathies in efforts to bolster their bargaining power."

4.4. Political competition and transition to a consolidated democracy

As previously said political parties and robust party competition play a very important role not only during the transition period of a country, but also during the process of democratic consolidation. According to Pasquino (1990, p. 52), while the democratic transition has not always been a party dominated process, all processes of democratic consolidation have indeed been party dominated. Morlino (2011) also asserts that there is a strong relationship between regime consolidation and the stabilization and structuring of parties and party systems. Specifically, he suggests that three conditions related to parties are required for consolidation of democracy: stabilization of electoral behavior, the emergence of recurring patterns of party competition, and the stabilization of the leadership. Namely, "they give an immediate picture of the stabilization of the relationship between parties and civil

society, i.e. some of the basic elements in the whole process of consolidation…" (Morlino, 2011, p. 111). Eventually, he concludes that competition and participation are the qualities that can affect all other dimensions of democracy. Similarly, Pridham (1990) argues that in order to capture the role of political parties in democratic consolidation we need to employ a three-dimensional approach that focuses on parties' relationship with the state, inter-party relationships and the relationship between parties and society. Following this line of reasoning, it seems that it is the institutionalization of the party system that is most relevant for democratic consolidation. This process entails stability of interparty competition, embeddedness of the parties in society, acceptance of the parties as legitimate institutions, as well as party organizations with stable rules and structures (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). However, there is still a question mark regarding the link between party system institutionalization and democratic consolidation. Among more specific arguments which address this question Morlino (2011) suggests that parties constrain the behavior of individuals and groups in civil society by channeling that behavior into democratic institutionalized arenas which eventually contains conflict and prevent groups from resorting to anti-regime extremist alternatives. This enables continuation and deepening of the democratic process which is necessary for consolidation.

Numerous studies depict the way in which political parties influence the process of democratic consolidation in post-

communist countries in Europe (see Birch, 2001; Filho et al., 2012; Grzymala-Busse, 2006; Innes, 2002; Kitschelt et al., 1999; Vachudova, 2005a, 2011; Wright, 2008). This clearly demonstrates the significance in approaching parties and political competition in order to comprehend the quality of democracy in a specific context. Seeking to highlight the contribution of political parties in Central and Eastern Europe, (Vachudova, 2005a, p. 15) writes: "Competition among political parties is essential for efficient democratic politics – and its importance is greatly amplified when the rules of the democratic game are at stake… [This is particularly evident] during transition, when the institutions of the new polity and economy are being created, it is the political parties in power that have a great deal of discretion over how new rules are written on issues as fundamental as citizenship, elections, and property rights. These political parties will only write these new rules in an efficient way if their freedom to maneuver is limited by competing groups." Having said that, the absence of stable party interactions among the competing party elites on one hand, and among these elites and the voters on the other represent a serious problem in some post-communist democracies.

Mair (1997), on the other hand identifies four main factors which differentiate the post-communist party system from the one of the established democracies. First, the new party systems of post-communist Europe emerged in the wake of a very specific democratization process that occurred in an effective absence of a real civil society. Second, these party

systems confronted a quite different type of electorate, an electorate which was substantially more open and unpredictable than those of the established democracies.[34] The third difference involves the context of competition. More specifically, the new political class was less motivated by organizational loyalties and commitments which resulted in an increased number of party splitting and merging. Finally, Mair notes that the most important difference between the post-communist party systems and the ones of the established democracies is the pattern of competition. That is, the elites in the new democracies proved to be more conflictual, which resulted in majoritarian, rather than consensual competition.

This last point opens up the discussion whether party fractionalization is conducive to democratization. (Lijphart, 1999, p. 62) for instance, points out that the existence of multiple political parties provides the citizens with a variety of choices and offers meaningful representation of the minorities. Contrary to this, a single-party majority government creates sharp divisions between those who hold the power and those in opposition. Therefore, according to him, consensus democracy performs better than majoritarian democracy in many policy areas,

[34] Mair (1997) notes that the electoral volatility in terms of voters' changing from one party to another has been quite high in the European post-communist countries which is not the case with the established democracies. This, according to him, can be particularly problematic because the stakes are usually too high due to the depth of ongoing institutional changes.

particularly in countries with sharp cultural, ethnic, religious or linguistic cleavages. In contrast, Carey (1997, p. 68) argues that "the greater the fragmentation of the party system that is associated with proportionality and multipartism is potentially problematic… [because] a party system that is too representative can contribute to policy deadlock." However, Powell (1982, p. 108) holds that fractionalized party systems tend to have less stable governments, but mainly due to their association with extremism, and not fractionalization as such.

To sum up, although there are some contrasting views on the level of political competition that is most propitious in promoting stable democracy, all scholars agree that parties and party competition are important vehicles for democratic development, for they shape the political system in a variety of ways.

4.5. Methodology, variables and data

4.5.1. Dependent variable

Because the aim of this chapter is to test the influence of political competition on democracy in Central Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, I use the level of democracy as a dependent variable for my second model. The term democracy has been used to capture many

concepts – from contested elections, political rights, freedom of expression etc. For that reason, once again the classic definition on democracy by Robert Dahl is my guiding concept which helped me decide which democracy indicator to use as a dependent variable. Namely, Dahl (1971) maintained that "democracy requires not only free, fair, and competitive elections, but also the freedoms that make them truly meaningful (such as freedom of organization and freedom of expression), alternative sources of information, and institutions to ensure that government policies depend on the votes and preferences of citizens."

A fairly large number of researchers and institutions have provided quantitative measures of democracy. However, as previously elaborated, Freedom House (Freedom House, 2013) and Polity (Marshall et al., 2012a) are the two most acknowledged democracy indices within the democratization literature. The Freedom House provides two separate indexes for political rights and civil liberties. The concept of political rights is applied by using the following basic definition: "Political rights are rights to participate meaningfully in the political process. In a democracy this means the right of all adults to vote and compete for public office, and for elected representatives to have a decisive vote on public policies" (Gastil and Sussman, 1987, p. 7). On the other hand, the Freedom House concept of civil liberties uses the following basic definition: "Civil liberties are rights to free expression, to organize and demonstrate, as well as rights to a degree of

autonomy such as is provided by freedom of religion, education, travel, and other personal rights" Gastil and Sussman (1987, p. 7). Freedom House assigns each country a numerical rating from 1 (most free) to 7 (least free) for both political rights and civil liberties.[35] These indices are then averaged in order to calculate the democracy index for a given country.

An alternative measure of democracy that is frequently used by political scientists is the one compiled by Ted Robert Gurr (see Gurr, 1974; Gurr and Jaggers, 1990), i.e. so-called Polity democracy score. Namely, Gurr evaluates countries annually on the authority characteristics of their political regimes, rating them on a 21-point scale that runs from -10 (a 'fully institutionalized autocracy') to +10 (a 'fully institutionalized democracy'). Democracy is measured based on the evaluation of the following five components: competitiveness of participation, regulation of participation, competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, and constraints on the executive.

As both of these indices provide an adequate operationalization of the dependent variable, it is my belief

[35] As it is elaborated in Chapter 3 (Section 3), political rights ratings combine the average of the following three subcategories: electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and functioning of government; while civil liberties ratings are based on an evaluation of four subcategories: freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights.

that a combined index that includes both Freedom House and Polity2 democracy indices would be most appropriate for the purpose of this study. Teorell et al. (2011) combine Freedom House and Polity2 into one index that ranges from 0 to 10 where 0 is least democratic and 10 most democratic. This is an index that according to Hadenius and Teorell (2005) outperforms all rival operationalizations of democracy. And what is important for this study, it has imputed values for countries where data on Polity is missing (the so-called 'interruption', 'interregnum' and 'transition' periods). Nevertheless, I have to use this index carefully as one of my key independent variables ('effective competition' or as originally named by Polity IV - 'competitiveness of participation') is one of the components in Polity2 democracy index. At the same time, although conceptually different, some of the other independent variables I employ in this chapter might overlap to a certain extent with this component. Hence, in order to conduct a robustness check I exclude the effect of the competitiveness of participation component from the Polity2 index, and therefore from the dependent variable. I have done this in several steps. First, I re-estimate Polity2 index by removing the effects of 'competitiveness of participation' component. Then, I adjust this new Polity index, as well as the Freedom House index into a scale 0-10. Finally, I combine these two newly created variables into one new combined Freedom House/Polity2 index that ranges from 0 to 10. Thus, in the end I have an adjusted democracy index to serve as a dependent variable for my robustness check models which differs from the Freedom House/Polity2 one only for not

having the 'competitiveness of participation' component in it.[36]

4.5.2. Independent variable

As the aim of this chapter is to examine the influence of political competition on the levels of democracy in the regions of Central Eastern Europe and Western Balkans, the key independent variable to test the above hypotheses is political competition. More specifically, six different dimensions of political competition will be considered as independent variables. These are: opposition share, effective competition, opposition fractionalization, government fractionalization, legislature fractionalization and electoral success of smaller parties. However, as previously said, my main focus will be on the first two dimensions because they evaluate most closely the input and output side of political competition (as defined by Morlino (2011)). The relationship between each dimension of political competition and the levels of democracy in Central Eastern Europe and Western Balkans will be tested in six separate independent models. At the same time a robustness check will be conducted by regressing the same

[36] This adjusted index has imputed values for countries where data on Polity is missing (Bosnia for 1992-2009 and Croatia in 1999) which I generated by regressing it on the combined Freedom House/Polity2 democracy index.

dimensions of political competition on the adjusted Freedom House/Polity2 democracy index.[37]

According to Morlino (2011, p. 205), "on the input side, the relevant competition is among political actors, characterized by freedom for all political parties to compete with each other complemented by fairness of political competition." In my opinion, the indicator that most closely operationalizes this concept is the share of the opposition in the parliament. Explicitly, the larger the legislative opposition is, it is more likely to have the ability to monitor the government work through checks and balances and to publicly report any missteps or deviations. This indicator is calculated by the author as a ratio between the total number of seats held by all opposition parties and the total number of seats held by all government parties. The data for these two sub-dimensions is taken from Database of Political Institutions (Keefer, 2012). Similarly, another variable that captures the quality of competition on the input side is the electoral success of smaller parties, that is, the percentage of votes gained by the smaller parties in parliamentary elections. The data for this variable is provided by Tatu Vanhanen (2011).

On the output side of political process I concentrate on whether "there are alternative patterns in the formation of government and different potential choices among policy

[37] See Section 4.5.1 for more information on the reasons for conducting the robustness check, as well as on the procedure for obtaining the adjusted Freedom House/Polity2 democracy index.

alternatives" (Morlino, 2011, p. 205). Therefore, I employ the Polity IV (Marshall et al., 2012a) measure of political competition: competitiveness of participation. However, in order to avoid conceptual confusion with the independent variable of the previous chapter (political participation), I have changed the name of this variable into 'effective competition', and as such will be used further in the text. This index is a five-point ordinal scale (5 is the highest) that measures the extent to which alternative preferences for policy and leadership can be pursued in the political arena.[38] Although this measure of political competition may be a blunt measure, it actually captures a meaningful variation in how much freedom different groups have to pursue political power (Wright, 2008). As it was previously mentioned, using this index as one of my key independent variables might be problematic, mainly because the dependent variable (combined Freedom House/Polity2 index) is partly based on it. For that reason, as a robustness check I re-estimate the model after excluding this component from the dependent variable. The second disadvantage by using this index in this study is that Polity doesn't provide data for the cases of so-called 'interregnum' (or anarchy) and foreign 'interruption', i.e. they are treated as system missing. This is the case with Bosnia (one out of five countries of the Western Balkans) which was in a state of civil war in the first years following

[38] The five categories are: repressed, suppressed, factional, transitional and competitive. For more information on how these categories are defined, see Appendix 2.

the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and under NATO intervention and presence ever since. Therefore, Bosnia is not taken into consideration in the second model.

The other three independent variables: opposition fractionalization, government fractionalization and legislature fractionalization also capture certain aspects of the political competition and as such influence the levels of democracy in a country. More specifically, a fragmented opposition usually lacks the consensus and skills to cooperate effectively against illiberal parties. Therefore it can become a powerful tool in the hands of the ruling elites who seek to suppress real political competition in the political system. On the other hand, there are contrasting views regarding the effects of the overall party system fractionalization on the level of democracy. Some analysts (such as Carey, 1997; Lijphart, 1996) believe that the existence of multiple political parties provides citizens with a variety of choices and enables minorities to attain meaningful representation by participating in governing coalitions. However, a very fragmented government is sometime perceived as a challenge to democracy because it can undermine governmental accountability and polarize the political landscape. On account of the above mentioned arguments, I considered it preferable to include these variables in the analysis. The data for these independent variables is taken from Database of Political Institutions

(Keefer, 2012).[39] I would like to point out here that although conceptually different, my other five key independent variables (besides 'effective competition') might also overlap to a certain degree with the component 'competitiveness of participation' on which the dependent variable is partly based on. Therefore, as previously mentioned, I estimate five different models with the new adjusted dependent variable as a robustness check for the other five key independent variables of this chapter, as well.

Finally, as it was the case with the first statistical model (see Chapter 3, Section 4), I include several control variables that according to the democratization theory are commonly regarded as correlates to democracy. These are: lagged levels of democracy, GDP per capita based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), average years of schooling in the population aged 25 and above, trade openness, ethnic fractionalization, religious fractionalization, political stability and absence of violence.[40]

[39] For more information about the data and the sources used for the independent variables, please see the Appendix 2 at the end of the thesis.

[40] For more information about the data and the sources used for the control variables, please see the Appendix 2 at the end of the thesis.

4.5.3. Methodology

The main empirical and theoretical findings on the relationship between political competition and democracy suggest that democracy is more likely to consolidate when there is robust competition in the political system. That is, political competition enhances democratic quality. Taking into consideration the lower levels of almost all dimensions of political competition in the Western Balkan states compared to their CEE counterparts, it seems that this theoretical implication holds true for the post-communist region in Europe, as well. In other words, I expect a positive correlation between the levels of democracy and political competition in CEE, but also in the Western Balkans. The purpose of this chapter is to test this hypothesis by using panel data on 18 European post-communist countries[41] for a period of 18 years (1992-2009). Therefore, I use pooled-OLS with a constant term as a method of estimation. More specifically, to formally test my

[41] The countries that I include in the regression analysis are the same as in the previous chapter. Accordingly, they can be divided in three groups. The first group includes the five Western Balkan states: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia. The second group consists of the ten CEE EU member states: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. And the third group comprises the other three Eastern European countries: Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, which I use as controls.

first hypothesis, I estimate six variants of the following time-series cross-section regression model (TSCS):

$$dem_{i,t} = \beta_1 + \beta_2 dem_{i,t-1} + \beta_3 comp_{i,t} + \beta_4 wb_{i,t} + \beta_5 (comp_{i,t} * wb_{i,t}) + \sum_{k=6}^{K} \beta_k x_{k(i,t)} + e_{i,t}$$

The subscript $i = 1, 2 \ldots N$ denotes a country; $t = 1, 2 \ldots T$ denotes a year; $k = 6, 7, \ldots K$ denotes a specific control variable; while wb is the regional dummy that takes a value of one for the Western Balkan countries and zero otherwise. Including the regional dummy for Western Balkans in the regression will allow controlling for the effects caused by the countries that belong to this group on the dependent variable. dem, $comp$ and x_k refer respectively to dependent, independent and control variables for unit i and time t; $e_{i,t}$ is a random error and β_1 and β_k refer, respectively, to the intercept and the slope parameters. I include interaction terms between the key explanatory variables and the Western Balkan dummy, to measure if political competition might have different influence depending on whether the country belongs to the Western Balkan region or not.

Six separate statistical investigations will be conducted. The intention behind this is to capture the isolated effects of the six main explanatory variables: opposition share, effective competition, opposition fractionalization, government fractionalization, legislature fractionalization and electoral success of smaller parties, while controlling simultaneously for other explanatory factors. The regression results will eventually show whether there is indeed a positive and

statistically significant correlation between political competition and the levels of democracy in the Western Balkans. As a robustness check, I also estimate another six models with the adjusted Freedom House/Polity2 democracy index as a dependent variable.[42] Table 8 (Model 2a-2f) and Table 9 (Model 3a-3f) report the estimation results of the twelve models.

[Insert Table 8 and Table 9 about here]

4.6. Results and analysis

The results in Table 8 and Table 9 imply that the effects of political competition on the levels of democracy do not significantly differ on whether the country belongs to the Western Balkan region or not. The only important difference is in the government fractionalization. Namely, including the interaction term turns the coefficient from negative into positive and statistically significant at 0.01 level, suggesting that more fractionalized government would lead to better democracy in the Western Balkans. These results confirm my hypothesis that political competition represents supportive component of democratic development in post-communist Europe,

[42] This robustness check is particularly relevant for the second model (2b) as the independent variable 'effective competition' is contained within the dependent variable.

including the Western Balkan states. I elaborate this in more details further below.

In the first two models (2a and 2b), the level of democracy is regressed on the two main independent variables (opposition share and effective competition), as well as on the control variables. On the input side of political competition, that is plurality in competition patterns, operationalized as share of the opposition in the parliament, the results confirm my assumption. As can be seen in Table 8, the opposition share is positively correlated with the levels of democracy in CEE and, moreover, it is statistically significant at 0.01 level. However, when the interaction term with the Western Balkans is added, although the same positive relationship continues, it loses its statistical significance.

With regard to the output side of political competition, i.e. the extent to which alternative preferences for policy and leadership can be pursued in the political arena, there is also a positive and statistically significant relationship with the levels of democracy, both in CEE and Western Balkans. Specifically, one of the key aspects of the democratic process is the lack of restrictions on formation of government and choosing among different policy alternatives. The robustness check, that was particularly important for this model, has confirmed these results. In other words, neither the substantive, nor the statistical significance were considerably altered.

The vote share of the smaller parties in CEE is also positively associated with the levels of democracy, which supports the idea that larger opposition is conducive to democracy. Nevertheless, when controlled for the Western Balkans the results are inconclusive.

Next, the level of democracy is regressed on party fractionalization, operationalized through three separate variables: legislature fractionalization, government fractionalization and opposition fractionalization. The results on legislature and government fractionalization (Models 2d and 2e) confirm the theoretical implication that the existence of multiple political parties has a positive association with democracy, mainly because it promotes a consensus democracy and represents a broader array of interests. Both coefficients are positive and statistically significant when controlled for the Western Balkans. On the other hand, the results on the relationship between opposition fractionalization and levels of democracy are inconclusive, as they suggest a positive correlation between the two for the region of CEE, while a negative and statistically significant one when controlled for the Western Balkans. However, I would like to point out that the negative correlation fits in well, if we accept the viewpoint advocated by some scholars that the absence of unifying leadership among the opposition parties limits its effectiveness because it lacks the strength to undermine government's commitment to comply with the rules of the democratic game.

Finally, Table 9 (Model 3a-3f) illustrates that the robustness check confirmed all results on the key independent variables of this chapter, except on opposition fractionalization in the Western Balkans, which lost its statistical significance. Further bellow I offer several explanations why the Western Balkan states failed to develop more robust political competition even after more than two decades following the collapse of the communist regime.

First, the communist parties in CEE and their transformation have to a large extent affected patterns of party competition that developed in the post-1989 democracies. Namely, the communist parties and their successors can be divided in three groups: (1) parties that exited from power after the collapse of the communist regime, transformed and returned to power after an interval out of office; (2) parties that exited from power and did not return; and (3) parties that did not exit and stayed in power throughout the first years of the transition (Grzymala-Busse, 2006). In all of the Western Balkan countries with the exception of Croatia, the old-regime parties retained their rule, i.e. neither transformed, nor exited from power. As a result, these parties had preferential access to the media and state resources which heavily disadvantaged the opposition forces and made the initial electoral alternatives less clear. Therefore, the initial political competition in these countries was rather weak. The same was the case in Bulgaria and Romania. On contrary, the other CEE countries (with the exception of

Lithuania) followed the other two strategies, that is, either the communist parties were forced to exit power, or they have transformed themselves radically into moderate Social Democratic parties. Consequently, they have developed robust political competition. This variation matters, not only because it shaped the initial levels of political competition that developed in the post-communist Europe, but also determined the progress in building liberal democratic political institutions and a market-based economy. This relationship has already been recognized by several scholars (see Bunce, 2000; Fish, 1998; Kitschelt, 2003; Vachudova, 2005a; Vachudova and Snyder, 1997). Vachudova (2005a, p. 11), for instance proposes that "where the collapse of communism was quickly followed by the creation and strengthening of a competitive democratic political system, we should expect relatively rapid progress in building liberal democratic political institutions and a market-based economy. In countries where the collapse of communism was followed by the creation of a noncompetitive (albeit democratic) political system, we should expect the suppression of liberal democratic institutions, and relatively slow progress toward a market economy."

Another reason for the absence of strong, programmatic political competition between political parties in the Western Balkan is the strong ethnic cleavage. Namely, the electorate in almost all Western Balkan states is underpinned by a strong cleavage structure based on ethnicity. Although the electoral volatility has been quite

high, it has been largely limited to one of the existing ethnic groups. Consequently, political parties have the incentive to play on such divisions and organize themselves more readily around ethnic than other identities. This is particularly the case with Macedonia and Bosnia, where since the very beginning of their democratic transition, political competition developed along ethnic lines, causing instability and making democratic consolidation unlikely. In Bosnia, for instance, the main party voted for by the Croats is Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ); the Bosniaks cast their preferences for the Party of Democratic Action (SDA); while the party that represents Serbian interests is the Union of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) which replaced the previously prominent Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) (Stojarová and Emerson, 2010). Similarly, the basic dividing line in Macedonian party politics is the ethnic cleavage between Macedonian and Albanian parties. Both the Macedonian and Albanian sides are divided into two large parties: the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) – in the case of Macedonians; and the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) and the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) – in the case of Albanians. Apart from these, there are dozens of minor, practically marginal parties. There are some recent developments into moving from totally mono-ethnic parties to multi-ethnic ones. However, the efforts to go beyond the existent ethnocentrism, very often takes form of elite bargains, which can potentially block further

democratization. A handful of scholars acknowledged that deeply ethnically divided societies are more prone to conflict which makes more difficult for them to implement democratic procedures. Donald L. Horowitz (1993, p. 19) has accurately observed that: "Democracy has progressed furthest in those East European countries that have the fewest serious ethnic cleavages (Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland) and progressed more slowly or not at all in those that are deeply divided (Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and of course the former Yugoslavia). Adrian Karatnycky (2002, pp. 109-110) expressed a similar view: "Democracy has been significantly more successful in monotonic societies than in ethnically divided and multiethnic societies."

Party corruption is considered to be yet another factor that shapes the party competition in the region. People in the region perceive political parties as some of the most corrupt institutions. Although, almost all Western Balkan states have established laws on the financing of political parties, they experience serious deficiencies in the implementation of such legislation (Cohen and Lampe, 2011, p. 237). A survey conducted by the UNODC (2011) observed that a very high percentage of the population in the Western Balkans considers that political parties engage in some kind of corrupt practices (the lowest is reported in Macedonia – 21.6% and the highest in Bosnia - 68.8%). The result is the lack of public trust in the political system and distorted political competition, posing a threat to democracy in the region. It seems that the most problematic aspect of party

corruption in the Western Balkans is party campaign financing and a lack of actual transparency. Namely, in their struggle to win, party leaders are willing to spend as much money as possible for financing of their campaigns and are often temped to accept donations from questionable or undisclosed sources. At the same time, the citizens' awareness on the subject of party funding is very limited and also the external pressure on political parties to abide by the law. Some of the other methods that some of the Western Balkans elites have systematically used to constrain the political competition are: placing media under their control, changing electoral laws to their advantage, diverting state funds from the opposition parties, blocking the registration of rival political parties etc. All of these seriously undermine the emergence of responsible and transparent pluralism and consequently the prospects for democratic consolidation. As Blechinger (2002, p. 15) emphasizes: "democratic reforms and economic development are likely to fail if captured by corrupt parties. Therefore, the structure of parties is critical for improving democracy in developing and transitional countries."

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary and discussion

Since the fall of the communist regime in the end of the 1980s, all Eastern European countries have been striving to build democratic societies. As a part of this region, Western Balkan states moved also ahead along difficult and often troublesome path of reforms and democracy building. Yet, issues relating unresolved statehood, ethnic conflicts and economic crisis continue to dominate political life in the region. As a result, larger political interests are often prioritized over other considerations, including consolidation of democracy. And consolidation of democracy certainly demands a great deal. Above all, it demands an extraordinary commitment and continuous efforts, both from the political elites and the public. Therefore, raising doubt on whether mass public commitment and strategic choices of political leaders influence the advancement of democracy in the Western Balkans, I have taken the actor-based approach as theoretical perspective. Consequently, the aim of this thesis was to examine if mass political activism and robust political competition are important determinants for democratic consolidation in Central Eastern Europe, but particularly in the region of the Western Balkans. More

specifically, by employing a time-series cross-section statistical model on a dataset comprising 18 Central and Eastern European countries, I have statistically assessed the effects of citizens' political participation and party competition on the democracy levels in these two regions. However, the focus of my research interest was primarily on the Western Balkan states, and the CEE EU member states served just as a term of comparison.

Weak participation in politics by ordinary citizens in post-communist Europe is considered to be one of the main reasons for the prolonged democratic transition in these countries and peculiar practices of illiberal democracy in some of them (particularly the Western Balkan states). A between-regions comparison, however, revealed that the levels of almost all dimensions of political participation are significantly higher in the Western Balkans compared to ten CEE EU member states. Therefore, my main hypothesis with regard to political participation was that while low levels of citizens' participation leads to hollow or stagnant democracy in most democratic systems, higher levels of civic engagement is not necessarily an indication for better democracy in post-communist Europe. The empirical findings confirmed this line of reasoning. Namely, there is a strong negative and statistically significant correlation between all four types of political participation relevant for this study (voter turnout, party membership, signing petitions and attending demonstrations) and the levels of democracy when controlled for the Western Balkans. As these results contradict the conventional theories on

political participation and democracy, there is obviously an intermediate variable that accounts for this relationship. Hence, I argue that political participation in the countries of the Western Balkans is motivated primarily by the receipt of various political, social or economic benefits provided or promised by a certain political party or a political candidate. This clientelist linkage building between politicians and voters can take several forms, some among which are: direct vote-buying, employment in the public sector, illegitimate acquirement of tenders etc. Consequently, this clientelist-inspired political participation, rather than deepening and advancing the principles of representative democracy, undermines the democratic legitimacy and accountability. As Shefner (2012, p. 51) has noted: "Clientelism forces certain political behaviors that reinforce structured inequalities. It limits representation, excludes many and channels access to power. Clientelist participation fosters corruption because of its intrinsic ethos of exchange, and provides only limited social mobility. It deprioritizes values of equality in favor of satisfying material needs, and is generally correlated with lagging economic development." The exact mechanisms of the clientelism argument was investigated through a small-N analysis (SNA), where I have compared Macedonia and Slovenia as two ex-Yugoslav countries that represent two most different cases in terms of popular movements, clientelism and democratization process.

The literature suggests that advancement of economic and political development of a country can weaken political

clientelism. So far, many scholars confirmed the robust correlation between levels of economic development and political clientelism (see Hicken, 2011; Keefer, 2005; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007; Remmer, 2007; Wantchekon, 2003). Namely, as the socio-economic status of the individual increases, the demand for clientelism decreases. At the same time, the cost for providing clientelistic goods might exceed the electoral benefit (Hicken, 2011). On the other hand, as democracy becomes more mature and democratic principles more entrenched into the society, the possibilities for clientelism diminish (see Keefer, 2005; Keefer and Vlaicu, 2007). Therefore, I strongly believe that political and economic reforms in the Western Balkan countries would eradicate corrupt political practices and promote democratic political participation. This is certainly an interesting area of study and hopefully these observations would catalyze further research in this direction.

The progress towards full democratic consolidation depends also from the development of competitive party system. Hence, the relationship between political competition and the levels of democracy occupied the second part of my thesis. Compared to the CEE EU member states, party systems of the Western Balkan states seem to be less institutionalized, more volatile, less distinguishable along ideological stances, as well as fragmented and ethnically polarized. Competition in these two regions was analyzed with regard to several empirical sub-dimensions. However, the focus was on the input and

output side of political competition (Morlino, 2011, p. 205). That is, freedom for all political parties to compete with each other; and freedom in formation of government and choosing among different policy alternatives, respectively. As it was expected, the empirical data indicated that with the exception of government fractionalization, Western Balkan states score lower in all quantitative dimensions of political competition[43] compared to the rest of Central and Eastern Europe. Apparently, robust political competition represents supportive component of democratic development in post-communist Europe. The statistical test has basically confirmed this hypothesis. Namely, there is positive and statistically significant correlation between the levels of democracy in Central Eastern Europe and the indicators that operationalize the input and output side of political participation. The same positive relationship continues when controlled for the Western Balkan region. I have identified several possible reasons why the Western Balkan states were unsuccessful in developing more robust political competition even after more than two decades following the collapse of the communist regime. First, Western Balkan states failed to develop higher initial levels of political contestation. Namely, the collapse of the

[43] Six different dimensions of political competition were taken into consideration in this study. These are: opposition share, competitiveness of participation, opposition fractionalization, government fractionalization, legislature fractionalization and electoral success of smaller parties. However, as it was elaborated in Chapter 4, the main focus was on the first two dimensions because they evaluate most closely the input and output side of political competition.

communism in these countries (with the exception of Croatia) did not result in a replacement of the ruling elite. That is, the old communist elite survived and continued to play a central role in conducting the democratic transition. On the other hand, in the other post-communist countries in Europe (with the exception of Lithuania), the communist parties were either forced to exit power, or they have transformed themselves radically into moderate Social Democratic parties. Second, the electorate in almost all Western Balkan states is underpinned by a strong ethnic cleavage. Consequently, political parties make use of this division and organize themselves more readily around ethnic than other identities. Third, political parties in the Western Balkans are perceived as some of the most corrupt institutions. The result is the lack of public trust in the political system and distorted political competition.

Although a certain progress has been made in the political party development in the Western Balkans in the last few years, there are still many deficiencies in most of the party systems throughout region. It is therefore necessary to create strategies and implement additional measures in order to reinforce the competitive party system. Such strategies include moving beyond totally mono-ethnic parties, improving the legislation on the financing of political parties, strengthening transparency in political finance, clearly defining the scope of activities and authority of political parties, as well as party restructuring that will improve internal party democracy.

To sum up, democratization in the Western Balkan countries seems to be mainly elite-driven, as they still haven't developed sufficient levels of genuinely democratic mass participation capable to induce political institutions to be responsive and accountable to societal interests. Cohen and Lampe (2011, p. 494) come to similar conclusion by suggesting that: "One of the most important lessons of the Western Balkan case is that the pace of democratic consolidation is mainly attributable to the willingness of postconflict elites to work together in tackling the entrenched sources of authoritarian resilience." Thus, a more firm and concrete commitment is needed to stimulate participatory attitudes among the citizens of the region, as it represents one of the most critical dimensions of democratic consolidation. Alternatively, these countries face the danger of gradually regressing into forms of "soft dictatorship" or "liberalized authoritarian rule".

5.2. Ideas for future research: the interplay between political competition and citizens' participation

As it was previously elaborated, the countries that once made up the post-communist bloc in Europe varied considerably from each other with respect to their democratization path. While the CEE countries that have

already joined the European Union have established stable and durable democratic institutions and well-functioning market economies, the Western Balkan countries have failed to genuinely transform their economies and to institutionalize democratic pluralism. At the same time, these two blocs of countries differ with regard to the levels of distrust towards the major political institutions and consequently to the levels of political participation. The goal of this final section is to briefly explore the relationship between political competition and citizens' participation in post-communist Europe - an interesting area which hopefully will generate ideas for future research.

It has been argued that vibrant political competition in CEE has depressed the trust in political parties and stifled political participation by citizens. Ceka (2012, p. 2), for instance has demonstrated that: "Intense political competition and, in particular, vocal and critical opposition parties that criticize and expose government scandals do much to convince the average Eastern European that political parties are deeply corrupt institutions run by self-interested and power-hungry politicians." That, on the other hand, discourages citizens to be politically active. This causal link is analyzed in more details further bellow.

Several empirical studies contend that citizens in post-communist democracies are very distrustful towards political institutions in their countries and particularly toward political parties (see Catterberg and Moreno, 2005; Klingemann et al., 2006; Mishler and Rose, 1997, 2001). The

extent of political trust in new democracies is a sum of several different factors. The most salient one is the economic development and prosperity of the country (see Catterberg and Moreno, 2005; Kitschelt, 1992; Mishler and Rose, 1997). However, Ceka (2012, p. 6) points out that vigorous political competition tends to depress trust in political parties because "vocal and critical opposition parties that expose government misdoings do much to convince the average Eastern European that political parties are fundamentally corrupt institutions." It is indeed true that the economic transformation that occurred in post-communist Europe created many opportunities for rent-seeking behavior and corrupted practices among the politicians. And in the countries with robust political competition, the vigilant and critical opposition parties used the opportunity to expose the government abuse of state resources and corruption scandals. Consequently, this has lowered the levels of trust in political institutions among the ordinary citizens. On the other hand, countries that lacked powerful opposition forces with skills and resources to expose corrupted practices had more trustful citizens.

The second link of the causal mechanism is the relationship between trust in political parties and political participation. That is, if citizens believe that political parties are corrupt and politicians are involved in the business of rent-seeking and state capture, then they will be discouraged to politically participate, i.e. to vote or become party members. However, there is also evidence that the post-

communist voters switch from one party to another and even vote for extremist, i.e. unorthodox parties, only to punish incompetent and/or corrupt incumbents. Pop-Eleches (2010) calls this 'protest voting'. Ceka's (2012) findings support this argument to a certain extent. He empirically demonstrates that "distrustful voters are less likely to vote than those who trust parties, but some of them present an electoral opportunity for different parties." Yet, when controlling for all relevant factors, his findings suggest that the same distrustful voters are very unlikely to go to work for a party. Nonetheless, this holds only for those who are not intense partisans. For individuals who have strong party identification, vigorous political competition has no effect on their trust in political parties and consequently on their political activism.

Similarly to this, I would argue that in countries where many segments of the society are politicized and large percent of the population has strong party identification, political participation tends to be higher. However, this is not a genuine political participation, but rather a clientelistic-inspired one. As it was previously elaborated, a clientelistic behavior between parties and voters is a feature that characterizes the Western Balkan states. Therefore, in these countries, increased political competition would most likely depress political participation, but not so much as a result of the decreased trust in political parties, but rather due to the presence of a strong opposition capable to pressure the incumbents to abandon these practices. Subsequently, once the clientelist networks that compel

citizens to participate cease to exist, they might be less motivated to do so.

Further exploration is needed in order to provide support for the hypotheses outlined above. However, being a whole new area of study, this topic falls out of the scope of this thesis and no further exploration will be pursued here. The main goal of this final section was to present some new concepts and catalyze ideas for future research.

Appendix 1

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Coding of parties by elections (1990-1999)

Country	Year	Incumbent government	Old/new regime
10 New EU Members			
Bulgaria	1990	BSP	Old
	1991	SDS	New
	1994	BSP	Old
	1997	ODS	New
Czech Republic	1990	OF	New
	1992	ODS + KDU-CSL + ODA	New
	1996	ODS + KDU-CSL + ODA	New
	1998	CSSD	-
Estonia	1992	I + M + ERSP	New
	1995	KMU + EK	New
	1999	I + ER + RM	New
Hungary	1990	MDF + FKGP + KDNP	New
	1994	MSZP + SZDSZ	Old
	1998	Fidesz + FKGP + MDF	New
Latvia	1990	LTF	New
	1993	LC + TPA	New
	1995	TB/LNNK + LC + LZS/KDS/LDP	New
	1998	TP + LC + LNNK + JP	New
Lithuania	1992	LDDP	Old
	1996	TS + LKD + LCS	New

Poland	1991	UD + WAK + KLD + PPG	New
	1993	SLD + PSL	Old
	1997	AWS	New
Romania	1992	FDSN/PDSR	Old
	1996	CDR + USD + UDMR	New
Slovakia	1992	HZDS + SNS	-
	1994	HZDS + ZRS + SNS	-
	1998	SDK + SDL + SMK + SOP	New
Slovenia	1992	LDS + SKD	Old
	1996	LDS + SLS	Old
Western Balkans			
Albania	1991	PPSh	Old
	1992	PDS	New
	1996	PDS	New
	1997	PSS	Old
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1996	SDA + SDS + HDZ	Old
	1998	KCDBiH + KS + HDZBiH	Old
Croatia	1992	HDZ	New
	1995	HDZ	New
Macedonia	1994	SDSM + LP + PDP	Old
	1998	VMRO-DPMNE + DA + DPA	New
Serbia	1992	SPS	Old
	1993	SPS	Old
	1997	SPS + YUL + ND	Old

Note: Abbreviations are the party's initials in its native language. Full names of parties can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 2**: State of democracy and market economy, by country (2012)**

Country	State of democracy	State of market economy	Status index	Rank
10 New EU Members	***9.08***	***8.63***	***8.86***	***8.50***
Bulgaria	8.65	7.93	8.29	14
Czech Republic	9.65	9.57	9.61	1
Estonia	9.55	9.00	9.28	5
Hungary	8.35	8.61	8.48	12
Latvia	8.80	7.82	8.31	13
Lithuania	9.35	8.71	9.03	7
Poland	9.20	8.89	9.05	6
Romania	8.55	7.79	8.17	16
Slovakia	9.00	8.75	8.88	8
Slovenia	9.65	9.25	9.45	3
Western Balkans	***7.54***	***7.08***	***7.31***	***26.20***
Albania	7.25	6.79	7.02	31
Bosnia and Herzegovina	6.40	6.43	6.41	39
Croatia	8.40	8.11	8.25	15
Macedonia	7.60	7.11	7.35	25
Serbia	8.05	6.96	7.51	21

Note: The Status Index ranks the countries according to the state of their democracy and market economy. Best score = 10, worst score = 1.

Source: Bertelsmann Transformation Index (Donner et al., 2012)

Table 3**: State of democracy dimensions, by country (2012)**

Country	Stateness	Political participation	Rule of law	Institutional stability	Political and social integration
10 New EU Members	**9.7**	**9.5**	**8.9**	**9.3**	**8.1**
Bulgaria	10.0	9.0	8.5	8.5	7.3
Czech Republic	10.0	10.0	9.3	10.0	9.0
Estonia	9.5	9.8	9.8	10.0	8.8
Hungary	9.8	9.0	7.8	7.5	7.8
Latvia	9.5	9.5	8.5	9.5	7.0
Lithuania	9.4	9.8	9.0	10.0	8.0
Poland	9.5	9.8	9.3	9.5	8.0
Romania	9.5	9.0	8.3	8.5	7.5
Slovakia	9.8	9.5	8.5	9.0	8.3
Slovenia	9.8	9.8	9.5	10.0	9.3
Western Balkans	**8.6**	**8.0**	**6.9**	**7.5**	**6.8**
Albania	8.8	7.5	6.0	7.5	6.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	6.8	7.5	6.8	5.5	5.5
Croatia	9.3	8.8	7.8	8.5	7.8
Macedonia	8.8	7.8	6.8	8.0	6.8
Serbia	9.3	8.5	7.0	8.0	7.5

Note: Best score = 10, worst score = 1.

Source: Bertelsmann Transformation Index (Donner et al., 2012)

Table 4: **NGO Sustainability Index Scores, by country (1997-2011)**

Country	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
10 New EU Members	**3.2**	**3.0**	**2.9**	**2.8**	**2.7**	**2.7**	**2.7**	**2.8**	**2.9**	**2.8**	**2.8**	**2.8**	**2.8**	**2.8**	**2.9**
Bulgaria	4.0	3.6	4.0	3.7	3.6	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.4
Czech Republic	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7
Estonia	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.4	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Hungary	2.3	1.6	2.0	2.3	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	N/A
Latvia	3.6	4.2	N/A	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7
Lithuania	4.0	3.0	2.9	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.8
Poland	1.8	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2
Romania	3.6	3.8	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Slovakia	2.8	2.8	2.1	1.9	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.7
Slovenia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.4	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.7
Western Balkans	**4.6**	**4.8**	**4.9**	**4.6**	**4.2**	**4.1**	**3.9**	**3.9**	**3.8**	**3.8**	**3.8**	**3.7**	**3.7**	**3.7**	**3.8**
Albania	4.4	4.2	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.3	4.1	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.9
Bosnia	N/A	5.6	5.2	4.9	4.5	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7
Croatia	4.6	4.4	4.7	4.3	3.8	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.2
Macedonia	4.4	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.1	4.0	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.7
Serbia	4.8	5.4	5.4	4.5	4.1	4.1	4.0	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.3

Note: NGO – non-governmental organization; N/A – not available. Best score=1, worst score=7
Source: USAID (2012)

Table 5: **Average political participation (1994-2009), by country (in percent)**

	Institutional political participation		Non-institutional political participation			Illegal political participation	
Country	**Voter (VAP) Turnout**	**Party members.**	**Signing a petition**	**Joining in boycotts**	**Attending peaceful demonst.**	**Joining unofficial strikes**	**Occupy. buildings or factories**
10 New EU Members	***58***	***3***	***24***	***5***	***12***	***3***	***1***
Bulgaria	71	5	10	3	12	4	3
Czech Republic	70	5	39	8	17	7	1
Estonia	49	2	19	3	13	2	0
Hungary	53	2	19	3	6	1	0
Latvia	52	2	22	5	21	2	0
Lithuania	41	3	23	4	13	2	1
Poland	48	1	21	5	10	4	2
Romania	61	5	12	2	12	3	1
Slovakia	71	5	44	6	11	3	1
Slovenia	69	4	30	7	11	4	1
Western Balkans	***64***	***14***	***28***	***10***	***14***	***4***	***1***
Albania	70	20	24	9	19	2	1
Bosnia & Herzegovina	49	16	23	7	8	4	1
Croatia	74	7	42	7	8	5	1
Macedonia	63	15	27	15	17	6	3
Serbia	64	11	23	13	17	5	1

Note: The percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

Source: EVS (2011) and WVS (2009)

Table 6: **Pooled time-series cross-national regression analysis on the impact of political participation on levels of democracy**

Dependent variable: Level of Democracy (fh_ipolity2)	**Voter (VAP) Turnout (Model 1a)**	**Political Party Membership (Model 1b)**	**Signing Petitions (Model 1c)**	**Attending Peaceful Demonstr. (Model 1d)**
Voter (VAP) Turnout	0.006 (0.01)	-	-	-
Voter (VAP) Turnout – WB	-0.093*** (0.02)	-	-	-
Political Party Membership	-	0.043* (0.02)	-	-
Political Party Membership – WB	-	-0.081*** (0.03)	-	-
Signing Petitions	-	-	0.006 (0.00)	-
Signing Petitions – WB	-	-	-0.037*** (0.01)	-
Attending Peaceful Demonstrations	-	-	-	0.014* (0.01)
Attending Peaceful Demonstrations – WB	-	-	-	-0.042*** (0.01)
GDP p.c., PPP (thousands of USD)	-0.026 (0.02)	0.020* (0.01)	0.016 (0.01)	0.024** (0.01)
Education	-0.079 (0.08)	-0.054 (0.04)	-0.064 (0.04)	-0.071* (0.04)
Trade openness	-0.061 (0.23)	-0.003 (0.12)	-0.032 (0.12)	-0.060 (0.12)

Ethnic fractionalization	0.252 (0.93)	0.075 (0.42)	0.068 (0.42)	-0.181 (0.43)
Religious fractionalization	-0.637 (1.01)	-0.175 (0.47)	-0.152 (0.47)	-0.034 (0.46)
Political stability & absence of violence	0.680** (0.29)	0.106 (0.13)	-0.140 (0.14)	-0.094 (0.13)
Western Balkan dummy	1.182*** (0.38)	0.457** (0.22)	0.219 (0.21)	0.357* (0.20)
Constant	1.830 (1.38)	0.991** (0.46)	1.144** (0.45)	1.070** (0.45)
Adjusted R-squared	0.9369	0.9473	0.9468	0.9473
Number of observations	51	172	172	172

*Note: The sample includes 18 Eastern European countries for the period 1994-2009. These are: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. The dependent variable is the level of democracy. The method of estimation is pooled-OLS with a constant term. The table reports the b-values on the coefficients and the standard errors (in parentheses). Appendix 2 gives detailed variable definitions and sources. (*Statistically significant at p<.1; ** Statistically significant at p<.05; *** Statistically significant at p<.01).*

Table 7: **Average political competition (1992-2009), by country**

Country	Opposition share (%)	Effective competition (ordinal)	Electoral success of smaller parties (%)	Legislature fractional. (P)	Government fractional. (P)	Opposition fractional. (P)
10 New EU Members	***44.52***	***4.3***	***60.27***	***0.75***	***0.42***	***0.59***
Bulgaria	40.35	3.5	53.15	0.66	0.25	0.52
Czech Republic	49.93	4.4	64.14	0.72	0.32	0.53
Estonia	49.56	3.6	69.51	0.80	0.47	0.66
Hungary	41.42	5	58.47	0.63	0.30	0.37
Latvia	45.89	4	68.22	0.79	0.55	0.60
Lithuania	39.46	5	66.46	0.74	0.42	0.67
Poland	46.21	4.4	55.60	0.73	0.39	0.59
Romania	50.82	3.8	53.78	0.76	0.34	0.68
Slovakia	43.18	3.9	58.06	0.79	0.57	0.60
Slovenia	38.36	5	55.26	0.82	0.58	0.71
Western Balkans	***36.78***	***3.5***	***47.24***	***0.71***	***0.46***	***0.54***
Albania	31.22	3.7	44.66	0.57	0.26	0.35
Bosnia & Herzegovina	24.29	/	53.12	0.88	0.76	0.78
Croatia	43.97	3.4	44.93	0.68	0.22	0.58
Macedonia	26.03	4	46.26	0.70	0.53	0.44
Serbia	58.38	2.9	52.02	0.70	0.55	0.56

Note: P denotes probability

Source: Opposition share, Legislature fractionalization, Government fractionalization, Opposition fractionalization – Database of Political Institutions (Keefer, 2012); Effective competition – (Marshall et al., 2012a); Electoral success of smaller parties – Vanhanen (2011)

Table 8**: Pooled time-series cross-national regression analysis on the impact of political competition on levels of democracy**

Dependent variable: Level of Democracy (fh_ipolity2)	**Opposition share (Model 2a)**	**Effective competition (Model 2b)**	**Electoral success of smaller parties (Model 2c)**	**Legislature fractional. (Model 2d)**	**Government fractional. (Model 2e)**	**Opposition fractional. (Model 2f)**
Opposition share	0.797** (0.38)	-	-	-	-	-
Opposition share – WB	0.990 (0.88)	-	-	-	-	-
Effective competition	-	0.369*** (0.08)	-	-	-	-
Effective competition – WB	-	0.438*** (0.13)	-	-	-	-
Electoral success of smaller parties	-	-	0.015*** (0.00)	-	-	-
Electoral success of smaller parties – WB	-	-	-0.002 (0.01)	-	-	-
Legislature fractionalization	-	-	-	0.087 (0.47)	-	-
Legislature fractionalization – WB	-	-	-	2.421** (1.12)	-	-
Government fractionalization	-	-	-	-	-0.075 (0.18)	-
Government fractionalization – WB	-	-	-	-	1.363*** (0.44)	-

Opposition fractionalization	-	-	-	-	-	0.117 (0.24)
Opposition fractionalization – WB	-	-	-	-	-	-1.31* (0.64)
GDP p.c., PPP (thousands of USD)	0.15 (0.01)	0.025** (0.01)	0.027** (0.01)	0.020* (0.01)	0.022* (0.01)	0.026** (0.01)
Education	-0.030 (0.04)	-0.096** (0.04)	-0.096** (0.04)	-0.082** (0.04)	-0.090** (0.04)	0.016 (0.05)
Trade openness	0.004 (0.12)	-0.194* (0.10)	-0.132 (0.11)	-0.148 (0.12)	-0.169 (0.12)	-0.060 (0.12)
Ethnic fractionalization	0.088 (0.42)	0.775* (0.40)	-0.458 (0.45)	-0.296 (0.46)	-0.183 (0.44)	0.144 (0.44)
Religious fractionalization	-0.215 (0.46)	0.313 (0.42)	0.166 (0.46)	0.262 (0.49)	0.219 (0.47)	-0.401 (0.48)
Political stability & absence of violence	0.099 (0.14)	-0.073 (0.12)	-0.084 (0.13)	-0.052 (0.15)	0.050 (0.15)	0.158 (0.16)
Western Balkan dummy	0.457 (0.39)	-1.780*** (0.52)	-0.019 (0.49)	-1.818** (0.80)	-0.560*** (0.21)	0.400 (0.35)
Constant	0.860* (0.48)	0.604 (0.51)	1.213** (0.48)	1.417** (0.61)	1.564*** (0.48)	1.643*** (0.55)
Adjusted R-squared	0.9236	0.9565	0.9500	0.9275	0.9250	0.8905
Number of observations	171	174	176	160	162	159

*Note: The sample includes 18 Eastern European countries for the period 1992-2009. These are: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Bosnia is not taken into consideration in the second model as there is missing data for the key independent variable (see Chapter 4, Section 4.5.2 for more information). The dependent variable is the level of democracy. The method of estimation is pooled-OLS with a constant term. The table reports the b-values on the coefficients and the standard errors (in parentheses). The Appendix 2 gives detailed variable definitions and sources. (*Statistically significant at p<.1; ** Statistically significant at p<.05; *** Statistically significant at p<.01).*

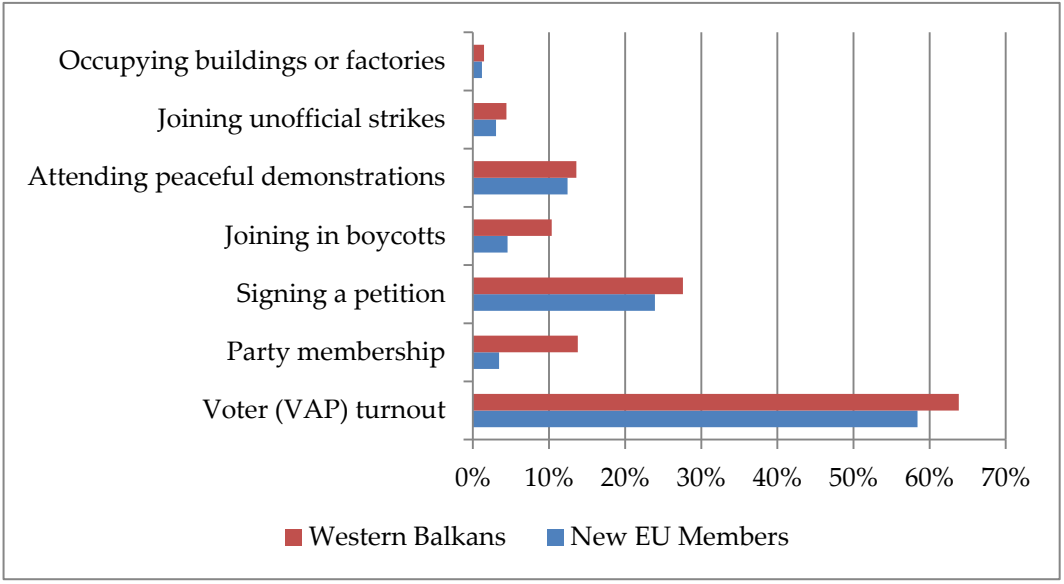
Table 9: **Robustness check with adjusted Freedom House/Polity2 democracy index as a dependent variable (pooled time-series cross-national regression analysis on the impact of political competition on levels of democracy)**

Dependent variable: Level of Democracy (fh_ipolity2_adjusted)	Opposition share (Model 3a)	Effective competition (Model 3b)	Electoral success of smaller parties (Model 3c)	Legislature fractional. (Model 3d)	Government fractional. (Model 3e)	Opposition fractional. (Model 3f)
Opposition share	0.721* (0.37)	-	-	-	-	-
Opposition share – WB	1.136 (0.87)	-	-	-	-	-
Effective competition	-	0.274*** (0.07)	-	-	-	-
Effective competition – WB	-	0.513*** (0.13)	-	-	-	-
Electoral success of smaller parties	-	-	0.015*** (0.00)	-	-	-
Electoral success of smaller parties – WB	-	-	-0.002 (0.01)	-	-	-
Legislature fractionalization	-	-	-	0.060 (0.46)	-	-
Legislature fractionalization – WB	-	-	-	3.062*** (1.09)	-	-
Government fractionalization	-	-	-	-	-0.108 (0.18)	-
Government fractionalization – WB	-	-	-	-	1.449*** (0.43)	-

Opposition fractionalization	-	-	-	-	-	0.033 (0.24)
Opposition fractionalization – WB	-	-	-	-	-	-0.736 (0.63)
GDP p.c., PPP (thousands of USD)	0.011 (0.01)	0.024** (0.01)	0.023** (0.01)	0.017 (0.01)	0.020* (0.01)	0.021* (0.01)
Education	-0.036 (0.04)	-0.105*** (0.04)	-0.101** (0.04)	-0.089** (0.04)	-0.097** (0.04)	0.001 (0.05)
Trade openness	-0.033 (0.11)	-0.221** (0.10)	-0.168 (0.11)	-0.162 (0.12)	-0.208* (0.11)	-0.111 (0.11)
Ethnic fractionalization	-0.093 (0.41)	0.483 (0.39)	-0.614 (0.44)	-0.472 (0.45)	-0.340 (0.43)	0.002 (0.43)
Religious fractionalization	-0.017 (0.45)	0.481 (0.42)	0.364 (0.45)	0.417 (0.48)	0.416 (0.46)	-0.146 (0.48)
Political stability & absence of violence	0.012 (0.14)	-0.188 (0.12)	-0.175 (0.13)	-0.137 (0.14)	-0.046 (0.14)	-0.042 (0.15)
Western Balkan dummy	-0.573 (0.39)	-2.109*** (0.52)	-0.064 (0.48)	-2.295*** (0.78)	-0.632*** (0.20)	0.156 (0.34)
Constant	0.900* (0.46)	0.845* (0.51)	1.209** (0.47)	1.475** (0.60)	1.590*** (0.47)	1.682*** (0.55)
Adjusted R-squared	0.9254	0.9580	0.9498	0.9252	0.9276	0.8862
Number of observations	171	174	176	160	162	159

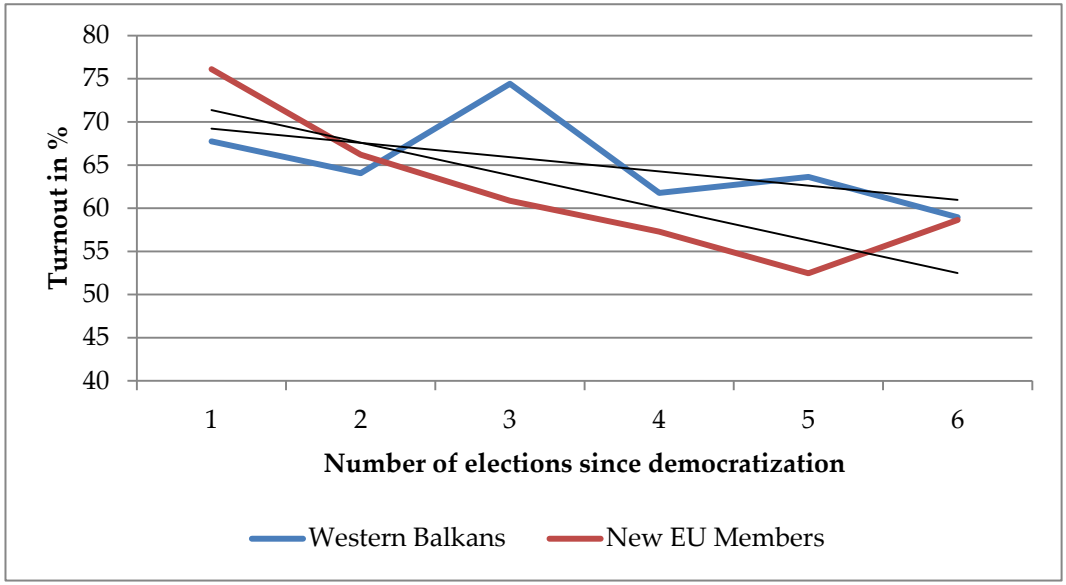
*Note: the sample includes 18 Eastern European countries for the period 1992-2009. These are: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Bosnia is not taken into consideration in the second model as there is missing data for the key independent variable (see Chapter 4, Section 4.5.2 for more information). The dependent variable is the level of democracy. The method of estimation is pooled-OLS with a constant term. The table reports the b-values on the coefficients and the standard errors (in parentheses). The Appendix 2 gives detailed variable definitions and sources. (*Statistically significant at p<.1; ** Statistically significant at p<.05; *** Statistically significant at p<.01).*

Figure 1: **Average political participation (1994-2009)**



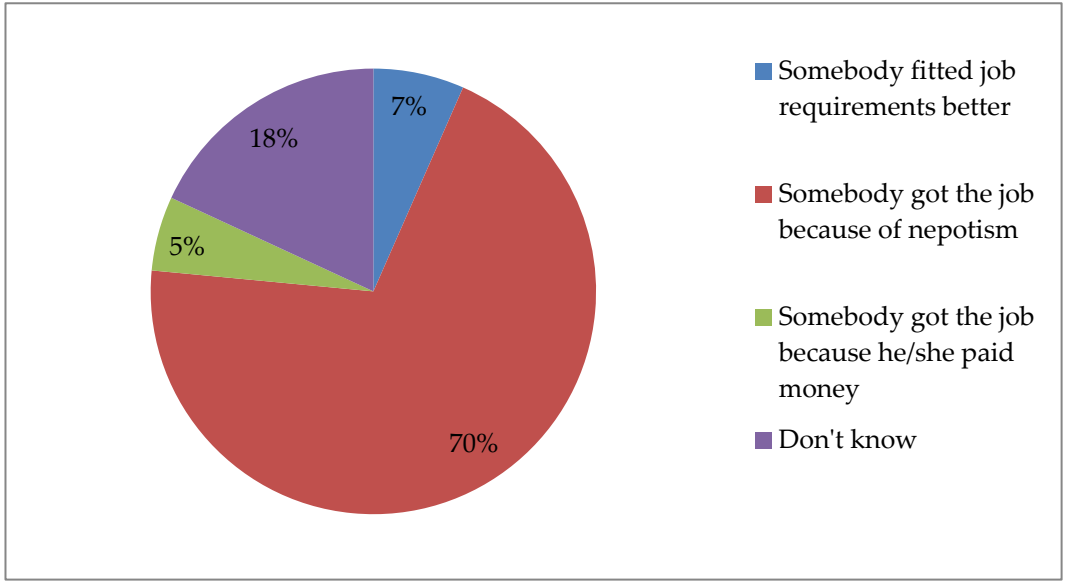
Source: EVS (2011); IIDEA (2011); WVS (2009)

Figure 2: **Voter (VAP) turnout in parliamentary elections (1990-2009)**



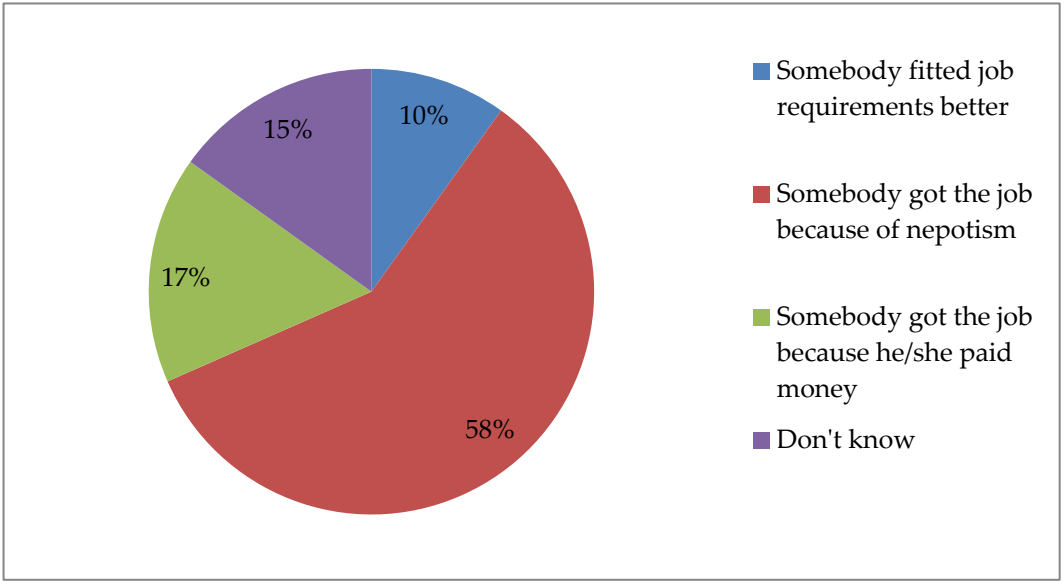
Note: Election number 6 was held only in limited number of countries. Thus, the apparent reversal of the decreasing trend in the new EU member states is to some extent misleading.
Source: IIDEA (2011)

Figure 3: **Percentage distribution of adult population who applied for a job in the public sector in the three years prior to the survey and were not hired according to the perceived reason for not being recruited, Macedonia (2010)**



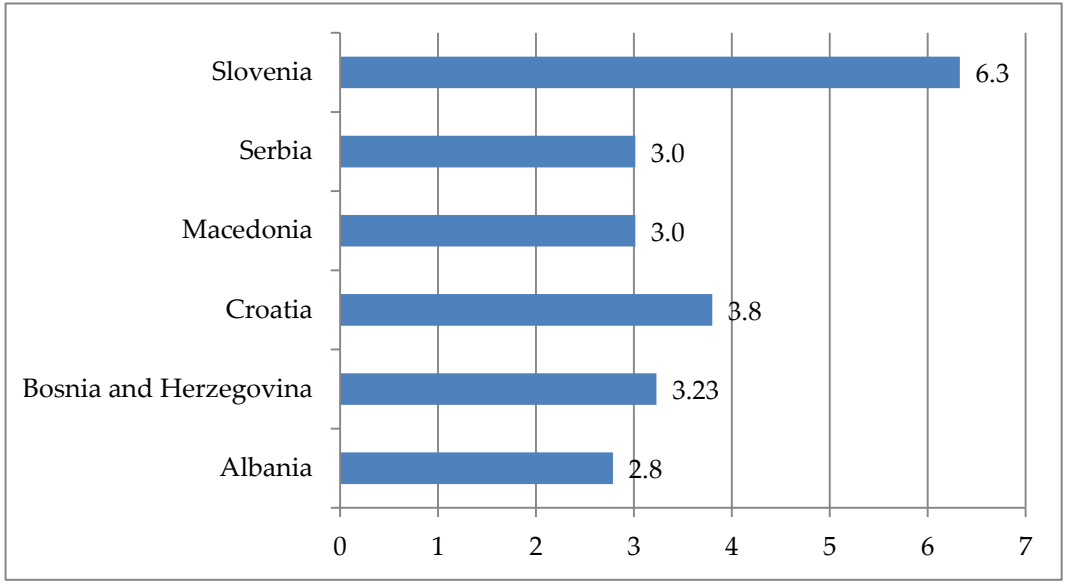
Note: Data refer to adult population (aged 18-64) who applied for a job in the public service in the 3 years prior to the survey and who were not recruited.
Source: UNODC (2011)

Figure 4: **Percentage distribution of adult population who applied for a job in the public sector in the three years prior to the survey and were not hired according to the perceived reason for not being recruited, Western Balkan region (2010)**



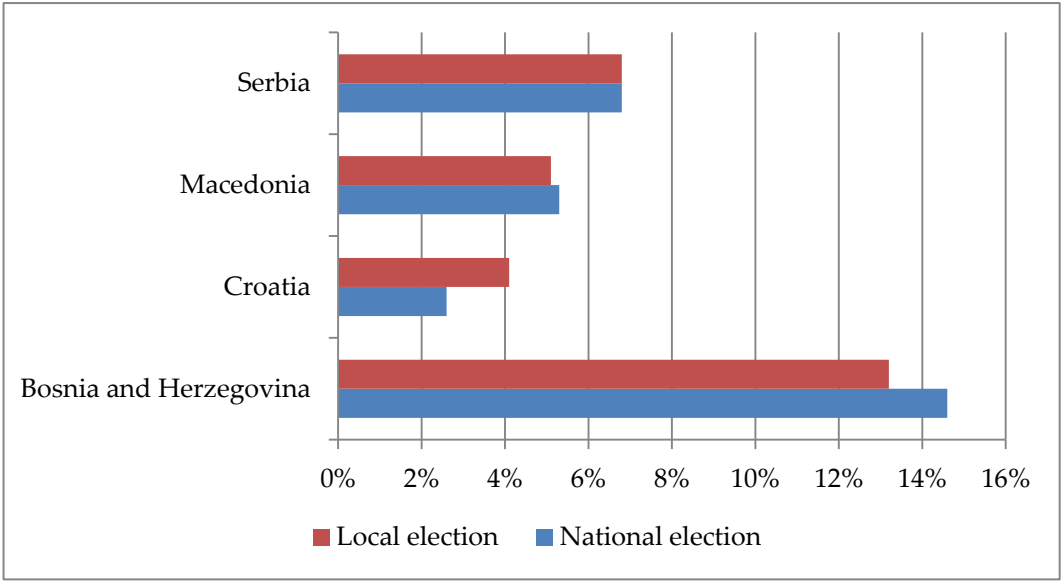
Note: Data refers to adult population (aged 18-64) who applied for a job in the public service in the three years prior to the survey and who were not recruited.
Source: UNODC (2011)

Figure 5: **Corruption Perception Index, Western Balkan region (2003-2012)**



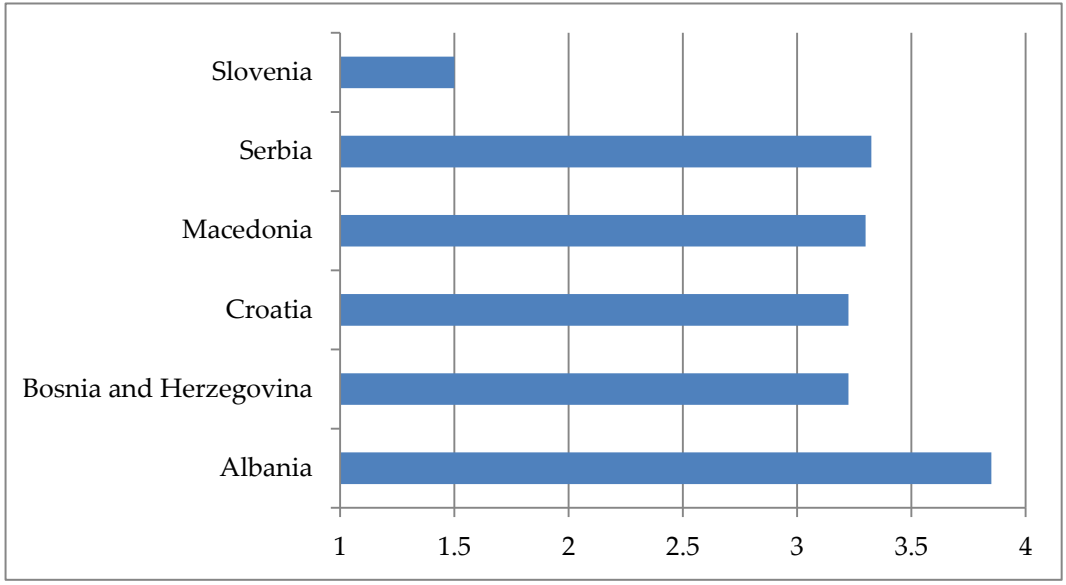
Note: A country/territory's score indicates the perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0 - 10, where 0 means that a country is perceived as highly corrupt and 10 means that a country is perceived as very clean.
Source: Transparency International (2013)

Figure 6: **Percentage of adult population asked to vote for a candidate at last national and local elections in exchange for money, goods or a local favor, by country/area (2010)**



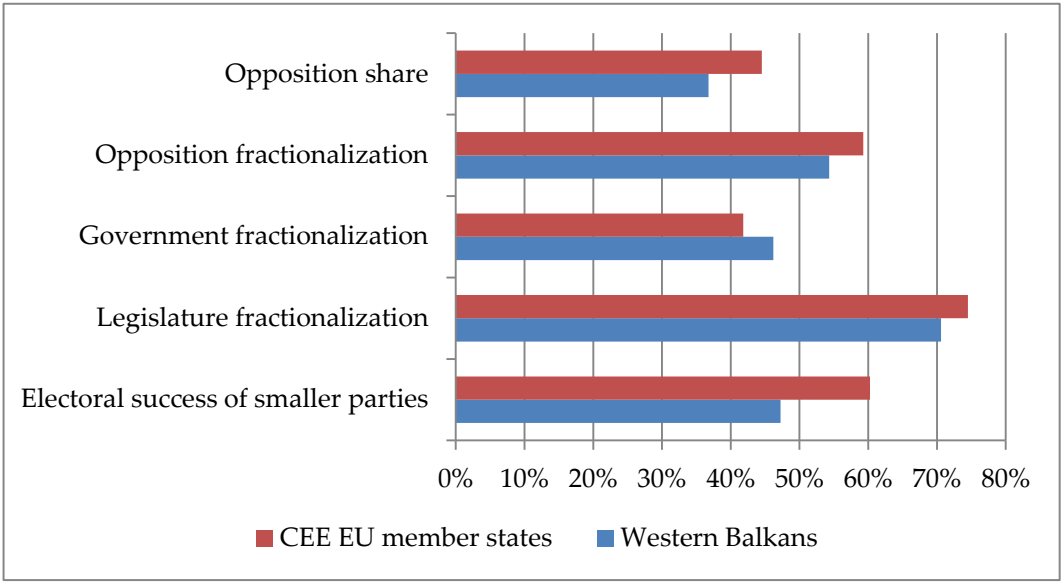
Note: Data do not include Albania since the topic was not covered in the Albania survey.
Source: UNODC (2011)

Figure 7: **Electoral process ratings, Western Balkan region (2003-2012)**



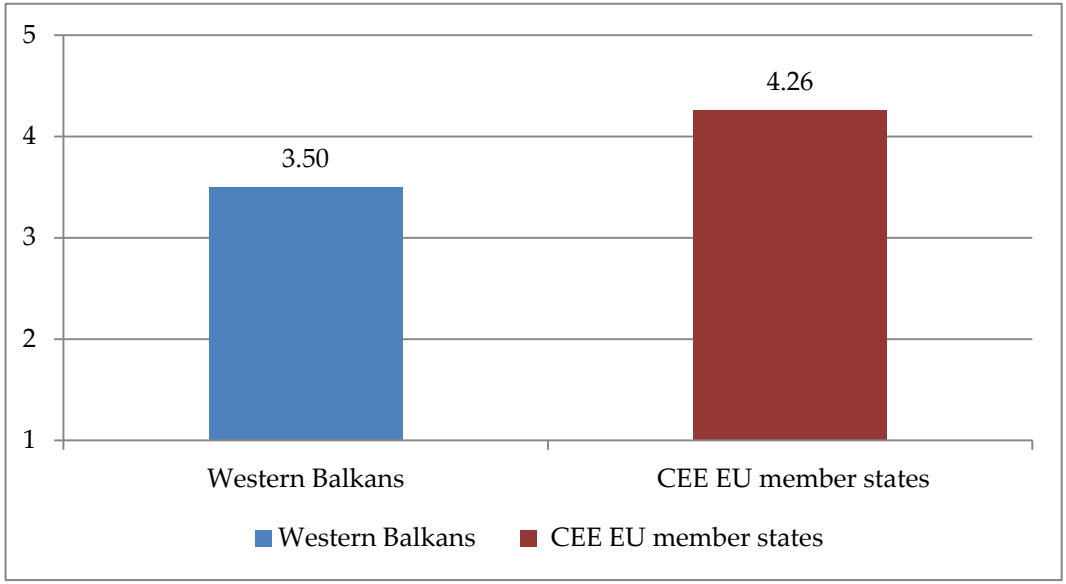
Note: Best score = 1, worst score = 7.
Source: Freedom House (2013), Nations in Transit Ratings

Figure 8: **Average political competition (1992-2009)**



Note: While the variable Electoral success of smaller parties is given in percentages, variables Legislature fractionalization, Government fractionalization and Opposition fractionalization are calculated as probabilities. However, in order to ensure better comparability, these probabilities are converted into percentages. The variable Opposition share is calculated by the author as a ratio and converted into percentage (see Appendix 2 for more details).
Source: Database of political institutions (Keefer, 2012)

Figure 9: **Average effective competition (1992-2009)**



Note: The average effective competition in the Western Balkans is calculated as an average of only four Western Balkan states: Albania, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia. That is because Polity doesn't provide a score for the cases of so-called foreign 'interruption', which is the case with Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Source: Marshall et al. (2012a)

Appendix 2

Variables definitions and sources

- Attending peaceful demonstrations: percentage of respondents who have engaged in a political action by attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations. Source: EVS (2011); WVS (2009)
- CSO Sustainability Index: The Sustainability Index reports on the strength and overall viability of CSO sectors. It analyzes and assigns scores to seven interrelated dimensions: legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, infrastructure, and public image. These scores are averaged to produce an overall sustainability score. The Index ranges from 1 (best) to 7 (worst). Source: USAID (2012)
- Education: Average years of total schooling in the population aged 25 and above. Source: Barro and Lee (2010)
- Effective competition (originally named by Polity IV 'competitiveness of participation): "extent to which alternative preferences for policy and leadership can be pursued in the political arena. [It] is coded on a five category scale: repressed: no significant oppositional activity is permitted outside the ranks of the regime and ruling party; suppressed: some organized, political competition occurs outside

government, without serious factionalism; but the regime systematically and sharply limits its form, extent, or both in ways that exclude substantial groups from participation; factional: polities with parochial or ethnic-based political factions that regularly compete for political influence in order to promote particularist agendas and favor group members to the detriment of common, secular, or cross-cutting agendas; transitional: transitional arrangements are accommodative of competing, parochial interests but have not fully linked parochial with broader, general interests. Sectarian and secular interest groups coexist; competitive: there are relatively stable and enduring, secular political groups which regularly compete for political influence at the national level; ruling groups and coalitions regularly, voluntarily transfer central power to competing groups." Source: (Marshall et al., 2012a)

- Electoral success of smaller parties: percentage of votes gained by the smaller parties in parliamentary elections. "The variable is calculated by subtracting from 100 the percentage of votes won by the largest party (the party which wins most votes) in parliamentary elections. The variable thus theoretically ranges from 0 (only one party received 100 % of votes) to 100 (each voter cast a vote for a distinct party)." Source: Vanhanen (2011)
- Ethnic/religious fractionalization: Index of ethnic/linguistic heterogeneity. It measures "the

probability that two randomly selected individuals from a given country will not belong to the same ethnic/religious group." Source: Alesina et al. (2003)

- GDP p.c., PPP: Real GDP per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP). Source: The World Bank (2010)
- Government fractionalization: "probability that two deputies picked at random from the government parties will be of different parties." Source: Database of Political Institutions (Keefer, 2012)
- Legislature fractionalization: "probability that two deputies picked at random from the legislature will be of different parties." Source: Database of Political Institutions (Keefer, 2012)
- Level of democracy: Freedom House/Imputed Polity is a measure of democracy composed by two existing measures of democracy: Freedom House and Polity. Both measures are first transformed to a scale 0-10 and then averaged into a new measure. The imputed values for countries where data on Polity is missing are obtained by regressing Polity on the average Freedom House measure. Source: Teorell et al. (2011)
- Opposition fractionalization: "probability that two deputies picked at random from among the opposition parties will be of different parties." Source: Database of Political Institutions (Keefer, 2012)
- Opposition share: ratio between the total number of seats held by all opposition parties and the total

number of seats held by all government parties. Source: Database of Political Institutions (Keefer, 2012)

- Political party membership: percentage of the respondents who are members of a political party. Source: EVS (2011); WVS (2009)
- Political stability & absence of violence: Index which measures the "perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including domestic violence and terrorism." The index ranges from about -2.5 to 2.5, with higher values corresponding to more political stability. Source: The World Bank (2010)
- Signing petitions: percentage of respondents who have engaged in a political action by signing a petition. Source: EVS (2011); WVS (2009)
- Trade openness: Dummy variable indicating trade openness based on five different indicators for specific trade-related policies. A country was classified as closed if it displayed at least one of the following characteristics: (1) Average tariff rates of 40% or more; (2) Non-tariff barriers covering 40% or more of trade; (3) A black market exchange rate that is depreciated by 20% or more relative to the official exchange rate, on average, during the 1970s or 1980s; (4) A state monopoly on major export; (5) A socialist economic system. Source: Wacziarg and Welch (2008)

- Bertelsmann Transformation Index: Status Index which ranks the countries according to the state of their democracy and market economy, i.e. political and economic transformation, respectively. State of democracy is constructed upon evaluation of five criteria: Stateness, Political Participation, Rule of Law, Stability of Democratic Institutions and Political and Social Integration. State of market economy is constructed upon evaluation of seven criteria: Level of Socioeconomic Development, Organization of the Market and Competition, Currency and Price Stability, Private Property, Welfare Regime, Economic Performance and Sustainability. The Index ranges from 10 (best) to 1 (worst) Source: Donner et al. (2012)
- Voter (VAP) turnout: percentage of the voting age population that actually voted. Source: IIDEA (2011)

Political parties' abbreviations

Albania

- Party of Labour of Albania (Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë, PPSh)
- Democratic Party of Albania (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë, PDS)
- Socialist Party of Albania (Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë, PSS)

Bosnia

- Party of Democratic Action (Stranka Demokratske Akcije, SDA)
- Serbian Democratic Party (Serbian: Српска демократска Странка/Srpska Demokratska Stranka, СДС/SDS)
- Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, HDZ)
- Coalition for a Single and Democratic Bosnia (Koalicija za cjelovitu I demokratsku BiH, KCDBiH)
- Sloga Coalition (Koalicija Sloga, KS)
- Croatian Democratic Union of BiH (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica BIH, HDZBiH)

Bulgaria

- Bulgarian Socialist Party (Българска социалистическа партия/Bulgarska sotsialisticheska partiya, БСП/BSP)
- Union of Democratic Forces (Съюз на демократичните сили/Sayuz na demokratichnite sili, СДС/SDS)
- United Democratic Forces (Обединени демократични сили/Obedineni demokratichni sili, ОДС/ODS)

Croatia

- Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, HDZ)

Czech Republic

- Civic Forum (Občanské fórum, OF)
- Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana, ODS)
- Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová, KDU–CSL)
- Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická aliance, ODA)
- Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická, CSSD)

Estonia

- Bloc "Fatherland"(Valimisliit "Isamaa", I)
- Bloc "Moderates" (Valimisliit "Mõõdukad", M)
- Estonian National Independence Party (Eesti Rahvusliku Sõltumatuse Partei, ERSP)
- Bloc "Coalition Party and Country People's Union" (Valimisliit "Koonderakond ja Maarahva Ühendus", KMU)
- Estonian Centre Party (Eesti Keskerakond, EK)
- Pro Patria Union (Estonian: Isamaaliit, I)
- Estonian Reform Party (Eesti Reformierakond, ER)
- People's Party Moderates (Rahvaerakond Mõõdukad, RM)

Hungary

- Hungarian Democratic Forum (Magyar Demokrata Fórum, MDF)
- Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party (Független Kisgazda, Földmunkás és Polgári Párt, FKGP)
- Christian Democratic People's Party (Hungarian: Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt, KDNP)
- Hungarian Socialist Party (Hungarian: Magyar Szocialista Párt, MSZP)
- Alliance of Free Democrats – Hungarian Liberal Party (Hungarian: Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége – a Magyar Liberális Párt, SZDSZ)

- Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség, Fidesz)

Latvia

- Popular Front of Latvia (Latvijas Tautas Fronte, LTF)
- Latvian Way (Latvijas Ceļš, LC)
- Political Union of Economists (Tautsaimnieku politiskā apvienība, TPA)
- For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK (Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK, TB/LNNK)
- Latvian Farmers' Union (Latvijas Zemnieku savienība, LZS)
- Christian Democratic Union (Kristīgi demokrātiskā savienība, KDS)
- Latgalian Labour Party (LDP)
- People's Party (Tautas partija, TP)
- New Party (Jaunā Partija, JP)

Lithuania

- Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania (Lietuvos demokratinė darbo partija, LDDP)
- Homeland Union (Tėvynės sąjunga, TS)
- Lithuanian Christian Democrats (Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai, LKD)
- Centre Union of Lithuania (Lietuvos centro sąjunga, LCS)

Macedonia

- Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (Социјалдемократскиот сојуз на Македонија/ Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija, СДСМ/SDSM)
- Liberal Party (Либерална партија, ЛП/LP)
- Socialist Party of Macedonia (Социјалистичка партија на Македонија/ Socijalistička Partija na Makedonija, СПМ/SPM)
- Party for Democratic Prosperity (Партија за демократски просперитет, Partija za demokratski prosperitet, ПДП/PDP)
- Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (Внатрешна македонска револуционерна организација – Демократска партија за македонско национално единство/Vnatrešna makedonska revolucionerna organizacija – Demokratska partija za makedonsko nacionalno edinstvo, ВМРО-ДПМНЕ/VMRO–DPMNE)
- Democratic Alternative (Демократска алтернатива/Demokratska Alternativa, ДА/DA)
- Democratic Party of Albanians (Демократска партија на Албанците, Demokratska Partija na Albancite, ДПА/DPA)

Poland

- Democratic Union (Unia Demokratyczna, UD)
- Catholic Electoral Action (Wyborcza Akcja Katolicka, WAK)
- Liberal Democratic Congress (Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczny, KLD)
- Polish Economic Program (Polski Program Gospodarczy, PPG)
- Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD)
- Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL)
- Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność, AWS)

Romania

- Democratic National Salvation Front (Frontul Democrat al Salvării Nationale, FDSN)
- Party of Social Democracy in Romania (Partidul Democraţiei Sociale in România, PDSR)
- Romanian Democratic Convention (Convenţia Democrată Română, CDR)
- Social Democratic Union (Uniunea Social Democrats, USD)
- Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România, UDMR)

Serbia

- Socialist Party of Serbia (Социјалистичка партија Србије / Socijalistička partija Srbije, SPS)
- Yugoslav Left (Југословенска Левица, ЈУЛ/Jugoslovenska Levica, JUL)
- New Democracy (Нова демоцратија/Nova demokratija, ND)

Slovakia

- Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko, HZDS)
- Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana, SNS)
- Union of the Workers of Slovakia (Slovak: Združenie robotníkov Slovenska, ZRS)
- Slovak Democratic Coalition (Slovak: Slovenská demokratická koalícia, SDK)
- Party of the Democratic Left (Slovak: Strana demokratickej ľavice, SDL)
- Party of the Hungarian Coalition (Strana maďarskej koalície, SMK)
- Party of Civic Understanding (Strana občianskeho porozumenia, SOP)

Slovenia

- Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (Liberalna demokracija Slovenije, LDS)

- Slovene Christian Democrats (Slovenski krščanski demokrati, SKD)
- Slovenian People's Party (Slovenska ljudska stranka, SLS)

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