

Controlling the party or controlling the media?

How intra-party dynamics moderated, and reinforced,
particularism in Croatia, 2000-2014

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DPhil in Politics
in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford.

Submitted: Hilary Term 2016

Word count: 89,750

Abstract

This thesis explores the shape, the dynamics, and the main reasons for media capture and collusion in Croatia since the second transition in 2000. Using principal-agent theory to refer to the basic relationship between politicians, media and citizens, I intend to explain why politicians make use of particularism - behaviour aiming at the limitation of horizontal accountability – to force the media into cooperation with politicians (media capture) or to engage in an illicit, mutually agreed deal (collusion). Located in the literatures on democratization, party research and media studies, I aim to connect these fields in arguing that intra-party dynamics such as party leaders' rootedness, contestation and the institutionalization of rules play an important role in incentivizing executive politicians to capture or collude with media outlets. The empirical outcome of the study showing drastic failures of horizontal accountability contradicts dominant narratives of Croatia's high level of democratic consolidation between 2000 and 2014 and therefore challenges the suitability of indicators primarily designed to capture the institutionalization of institutions rather than the institutionalization of particularism.

Croatia is a particularly appropriate case to study in this context since none of the traditional incentives such as Europeanization, inter-party competition, a strong civil society or economic modernization can fully explain shifts in the way politicians limit or reinforce horizontal accountability of the media. In order to address this puzzle I adopt a two-pronged research strategy based on both qualitative and quantitative elements in order to reliably and validly measure the shape and development of media capture and collusion.

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1. Introduction

“The rule of law will function as in any average European country and corruption will be contained to a reasonable level. (...) Our media scene is diverse, there will be no political pressure, and there are several daily newspapers and news magazines in which one can read serious analysis written by well-informed professionals”

President Mesić in 2005 on his vision of Croatian democracy for the year 2015 (Nacional, 2005)

This doctoral thesis sets out to investigate the shape, dynamics and main reasons for media capture and collusion in Croatia since 2000. Connecting the literatures on democratization, party research and media studies, I argue that dynamics within governing parties provide politicians with important incentives to capture or collude with media. In so doing I seek in particular to shed light on how and why democratization drivers such as inter-party competition and Europeanization failed to prevent democratic regressions at a time when their effects should have been particularly strong.

The thesis will consider the nature of press supervision using a number of central concepts, which will be discussed at greater length below. I use “horizontal accountability” to gauge the degree of this supervision, based on a notion of accountability that is important especially in the time between elections. Using this framework to refer to the basic relationship between politicians, media and citizens, I intend to explain why politicians make use of particularism - behaviour aiming at the limitation of this horizontal accountability – to force the media into cooperation with politicians (media capture) or to engage in an illicit, mutually agreed deal (collusion). Media capture and collusion both result in a suppression of relevant critical reporting.

In the year 2000, shortly after the opposition coalition led by the Social Democrats (SDP)¹ had taken over the cabinet from the centre-right HDZ, the editorial offices of Croatia's newspaper Jutarnji List were thriving places of young and eager journalists, encouraged by their editors to uncover corrupt politicians. As early as the late 1990s political dailies and weeklies were publishing far-reaching scandals about politicians from the ruling HDZ and effectively contributing to the growing disaffection with the Franjo Tudjman regime, which finally ended with the death of the patriarch in 1999.

Only one year later, the car of the Ninoslav Pavić, owner of the dominant Europa Press Holding (EPH), the publisher of the daily newspaper Jutarnji List and the weekly Globus, was the target of a bomb attack. The attack happened at night and nobody was hurt. After this incident working conditions in the editorial offices of Jutarnji List dramatically changed. Shady, secret service based editors began giving journalists documents and asking them to produce a story from them. Journalists such as anonymous interviewee 4, a successful journalist, came under increasing pressure from his editors not to question this "evidence" but to smear people based on the furnished documents.

The attack on Ninoslav Pavić caused international uproar and Croatia consequently dropped several positions in a number of media-freedom indices. Unfortunately, however, the attack was not primarily related to press freedom. It was merely a "warning" as part of internal infighting between "partners" of a secret media cartel. Jutarnji List, Globus and other papers were used to promote business deals, to drive up prices of commodities, to silence burgeoning corruption and to praise the public prosecutor who, as will be seen, protected corrupt publishers and politicians - despite heaps of evidence that was kept in locked drawers in his office.

If one side to this story is the development of mafia-like structures in and around the media as central supervisors of executive power, the other is that governments let it happen or even contributed to it in order to profit from the control they gained over newspaper reporting. The development of media independence, referred to here as horizontal accountability, was anything but linear in the 15

¹ SDP: Socijaldemokratska Partija Hrvatske (Social Democratic Party of Croatia); HDZ: Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union).

years following Croatia's "second transition" in 2000, which marked the change from the president-parliamentarism of Franjo Tudjman to a premier-presidential system.²

While the new six-party coalition led by SDP president Ivica Račan had between 2000 and 2003 advanced a number of measures increasing media independence under detrimental circumstances, the following HDZ leadership around Ivo Sanader initiated serious regressions. By silencing all important parts of the mainstream press and neutralizing the public prosecutor Ivo Sanader was able to funnel off large amounts of public funds, thereby undermining democracy in a way that had been deemed unthinkable after the end of the war-torn 1990s.

After the era of state exploitation and exorbitant corruption of Ivo Sanader, there were high hopes that the Social Democrat government led by Zoran Milanović would reverse the encroachment on control institutions such as the media. And even though Milanović refrained from systematic collusion with important publishers and followed up on his promise not to re-elect the compromised public prosecutor Mladen Bajić, he and his Minister of Finance Slavko Linić limited horizontal accountability by sanctioning media outlets for independent reporting.

In all these shifts to and away from effective horizontal accountability it is remarkable that factors which have been highlighted by the literature as driving democratization ("drivers") - in this context especially Europeanization and electoral (inter-party) competition - provide little in the way of explanation for this variation. Ivica Račan's move to increase horizontal accountability of the media for instance happened when Croatia was not even a candidate for EU membership and transformative pressures were low. Similarly, Ivo Sanader's burgeoning corruption and encroachment on the media scene took place not only under conditions of close EU monitoring, but also when the opposition SDP had increasingly good prospects of beating the incumbent HDZ in the upcoming elections in 2007.

² I classify these systems of government according to Shugart and Carey (1992). While both systems, president-parliamentary and premier-presidential, are subtypes of semi-presidentialism the central difference between them lies in the president's (share of) competences to appoint or dismiss members of cabinet. In premier-presidential systems cabinets come to power through the assembly rather than through the president as in president-parliamentarism. In the Croatian form of premier-presidentialism only the delegation chain voters - political parties - parliament is relevant for our context. I will therefore in the following apply Strøm, Bergmann and Müller's (2003) principal-agent argument to it, originally developed for parliamentary systems.

This basic tension, emanating from the inconsistencies between the theoretical workings of these drivers and the actual levels of control for executive politicians, provides the impulse for raising a number of questions that this thesis will be addressing. Why did traditional drivers fail to prevent democratic regression at a time when their effects should have been particularly strong? Considering that the first Social Democratic government had already taken steps to establish a universalistic system, why did politicians revert to less democratic practices after the HDZ had returned to power? And why did they do so exclusively in the informal realm?

Or, in more general terms, how did collusion between publishers and politicians develop? What are the patterns of this collusion over time, are there differences between cabinets and if so, why? What are the conditions for these patterns of collusion to emerge and to cease? How do politicians and publishers initiate contracts and how stable are they?

Using original methods of data collection and data analysis, this thesis aims to illustrate the actual development of horizontal accountability over 15 years, identifying the factors that drove it, and, in a second step, to integrate the emerging picture into an overall framework of democratization research which, being geared towards comparability of a large number of cases, sometimes fails to grasp fine distinctions between democratic and quasi-democratic contexts.

There are normative and theoretical reasons why it is important to find answers to these questions. On the normative side, media independence, an essential and integral part of alleviating the information deficit that citizens are confronted with when delegating to politicians, has recently had a bumpy ride in post-socialist and Western Europe. In the UK for instance, the police forced the Guardian to destroy the hard drive containing information from the whistle blower Edward Snowden. In Bulgaria and Macedonia journalists have recently repeatedly become victims of police violence during protests calling for the government's resignation. In Hungary and Poland press freedom has seen major erosions since conservative-nationalist governments returned to power.

From the theoretical perspective, the literature on horizontal accountability tends to focus on state control agencies and has largely neglected the relationship between media and politics, and in particular its influence on democratization developments. Even though media organs nominally often play central roles in theories of democratization, their function remains understudied and is not yet fully understood. The media have been described as a “source of instability” in otherwise stable hybrid regimes (Levitsky & Way, 2002, p. 59) and necessary in the establishment of a “level playing field” for incumbents and opposition (Levitsky & Way, 2010), in particular helping the latter to properly compete against the former in elections. According to Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007, p. 307) media reporting is important in the fight against corruption while at the same time catalyzing and amplifying political discontent with inefficient governments. In a formal model Besley and Prat (2006, p. 721) find that a lack of media independence increases temptations for politicians to engage in rent extraction and leads to less alternation of governments.

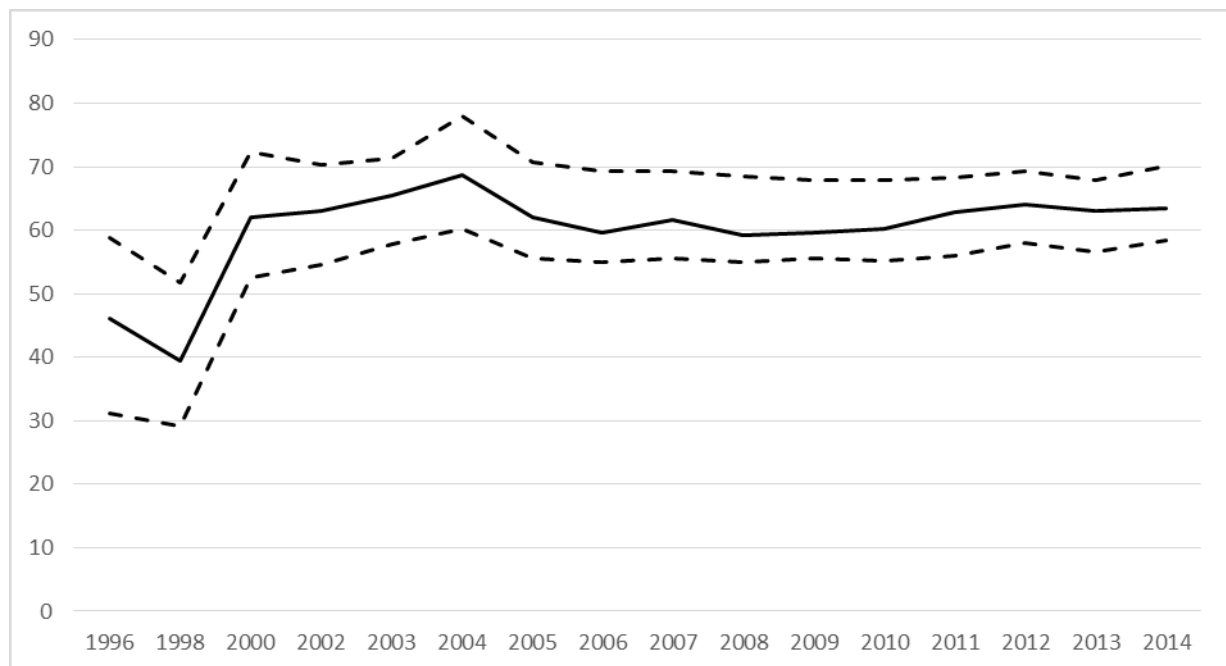
And even though there are still unresolved issues of circularity in cause and effect between media and democratic change (Gross, 2002), there is a growing body of research that finds that an independent media is important in helping citizens to de-select corrupt politicians, thereby promoting norms of acceptable behaviour in transitional contexts (Brunetti & Weder, 2003; Jakubowicz & Sükösd, 2008a; Lull & Hinerman, 1997; Markovits & Silverstein, 1988; Reinikka & Svensson, 2005). Independent media, together with elections and social mobilization, can effectively limit executive transgressions (2006). Adsera et al. (2003) find a robust relationship between newspaper readership and good governance. In a similar vein, Norris (2006) showed in a large-N cross sectional comparison that an independent media does play a significant role in a range of indicators of good governance, and that it is integral to the process of democratization.

In the absence of systematic evidence on the matter, anecdotal examples at an individual level suggest that the effects of news reporting on politicians is real. One Bulgarian politician, for instance, revealed to an interviewer of the Media and Democracy project at Oxford University “I’m pretty convinced that the big majority of Bulgarian citizens believe or have a confidence in the media, and they

admit what they read or hear on the radio or see on television as the strict truth, the reality of things. The media here have a big, big influence on how public opinion is formed.” (cited after Örnebring, 2012, p. 504). A particularly vivid example comes from the British Labour MP Tom Watson, who describes his strong emotional, panicky response when finding his image in a smear campaign on the front page of Rupert Murdoch’s Sun (Watson & Hickman, 2012, p. 12).

With the focus on media as an especially important supervisor of executive power, the perspective offered here aims to provide a more refined explanation of why governments in some cases employ mere semblances of democracy that do not fit into the picture of overall stability that conventional measures of democratic consolidation suggest. Indicators of consolidation such as weak polarization of the party system, a comparatively low level of voter fluctuation and high cabinet durability are considered to signal favourable developments in the institutionalization of democratic regimes (Merkel, 1997; Morlino, 1995). Moreover, according to recent transformation indices post-socialist countries in Central (CEE) and South Eastern Europe (SEE) have since 2000 by and large been classified as consolidated democracies (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014; Freedom House, 2014). However, these rather crude measuring sticks designed to cover the full spectrum ranging from fully-fledged to unconsolidated democracies fail to grasp finer nuances in the degree of constitutional self-binding of actors, understood as politicians recognising the leeway granted them by constitutions (Buchstein, 2013) and regulating themselves accordingly. There is ample evidence from countries such as Poland, Hungary or Romania that many actors in new democracies do not fully adapt to their democratic roles (Ágh, 2013, 2014; Cercel, 2012; Gherghina & Miscoiu, 2013).

If consolidation is defined as the point where democracies are reasonably secure from reversal (G. A. O’Donnell, 1996; Valenzuela, 1992), the events in Croatia show that the focus of consolidation research on formal institutions has created an unwarranted picture of stability. Aggregated indicators for Croatia show that after the end of the Tudjman regime, government accountability has been assessed as largely functioning.

Development of aggregated accountability indicators for Croatia 1996 - 2014

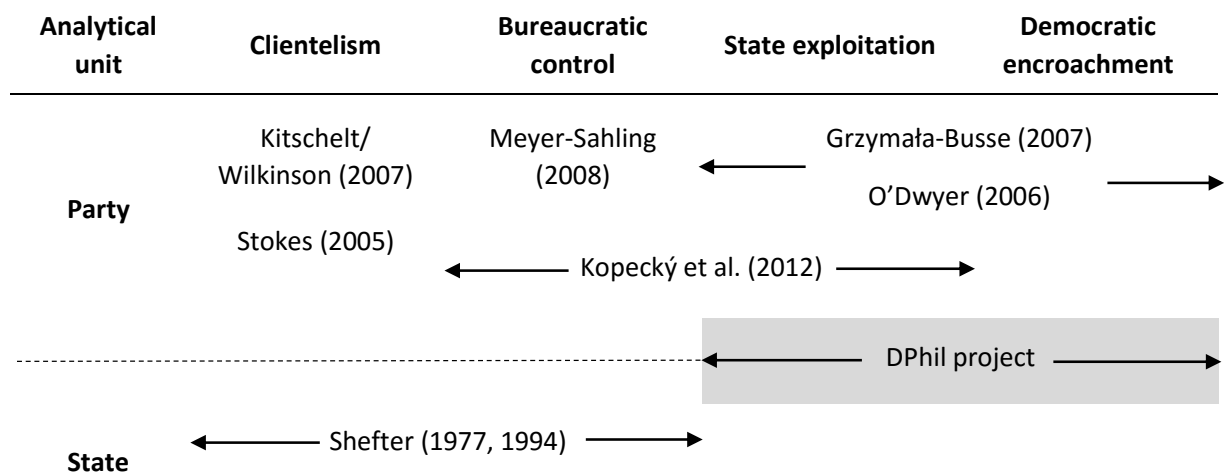
Source: Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2010)

While there is a consensus on the importance of single factors such as economic development for the democratic quality of a polity (Boix & Stokes, 2003; Geddes, 1999), there is still little understanding of the conditions that have to be fulfilled if political systems are to become democratic.

As will be discussed in more detail below, this thesis seeks to address this gap by focussing on competitive dynamics within political parties as an important explanation. Where the literature focuses on state control agencies, it usually concentrates on corruption and clientelism while merely paying lip service to the relationship between politicians, political parties and the media. Most recent political science contributions have focussed on parties as unitary actors, with (Kopecký, Mair, & Spirova, 2012) or without a special focus on governing parties (Grzymała-Busse, 2007; O'Dwyer, 2006). While a large part of the literature is primarily concerned with party-voter relationships (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Stokes, 2005), a further significant portion of scholarly attention is directed towards elite patronage appointments motivated by bureaucratic control and state exploitation. This disser-

tation aims to add to this literature by shifting the focus to the role of party organizations and to trace their impact on the level of democratization at state level. With a few minor exceptions (Della Porta, 2000; Hellmann, 2012) recent scholarship has largely remained silent regarding the effects of party-internal dynamics on corruption, or media control more generally.

Embedding the dissertation in the literature



1.1. Main argument

In light of these shortcomings, I advance the argument that intra-party dynamics bear much of the burden of explanation for why executive politicians limit media independence. Departing from the idea that parties are central to the democratic process, I develop a theory below that posits a link between politicians' propensity to capture or collude³ with media organs on the one hand and their standing within their home parties - and in particular their path to intra-party power on the other. I develop the concepts of rootedness and contestation which, emphasizing the importance of multi-stage party leadership selection mechanisms, provide party leaders in post-socialist contexts with what they need to govern effectively - a minimum level of internal support. According to this logic, *rooted* party leaders have comparatively fewer incentives to make use of media outlets to consoli-

³ Below, I will explain in more detail that capture and collusion have the same outcomes, but differ in their initiation.

date their intra-party position, while the level of *contestation* of a party leader affects the incentives of publishers to engage in a collusive pact.

By shifting the focus to intra-party dynamics, this approach brings into play a factor that offers a large explanatory potential but which, to date, has received little systematic attention in explaining media capture. Moreover, it aims to improve the measurement of media capture by offering an operationalization that gauges levels of criticism of politicians in media outlets over time. Quantifying this proximity through sentiment analysis of 883,316 media texts from eight media outlets covering the last 15 years, a new method is suggested which delivers promising results in the Croatian case.

1.2. Introduction of the dependent variable: levels of horizontal accountability

The central explanandum of this thesis lies in the variation in levels of horizontal accountability, specified as the freedom of central media outlets to scrutinize the executive and fulfil their function as effective supervisors of agent-politicians.

The study of democracy in terms of principal-agent theory aims to explore the information disadvantage of principal-citizens vis-à-vis their agent-politicians and understand how this disadvantage keeps them from delegating successfully (Miller, 2005, p. 209).⁴ Keeping this information deficit within reasonable limits is an important precondition to fulfilling central promises of modern democracies such as ‘government for the people’, understood as the capacity to provide citizens with basic ‘goods’ such as efficiency, coordination, transparency and credibility. To ensure that politicians act as truthful agents of their citizens and adhere to these democratic virtues, citizens need to make politicians accountable by exercising “substantive control” (Dryzek, 2000, p. 79 ff.) over their actions. ‘Control’ in this context refers to the ability of a principal to align the preferences of her agent in order to avoid systematic agency loss. In established democracies this ability is usually referred to as loyalty and it constitutes the basic mechanism producing social control and responsiveness (Dahl,

⁴ Lupia defines delegation as successful if it increases the principal’s welfare (relative to what would have happened if the principal had not delegated) and unsuccessful if it fails to do so (2003, p. 36f.).

1971) through acceptance (Merkel, Puhle, Croissant, Eicher, & Thiery, 2003, p. 231), based on legitimate rule (Weber, 1922).

Accountability is enforced through sanctions whereby citizens can oust those incumbents from office who fail to properly represent them (Przeworski, Stokes, & Manin, 1999, p. 38). This notion of accountability can cover both control exerted by the democratic process and control over the type of policy outcome and should be designed in a way that renders governance as well as the act of delegation itself effective and efficient (Lupia, 2003, p. 35). According to this understanding, agent-politicians are deemed accountable to their principal-citizens if the policy outcome adds to the principal's welfare and if the principal has sufficient information about what the agent is up to (Strøm, 2003, p. 85).

Here I aim to fuse two approaches, namely the agency approach of Strøm, Müller and Bergman and horizontal accountability, a concept envisaged but not fully developed by Guillermo O'Donnell. Horizontal accountability was conceived as a term to describe oversight of autonomous state agencies, allowing the state to be sanctioned if its actions are "qualified as unlawful" (G. O'Donnell, 1999, p. 38). In properly accountable democracies a plethora of state agencies carry out horizontal control in the legislature, the executive and the judiciary (Kenney, 2003; G. A. O'Donnell, 2003). While O'Donnell himself did not include media in his concept of horizontal accountability, they have been ascribed key roles in accounts of vertical and horizontal political accountability, especially in democratization contexts (Schedler, 1998; Whitehead, 2002). McMillan and Zoido (2004) demonstrate for Peru that, of the institutions of horizontal accountability, the news media provided the strongest check on the executive. I therefore follow Schmitter (1999, p. 60) who argues that permanent organizations such as the media are better equipped to control the executive effectively given that they do not share "the same public legal status or the same collective mentality".

1.2.1. Conceptualising the axes of the typology

In order to adequately specify the concept of horizontal accountability I develop a typology structuring it according to behaviour and the codification of formal and informal rules. Behaviour in this context refers to a broadly understood process of policy formulation with regard to the media.

The dominant classification of political behaviour refers to legal and illegal activities. This distinction, however, is insensitive to situations where politicians ‘lawfully’ decide to limit the accountability of institutions of horizontal control, for instance in their own private interest. Given the importance of informal rules for political actors in transitional contexts it is not enough to use formal rules synonymously with legality, as one would do in contexts of established democracies where formal rules are usually more institutionalized than informal rules (North, 1990). Doing new democracies justice as a *sui generis* category requires acknowledging the fact that in these countries informal rules are often more institutionalized than formal ones and therefore provide the real frame of reference for actors. With this focus on transitional democracies, a more parsimonious differentiation between legal and illegal behaviour or formal and informal rules is not sufficient here because it does not capture the undemocratic nature of democratically enacted formal rules such as defining libel as a criminal offense. It would also be underspecified to grasp unintuitive strategies adopting informal methods to advanced levels of horizontal accountability.

In order to address these problems I combine the two dimensions of behaviour and rules to develop the concept of particularism, that is, behaviour limiting horizontal accountability. When the independence of control institutions is undermined “lawfully”, backed by formal rules, it is referred to as formal particularism. Formal particularism refers to formal rules limiting horizontal accountability or very unspecific rules allowing wide leeway to be intentionally misinterpreted by the executive or the judiciary.

The greater the effectiveness of democratization drivers, the more governments are forced to change the laws when they seek to change their policies (Stephenson, 2003). A comparatively low

cost way to circumvent this consists for instance in politically influencing the appointment of important judicial positions or in directly influencing adjudication. This more covert practice, where particularistic behaviour overrides (weakly institutionalized) formal rules with universalistic content, will be referred to as informal particularism. Using informal particularism, governments are able to change their policies without changing the law, such as executive orders to courts to arrive at a certain judgement. Actors inclined to use informal particularism need to maintain a semblance of universalism that provides a democratic façade of legitimacy.

Universalism implies that institutions of horizontal accountability are de-facto, rather than just de-jure, controlling the executive and other state agencies and that politicians effectively bind and restrain themselves to respect their autonomy. Where conditions do not permit open universalism, politicians can also strengthen horizontal accountability through informal means such as for instance the leaking of classified documents contributing to the de-authorization of corrupt politicians.

The concept of particularism is appropriate to discerning more subtle instances of how executives control or collude with the media, especially in contexts where democracy is already locked-in. This is the case for post-Tudjman Croatia where, in contrast to the 1990s, party elites pursued the goal of EU accession with broadly functioning party competition under conditions of premier-presidentialism, rendering a return to more authoritarian forms of government highly unlikely.

The changing process of delegation: from formal particularism to universalism

		Behaviour	
		<i>Particularistic</i>	<i>Universalistic</i>
Rule codification	<i>formal</i>	Formal particularism: particularistic behaviour in accordance with formal rules	Formal universalism: universalistic behaviour in accordance with formal rules
		1990s, again since 2011	2000-2003, 2009-2011
	<i>informal</i>	Informal particularism: particularistic behaviour in contradiction to formal rules	Informal universalism: universalistic behaviour in contradiction to formal rules
		2004-2009	2000-2003

1.2.2. Specification of actors and time frame

I narrow down the choice of politicians to executive leadership positions, in particular PMs and presidents. Although it might seem that to consider only these leading roles is to ignore the complex realities of governing, looking at prime ministers conceptually makes sense because Croatia is a case of 'prime ministerial' government (Blondel, Müller-Rommel, & Malovà, 2007, p. 178) where executive authority is concentrated in the person of the prime minister (Maršić & Zakošek, 2010). Moreover, it became quickly clear during the interviews that handling and contacting the media was a centralized affair in practically all cabinets (with the exception of Ivica Račan's and Jadranka Kosor's cabinets). PMs were regularly mentioned as being involved, even at an operational level of media-related affairs: Jadranka Kosor often reacted personally to media reports and Ivo Sanader despatched an envoy to directly negotiate collusive deals (see chapter on particularism). Only a minority of ministers had some leeway in maintaining relations with the media themselves, the most notable being those who were in command of important resources, such as a stable local party base (for instance Božidar Kalmeta under PM Sanader and Slavko Linić under Zoran Milanović).

Since the switch to premier-presidentialism, presidents do not have the capacity to enact formal legislation. At the same time they are subject to neither inter-party competition nor Europeanization. The empirical analysis includes them nevertheless because presidents have informal powers which make them actors in their own right with regard to particularism and universalism. As briefly discussed above, PMs and presidents in Croatia's version of premier-presidentialism have established a division of responsibilities, especially as regards jurisdiction over the secret services and the public media.⁵ There seems to be a zero-sum game in these responsibilities between presidents and prime ministers, induced by a pattern of competition which is prevalent even where presidents coexist with PMs from the same party or party family. As a consequence, presidents have not only through their own actions contributed to the development of particularism and universalism but have also had a direct influence on PM's leeway in this respect. Hence, while the resulting picture would be incomplete without our taking into account the president's roles, the properties of single delegation chains in parliamentarism as part of the conceptual embedding into principal-agent theory lead me to focus on prime ministers in developing an explanation that addresses the puzzle developed above.

As explained in more detail below, in order to hold the regime change variable constant in explaining shifts between particularism and universalism, I have restricted the period of analysis to the time since the six-party coalition won the parliamentary elections in January 2000 (shortly after president Tudjman's successor Stipe Mesić won the presidential elections in December 1999). This is also consistent with the conceptual focus on locked-in democracies briefly touched upon above. The time frame of the analysis is therefore January 2000 until October 2014, which is congruent with the period that Croatia has been a parliamentary democracy.

⁵ The constitution only foresees cooperation between the PM and the president in appointing the heads of the secret services (in addition to leading diplomatic positions). While president Mesić took over the secret services, for instance, PM Račan received influence over the public broadcaster. This relationship turned around with president Josipović, who got to nominate the leadership of HRT, whereas Zoran Milanović preferred control over the secret services.

1.3. Alternative explanations

Why do politicians limit horizontal accountability? While many answers have been given to this question, this section briefly summarises and discusses the most prominent alternative explanations that scholars have developed. Even though elements of the factors presented below are likely to have impacted shifts between particularism and universalism to some extent, I will, for reasons of parsimony, later in the process concentrate on those drivers which can be expected to carry the bulk of explanatory power: inter-party competition and Europeanization.

Structural arguments	Economic arguments
Strong civil society and whistle blowers	Economic crises and advertisement spending
Regime change	Media pluralism and market competition
Europeanization	
Inter-party competition	

1.3.1. Strong civil society and whistle blowers

Protests and the role of civil society organizations have repeatedly been highlighted as being especially important in universalistic developments. And even though protest and grassroots opposition are important democratization drivers, they work under certain conditions. As Robertson (2010) outlines, for instance, these condition include a split in the elite. With reference to media capture this driver does not apply here for two reasons.

Firstly, a large minority among the population did not even oppose authoritarian control of the media through executive politicians. As late as 2005 and 2006, ten years after the end of the war, about 30% of the Croatian population believed that freedom of expression in Croatia was too great. This group supported the closure of certain media stations and the establishment of a state censorship

body, believing that limits to freedom of expression in the media with reference to certain topics was justified (Peruško, 2005, 2006).

Secondly, even though there was an active NGO scene in Croatia the topic never caught on with the Croatian public. Civil society organizations had already been playing an important role in Croatia's regime change since the late 1990s. Bunce and Wolchik (2011) show that the 1999 elections were in large part supported by spillovers of activists from earlier regime-changing elections in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia. This also includes support from institutional actors, such as the US government and the NDI and IRI (Bunce & Wolchik, 2011).⁶ There are two reasons, however, why the topic remained restricted to circles of specialists and NGO observers. For one, information about the collusive practices reached the surface only in small doses. Media ownership structures are complicated, their relations to political actors opaque and there is little work in Croatian language pulling the information together and connecting the dots. Secondly, the work of civil society organizations such as Partnership for social development, fairpress.org, the Croatian Association of Journalists and others, who have continuously engaged in whistle-blowing concerning media capture and collusion was marginalized, in many cases through targeted manipulations by corrupt journalists, publishers and intelligence structures.⁷ This is due to the substantial sanctions that reporting on such issues could bring with it. Another more important reason lies in the systematic suppression of such topics by the mainstream press, which was (or still is) under control of a media cartel and permeated by a network of corrupt journalists, directly accessible by former public prosecutor Mladen Bajić and others (see section 5.2.3.2.).

⁶ USAID provided financial aid to GONG and the monitors were trained by NDI. The American ambassador to Croatia requested that IRI take Croatian opposition leaders to Slovakia to meet with former opposition leaders there (Irvine, 2007). The U.S. contribution was significant (over \$ 5,200,000) (Fisher & Bijelić, 2007, p. 67).

⁷ The head of the transparency NGO "Partnership for social development" Munir Podumljak for instance cites the content of text messages that became public as evidence in the case of assassinated publisher Ivo Pukanić, who according to these sources maintained an "exceptional co-operation" in "joint operations" (Ćimić, 2012) with the secret service POA, which had tried in 2003 to force journalist Helena Puljiz into corruptive collaboration (see section 5.2.3.3.).

1.3.2. Economic crises and advertisement spending

Economic recessions have negative impacts on press freedom and create scope for the application of political pressure (DG Enlargement, 2014). For instance, low-paid journalists may be more inclined to distort news to safeguard their own career (Baron, 2006). Media economists such as Petrova (2009) and Gentzkow et al. (2006) have shown that healthy levels of advertising reduce political dependence. Since Croatian media started to rely on advertisements as their main source of income from the early 2000s (covering about two-thirds of the budget of the average print publication, see subsequent chapters), economic crises have had major impacts on the financial sustainability of media organs and, consequently, on their political dependence.

At the same time, important shifts between particularism and universalism took place despite counter-productive market conditions. As will be seen, state enterprises became important advertisers, turning many media entities into needy recipients of public money during a time when levels of economic development were still healthy and promising. Secondly, Sanader's successor, Jadranka Kosor, initiated universalistic shifts such as enabling independent corruption investigations into her own party, the HDZ, in the midst of the economic recession, which has been shaking the countries of the Western Balkans since 2008. This factor therefore had an effect on the level of horizontal accountability among the media, but in terms of a context condition rather than as a direct driver.

1.3.3. Media pluralism and market competition

In a similar vein, Besley and Prat (2006) show that reducing the cost of accessing the media market, coupled with subsequently higher levels of market competition, increases the risk for politicians that their true character will be communicated to citizens and therefore reduces rent-seeking behaviour.

At the same time, however, a number of external conditions render this factor ineffective, such as the secret media cartel that has dominated the Croatian media market since 1997. As subsequent chapters will show, the participants of this powerful cartel of mainstream media needed the silent

consent of politics and therefore had no interest in going beyond a façade of independence that still encouraged citizens to go out and buy the newspapers. Secondly, as will be seen in the chapter on particularism, politicians such as Ivo Sanader deliberately supported a higher market concentration by, for instance, abusing his position to sell the state owned Slobodna Dalmacija to his crony Ninoslav Pavić. At the same time, internet-only news media such as index.hr have risen in profile and readership only in the last five years and are still a far cry from coming anywhere near the circulation the mainstream media have. In sum, therefore, while there was limited pluralism of media outlets, the pluralism of media content, the relevant variable for media scholars, remained low.

1.3.4. Regime change

Regime change itself would be an obvious explanation for variations in the horizontal accountability of the media, not least because some scholars draw on media freedom as an inherent variable to classify regime types (Levitsky & Way, 2010; Sartori, 1987; Schiller, 1999; Teorell, 2010). Moreover, there is also direct empirical evidence that the propensity of media capture co-varies with the executive's access to legislative powers (Bairrett Jr., 2015). As the subsequent historical overview chapter will show, the president during the 1990s not only had extremely far-reaching powers in comparison to other presidential-parliamentary systems worldwide, he also practically controlled the judiciary through mass patronage and a large number of the mainstream media by encroachment.

Given the vast differences not only between the formal characteristics of the presidential-parliamentary and the subsequent premier-presidential system but also between their constitutional realities, the influential regime variable is held constant by restricting the timeframe of the analysis to parliamentarism which has been in place since 2000. During this observation period, extending from when Ivica Račan was first elected PM until 2014, the foundations of the political system remained largely unchanged. This implies that there have been no major changes in democratic quality

that could be understood as democratic erosion being connected to, or having influenced, the variation on the dependent variable.⁸

From the drivers singled out above, there are two factors left which have been shown in the past to carry some explanatory power, especially for post-socialist countries: Europeanization and electoral (inter-party) competition. Given their special scholarly relevance in explaining democratization outcomes, I will conceptualize these drivers in the following sections and specify how they are expected to drive universalistic developments.

1.3.5. Europeanization

The Europeanization literature analyses the impact of EU integration on member and candidate countries (Sedelmeier, 2011). For Europeanization to take effect, the government of the potential candidate country needs to be united over the political goal of joining the EU (Schimmelfennig, 2005). The majority of studies evaluating the effect of EU accession on the quality of democracy in candidate countries find a limited impact (for an overview, see Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005; Sedelmeier, 2011) and a limited influence on parties in member states (Poguntke, Aylott, Carter, Ladrech, & Luther, 2007).

Scholars assessing the impact of transnational cooperation between parties in candidate countries and their sister party groups in the European Parliament conclude that the impact from cooperation is likely to be limited (Pridham, 2011). In a similar vein, in their analysis of the EU impact on dimensions of inter-party competition in new CEE member states (such as relevance of party blocs, bloc pattern stability and fragmentation) Enyedi and Casal Bértoa (2011) find that EU influence is not significant. In contrast, in one of the studies identifying measurable Europeanization effects of EU can-

⁸ Obviously the Croatian political system has experienced major changes through its institutional integration into the EU, which it joined on 1 July 2013. As discussed below in the section on Europeanization, the direct EU pressures impacting on national media systems are mainly limited to creating unified market conditions throughout the bloc and are therefore not taken to constitute what could be understood as regime change in the above sense.

candidate countries, Ladrech (2011) argues that in many post-socialist countries EU-conditionality led to weak party identities resulting in weak competition over valence issues and exaggerated political-cultural differences between parties.

I follow the majority of Europeanization scholars in arguing that the EU's reach in transforming candidate countries consists more in supporting a lock-in effect once authoritarian governments have had to concede victory to more liberal-minded successors. Where EU pressures are not matched by domestic support, they are likely to lead to "potemkin institutions" (Grzymała-Busse, 2007, p. 225). Once there is a domestic "demand" for EU rapprochement and a country becomes an accession candidate, EU influence works through the mechanisms of either *acquis* or *democratic conditionality* (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004).

With respect to EU *acquis conditionality*, an important part of Croatia's accession process consisted in the yearly Progress Reports published by the European Commission which identified the most pressing issues in all Communitarian policy fields, including the judiciary and media policy. However, as reflected in the limited *acquis* in the policy field of "information society and media", media and their markets are regarded by the European Commission as issues that are essentially national in scope (DG Enlargement, 2014). For instance, during the world-wide economic recession, which hit Western Balkan countries especially hard and facilitated the use of pressure against media and journalists, the EU's role was mostly restricted to taking up the issue in the Enlargement Strategy papers, the yearly progress reports and organizing stakeholder conferences.

The progress reports will be systematically analysed for any piece of conditionality that might impact horizontal accountability of the media. These reports were part of an ex-post monitoring mechanism and contained individual points of required action for the Croatian government. More concrete policy measures were prescribed in the benchmarks⁹ representing conditions for the opening and closure of each individual negotiation chapter. These benchmarks prescribe certain legislative amend-

⁹ With the start of the Croatian accession process the EU introduced benchmarks as quantifiable measures for progress in the implementation (rather than just the adoption) of the *Acquis*.

ments or the establishment of a concrete track record, for instance in the area of judicial appointments. Where implemented, the recommendations of the progress reports as well as the benchmarks will be ascribed to Europeanization.

Democratic conditionality works on a more general level in that the EU sanctions behaviour that it deems “undemocratic”. While no exact definition of this term has been provided, the Commission refers back to the Copenhagen criteria requiring a country aspiring to be an EU member to achieve “stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union” (European Council, 1993). Provided there is domestic demand for it (as there was in the case of Croatia), the reward of starting accession negotiations represents an important incentive for the candidate country to fulfil these criteria. Once negotiations have started, democratic conditionality becomes less important, even though sanctions can always be activated once democracy levels drop below a tolerated minimum.

EU pressures are identified primarily from official documents and aside from EU progress reports this also includes conclusions from EU Councils. Elements of democratic conditionality that may be hidden, such as background pressure on political actors for instance, cannot be observed directly and need to be inferred from the development of actor’s policy positions and especially the timing of related events.

The applicability of Europeanization to the subject of this thesis can be questioned from three perspectives. Firstly, as has been stated above, media policy is regarded as a largely domestic policy field by the EU and interventions in national media markets can therefore not naturally be expected. As the empirical chapters will demonstrate, the EU has for instance neither commented nor intervened in the most critical media market developments, such as Ninoslav Pavić acquiring Slobodna Dalmacija and exceeding domestic concentration limits in media ownership. Nor has it taken a stance when

Swedish owned Bonnier had to cease its operations after its Croatian investigative daily was economically boycotted on the market.

Secondly, there is evidence that the EU's policies are not necessarily exclusively guided by technical considerations as the formalized accession process under leadership of the Commission might suggest, but seem instead largely dependent on political considerations. At least according to the Director General of the DG Enlargement, Michael Leigh, while enlargement conditionality was formally tougher for Croatia, given the negative experience with respect to the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the EU Commission had also a considerable interest in a successful accession of Croatia: "Enlargement policy has slowed down so we are rather keen on successes to give credibility to the policy as a whole. So there may be some excessive inclination to get good news, despite all the checking and monitoring." (Leigh 2011, cited after Simmons, 2011, p. 10). This was the case not least because of the hoped-for positive signal of a "successful" Croatian accession to the other (potential) EU accession candidates from the Western Balkans.

There are two examples which illustrate the political "intervention threshold" that EU actors respected before they chose to intervene in candidate countries' internal affairs. In 2003 the Commission threatened to isolate a potential future Sanader government if the HDZ leader entered a coalition with the nationalist HSP of Anto Đapić (Pleše, 2003). Secondly, the EU Commission delayed the start of Croatia's accession negotiations contingent on "full cooperation" with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. Only when fugitive General Ante Gotovina was captured and transferred to the Court did accession talks eventually begin. In sum, interventions only took place in issues that were deemed salient by certain member states and thereby took place rather arbitrarily.

Thirdly, based on the logic of rewards and sanctions, I expect EU pressures to wane once an accession candidate country has acceded to the bloc. This is largely confirmed by the experience of the DG Enlargement, as Commissioner Leigh witnessed: "The EU in reality loses leverage the moment the

accession treaty is signed. Once a member accedes, the ability to monitor or to take action on all the areas where we worked so intensively before membership is really not there. They go through this incredible hothouse coaching, with a sort of quasi-imperial right of intervention, and then it suddenly stops. The idea that the momentum carries forward is not borne out by experience.” (Leigh 2011 cited after Simmons, 2011). Since domestic politicians are aware of the temporary nature of potentially costly EU conditionality, they have incentives to respond with less costly, equally temporary policies that only provide semblances of domestic change, and can be reversed once accession has been accomplished.

In conclusion, it is not inconsistent with the Europeanization argument to expect informal particularism, but it is important to identify this driver’s effect in order to delimit it from other factors.

Europeanization is understood to have taken effect from early 2000 when the new government ended Croatia’s foreign policy isolation and adopted the goal of EU accession.¹⁰ With the start of accession negotiations in October 2005 specific benchmarks were drawn up by the European Commission with varying intervention depths in areas relevant for democratization such as media, judiciary, corruption, electoral law, etc.

The way Europeanization is expected to impact Croatia is based on the reward and sanction approach developed by Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) and can be separated into a number of different phases, areas and impact mechanisms.

Firstly, Europeanization is expected to apply during the time Croatia was actively seeking EU membership, but was not yet part of the bloc, i.e. January 2000 –July 2013. Secondly, the *target of influence* is the individual conditions set by the EU with specific time-frames as included in benchmarks and progress reports. Thirdly, the *mechanisms of influence* consist in (1) withholding progress in establishing a contractual relationship via democratic conditionality (01/ 2000 - 10/ 2001), (2) withholding progress in submitting the application for EU membership via democratic conditionality (10/ 2001

¹⁰ Contractual relations with the EU started in October 2001 when the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) was signed (Croatia formally applied for EU membership in February 2003).

– 02/ 2003), (3) withholding the start of accession negotiations via democratic conditionality (02/ 2003 – 10/ 2005) and (4) withholding progress in accession negotiations via acquis conditionality (10/ 2005 – 07/ 2013). Fourthly, as stated above, the venues of influence are (1) acquis conditionality, understood as the implementation of a number of concrete benchmarks and (2) democratic conditionality as reflected in the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria.

Based on the considerations laid out above, in the absence of corresponding domestic universalistic behaviour I expect EU conditionality to lead primarily to semblances of universalism such as informal particularism.

1.3.6. Inter-party competition

Inter-party competition has received much attention recently in the form of several efforts to apply the concept in post-socialist, new democratic contexts in Central and Eastern Europe. While a part of the literature shows that inter-party competition seems to have had a large impact on universalistic shifts, it is also obvious that there are many cases (including Croatia) where electoral competition did not suffice to initiate a push to democratization.

In this context Geddes (1994) for instance argues that parties fail to initiate (democratic) reform when patronage is distributed unevenly among major parties in parliament. This implies a zero-sum game in which parties only act in people's interest if it is also in their own interest. She continues that parties are motivated to reform in contexts where inter-party competition is distributed among roughly equally large parties since they expect electoral sanctions if they do not follow their electorates' wishes to reform. According to more recent research this in turn requires that party systems are effective in conditioning the information available for voters so as to enable them to hold politicians accountable (Schleiter & Voznaya, 2012). Following this approach highly fragmented party systems raise the information costs for voters about the type of politician and are hence associated with higher levels of particularism.

At the same time, however, there is also considerable discussion over the conditions for and the extent of inter-party competition leading to increasing universalism. Holding levels of party competition constant, Manow (2002, p. 28) demonstrates sizable variation of particularism across countries. Innes (2014, p. 90) points to the case of the Czech Republic where an extremely stable pattern of bipolar competition coincides with levels of state capture comparable to those in pre-Maidan Ukraine. Meyer-Sahling (2008, p. 285) argues with respect to Hungary, that exactly when critical oppositions developed in 1998, levels of particularism (measured by party patronage) started to grow rather than shrink. In a similar vein, Gwiazda (2008) shows for Poland that even when a party system is fragmented, parties will attempt to use particularism.

While the discussion can be largely summed up as inconclusive at this point, two comparative applications of the concept stand out as being particularly useful.

O'Dwyer's (2006, p. 7) basic argument states that electoral competition can constrain patronage-led state-building when it is robust and institutionalized. Robust competition implies that there is no dominant party; institutionalization also involves a manageable number of stable parties competing with to some degree predictable coalition-building preferences. However, there is little mention of the exact way in which inter-party competition works to reduce particularism.

For Grzymała-Busse (2007), "robust competition" requires a party system where no party seeks to revert to authoritarianism to ensure its own survival. Robust competition leads to a threefold limitation of the incumbent: (1) Vociferous criticism of the opposition moderates government behaviour, essentially because the incumbent fears exposure and subsequent punishment, (2) as incumbents have to fear that their successors might use the discretion they enjoyed against them, it limits the capacity for governing parties to exploit the state and at the same time generates incentives to build "formal institutions of oversight" (2007, p. 81) and (3) in the long run and by repeating the game, it induces governing parties to share power and donors to donate to all parties. Like O'Dwyer, Grzymała-Busse does not specify a detailed causal mechanism explaining how robust competition

works but predicts a correlation between levels of competition and the extent of state exploitation that is independent of other explanatory factors, such as external pressure.

Summarizing the above discussion I expect a number of limitations on the driver of inter-party competition in inducing universalistic behaviour.

The logic of inter-party competition does not sufficiently incentivize actors to go beyond a passive interpretation of universalism that primarily aims at ensuring a level playing field. The incentive structure emerging from inter-party competition leads parties to focus on preventing political competitors from abusing state resources to create a competitive advantage for themselves. This in turn implies, that the motivation produced by inter-party competition to universalistic developments is primarily defensive. The main targets of inter-party competition to produce universalism lie therefore in developing what Grzymała-Busse calls “formal institutions of oversight”.

This is further limited by the fact that it is questionable that party system competition exists continuously at all times (see for instance Innes, 2014), which could result in governing parties not checked by a potent challenger to weaken or scrap these institutions of oversight altogether. Not least, even with formal ex-post oversight in place, as long as a salient player such as a governing party retains an intrinsic motivation to cheat, which does not seem to be unreasonable to assume in a competitive context, it is merely a question of creating the necessary informal rules to override formal oversight. Therefore, I assume that inter-party competition won't produce more than semblances of universalism.

Moreover, inter-party competition does not apply to the media in the same way as it does to O'Dwyer's “runaway state building” (increasing patronage in the state bureaucracy) and Grzymała-Busse's exploitation of state resources, mainly because the state does not have the level of access to private media as it has to state-owned or public media. Parties can insure themselves against competitors abusing formal legislation to control for instance the public broadcaster HRT, but it is difficult, if at all possible, for a governing party to take preventive action to discourage political competi-

tors from *informal* collusion with a media outlet. Even though it is arguably more attractive for publishers to collude with executive politicians, there are also examples where EPH owner Ninoslav Pavić cooperated with leaders of the opposition to bring down the ruling party. In sum, therefore, the insurance argument of inter-party competition applies only to the public broadcaster and not to the private media.

From this literature review I identify inter-party competition as a driver under the condition that the opposition constitutes a credible alternative to voters (as measured by opinions polls) and therefore poses a serious threat to replace the governing party.

While the HDZ emerged as the dominant party in 1990 and enjoyed by far the largest electoral support, the opposition was fragmented and no party represented a credible alternative. From 1997 discontent with the HDZ grew among the population led to an increasingly strong¹¹ opposition which resulted in a wholesale replacement of the HDZ with the six-party coalition in early 2000. Now in opposition, the HDZ, shaken by infighting between rivalling party factions, was able to effectively scrutinize government only after Ivo Sanader had taken over the leadership of the party in 2002. The next parliamentary elections in 2003 brought an HDZ-led coalition back into government, while the centre-left bloc dissolved after it had lost a large share of its popular support. Inter-party competition as a driving force became salient again only when Zoran Milanović was elected the new president of the opposition SDP in June 2007 and public approval rates increased again to represent a credible alternative to the HDZ. During the mandate of Jadranka Kosor the Social-Democrat opposition was a credible competitor. Zoran Milanović was potentially constrained by the HDZ only after the party started to receive more favourable poll ratings from April 2014.

As a result of the above discussion, the way inter-party competition is expected to impact politicians can be broken down into these areas:

¹¹ Measured by opinion polls and victories in local elections.

1. *Time*:
 - a. 1997 – early 2000 (SDP controlling HDZ)
 - b. 2002 – 2003 (HDZ controlling SDP)
 - c. 2007 – 2011 (SDP controlling HDZ)
 - d. April 2014 – September 2014 (HDZ controlling SDP)
2. *Target of influence*: retreating from influence on the public broadcaster
3. *Mechanism of influence*: insuring against unfair competitive advantage of political competitors
4. *Venue of influence*: competitive pressure expressed as vociferous criticism and censorship of the government, threat of being replaced as governing party
5. *Impact type*: limited impact towards universalistic behaviour due to the passive incentive structure and restrictions with respect to the targets of influence

To summarize, I expect to find that Europeanization and inter-party competition led to the abandoning of practices of formal particularism after the change in government in 2000 and produced semblances of universalism when robust competitors were around.

1.4. Developing the argument

With the expected deficiencies of the two drivers, I develop an explanation for why certain politicians collude with certain publishers (and vice versa). I argue that weakly rooted party leaders have incentives to capture media in order to ex-post consolidate their leadership position. Correspondingly, publishers are interested in how contested party leaders are as it signals to them whether they have control over spoils to reward them in their illicit exchange. This explanation is framed in the language of principal-agent theory which I present and apply to my model in the following sections.

To do so, I first specify particularism in the media using the term media capture. The following section applies the principal-agent framework to media capture and extracts the causal mechanisms

that explanations of ex-ante and ex-post control of politicians are based on. Subsequently, based on that logic, I develop an intra-party model that explains important parts of the shifts between particularism and universalism.

1.4.1. Definition of media capture and collusion

In this section I discuss briefly how media capture and collusion differ from the many legitimate ways the media and politicians cooperate. While media capture and collusion differ in how they are initiated (which I discuss in more detail in the subsequent section) both result in the same outcome – far-reaching limitation of horizontal accountability – which is why I use these terms interchangeably here. Given that the purpose here is defining the result of the terms against similar phenomena, it shall therefore suffice for the moment to refer to media capture as the process whereby politicians take over the media unilaterally and force them into cooperation, while collusion refers to mutually agreed cooperation from which both sides extract some form of compensation. In practice these categories of course often overlap to a certain extent.

As Hallin and Mancini (2004) emphasise in their seminal contribution on media systems, journalism historically emerged as a political tool to spread religious ideas or the views of an emerging bourgeois elite. It is therefore nothing new that even today regular contacts between journalists and politicians represent a necessity for both to fulfil their core roles of communication in the former and information in the latter case (Kuhn & Nielsen, 2014).

There is a fine but clear line between partisanship of the media - i.e. a bias towards the government in the form of an incumbent bonus in for instance public broadcaster programmes - and media capture. Partisanship is embedded in media histories and, in contrast to media capture, easily decoded and recognizable by audiences. It combines a “bystander” approach with a sincere effort to report objectively (McKie, 1995). Mediterranean (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) but also many post-socialist countries (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012; Peruško, 2013; Vaclav Stetka, 2012a) have been characterized as po-

larized-pluralist media systems with highly polarized partisan fault lines, reflected in “political parallelism”, based on historical partisan ownership of the most important media in Europe (Mancini, 2012).¹² Even though developments such as declining party identification and commercialization of the media have gradually led to a weakening of partisan dominance over the media in Western Europe, these structures are particularly pervasive, especially in post-socialist countries. In many of these countries, press freedom and commercial media developed comparatively late, while public broadcasters often follow governmental or partisan lines (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). In these countries, news media do not act as neutral information providers but as intermediaries between social groups which use the public media space to negotiate and reach agreement (Mancini, 2012, p. 268). At the same time, the line delineating legitimate functions of the media from illegitimate abuse is thin and easily crossed. According to Bajomi-Lázár (2013, p. 76) for instance, parties “colonise” public and state-owned media as a reward strategy aimed at extracting resources from the media such as airtime, frequencies, positions and money. Last but not least partisan media can be used as tools for social mobilization, such as in pre-electoral phases (Roudakova, 2012, p. 272).

In turn, media capture or “instrumentalization”, a concept used by Hallin and Mancini (2004), relates to a failure of the media to attain a sufficient degree of independence in fulfilling its core function of providing information. Instead, “various groups, not just the government” (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2008, p. 91) use it for other, mostly private purposes, including the silencing of negative publicity (Peters, 2003; Stanig, 2015; Vaclav Stetka, 2012b, p. 447), or the furthering of actors’ own careers (Durante & Knight, 2009). These “various groups” include influential business tycoons, often media owners themselves, who use their public influence to further other economic or political goals. These actors have been referred to as non-media diversifiers (Humphreys, 1995), industrialists (Hallin and Mancini 2004), or media moguls (Palmer & Tunstal, 1991). Often non-media diversifiers do not need their

¹² The other two models comprise the liberal type - which includes the US and, to some extent, the UK and is characterized by an early development of press freedom and commercial media - and the Northern European democratic corporatist model, where media systems gained autonomy comparatively early and show fewer signs of political parallelism while being usually equipped with strong public broadcasters (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

media to be profitable if they can be cross-subsidized from other businesses (Gross, 2008), providing them with an unfair advantage on the market since they are able and willing to produce under dumping conditions.¹³ They are prevalent especially in polities with a high degree of institutionalization of informal rules, partly as a consequence of insufficiently regulated privatization processes.

In the Czech Republic for instance the newspaper market is dominated by Andrej Babiš - the agricultural tycoon's publications include two large-circulation national dailies (Mladá Fronta DNES and Lidové noviny) - and coal mogul Zdeněk Bakala, who owns the business daily *Hospodářské noviny*, the two influential weeklies *Respekt* and *Ekonom* as well as the news portal *Aktualne.cz*. In Slovakia two rich tycoons, Patrik Tkáč and Ivan Jakabovič, control the second largest television station TV JOJ and allegedly since 2009 indirectly the daily *Pravda* (Jebril, Stetka, & Loveless, 2013, p. 16). This list could be continued for Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. The two Western European celebrities of the media tycoon class, Silvio Berlusconi and Rupert Murdoch, also further their businesses through impacting on the independence of their media.

Berlusconi controlled more than half of the Italian television market through his Mediaset television company. When he was still PM he also had a say in a large part of the public broadcaster RAI through the institutionalized informal party political division of the public media. Berlusconi made use of his influence through "his" editor-in-chief at the public TV station Tg1 to eliminate criticism, report on government policies in a positive light and spread a favourable perspective on his numerous court trials (Cornia, 2014, p. 66).

Rupert Murdoch, too, expanded his media empire partly by making use of collusive practices. His support for politicians such as Thatcher and the Tories in the UK or Labour in Australia, earned him commercial favours on many occasions (Leapman, 1994; McNair, 2000, p. 150). Following several trustworthy testimonies, Murdoch sought the support of the leader of the Scottish National Party Alex Salmond in his bid for the television channel BskyB, asked former British PM John Mayor to

¹³ Generally, media moguls can incur heavy losses since captured media often decrease in informative value as a result of the visible influence and their negative reputation (Bignon & Flandreau, 2012).

change his policies on Europe, and successfully pushed Tony Blair to drop the limitation of cross-media ownership in exchange for positive reporting (Milne, 2012).¹⁴

In my usage of media capture and collusion, I concentrate on the systemic level of agent-politicians, supervisor-publishers and principal-citizens and therefore distinguish capture from undue influence on individual journalists. This especially relates to the practice of many politicians to keep house journalists who receive exclusives in return for their professional distance. In some cases this is accompanied by self-censorship or undue cooperation as some journalists are ideologically biased (Bovitz, Druckman, & Lupia, 2002), or corrupt (Besley & Prat, 2006).

In adaptation to the above usages of the term media capture I additionally introduce a systematic and a temporal dimension which differentiates the “occasional” and often corruptive placement of articles from the continuous impact on the editorial policy of a media outlet. Therefore, in modification of the definition of state capture from the World Bank (Hellman & Kaufmann, 2001) and in line with the above conceptualization of particularism, I define media capture as the efforts of an individual or an organization to permanently and systematically shape media publications and journalists’ public opinions according to their own preferences by providing illicit private gains to journalists, editors or media owners.

According to this understanding and in contrast to the literature on media bias, shaping media publications goes beyond mere partisan bias, undue influence or politicization and is usually not ideological but commercial in nature. The following section develops media capture in principal-agent terms and extracts the causal mechanisms that explanations of ex-ante and ex-post control are built on.

¹⁴ The former executive of Murdoch’s News International, Andrew Neil, noted that “Blair privately made it clear to Murdoch that how a future Labour government would treat his multifarious media interests in Britain depended on how Murdoch’s papers treated Blair and the Labour party during the (1997, *TM*) campaign.” (cited after McNair, 2000, p. 153).

1.4.2. The principal-agent perspective on party leadership selection

The principal-agent problem starts off with a principal delegating tasks to an agent. This act of delegation entails a number of theoretical problems: the relationship between the two is likely to be formed under conditions of asymmetric information. The agent – who is usually an expert – is not only better informed than his principal but also has the opportunity to misrepresent this information towards the latter in order to reduce his transaction costs. As a consequence, the agent can become dominant in the relationship where the principal is reliant on the agent for important information.

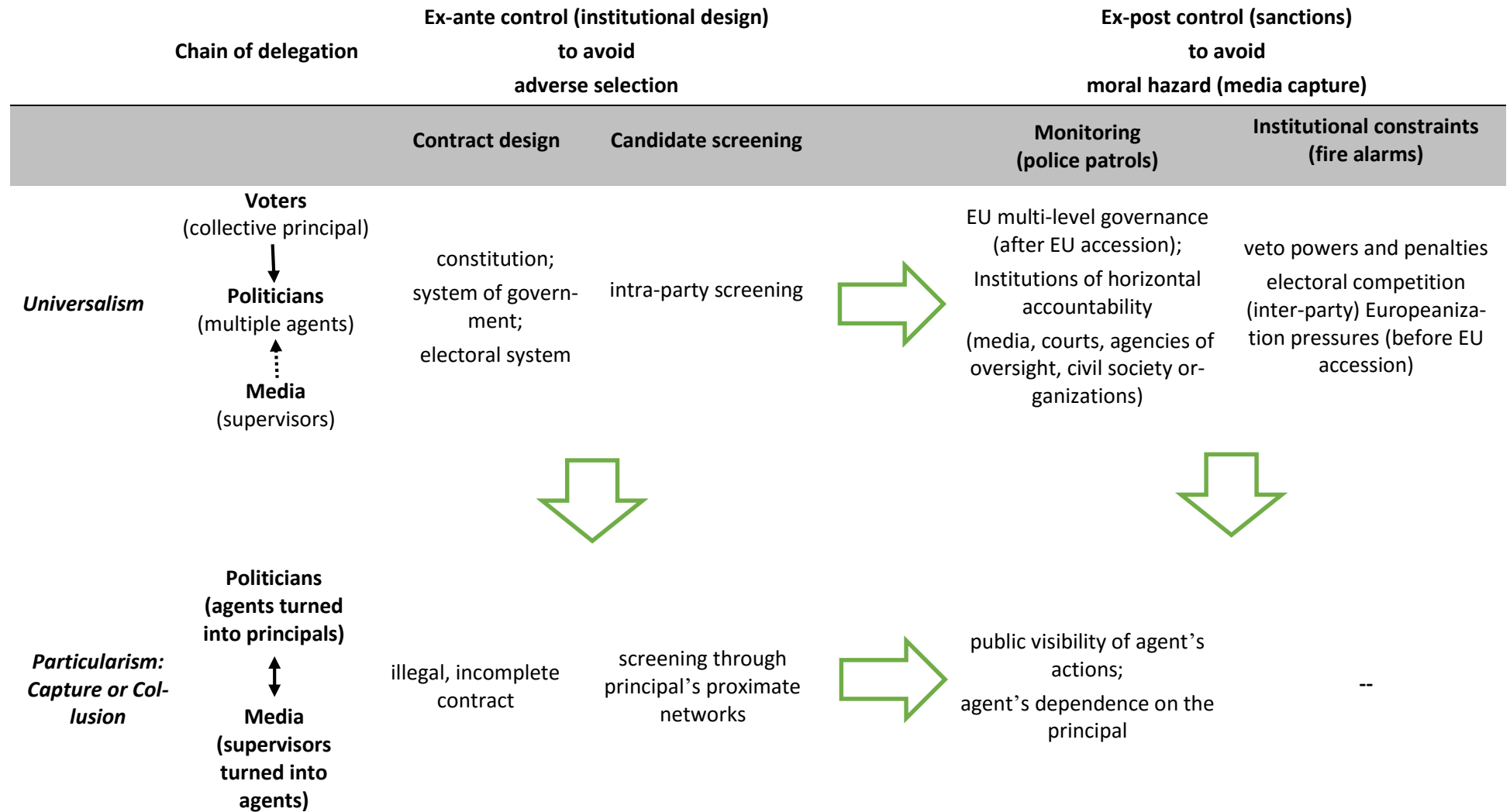
The ensuing problem of moral hazard consists in the divergence of the agent's actions from the principal's preferences following the former's temptation to extract benefits from this informational advantage over his principal.¹⁵ This problem is especially salient in situations where agents face incentives and opportunities to take hidden action to the detriment of the principal's interest (Strøm, 2003, p. 62). Additionally, principals are potentially susceptible to adverse selection, according to which information deficits about the type of agent potentially mislead the principal to choose an agent who shirks to further his private gain.

The literature on principal-agent theory (Calvert, McCubbins, & Weingast, 1989; Kiser, 1999; Lane, 2007; McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984; Miller, 2005; Moe, 2005a, 2005b; Strøm, 2003; Waterman & Meier, 1998) identifies four basic mechanisms through which agency costs can be contained: *contract design*, *ex-ante screening* of agents, *monitoring* and *institutional checks*. As the figure below shows, there are two directions of control reinforcement (represented by the four arrows): firstly, on the horizontal level, where ex-ante controls are effective, ex-post controls lose significance. Secondly, with respect to the vertical chain of delegation, where universalistic delegation from citizens to politicians is effective (for instance where free and fair elections are largely in place), politicians will find it difficult to shirk on their principals.

¹⁵ This problem is often framed as “policy drift” or “bureaucratic drift”.

The following matrix provides an overview over these patterns of agency control. It contains both the explanandum, media capture and collusion as part of a particularistic chain of delegation, and the explanans, intra-party dynamics, as part of ex-ante control mechanisms to address adverse selection.

Accountability mechanisms to control agency costs



The above universalistic delegation chain spans from principal-citizens delegating to agent-politicians, where politicians are selected by cohesive parties, popularly elected by parliament to the executive. Where politicians behave universalistically, media and the public prosecutor are completely free to monitor agent-politicians in principal-citizens' interest. As the above table illustrates, in parliamentary democracies universalistic agent-politicians are monitored by publishers or the judiciary in a single delegation chain (as opposed to two parallel chains in (semi-)presidentialism).

Politicians behaving particularistically capture supervisors into principal-agent relationships or engage in reciprocal collusion. As briefly touched upon in the foregoing section, the outcome of media capture and collusion is the same, since in both cases, supervisor-publishers and agent-politicians behave like a single player (Celik, 2008). While a second supervisor, such as a de-jure independent public prosecutor, can potentially alleviate this problem, he can also, depending on the degree of his autonomy, participate in a collusive triangle between the agent and the first supervisor (Kofman & Lawarree, 1996). Especially transitional democracies often suffer from strong executives with wide leeways following the factual collusion between agents and supervisors.

Capture and collusion differ in how they are initiated since media can be either unilaterally forced into cooperation by politicians as in capture, or publishers engage in what Mancini and Zielonka refer to as an informal mode of "dirty togetherness" where supervisor-publishers collude with agent-politicians in order to cheat on principal-citizens. In capture, rents are collected by politicians at the cost of publishers and citizens, while in collusion politicians extract, together with publishers, rents from principal-citizens. In this sense, media can be both "victims and predators" (Mancini & Zielonka, 2012, p. 381).

Particularism such as collusion can be prevented by ex-ante and ex-post mechanisms of control, as depicted on the vertical pane of the above illustration. Control mechanisms in parliamentarism are based on ex-ante screening, which has been primarily discussed in contexts of Congressional control over a shirking bureaucracy (McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984) or in terms of how citizens can hold their agent-politicians to account in parliamentary democracies (Strøm, Müller, & Bergman, 2003). Given

that the bulk of problems in parliamentarism derive from adverse selection rather than moral hazard, some scholars ascribe ex-ante mechanisms such as screening and candidate selection clear advantages over ex-post mechanisms of control (Strøm, 2003, p. 93; Weingast & Moran, 1983). Transitional parliamentary systems where these ex-ante screening mechanisms are weakly developed are particularly vulnerable, because in a system with only one delegation chain this chain can only be as strong as its weakest link (Geddes, 1994).

In this context, the internal candidate screening of parties in transitional democracies is as important as it is weak, since leadership selection and de-selection mechanisms often produce dominant party leaders with little specified mechanisms of accountability (Hellmann, 2012; Spoerri, 2008). At the same time, especially in parliamentary settings the leaders of large parties often become prime minister, which in many polities renders the party internal selection processes more important than the election itself (Hazan & Rahat, 2010, p. 12; Ranney, 1981, p. 103; Schattschneider, 1942, p. 64).

Intra-party screening as a selection mechanism that applies ex-ante has therefore theoretical advantages over ex-post control because it applies early in candidate selection and at a particularly vulnerable stage in the sense that there is a high likelihood of agency loss through adverse selection. Ex-ante drivers are particularly effective because they affect calculations and incentives of actors already at the stage of candidate selection, while ex-post drivers are more concerned with sanctioning particularism than with preventing it from happening in the first place.

In this context Strøm (2003, p. 85) rightly argues that agency loss in the form of moral hazards such as rent-seeking or corruption is difficult to detect ex-ante given that it is more likely to result from temptation than from institutional design. Therefore, in order to reap the efficiency benefits of ex-ante control in detecting types prone to rent-seeking, I argue that effective screening mechanisms need to incorporate a temporal and a multi-level dimension for party members to monitor the behaviour of their intra-party agents' over time.

To this end I develop a three step explanation for PMs' cooperation with publishers: firstly, party leaders who are well rooted in their parties (understood as the level of participation of party-internal bodies in the selection process of party leaders) do not need media support for infighting with their intra-party competitors. Secondly, party leaders are only attractive for collusive cooperation to publishers if they eventually manage to control their parties and eradicate serious contestation. My aim here is to explain the propensity of publishers to engage or not engage in systematic media capture. Thirdly, the mode of intra-party competition is connected to the mode of particularism later used by PMs.

1.4.3. Explaining media capture with intra-party dynamics

1.4.3.1. Embedding the explanation in the literature

The connection between party leadership selection mechanisms and intra-party democracy is increasingly coming to the fore of party research. The discussion of party leader selection mechanisms to date, however, predominantly concerns the inclusiveness and competitiveness of the leadership selectorate and party leaders' term lengths (Cross, 2013, p. 216).

Parties have been broadly described as screening devices, which, as cohesive organizations can serve as ex-ante controls for citizens to reduce adverse selection by only admitting politicians as candidates with "appropriate beliefs, values and skills" for public office (Strøm, Müller, Bergman, & Nyblade, 2003, p. 651). The concept of rootedness essentially aims at a specification of this screening effect of political parties, through which the party in public office is reproduced (Katz, 2001).

In the literature on political parties screening is mostly mentioned in the context of coherent party platforms and identifiable party labels enabling voters to make an informed choice between candidates. The literature so far has a quantitative emphasis, analyzing the reasons for change of leadership selection procedures (Cross & Blais, 2012b) and the reasons for party leader survival (Ennsner-Jedenastik & Müller, 2011, 2015). Aragón (2013) has found a robust positive relation between dem-

ocratic nomination procedures of presidential candidates and the quality of government in Latin America. While this literature has contributed to finding reasons for and, to some extent, effects of leadership selection, there is virtually no research on the actual mechanisms clarifying how parties work as screening devices, the role leadership selection plays in it and how it impacts on party leaders' future actions as PMs.

Selectorate theory argues that political leaders require certain levels of support in order to retain their position (Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson, & Smith, 2002). This is corroborated by empirical findings from a comprehensive study of post-war party leaders in Austria, showing that one percent change in party leaders' internal support alters the risk of their removal by five to seven percent (Ennsner-Jedenastik & Müller, 2011, 2015).

I theorize that when leaders lose this internal backing they are more likely to turn to other, possibly external sources of support. This theoretical argument is applied empirically in the chapter on intra-party competition, laying out how a lack of rooting, understood as party-internal support acquired by a slow rise through multiple levels of the party hierarchy, forced Croatian party leaders to make use of particularistic behaviour to provide a minimum safeguard for their mandate.

The central, often implicit idea is that the more competitive the selection procedure, the better the results in terms of the democratic quality of the selection process. Selection rules determine the degree of accountability of the political leadership (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2002; Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, & Morrow, 2003). They have been classified according to the two classic dimensions of intra-party democracy, centralization and inclusion (Kenig, 2009a). Kenig concludes that a high level of inclusion of the selectorate as in one member one vote systems, for instance, not only does not necessarily translate into a more competitive election process but also often leads to an early front runner who receives a considerable share of the votes (Kenig, 2009b). Ennsner-Jedenastik and Müller (2011) find that Austrian party leaders who were elected in an inclusive process were at a

higher risk of being replaced than those elected in an elite-centred selection process.¹⁶ In other words, party leaders who have internal support networks are less likely to have to engage in infighting – and potentially turning to the press as an external ally.

1.4.3.2. Three steps: rootedness, contestation and institutionalization of rules

The three steps of this explanation refer to (1) the party-internal *rooting* affecting the incentives of party leaders to seek publishers' support, (2) the incentives publishers face to initiate collusion based on party leaders' *contestation* and (3) the factor that influences whether party leaders engage in formal or informal particularism: the *institutionalization of rules* within their parties. I differentiate between rootedness and contestation: while both relate to the stability of party leadership, rootedness explains incentive structures for party leaders, contestation incentive structures for publishers.

Firstly, in the effect it has on the incentives of party leaders to seek publishers' support, rootedness implies that politicians have successfully worked their way through the party hierarchy and been repeatedly entrusted with higher levels of party leadership as a result of their success in convincing fellow party members interested in the collective success of their party. Repeated interactions in intra-party elections at local and regional level, and the long-term persuasion of their fellow party members give party politicians the opportunity to knit support networks which sustain them later, when they acquire party leadership. A rooted party leader has natural control over the party since compliance is voluntary and social control in democracies is exerted through cooperation (Merkel et al., 2003, p. 231). This acceptance is a consequence of rising through the levels of the party hierarchy, having successfully built a support coalition.

Non-rooted politicians in contrast, have acquired party leadership without going through this system of multi-level party internal ex-ante checks, for instance by quasi appointment of a predecessor or simply by imposition. They did not have to rise through the ranks but were promoted, appointed or

¹⁶ They find that party leader selection by the executive reduces the risk of being ousted by 75% (Ennsner-Jedenastik & Müller, 2011, p. 11).

otherwise swept into office and are therefore more likely to antagonize others who have diligently worked their way towards the top. Non-rooted politicians do not have a home base of support and need to ex-post consolidate their party leadership, usually by side-lining and eliminating competitors. Given that they do not have an intra-party coalition to sustain them, they have incentives to turn to extra-party sources of support, such as the media, in order to discredit their competitors and secure their position. Where party leaders are rooted, they do not need external help in consolidating their positions. This in turn will probably reduce their interest in media capture or collusion and the game ends there.

The concept of contestation aims at showing how party-internal opposition affects the conditions under which publishers move, or do not move, to engage in collusion. Politicians have to appear as credible and reliable partners to publishers. As such, executive politicians do not only have to be willing to engage in cooperation; they also need to be undisputed within their parties and thereby powerful enough to secure the rewards for positive reporting, such as tax relief or tax paybacks. High-level politicians are not attractive for collusion when they are seriously and constantly contested, because this potentially reflects on their capacity to provide publishers with spoils, neutralises their potential to induce sanctions, and simultaneously damages the latter's reputation, should a supported politician eventually fail to be re-elected.

The extent and quality of party-internal contestation is therefore a signal to publishers of whether politicians will be able to deliver on spoils. Where contested party leaders come to party-internal power and seek media support, publishers make calculations on whether or not to support them, depending on their prospects of convincingly disciplining their parties. When, in this scenario, publishers are supportive of a party leader seeking permanent and systematic cooperation, the outcome is collusion. Where publishers do not see the particular politician as a promising candidate (or refrain from collusion for other reasons) and withhold support, politicians might want to force the publisher to cooperate by unilaterally capturing a media organ.

Rootedness is loosely related to contestation, as rooted party leaders are less likely to be contested, whereas non-rooted politicians provoke contestation by the way they came to party-internal power. This relationship, however, is non-determinate since most if not all party leaders in democratic systems are bound to be contested at some point in their careers.

Consequently, even though both concepts, rootedness and contestation, are related to party leaders' survival at the top of their parties, they differ in important ways that are relevant to the argument advanced here. While rootedness builds on existing quantitative measures gauging party-internal support such as the size of the selectorate or the length of statutory terms (Ennser-Jedenastik & Müller, 2015), it is more related to the *process* of acquiring central office, because it is the quality of this process which is relevant for whether party leaders need publishers' support.

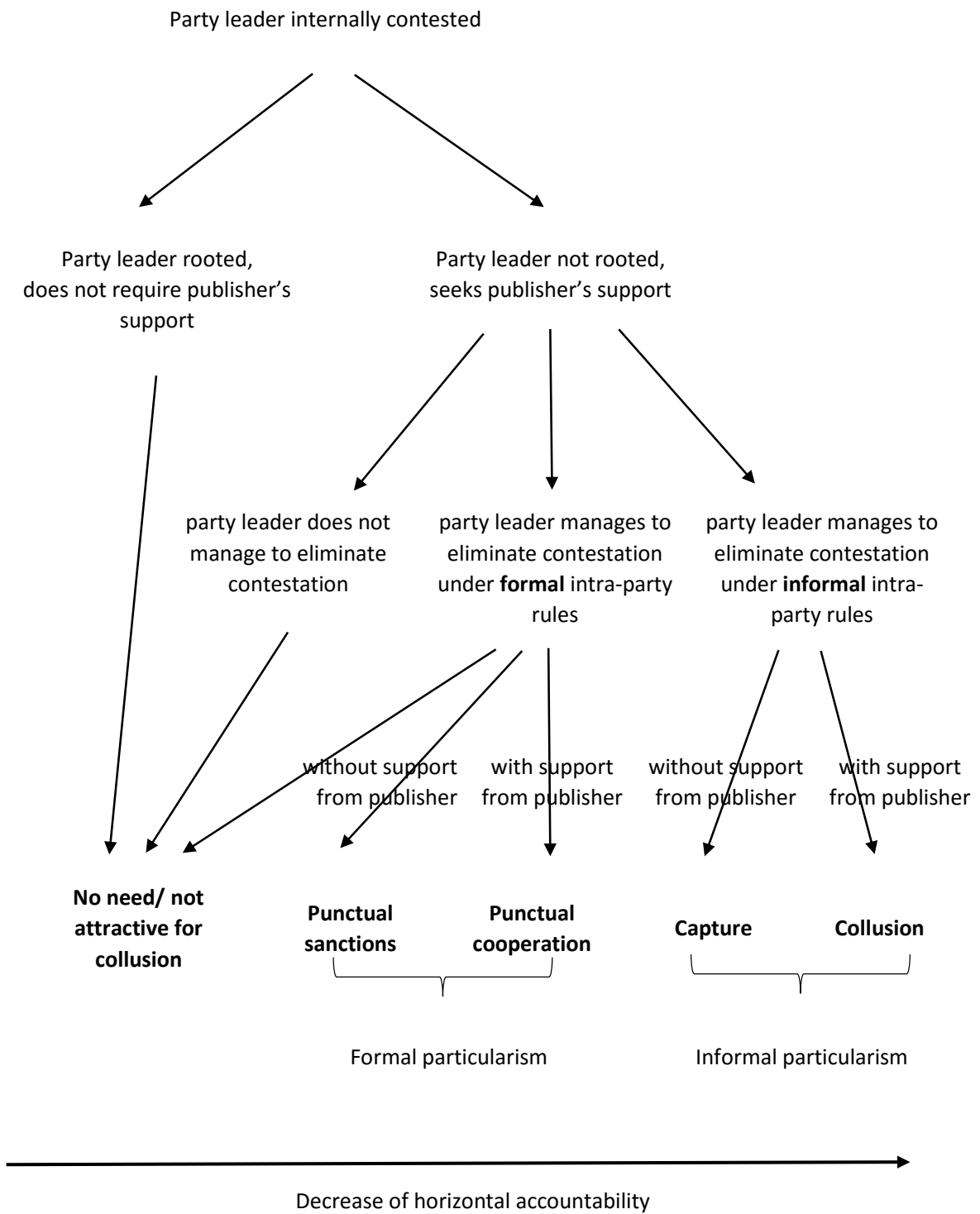
Contestation is in turn comparable to measures related to the level of party-internal competition (as seen in Kenig, 2009a, 2009b), but, again, is more concerned with the quality and the process of how party leaders are criticized, attacked and called into question, since it indicates to publishers whether there is something in it for them in providing media support in the first place.

Thirdly, as the empirical chapters show, different PMs use different types of particularism to control media behaviour. While Ivo Sanader made use of informal particularism, for instance when he cut off the financial sources of critical media outlets, Zoran Milanović preferred selective punishment and used formal particularism. I theorize that these types of particularism correspond to the institutionalization of rules within politicians' respective parties. Politicians' choice of informal particularism is therefore likely to correlate with the predominant mode under which they acquired and consolidated party-internal power. These modes consist in the institutionalization of either formal or informal rules of party-internal accountability, which will be further specified below.

The following figure provides an overview of these three steps and the causal links I expect to observe. The explanatory links made here are stylized in that they depict simplified patterns of interac-

tion. They should not be considered the exclusive causes of certain outcomes, nor deterministic, implying necessity in their mutual relationships.

Overview of the causal steps of the argument



1.4.3.3. Actor's resources

In this game, both players command certain resources and threat potentials. Depending on the circulation a publisher reaches with his media, politicians do not likely engage in open confrontation with publishers, given that openly attacking a publishers' position on the market can be a risky business for politicians, as numerous examples from the Western world and especially Rupert Murdoch demonstrate. Gordon Brown, for instance was shot down by Murdoch (Watson & Hickman, 2012, p. 10) at about the same time that Jadranka Kosor was dropped by Ninoslav Pavić (see chapter on universalism). Politicians aren't defenceless in this game since publishers require at least the silent permission of politicians in order to extract rents from cross-media ownership.¹⁷ These rents are endangered where publishers for instance communicate politicians' true corruptive types. But even when politicians decide to fight publishers it is something they'd rather avoid since these fights can be very costly.

Publishers in turn are interested in maintaining a certain level of government criticism because (1) informative news and critical reporting of politicians positively correlates with higher circulation (Bignon & Flandreau, 2012) and (2) it bolsters their negotiation position vis-à-vis PMs, who have to pay a higher price if they want to suppress these criticisms. They sanction politicians using "blat", through "slanting" (Bignon & Flandreau, 2012), or "kompromat" (Örnebring, 2012) - labels for "mudslinging" by journalists, spreading accusations, initiating rumours and incriminating certain individuals as a means of harassment.¹⁸ In contrast, "advertorials" (Örnebring, 2012) refer to concealed advertisements for certain individuals and include uncritical interviews and prominently placed news about the successful finalization of an infra-structure project in the pre-electoral phase.

¹⁷ This argument obviously extends to legal rent extraction such as lowering tax rates for media, which requires politicians' active formal consent.

¹⁸ Even though "slanting" politicians can also be a function of the preferences of readers (Mullainathan & Shleifer, 2005), conceptually and empirically I focus on slanting as a form of centrally ordered, strategic sanction. I differentiate between them empirically based on the narratives extracted from the interviews with journalists.

1.4.3.4. Scope conditions of the explanation

The application of this explanation to the case studied here is contingent on scope conditions which alter or moderate the causal explanation laid out above. I will therefore briefly discuss three scope conditions and the extent to which they limit or mediate media capture and collusion: the concentration of media ownership in a given market, the role of media cartels, and the degree to which foreign (i.e. Western) media ownership might contribute to more media independence.

1.4.3.4.1. Media and ownership concentration

While ownership concentration in economic terms entails a limitation of competition, in contemporary media studies there is no clear consensus as to whether ownership concentration leads to more or less plurality of media content. Even though scholars do agree that the final outcome of whichever level of ownership concentration needs to be pluralism of content (Doyle, 2002), this question is mostly discussed axiomatically rather than on the basis of evidence (Barnett, 2010). At the same time a majority of scholars support the hypothesis that ownership concentration diminishes diversity of media content (Peruško & Popović, 2008, p. 165).

Arguments supporting the beneficial aspects of concentration are primarily economic in nature, in particular the cost-effective usage of resources, lower cost of news, improved access to international news, better news management, and easier access to news technology (Ofcom, 2006). The disadvantages are in turn discussed in terms of the quality of democracy. According to this argument a pluralistic media scene is important for freedom of expression because it increases the opportunities to “tell truth to power” (Barnett, 2010). The diversity of suppliers is crucial since the zero-sum nature of a shrinking market translates into rising influence for the remaining suppliers (Meier & Trapfel, 1998). In a similar vein, according to Besley and Prat (2006), pluralism of media ownership reduces the probability of media capture, since when the government bribes a media outlet to suppress information, the revenue of competing outlets increases because they face less competition in

providing relevant news. Case studies of countries such as Slovenia and the Ukraine highlight the dangers of undermining democracy that stem from ownership concentration (Ramet & Kuhar, 2012; Ryabinska, 2011). Also the Croatian case will show that artificially high levels of ownership concentration facilitated media capture and collusion.

1.4.3.4.2. Media cartels

As the subsequent chapters will show, a media cartel has been in place in Croatia since 1997 influencing the causal relations in the above explanation. Under the conditions of a media cartel the participating media do not engage in “media wars”, which due to their revealing nature can contribute to favourable developments (Jakubowicz & Sükösd, 2008b, p. 12). As will be seen in the following chapters, the Croatian media cartel was characterized by a complete lack of attacks among the participating media (owners).

Price cartels moreover enable publishers to extract much higher profits from their product than they would be able to under conditions of a functioning market. It can safely be assumed that the prices of the mainstream media in Croatia were fixed - above the value that demand alone would have created, of course.¹⁹ Secondly, according to the argument quoted above, media pluralism provides effective protection against capture (Besley & Prat, 2006). Under the reverse conditions of a media cartel (understood as the lack of any meaningful competition) this implies drastically reduced costs for governments to silence and capture all mainstream media outlets, as happened during the time of PM Sanader. It also increases political leverage for publishers who can coordinate their influence and increase their effectiveness. The existence of a media cartel therefore further removes market controls for publishers and reinforces undesirable developments from a perspective of democratization.

¹⁹ Direct evidence for this general behaviour is mentioned in the chapter on particularism, where the owners of the two big political weeklies in 2008 colluded on a price increase to 14 Kuna for products which, in their own words, were worth 7-8 Kuna at most (Index.hr, 2010d).

1.4.3.4.3. Foreign ownership

Foreign ownership has in the past been mentioned as having a limiting influence on media capture and non-transparent media practices. For Slovenia, Beachboard and Beachboard (2006) advance that foreign ownership was what made investigative journalism possible in the first place. In a three-country comparison Stetka (2013) found that levels of foreign media ownership positively co-varied with levels of autonomy of investigative journalists.

More sceptical accounts point to the fact that there are no indications that foreign media ownership necessarily has a positive impact on media independence (Lauk, 2009). Moreover, as will be seen, foreign media ownership in Croatia, too, has not contributed to more pluralism of media content. In one case the Swedish Bonnier group secured investigative reporting that proved to be resilient even against pressure from the PM office. However, when the investigative weekly was financially pressured with an enduring advertisement boycott, Bonnier eventually opted to close down its operations. In another case the German WAZ group owned a considerable share of the EPH group (50%) until it left the Croatian market in 2014. Despite numerous allegations of media capture and collusion, discussed at more length below, there has been no response from the German media enterprise, which exclusively pursued its financial goals. Also Styria, the Austrian owner of Večernji List, didn't prevent Ivo Sanader and others from intensively influencing the editorial policy of the newspaper at certain times.

1.5. Conclusion

In this introduction I have set out a framework to study how particularism in the guise of limiting horizontal accountability developed in post-Tudjman Croatia and how it responded to various drivers. I have developed particularism as a concept for grappling with the executive's transgressions in order to appropriately label harassment by the state as 'lawful' and 'legalistic' and to identify differences in the way they limit horizontal accountability.

In addressing central gaps in the literature, I have developed an explanation which emphasizes the role of intra-party dynamics in incentivizing politicians to capture media or to collude with them. I have discussed several alternative factors and specifically detailed the drivers of inter-party competition and Europeanization, which explain some of the shifts between particularism and universalism, albeit not enough to fully make sense of them.

This thesis is structured as follows. The subsequent chapter discusses the methods of data collection and data analysis used in this thesis, comprising (1) semi-structured interviews to reconstruct in-depth collusion relationships between politicians and publishers over time and (2) sentiment analysis of a large number of news articles of eight media outlets covering the time between January 2000 and September 2014. Chapter three provides a historical overview over the 1990s, the incentives provided by Croatia's presidential-parliamentary system to political actors, central context conditions such as the war, the sweeping elite changes that accompanied it and their impact on the transition in the media. Based on the interviews, chapters four and five present and discuss the shifts between particularism and universalism since 2000 and, in passing, apply the drivers of inter-party competition and Europeanization. Chapter six presents the results from the sentiment analysis and discusses how they support or contradict the narratives laid out before. Chapter seven applies the framework of rootedness and contestation and demonstrates how the modes of intra-party competition and leadership selection relate to the shifts in particularism and universalism identified earlier. The conclusion synthesizes the empirical and theoretical answers to the questions posed in this introduction, discusses policy implications and suggests directions of further research.

2. Measurement and methods of data collection

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the choice of the case I analyse and my ways of measuring the concepts presented in the introduction. In the first section I justify the case selection and discuss the explanatory application of this study's findings to a wider group of cases. Since the main focus of this thesis lies on gauging variation in horizontal accountability as operationalized in media freedom, I devote the largest part of this chapter to introducing the qualitative and quantitative strategies I employ in reaching this goal. The later sections deal with data collection to measure variation in the independent variable. Given the explanatory focus on qualitative processes and developments in the way rootedness and contestation influenced patterns of capture and collusion, I correspondingly focus on techniques of qualitative measurement.

2.2. The case study method

While this thesis uses principal-agent theory to theorize actors' incentives in formal or informal delegative systems, it seeks in particular to refine explanations for politicians' behaviour.

Accordingly, case selection has followed three parameters identified as important in identifying suitable cases. Firstly, cases need to be representative of the dimensions of theoretical interest (particularism in the media), and, secondly, need to show useful variation in the dependent and independent variables (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Thirdly, the Croatian case is particularly appropriate for studying the effects of traditional drivers of Europeanization and inter-party competition since the variation in these variables seems to be independent of the shifts in particularism, as will be seen in subsequent chapters.

The single case characteristics exploited here allowing for intensive study of the interaction of factors over time simultaneously limit the generalizability of conclusions. As a consequence of the limited explanatory reach, verification or falsification of the hypotheses cannot produce external validity be-

yond the Croatian case and thus does not allow inferences that might lead to theoretical generalizations. It can, however, produce internally valid results and thus generate hypotheses that can be further tested in a larger case sample (Collier & Mahoney, 1996, p. 71).

Hence, the hypothesis introduced in the previous chapter and applied in chapter seven has been developed with the larger region of South-Eastern Europe and European post-socialist countries in mind.²⁰ Croatia is representative of particularism in the media in the context of SEE and CEE, as will be seen later in this chapter, and therefore generally suitable to develop causal mechanisms, even though, again, the primary objective here is to develop a hypothesis.

Secondly, the main means of making inferences about the causal relationship is the co-variation between intra-party dynamics and shifts between particularism and universalism over time. The Croatian case is especially suited to illuminating particularistic shifts since it includes considerable variation in the dependent variable. There have been frequent changes in horizontal accountability during the fifteen-year period analysed here. Simultaneously, the variation in the independent variable, i.e. rootedness and contestation of party leaders, corresponds to the movements between particularism and universalism.

Thirdly, Croatia went through a second democratic transformation after the first system change to democracy in 1990 had resulted in a hybrid regime. Elections and electoral competition, which are usually employed to explain these changes, can, however, only explain a part of what can be observed in terms of particularism. The “second transformation” leading towards proper democracy has been at least partially reversed - under conditions that commonly explain democratic improvement: “robust” party competition, and Europeanization. In other words, under rather detrimental conditions a universalistic development unfolded, while a few years later a democratic regression took place at a time when context factors were actually conducive to more universalism. The fact that these traditional drivers don’t seem to have worked as they did in other countries makes Croatia

²⁰ As a consequence of fundamental differences in party development across world regions and resulting party types, party development and intra-party dynamics are phenomena which can be meaningfully compared only in a European context, if findings are to avoid conceptual stretching and to produce valid results (Sartori, 1970).

a particularly appropriate case to study. At the same time, the co-variation between the dependent variable (i.e. the level of particularism at state level) and independent variables (intra-party setup) at high and low values (Van Evera, 1997) provides solid conditions for causal inference (Geddes, 1990; King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994).

As discussed earlier I study Croatia's executive politicians since 2000 as six within-cases over time. Within-case methods of causal interpretation, such as (1) "analytic narratives" (or "analytic explanation", see Bates, Greif, Levi, Rosenthal, & Weingast, 1998; George & Bennett, 2005, p. 211) and (2) within-case comparison (George & Bennett, 2005) depict an interaction process that is deduced from both the empirical evidence and the theory. It is used as a form of process tracing creating causal links between observable results and possible outcomes.²¹ Moreover, the diachronic comparison induces us to conceptualise actor's constellations in terms of evolving networks, rather than rigid antagonisms.

Principal-agent theory is particularly appropriate when theorizing about these changing relationships between citizens, politicians and supervisors and has been used above to formulate hypothetical explanations for the identified puzzles. Recognizing the limits of a single case approach (as well as the limits of the relatively general principal-agent theory) this thesis does not seek to test the principal-agent approach. However, using the framework as an "engine of empirical discovery" it structures the reconstruction of actors' incentives at a micro-level, especially in instances where their behaviour cannot be directly observed. Thereby the historical analysis is "disciplined by both logic and the empirical record" (Bates et al., 1998). If available, details will also be given of competing explanations and the reasoning that led to their dismissal.

Comparatively confident estimates of causal effects are possible in case studies with controlled within-case comparisons. These comparisons follow the change in the intra-party setup while controlling for Europeanization and electoral competition (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 166; Lijphart, 1971, p.

²¹ In order for process tracing to constitute a valid argument it needs to fulfil certain conditions, such as the establishment of uninterrupted causal paths at the appropriate levels of analysis, and avoiding false positives or false negatives by avoiding measurement error or underspecified theories (George & Bennett, 2005).

689). In cases where more than one variable changes it is necessary to apply process tracing to determine their potential impact on the outcome.

In order to circumvent the problem of multiple convergence arising with the similar effects of intra-party setup and inter-party competition I have detailed differentiated drivers and identified different causal patterns which might produce similar outcomes (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 161). Based on the relevant literature I have specified the causal mechanisms of these drivers and their timeframes of impact.

Having clarified the conditions for drawing inferences within the single case studied here, I move on to the measurement of my dependent and independent variables: media capture and intra-party dynamics.

2.3. Measuring media capture

This section refers to the measurement of media capture and collusion. Data collection strategies should aim to collect evidence matching the ideal type of a direct proof as closely as possible. This is, of course, not easy when one is researching informal alliances as a part of covert politics. Researching media capture is therefore a showcase for the often endemic problems of political science, with information treated secretively and with little transparency and official documents usually not available. As Bignon and Flandreau (2012, p. 4) put it, the scattered nature of covert financial flows for instance makes tracing the evidence for hidden relationships a difficult endeavour. One standard research strategy I therefore employ to address these problems consists in triangulation. In particular I corroborate the narratives about collusive practices derived from the interviews with (1) a quantitative large-n data analysis from the “reality” of daily reporting to account for possible validity problems in these narratives and (2) a qualitative analysis of media articles to check for their consistency and reliability.

While (formal) universalism and formal particularism are directly observable, the detection of informal universalism and informal particularism is naturally more difficult and requires a careful reconstruction of events. Obviously, the ideal evidence for these processes consists of the direct testimonies of all important actors and their involvement in collusion and capture as well as their motivations for doing so. While this level of transparency will not be attained because of the naturally secretive character of the affair, the evidence provided here, presented along with the interviews, nonetheless comes relatively close to this ideal scenario. Particularly important here was the systematic use of the Wikileaks database, which contained some pieces of sensitive information that American ambassadors had forwarded to Washington.²²

Moreover, in the course of Ivo Sanader's departure as PM several pieces of evidence were "leaked" to the media, such as text and phone transcripts, secret contracts and the results of police investigations, which provided deep insights into the mechanisms, personal linkages and motivations for media capture. The accuracy of these transcripts has, despite occasional protests from those involved, rarely been denied. Where it was called into question, this will be indicated in the text. All these pieces of evidence were carefully collected and used, together with the interview evidence, to reconstruct the principal-agent relationships. While it is unlikely that all cases of particularism have been uncovered, the depth of the inquiries has generated a considerable amount of detailed data providing a good reason to believe that a fair share of misconduct has seen daylight. In general, since every act of delegation also implies accountability of the agent towards the principal, I expect to find evidence not only for the act of delegation but also for the accountability of the agent in the relationship with his principal.

²² It is difficult to assess the exact reliability of the information transmitted from the American ambassador to Washington because the leaks themselves rarely cite sources, but they seem to be mostly based on background talks and media reports. I will report the original information sources where stated and indicate where pieces of information might be unreliable.

2.3.1. Operationalizing horizontal accountability

The data indicating the shifts between particularism and universalism in horizontal accountability is collected at a micro- and a macro-level.

At the micro level, instances of particularistic and universalistic behaviour are extracted from interviews with Croatian journalists that focus on the relationships of agent-politicians with supervisor-publishers. While formal institutions can easily be compared in large-n analyses based on quantitative data sets, identifying and measuring informal institutions such as particularism requires intensive fieldwork (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004).

This micro-level data will be supported by longitudinal macro-level data relating to media capture. In building this measure, there are good grounds for borrowing from the literature on media bias. The dominant method in measuring media bias or partisan media is still qualitative content analysis. Prominent approaches include longitudinal and comparative studies of several media outlets such as the study of Covert and Wasburn (2009). Other approaches measure the lengths of politicians' air time (Chiang & Knight, 2011), or the impact of government advertising on government corruption reporting (Tella & Franceschelli, 2009). Puglisi and Snyder (2014) measure political positions of media outlets by looking at their positions on concrete ballot propositions. Gans and Leigh (2012) in contrast analyse the ideological affinity between media outlets and political actors based on the political positions of public intellectuals. Hanretty (2010) in his assessment of the political independence of public broadcasters makes use of a measure of political influence on central banks developed by Cukierman. Cukierman (1992) and Cukierman and Webb (1995) measured de-facto independence by looking at the rate of turnover of the chief executive and the extent of formal change in the position of the chief executive in timely proximity to changes in government. MacMillan and Zoido (2004) have established connections between the media and politicians in Peru using judicial evidence documenting financial transactions between the government and the media to suppress information. Bignon and Flandreau (2012) measured the extent and impact of media capture by looking at the pricing of media stocks.

Inspired by principal-agent theory I conceptualise the hypothetical relationship between executives and control institutions in a state of universalism as one between principals (citizens), agents (politicians) and supervisors (control institutions). In a state of particularism (including both the formal and the informal variant) politicians assume a secondary role as principals, establishing a delegation relationship with their de-jure supervisors but de-facto agents.

The basic premise on which this conceptualization rests implies that the de-facto relationships between two de-jure independent actors can be observed in the degree of correlation of their behaviour over time. While particularism represents a measure of the infringement of horizontal accountability, it is operationalized with the degree of editorial independence, and measured by the distance between the governments' preferences and the behaviour of control institutions. Cases showing a systematic absence of media criticism contradicting or at least questioning the government's position suggest that there is a particularistic relationship between the two.

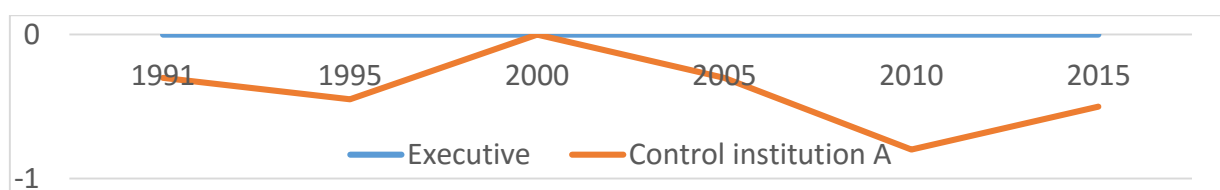
Measuring the distance between these actors' positions has two important advantages: firstly, it avoids the pitfalls of tapping into their formal relationships by assuming that, in universalistic systems, the distance between politicians' preferences and the position of control institutions varies over time. This general assumption underlies a number of approaches measuring media bias, for instance that of Puglisi and Snyder (2014) or Gans and Leigh (2012). Secondly, it is not necessary to explicitly specify politicians' preferences beforehand because the systematic absence of criticism of the political actors by the media in itself indicates particularism.

This is not to say that there are no systematic elements in the relationship between control institutions and executives in democracies. There is for instance evidence that agencies (influenced or even controlled by the U.S. president) anticipate Supreme Court rulings and adapt their actions a-priori accordingly (see Eskridge & Ferejohn, 1992). At the same time, the German federal constitutional court regularly strikes down laws initiated by the government or its supporting parliamentary majority - matters that have far-reaching budgetary repercussions for the government (such as the rul-

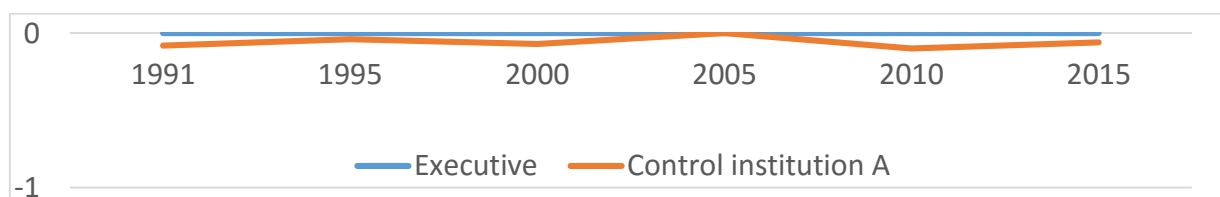
ing on the level of unemployment/ welfare benefits (Bundesverfassungsgericht, 2010)) or which directly affect the rules of power distribution (such as the recent ruling on the German electoral system which reduces the advantage for the ruling CDU/ CSU through the so called overhang mandates (Bundesverfassungsgericht, 2012)).

Distance may also occur simply when executives make miscalculations in their expectations of how legal norms or behaviour will be interpreted by control institutions. Moreover, new governments are regularly elected and new leaders of control institutions are appointed, frequently leading to policy shifts and uncertainties in their anticipation by control institutions. In summary, while there may be both random and systematic elements in the distance between executives and control institutions, over time we should expect to observe variations in the distances between what governments do and what control institutions position themselves as. In contrast, control institutions should be systematically close to the government's position in systems characterized by particularism. The following stylized diagrams illustrate the expected variance between patterns of universalism and particularism.

Expected variance of policy distance in universalism



Expected variance of policy distance in particularism



I operationalize this approach by measuring criticism of Croatian executive politicians in eight Croatian media outlets over 15 years. I use sentiment analysis to automatically analyse 34,407 news articles and to measure the extent of critical reporting from given newspapers to government politicians. Based on a lexicon of positive and negative words, automated sentiment analysis can process large amounts of text and relate measures of criticism to certain politicians.

Having conceptualized the measurement approaches, I will operationalize them in the subsequent sections.

2.3.2. Interviews

2.3.2.1. Approach: semi-structured interviews

The goal of employing semi-structured interviews was to organize interviews along a number of pre-defined topics while at the same time maintaining the space and natural atmosphere to allow new themes to emerge and enable me to explore questions other than those determined in advance. Given that publicly available information is likely to be incomplete, interviews are critical in that they provide a more detailed and coherent picture of events. The aim of interviewing potential targets of undue influence was to show the potential existence of principal-agent relationships between the executive and formally independent supervisors.

Following from the central hypothesis that intra-party dynamics play an important role in determining the likelihood of politicians establishing illegal principal-agent relationships, I aimed at measuring the extent of undue influence on individual and systemic actors in diachronic comparison. Hence data collection concentrated first on collecting concrete instances of attempts to control journalists at an individual level and media at an institutional level. The aim consisted in finding specific and detailed information as to who was involved in establishing principal-agent relationships where there should have been independence and more subtle accounts concerning the mechanics of these relationships over time.

It became obvious during the interviews, that the original intention - counting instances of censorship per minister to measure particularistic behaviour - wasn't feasible because of "untouchable" politicians who manage to suppress not only negative signals about themselves but also the very intervention at higher levels of media publishers. These instances had been observed by journalists only sporadically and therefore made a survey approach impossible (see in more detail especially in chapter five on particularism). This problem was eventually resolved resorting to a large-n sentiment analysis, which I discuss in more detail in the following sections. Sampling resulted in 47 interviews conducted predominantly with investigative journalists who were anonymized in order to protect their identities.

2.3.2.2. Sampling of interviewees

Since politicians are very unlikely to incriminate themselves, I aimed at interviewing primarily investigative journalists given that they were particularly likely to have encountered undue influence. In order to collect data with the least possible bias, two guidelines were followed in the sampling of interviewees. Firstly, since the initial goal was to learn about the extent of political intervention between different governments in comparison, the aim was to sample journalists who had worked during both conservative and social-democratic governments and covered the entire timespan from 2000 until 2014. After it became clear that the quantitative measurement would be carried out through sentiment analysis, these preconditions were somewhat relaxed to increase the precision of the narrative.

Secondly, in order to control for possible political orientations of journalists I aimed at keeping a balance of left- and right-leaning journalists. Further sampling was carried out through snowballing with rough checks run on the ideological backgrounds of journalists, where possible. Snowballing allowed the proportion of respondents with relevant experiences to be increased.²³

²³ Snowballing is particularly helpful where populations are not fully visible and has advantages in the identification of relevant subjects for interview (Tansey, 2007). Snowballing needs to be used with caution, however,

2.3.2.3. Time frame

As mentioned in the introduction, when longer time spans are involved, conducting interviews is “less an exercise in ‘guided conversation’ than in ‘guided reminiscence’” (Davies, 2001, p. 76). A part of the time problem in interviewing relates to significant events that took place in the recent past. These events are likely to overshadow earlier, more distant events. At the same time, however, this effect is cancelled out to some extent through the increased likelihood that past governments’ actions had been under scrutiny for a longer time, that participants in the meantime might have come forward with witness reports or that evidence about potential collusion cases might have become available. In a similar vein, it is likely that recent transgressions are underreported because knowledge about them hasn’t spread yet.

Nostalgia is a further source of possible bias in diachronic comparisons. The mandate of Ivica Račan, who was PM from 2000-2003, is the most distant in time and was both preceded and followed by aggressive encroachments on the media, which may increase the positive evaluation of Račan’s cabinet in direct comparison. The striking absence of concrete examples of political interventions during this time and the consistently positive, sometimes even euphoric, reporting by the great majority of participants suggests, however, that these results will be borne out.

The same bias is likely to distort the perception of Zoran Milanović’s mandate – the last of the four under scrutiny since 2000 – leading to a negatively biased picture. This could be the case because frustrations are not only fresh but expectations of journalists in terms of transparency and correctness were high given the particularistic nature of preceding governments.

because it can lead to respondents with similar characteristics (Seldon & Pappworth, 1983). I have accommodated this concern by trying to preserve a balance between leftist and rightist investigative journalists.

2.3.2.4. Managing the left – right divide

Several interviewees from both conservative²⁴ and more progressive ideological backgrounds confirmed that only a minority of Croatian journalists in the mainstream press are part of more traditional circles.²⁵ Similarly, despite several efforts it proved impossible to find an investigative journalist with a traditional background. While this is by no means a phenomenon limited to Croatia (for instance, see Henningham, 1995) it has implications for the interpretation of the results.

The only group that could clearly be delineated in the sample is the group of traditional journalists. This is partially connected to the fact that those who were called “left-wing” by other journalists often criticized “left-wing” politicians and reported instances of undue influence coming from them. This suggests that the group of interviewees consists of a large centrist block which is seen as left-wing by traditional journalists merely because they are not conservative. Most of these so-called “leftists” for instance provided very critical perspectives on social democratic politicians such as Ivica Račan, Zoran Milanović and Ivo Josipović. Moreover, many of those with a positive memory of Ivica Račan’s time also had a very critical opinion of Zoran Milanović’s mandate. There is therefore reason to believe that the journalists interviewed were reasonably detached from ideological considerations when responding to the questions.

2.3.2.5. No-response issues

The no-response problem occurred mostly with editors or editors-in-chief. Given that editors-in-chief have increasingly become mere extensions of the management in executing editorial policies which are often conceived higher up in the hierarchy, they are also more often “operatively” involved in collusion between publishers and politicians or tycoons. Editors-in-chief have the most relevant information about these collusions, but at the same time, given their often questionable and

²⁴ I will use the term ‘traditional’ to refer to right-wing or conservative journalists, since they use it to refer to themselves.

²⁵ There is a larger group of obscure journalists and bloggers who follow more far-right ideologies and who predominantly work in online portals. They are known for ignoring minimum standards of the journalist profession.

by no means easy position in justifying political taboos to journalists, have obvious incentives not to be open about their roles. Only two editors (at least from the print media; television editors have different functions) agreed to be interviewed in the first place; the others did not respond.

Choosing to interview predominantly investigative journalists, I expect them to openly report government harassment and to provide the necessary background as to the motives, given that they themselves chose their topic of interest, which is consistent with the expectation that their motivation to scrutinize the executive on behalf of the public is genuine. In sum, the no-response problem is not likely to affect the general reliability of the interview data, but it implies that more precise data could have been gathered from editors-in-chief.

2.3.2.6. Other sources of possible bias

Critical journalists who insisted on their independence acquired a reputation among editors-in-chief and politicians for not cooperating. These journalists were put under much less pressure because their sponsors quickly recognized the futility of such efforts. This leads to the obvious conclusion that corrupt or captured journalists are unlikely to report their entanglement in illicit cooperation with politicians. In cases where it later turned out that interviewed journalists were compromised (following frequent statements by their colleagues) the information from these particular interviewees was not taken into account when building the narrative. Journalists are usually compromised as a consequence of corruption, for instance corruption by certain parties, politicians or institutions such as the secret services.

Secondly, interviews were conducted in Zagreb. While the overwhelming majority of journalists live and work in Croatia's capital, this also means that, for papers with a strong regional emphasis such as Slobodna Dalmacija and Novi List, journalists working in the Zagreb offices were somewhat isolated from events in their respective regional headquarters.

More precise data could have been gathered using a sampling strategy targeting journalists from each policy field, newspaper and period in time, since pressures from ministers are aimed at specialized journalists. Given the enormous numbers of interviewees one would end up with following these fields systematically over sources and time, this approach remained beyond the constraints of this doctoral thesis.

2.3.2.7. Analysis of interview data

The criterion for the portion of the interview data to be used to reconstruct the events from 2000-2014 is derived from principal-agent theory and the aim to clarify particularistic relationships of collusion between agents and supervisors. Of special interest was information on the type of contracts between politicians and supervisors, i.e. their lengths, the conditions under which they were established and the conditions under which they ended. What were the incentives for politicians and publishers to engage in cooperation or even in collusion? How did politicians prevent inimical behaviour of their would-be agents? How and why were particular agents chosen by the principals? What did sanctions and rewards look like?

2.3.3. Sentiment analysis

2.3.3.1. Measurement of media politicization and media bias

The disciplines of Politics and Political Sciences have seen a surge in quantitative text and content analysis in recent years, especially in the fields of automated content analyses, such as studies working with word counts and regressions to analyse the prevalence of certain topics in given texts (Rich, 2014) or studies to measure party or policy positions in manifestos and to analyse legal documents, laws or constitutions (Hopkins & King, 2010; Laver, Benoit, Arnold, Hosli, & Pennings, 2005).

There has been substantial sentiment analysis in German and English of financial texts with the ultimate goal of predicting future stock exchange trends by automatically extracting the sentiment con-

tained in financial media articles. The bulk of these publications are found in the fields of computer or information sciences and computational linguistics. Sentiment analysis in political science has to date been used mostly to measure political sentiment within social media, especially Twitter and Facebook. One prominent recent example includes a study by Gary King et al. (2013) which used sentiment analysis to broadly assess how the Chinese state dealt with critical user posts on social media networks.

There is to the best of my knowledge no approach which has used sentiment analysis to measure criticism of individual politicians, as a way of assessing comparative levels of media control, and to compare the results between politicians and over time. This method can not only reveal systematic variations that show how individual politicians successfully influenced the media; it can also assess the degree to which this happens and allows direct comparison of media popularity among politicians. Last but not least, through the comparison of criticism levels among newspapers it reveals media capture.

I expect the automated content analysis to largely confirm the narratives generated from the interviews. That is to say, politicians who have been reported as initiating capture or collusion are more positively reported on, especially in cases where there is an abundance of evidence suggesting or even confirming their corruptive involvement. Given that the main newspapers reported to be part of collusive agreements are often from the opposite political camp (such as in the case of liberal Jutarnji List/ Slobodna Dalmacija and conservative Ivo Sanader), there is also little scope for the confusion of capture/ collusion with political parallelism.

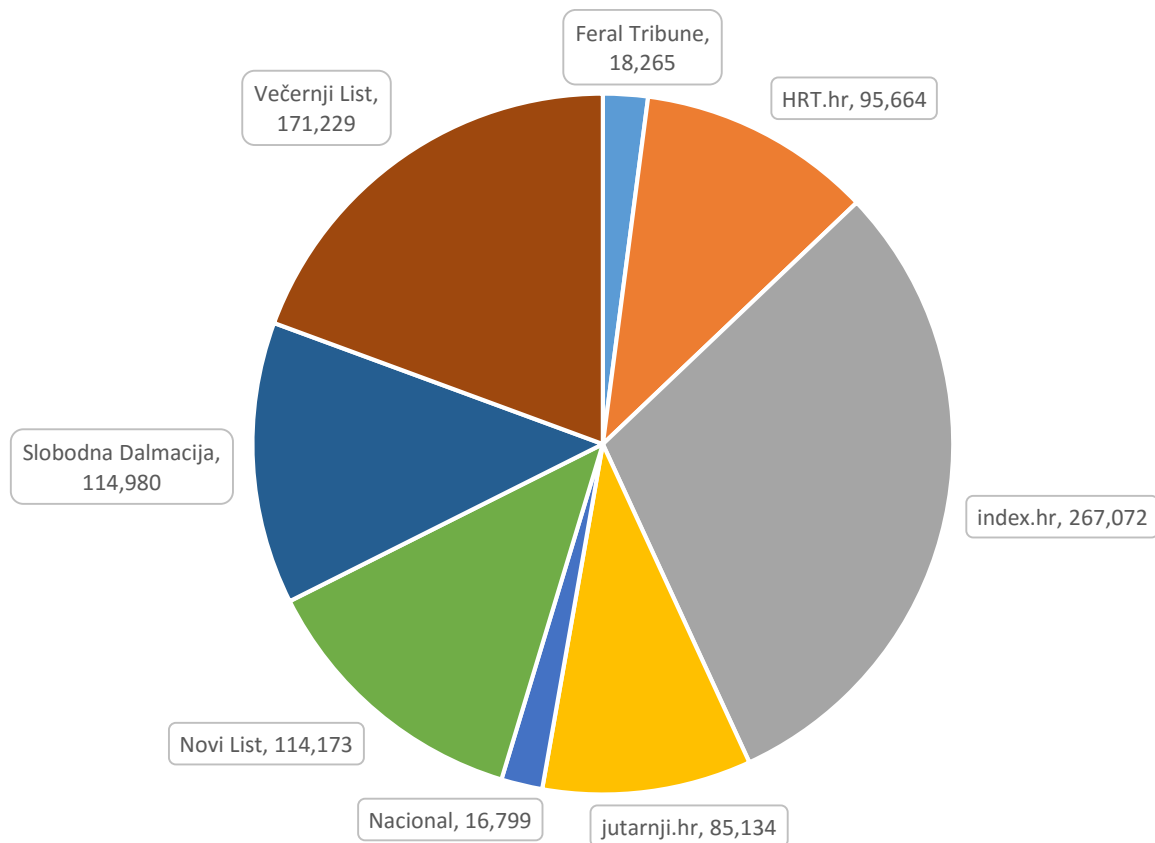
2.3.3.2. Data collection

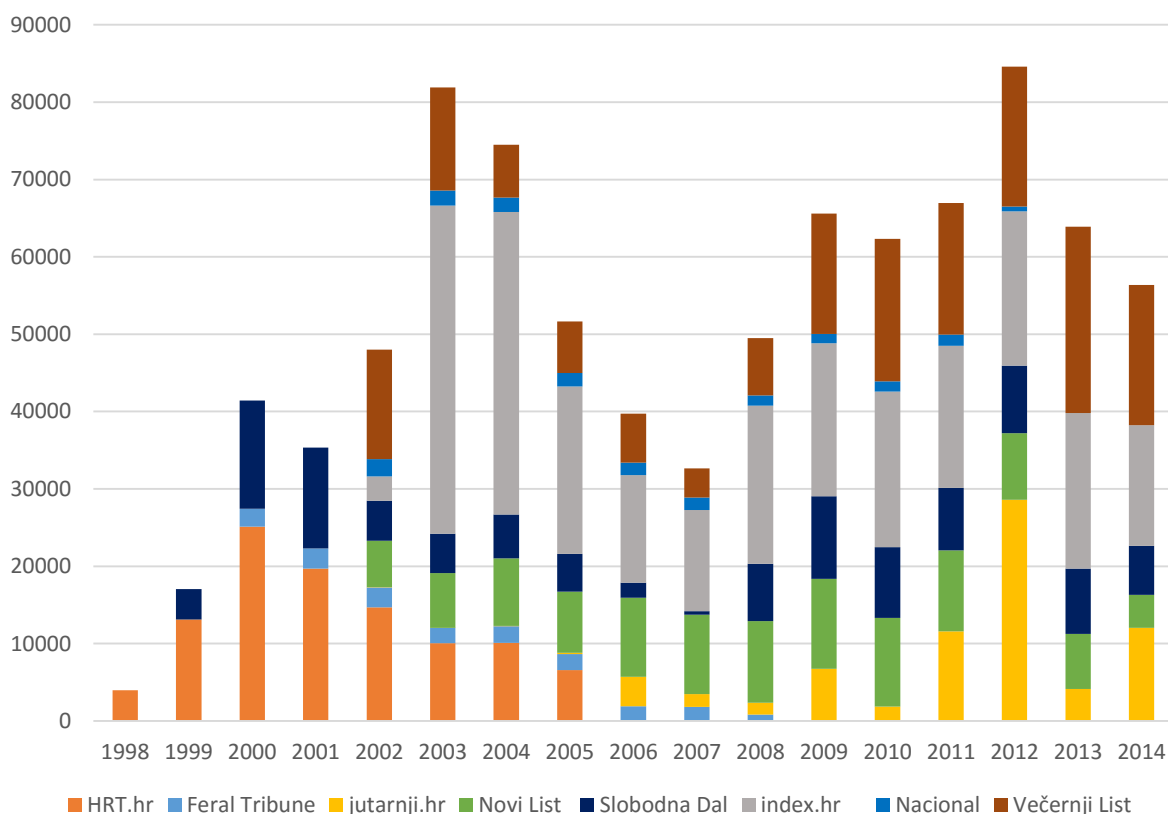
Articles were collected using web scraping, a software-assisted method to gather structured data from websites. Outwit Hub, the software used for scraping is an interface which can be programmed to catch a desired portion of html code on a particular website and then to run this programmed fil-

ter on a list of web addresses. These web addresses (from the individual news articles) were collected beforehand by systematically crawling the online archives of the respective media outlets. Given that the eight news websites not only differ in structure but that these structures have also changed (in some cases frequently) over time, data collection posed a considerable logistical challenge.

Scraping resulted in the following number of articles arranged according to media outlet.

Number of articles by source



Articles by year and source

Since websites in earlier years, for instance index.hr and Slobodna Dalmacija were built manually without much consistency in the application of regular expressions in the source code, some filters are imperfect and in some cases missed whole articles or did not properly catch authors or portions of texts.

Moreover, as it is impossible to ascertain the total number of articles available in a certain web archive, the number of articles not scraped or not properly scraped cannot be exactly specified. Based on random checks²⁶, however, the margin of error seems to be negligible. In the case of Slobodna Dalmacija, frequent changes of the website structure between 1999 and 2008 and an inconsistent application of html code led to a comparatively high loss of articles, estimated at 10-20% for that timespan or roughly 6-12,000 articles from a total of 57,031. This bias is random.

²⁶ To do this, I compared the universe of articles of a website archive as drawn from the crawling process with the number of articles gathered by the scraping process.

The original population of newspaper articles was further reduced by intentionally not scraping texts which were not connected to politics, such as sports, music and culture articles.

2.3.3.3. Availability and quality of the archives

The first Croatian media went online in 1998 and since then the number of media websites has gradually increased. The validity of online articles in representing articles in the printed versions of newspapers depends on a variety of factors, first and foremost on the type of media involved.

Firstly, online portals of non-print media (such as the public broadcaster HRT) offer a text-based news service additional to the broadcast news. Even though the text-based news is likely to reflect the main news broadcast, the online presence represents a news source in its own right. Unfortunately there is no data on public use of the HRT website for the period its archives are available (1998-2005). It can be assumed, however, that especially in the first years readership of the website was high because of (1) the generous funding resources the public broadcaster is known for and (2) its then duopoly position on the online market, which it shared in the first years with Slobodna Dalmacija (the latter opened its online portal in 1999).

Secondly, in the case of index.hr the analysis includes a genuine online news media, which is only published on the internet and does not have a printed equivalent. Thirdly, there are online presences belonging to newspapers that are primarily print-based. This group comprises the weeklies Feral Tribune (available online from 1993-2008), and Nacional (2003-2012), as well as the dailies Slobodna Dalmacija (1999-2014), Jutarnji List (2003-2014), Večernji List (2002-2014), and Novi List (2002-2014).

Of these papers, Feral Tribune, Nacional, Slobodna Dalmacija (until 2008) and Novi List opted to mirror most if not all content from their paper-based titles online behind a paywall. In contrast Jutarnji List, Večernji List and Slobodna Dalmacija (from 2008) established dedicated online editorial offices producing in part specialized online content but also mirroring a selection of the printed material, in

some cases in shortened form.²⁷ Weekend supplements, which are often political in nature are not enclosed in the text body.

There is no data on the extent to which printed content has been published online or to which the material published online follows different editorial guidelines than the printed version. From the interviews, however, it became clear that censorship stretched to the online platforms of the newspapers, with critical articles either being deleted from the website or hidden so they were virtually impossible to find (anonymous interviewee 8).²⁸ At the same time, it should be noted that the scale effect of this phenomenon should not be overestimated, since the most prevalent form of censorship is self-censorship, which cannot be assessed with this method.

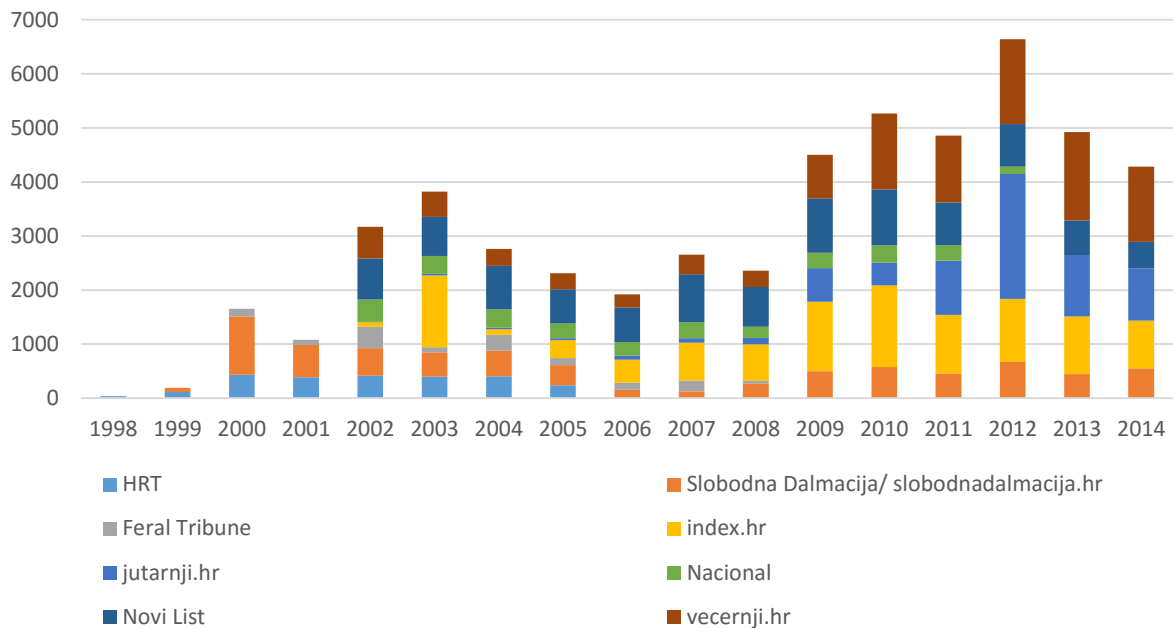
2.3.3.4. Data analysis: Slavomjer

The sentiment analysis was carried out using the Slavomjer tool. Slavomjer is a project of four former students at the faculty of electro engineering and computing at the University of Zagreb (Petra Almić, Siniša Biđin, Goran Gašić and Luka Krajcar). Slavomjer is a software tool for the Croatian language which combines automatic aspect/ entity recognition (such as names, organizations and countries), sentiment analysis (i.e. recognition of positive and negative words) and the automatic association of entities and sentiment.

In order to optimally use the resources made available by Siniša Biđin and Petra Almić, who performed the sentiment analysis, the total text body was filtered down to 34,407 articles based on occurrences of the names of all executive politicians who have been in office since 2000. For an article to be included in the filtered sample a politicians' name had to be mentioned at least three times. As can be seen in the illustration below, the sampled text body broadly reflects the characteristics of the population of articles depicted above.

²⁷ Večernji List introduced a paywall for so called 'premium articles'. These articles are included in the text body.

²⁸ The exact extent of censorship or 'hiding' articles cannot be specified for all news sources. As anonymous interviewee 8 suggested, for Večernji List it was rather negligible.

Filtered articles by year and source

Slavomjer performs aspect-oriented opinion mining, the stages of which can be summarized as follows: (1) identification of sentiment based on an existing lexicon which had been built on a large text base in an iterative process, (2) identification of the aspect/ entity and (3) the identification of pairs of aspects and sentiment clues (Glavaš, Korenčić, & Šnajder, 2013). It uses supervised machine learning to detect the links between entities and sentiment.

The first step in analyzing the newspaper articles consists in preparing the texts in the natural language processing pipeline, including sentence segmentation, tokenization, lemmatization, and part-of-speech (POS) tagging.

Through sentence segmentation, the boundaries of sentences are determined. Tokenization breaks up a text up into tokens such as words, punctuation marks, and special characters. Lemmatizers are used to reduce words to their basic form in order to account for aspects. Nouns are brought into a singular nominative form, verbs are transformed into an infinitive form and adjectives into a singu-

lar, nominative, masculine, indefinite, and positive form. POS tagging is used to categorise and tag the words according to grammatical rules.²⁹

The second step consists in acquiring the sentiment lexicon. The sentiment lexicon used for processing the media texts was derived automatically based on user-generated online reviews, by identifying words which were frequently used on positive and negative reviews (Glavaš et al., 2013, p. 19). Negations were detected through negation words within a ± 3 token range of the sentiment (as in for instance “Ivo Sanader was not a correct politician”).

Slavomjer detects whether entities and sentiment are associated based on a number of parameters: distance between entity and sentiment (in number of tokens); number of entities and sentiment in a sentence; sentence length (in number of tokens); punctuation; order of the entity and the sentiment; lexical features indicating whether sentiment is conjoined with other entities, and part-of-speech features of entities and sentiment (Glavaš et al., 2013, pp. 19–20).

The most important limitation of Slavomjer consists in its performance in recognizing what sentiment words are related to a given entity in a text. Errors are especially caused by casually mentioned entities or the occurrence of many different entities in a text. The authors did not calculate a confidence level for the results, but the correctness of the support vector machine, which is used to predict if an entity and a sentiment in a text are related to each other, was assessed at around 60%.³⁰

These problems with validity, especially in terms of disambiguating words which can be used in the wrong context, could be more than offset by a very significant gain in reliability given the large numbers of articles (Laver & Garry, 2000, p. 625). Judging from the general patterns found in the article subset, results seem to be valid (see the more detailed discussion in the chapter on quantitative text analysis).

²⁹ The POS tagger used in Slavomjer was built by Željko Agić et al. (2008).

³⁰ This number was mentioned by Petra Almić.

2.4. Measuring the independent variable: intra-party dynamics

As mentioned above, this thesis seeks primarily to investigate the shape and the main dynamics of media capture in Croatia. It also seeks to identify the main reasons for this, given that a number of traditional drivers do not seem to work as the relevant literature would anticipate. The explanation I arrive at as a result of the empirical analysis emphasizes intra-party dynamics as consistently co-varying with the shifts between particularism and universalism over time. The longitudinal development of rootedness, contestation and the institutionalization of internal party rules, identified as being the main constituent parts of this explanation, are essentially measures of processes and their quality, which I will establish qualitatively.

I investigate variation in the independent variable by reconstructing intra-party events in the two big parties between 2000 and 2014. On the basis of principal-agent theory I develop below a set of intra-party rules of accountability, the party leaders' behavioural interpretation of which will form the basis for the respective chapter on intra-party competition. This chapter will lay out how application of these rules in practice (reconstructed from key party conventions) indicate rootedness, contestation and the institutionalization of internal party rules.

I organize data collection by grouping intra-party rules in a matrix representing vertical/ horizontal accountability dimension and ex-ante or ex-post application of control mechanisms. Under vertical accountability I subsume rules that ensure that party leaders can be properly held accountable by party members in party leadership elections. These rules concern (1) the way, party leaders come into office and (2) the specifications that prescribe how they leave it again. The rules that prescribe how party leaders come into office are made up of the delegation and bottom-up election process from the party base to the party leadership and the extent to which candidates compete for central office. Rules in this context are understood as formal rules, while informal rules are used synonymously with behaviour since they are usually the consequence of institutionalized but undocumented patterns of behaviour (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004).

Firstly, to assess how effectively party members can hold party leaders accountable, I look at universalism and particularism in bottom-up intra-party delegation. I follow Eldersveld (1964, p. 1) in seeing parties as miniature political systems with an authority structure, a representative process, an electoral system and means to resolve conflicts. One necessary condition for a functioning intra-party system of accountability is therefore free and fair elections of the party executive and the president. In terms of intra-party democracy it is necessary that delegation from local party organizations to the party convention be free from manipulation, for instance in the form of efforts by the party leadership to influence the composition of the electoral party congress. Moreover, ballots for the election of the party leadership need to be secret in order to protect dissenters.

The second set of rules that applies ex-ante in providing vertical accountability concerns the patterns of intra-party rivalries. In adaption of electoral competition as interpreted by Grzymała-Busse (2007), intra-party rivalries need to be “robust”: easily identifiable and plausible competitors monitor the incumbent. Since this concept is aimed at electoral competition, some of its preconditions have to be relaxed. In order to be easily identifiable, rival candidates have to be tolerated by the party president and its executive without fearing sanctions such as exclusion from the party. The need to maintain party-internal cohesion somewhat attenuates internal monitoring and limits the intensity of constant and vociferous criticism of the incumbents. In order to provide party members with a clear choice, however, a minimum level of internal democracy has to be in place that allows members to criticize the incumbent, again, without having to fear sanctions.

With respect to the ex-post dimension of vertical accountability, tenure limits factually introduce formal alternation in the party leadership. They provide safeguard mechanisms preventing authoritarian figures from “taking over”. In a similar vein, impeachment procedures for members of the party leadership formalise channels of regulation in instances where they have violated party statutes or committed felonies.

Rules relevant for ex-ante control in horizontal accountability include selection mechanisms for executive deputies. The composition of the executive reflects the factions and groups within a party

and while it generally aims at good representation, it simultaneously serves the function of controlling party leaders (Čular, 2004b). Where party leaders have sole discretion over the appointment of their deputies in the executive committee, this horizontal control function is neutralized.

Ex-post control mechanisms of horizontal accountability aim at preventing excessive accumulation of power in the hands of the party leadership. Internal arbitration court members in particular must be appointed independently of party leaders.

2.4.1. Dimensions of intra-party accountability

	Vertical accountability	Horizontal accountability
Ex-ante control	Competitive leadership selection Free and fair elections of the party leadership	Selection rules for executive deputies
Ex-post control	Fixed term limits Impeachment procedures	Selection rules for arbitration court members

These rules represent the criteria according to which I trace the behaviour of executive politicians within the dynamics of their respective parties.

I trace the circumstances under which party leaders acquired power in their parties. Did they come to power suddenly, for instance through factional infighting, or did they work their way up through the party from the bottom? Non-rooted party leaders have a harder time colluding with the media because they would first need to eliminate intra-party contestation to signal to publishers that they have a strong grip on power. In the next step I analyse whether party leaders tried to eliminate contestation or not. Where they did, the antagonism they provoke might have led to personal attacks, which should be empirically observable.

The degree of rootedness can be qualitatively inferred from the paths taken by politicians to party-internal power. Retracing party leaders' rise through their parties, I expect to observe two indicators for rootedness. Where party leaders have acquired party leadership by rising up through the party, gathering support from fellow party members in local and district party elections, contestation should take place in a more structured and civilized way, where the basic legitimacy of a party leader is questioned not through attacks on a personal level but through more programmatic or ideological discussions. Other indicators of ex-post consolidation of non-rooted politicians might be observable, such as the centralization of internal party decision-making structures. Where party leaders are rooted, there is no pressure to take such action to control the party because they already do. Therefore, in sum, I expect rooted party leaders not to centralise decision-making structures³¹ and to be challenged on ideological rather than on personal grounds.

In order to reconstruct these processes, I draw on media coverage of party conventions. To ensure that the analysis is based on an unbiased account of intra-party events, only newspapers which have been shown not to be involved in collusion will be processed.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have operationalized the concepts previously developed in the introductory chapter. This includes the concept of the dependent variable, particularism, as well as the concept of the independent variable, intra-party dynamics. I have operationalized particularism as the systematic closeness of executive positions and those of institutions of horizontal accountability - in this case, the media. I measure this distance by looking at the level of capture and collusion, as reconstructed by the interviews, and studying how systematically and far-reaching important executive politicians have been criticized in certain media.

³¹ There are other motivations, of course, for why party leaders centralise or decentralise internal party decision-making structures, such as the impact of the system of government (Samuels & Shugart, 2010) or Europeanization (Poguntke, Aylott, Carter, Ladrech, & Luther, 2007). Through the logical and chronological contexts of the events it will become clear that (de-)centralization was connected to intra-party contestation.

The next chapter introduces the case of Croatia by laying out the historical setting in the 1990s, as regards formal particularism, its preconditions and context, and the development of the media sector in the immediate aftermath of the first transition. The chapter closes by zooming out into the political environment of the outgoing Tudjman era, the circumstances that led to it, as well the conditions the new coalition government found in 2000, when it assumed power.

3. Historical overview – establishment of formal particularism and the first transition in the 1990s

Pašalić: “Mr President, I have created a big fog around this because it must not be visible even from an airplane that this has anything to do with us.”

Tudjman: “Alright, it is in our interest to get our hands on it.”

Pašalić: “And again, in such a way that it appears democratic from the outside.”

President Tudjman and his adviser Ivić Pašalić discussing the takeover of Večernji List in 1997
(Slobodna Dalmacija, 2000)

3.1. Introduction

The historical overview presented here provides the backdrop for subsequent empirical chapters to explore the development of particularism in more detail. The 1990s create the context for the way particularism is rooted and provide the initial conditions for how it will be maintained. This overview therefore covers the nature of the old state, the characteristics of the transition and how the new semi-presidential system developed during the first decade after its inception. The chapter opens with the fading socialist system and then zooms in on the early 1990s to briefly analyse the peculiarities of Croatian style presidential-parliamentarism. After setting the historical stage it summarizes how the relevant political actors used and abused the media system. The last sections discuss the decay of Tudjman's regime towards the end of the 1990s and pay special attention to the infighting of the two main HDZ factions.

The main line of argument follows the hypothesis that Tudjman brought most of the existing mainstream media under (direct or indirect) state control using formal appointments – a technique, as will be shown, that he had already used to force obedience on key actors in the economy and the judiciary. The overview will focus especially on judicial control as one of the preconditions for the

executive to make use of formal particularism. Despite, or because of, these measures there were still very active pockets of criticism outside the mainstream media.

This chapter will demonstrate that the mode of elite change was a sweeping replacement (Higley & Lengyel, 2000a) in the political, economic and judicial spheres. Despite full control over the mainstream media through individuals within or close to the HDZ, private media enjoyed some degree of freedom, especially when they reflected infighting within the HDZ. An increasing loss of popular support after the end of the war in 1996 in turn reinforced this infighting and led to increasing factionalization within the HDZ towards the end of the 1990s. In the competition between the two factions of the HDZ, the hardliners and the moderates, the groundwork for collusive cooperation between politicians and media-mafia conglomerates was laid, a collusion that came to dominate the scene, especially in the first years after the second transition in 2000.

3.2. The general context of the first transition

3.2.1. Prologue to democratic change (1980-1989)

Tito's rift with Stalin positioned Yugoslavia between the two blocs of the cold war era, which made the country a preferential target of Western economic support. To a significant extent this was responsible for Yugoslavia's economic success relative to the Warsaw Pact countries. Yugoslav society enjoyed a comparatively wide freedom of the press and openness to foreigners, and its citizens were able to travel abroad. It was the only socialist³² country formally allowing strikes. Civil society groups were already forming in Croatia in the 1970s and 1980s; in the 1980s women's groups were especially active (Bunce & Wolchik, 2011, p. 80). At the same time, of course, the communist party (League of Communists of Yugoslavia – LCY) monopolized all strategic positions and power remained in the party's hands.

³² I use the terms 'socialist' and 'communist' interchangeably here.

Towards the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s socialist liberals were dominant in the majority of the republics' party organizations. In Croatia especially, the strong presence of liberal, democratic and also nationalist tendencies during the so called "Croatian Spring" produced a party-internal movement that pushed for more political and economic decentralization and reaffirmation of the Croatian language, which was perceived to have been "downgraded" by Belgrade (Ramet, 2006). When the League of Communists of Croatia (LCC) started pushing for confederal structures within Yugoslavia (thereby implying a secession) Tito sacked the LCC leadership and replaced it with a conservative executive. The top of the party in Croatia was tightly controlled and the so-called phase of "Croatian silence" began, when the LCC's leadership was streamlined with the apparatus in Belgrade.

Simultaneously, Tito appeased the national movements throughout Yugoslavia with changes to the Yugoslav constitution in 1974, which federalized the system and devolved considerable responsibilities to the republics. With the death of Tito in May 1980 the divisions within the LCY became deeper. The main rifts were twofold (Ramet, 2006): (1) between party liberals, who supported democratization of the LCY to some extent, and the conservatives, who wanted to preserve the socialist system as it was; (2) between supporters of the existing decentralized system and "recentralizers". These streams not only existed within the LCY but in most of the republic's socialist parties as well.

An important part of the reason for these rifts was distribution fights. Increasing economic problems had gradually led to hyperinflation in the late 1980s. At the same time, with Tito's disappearance the position of the moderating President also ceased to exist, which in the context of the 1974 constitutional changes increasingly paralysed decision-making in Belgrade. During the second half of the eighties politics in Yugoslavia were characterized by fragmentation and confrontation.

Within Croatia the conservative stream had dominated the LCC since the Croatian silence, but a pragmatic faction gained strength the more the economy deteriorated and the more the

conservatives pushed to introduce their ideological projects in education and science (Kasapović, 1992, p. 35). Even though the pragmatic group was not coherent enough to present a common platform, the dominance of the conservatives was still in question.

The conservative faction retained a strong grip on mechanisms of political negotiation, which remained limited, however, to the sphere of formal institutions. Socialist politics had been negotiated mostly within the formal structures and institutions and had had little contact with informal arenas of political action (Kasapović, 1992, p. 34). Social conflicts outside these formal mechanisms were ignored. This inevitably led to the creeping marginalization of formal institutions as an arena for problem solving. The ideologically driven anti-liberalism of the orthodox faction and the “pragmatic anti-politics” of the pragmatists practically strangled the arena for free political, cultural and social activity (Kasapović, 1992, p. 37).

From 1986 more liberal politicians were increasingly elected into the executive of the LCC (Budimir, 2011, p. 81). While the LCY still screened and selected the candidates for all important positions, following this creeping change in leadership, younger and better educated individuals were recruited into the party and into managerial and administrative positions (Sekulić & Šporer, 2000, p. 153). For instance, the relative openness of the LCC was reflected in a technocracy-oriented rather than ideologically motivated recruitment of managers (Sekulić & Šporer, 2000, p. 158).

Against a backdrop of increasing economic problems and nationalist mobilization by the Serb leadership, the reformist faction³³ won a considerable victory at the LCC party congress in December 1989 as the executive supported far reaching reforms such as the abolishment of the death penalty, the release of all political prisoners and the introduction of a multiparty system. Ivica Račan, later leader of the SDP and Prime Minister from 2000-2003, was elected President of the Croatian socialist party.

³³ It consisted, amongst others, of the members of the LCC's central committee, Drago Dimitrović, Celestin Sardelić, Stjepko Gugić, Milivoj Solar and Zorica Stipetić (Budimir, 2011, p. 81).

At the same time, following the Serbian nationalist agitation, the atmosphere at federal level was already poisoned. In January 1990 the Slovene delegation walked out on the Congress of the LCY after all their amendments for more independence had been rejected. The Croat delegation, led by Ivica Račan, also stopped its participation (Calic 2014:298). This de-facto marked the end of the Yugoslav Communist party.

While this was happening the first parties of the new Croatia were developing. The process began in 1989, increasing in speed after the pragmatic-liberal leadership took over in the LCC at the end of the year. Since parties had very little time to prepare for the first free elections they did not manage to build up a developed organizational framework or a stable membership. In February 1990 new electoral laws were adopted by the LCC and multi-party elections for institutions that were still socialist in make-up were called for April 1990 (Radelić, 2006, p. 591). Expecting that it would gain the most votes, the LCC designed an electoral system that gave the strongest party a considerable advantage. Contrary to the reformed Socialists' expectations, however, the HDZ won an absolute majority and subsequently designed a presidential-parliamentary constitutional set-up that was adopted by the Sabor in December 1990. Croatia declared its independence in June 1991.

3.2.2. The war and the set-up of presidential-parliamentarism

With help from his lieutenants of the former Yugoslavian army (Yugoslav People's Army, YPA) and significant assistance from the Croatian diaspora, General and former dissident Franjo Tudjman founded the HDZ between February and May 1989. Tudjman launched a nationalist and anti-communist campaign that made his party crushingly dominant.³⁴ The success of Tudjman's ethno-nationalist mobilization was primarily a backlash against Milošević's aggressive nationalist-chauvinistic Serbian policies after his successful putsch within the Serbian socialist party in 1987.

³⁴ At the same time, when it became clear that the HDZ would win the elections, Tudjman also emphasized that he would not allow revanchism vis-à-vis the socialist successor party. In the same interview he said, however, that this might be difficult, especially at lower levels, where people who voted for the HDZ allegedly lost their jobs and might be inclined to pay back in same coin (Nedjeljni Vjesnik, 1990).

With his nationalistic mobilization Milošević created an atmosphere of paranoia over the possibility of a Croatian attack among the Serb minority in Croatia, which responded with military mobilization, supported by the YPA, and a declaration of territorial autonomy (Grandits & Leutloff, 2003). The Croatian Serbs especially in the Krajina area started to erect road blocks, take over control of the region and expel Croats and other non-Serbs (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, 2015). The Croatian population and also the political elite were united in their perception that they had to defend the territorial integrity of Croatia against a violent takeover.

After the reformed Socialists had conceded victory, and under the impression of a Serb secession from Croatian territory, Tudjman ousted Serbs from their position in the state (Ramet, 2006, p. 356). Because of the Croatian Ustaša regime that had been imposed by the German occupiers during the Second World War, and its brutality, which was particularly directed towards the Serbian population and resulted in tens of thousands of dead, Serbs had been represented in great numbers in the partisan counter-insurgent groups. As the winning partisans became the backbone of the socialist party, Serbs were significantly over-represented in elite positions in Croatia (Sekulić & Šporer, 2000). While in 1991 ethnic Serbs constituted 12% of the population and 50-75% of the police force³⁵, by November 1992 this share in the police had decreased to only 28% (Ramet, 2006, p. 356).

In 1995 Croatia regained control over most of the occupied territory, while simultaneously dealing with the chaos created by the war: 400,000 internal refugees and the destruction of 40% of the domestic industry (Ramet, 2010). According to Nations in Transit between 700,000 and 800,000 people were considered to have been victims of the war, an enormous number for a country with a population of 4.5 million (Freedom House, 1997).

While Croatia was attacked and became a war victim, this role was reversed to some extent when Tudjman's state leadership pursued the same aggressive logic, after Croatia itself started to use force in asserting territorial claims in neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina. Tudjman informally allied with

³⁵ Even though Sabrina Ramet is a leading scholar in the field, the 75% she cites seems somewhat exaggerated. The numbers from the Croatian Ministry of the Interior from 1984 are probably more realistic, according to which 49.9% of the Ministry's forces were Serbian (Republički sekretarijat unutrašnjih poslova, 1984).

Milošević to put those parts populated with a strong Croatian minority under its control. Even in 1999 he still hoped to divide up the country (Nacional, 2001; The Independent, 2000).³⁶

When talking about Tudjman as “republican monarch” (Kasapović, 2008, p. 135) it is important to be aware of the adverse effects of the war on the democratization process (Dolenec, 2013, p. 133ff.). I will now look at these effects at an institutional and a behavioural level.

3.2.2.1. Institutional level

3.2.2.1.1. Presidential-parliamentarism

Facing a looming war and the need for strong leadership, the HDZ used its overwhelming electoral victory in spring 1990 to create a presidential-parliamentary system with an unusually strong president vis-à-vis the parliament.

Constitutionally, President Franjo Tudjman was entitled to nominate and dismiss the prime minister and the cabinet (subject only to collective parliamentary confirmation), to convene and chair cabinet meetings and to rule with decrees in emergency situations, which he made extensive use of during the war years 1991-1995. Tudjman routinely toppled governments and frequently exchanged prime ministers, unconstrained by a potential parliamentary designation. In addition, he chaired the HDZ, which at all times during his two mandates held a large majority in the lower house and subsequently gave him a wide leeway over the composition of the government.

These preconditions rendered the President a very strong player in the political system. Tudjman’s charismatic and authoritarian party leadership (Čular, 2004a) and the bonus he enjoyed as a president in office lent the party its cohesiveness which consequently imposed few constraints on effective ex-ante controls. And while the HDZ dominated the Croatian party system during the 1990s, competition within the governing party was marginalized, as was the parliament and its leeway to hold the cabinet to account.

³⁶ There were also atrocities against civilians, committed by both the Croatian and Serbian military, which due to the space required for their explanation will not be detailed here.

While parliamentary systems through their prioritization of ex-ante screening require potential candidates for public office to prove their abilities at different levels of the party organization (Strøm, 2003, p. 68), parties in the presidential-parliamentary system only play a role in structuring parliamentary elections, which in systems with a dominant president account for only a small share of the powers that citizens delegate to politicians. Contrary to parliamentary systems, therefore, candidates in presidential-parliamentary systems are not necessarily put through a party-internal screening process.

Moreover, as Samuels and Shugart (2010) argue, there is considerable agency loss between parties and their presidential candidates such as the HDZ and Franjo Tudjman. Given that President Tudjman was clearly the leading and charismatic “father of the nation”, his presidential role also turned the HDZ into a presidentialized party. In presidential and semi-presidential systems with a pronounced role of the president this weakness of parties as ex-ante screening devices is usually balanced with stronger ex-post constraints. These include institutions with active oversight (police patrols, committee hearings) as well as “fire alarms”, such as audits and judicial institutions. As a consequence, in 1990s Croatia both ex-ante and ex-post controls remained ineffective, as will be seen in the following section.

3.2.2.1.2. Uncommon mixture of majoritarian elements of presidentialism and parliamentarism

In terms of formal institutions, the new presidential-parliamentary system not only allowed for an unusually strong president, but also mixed elements of majoritarianism with parliamentary decision processes, which allowed politicians a high degree of discretion in selecting candidates for positions which, according to normative criteria of accountability, should have been autonomous from the executive. This especially includes the heads of the supreme and constitutional court, the director of national state media and the public prosecutor’s office.

Formal particularism, for instance, gave the HDZ-dominated executive (i.e. the president and the cabinet) a wide range of opportunities to delegate to a plethora of positions without needing to specify effective controls over the selection of the agent or his monitoring once in office.

A simple parliamentary majority in the lower house was for instance sufficient for the appointments of constitutional judges. And even though the nomination process was separate from the appointing institution³⁷, the constitution for instance did not require the participation of the other parliamentary chamber in the appointment process. The weakness of the Sabor, on paper one of the major players supposed to counter-balance the president, did not only stem from its irrelevance during the Socialist period, but also from dominance of the president over the composition of the parliamentary majority through control over party-internal electoral list nominations. By mixing certain elements of majoritarian and consensus democracies, partisanship suddenly played an important role in deciding upon appointments to the constitutional court, and there could be no doubt that this partisanship was extremely strong, as the subordination of the HDZ parliamentary majority to the President suggests (Zakošek, 2002).³⁸ Given that these “common bonds of co-partisanship” internalized important constraints (such as the constitutional court) into the parliamentary chain of delegation, executive control was practically neutralized (Strøm, 2003, p. 76). This set-up was a prime example for how formally majoritarian set-ups that require a high degree of internal and unformalized constraints such as gracious losing or consensus on critical issues can go wrong in transitional contexts (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004, p. 726; Lijphart, 1999; Merkel et al., 2003; Podolnjak, 2007).

The Croatian model of a simple parliamentary majority for constitutional judge appointment was a rare exception among continental European constitutional set-ups until its abolishment in 2010.³⁹ In political systems where parliament is the only body to elect constitutional judges without involving

³⁷Constitutional judges, for instance, were nominated by the president and the public prosecutor by the cabinet.

³⁸ Further evidence that co-partisanship played the crucial role in appointing constitutional judges can be found in the fact that since the passing of a law in 2010 stipulating a two-thirds majority in parliament for the election of constitutional judges, no judge had been appointed by August 2015.

³⁹In summer 2010 the minimum majority was extended to a two-thirds majority in a series of constitutional changes during the finalization of EU negotiations.

other branches of government, a successful election procedure usually requires a super-majority of at least two-thirds (Podolnjak, 2007, p. 572). The simple majority, however, neutralized effective parliamentary control through the opposition, especially since the parliamentary majority had little incentive to control their fellow party members in the executive branch (Ostrogorski, 1902).⁴⁰ It is therefore not majoritarianism in itself that is particularistic⁴¹ but its application under Croatian conditions which allowed the president (and later the prime minister) to handpick his constitutional judges.

In Croatia, therefore, external checks were weak from day one as they were characterized by a large number of informal structures - especially patronage, which aimed at securing the influence of the President in control institutions outside the delegation chain (Linz, 1994).

3.2.2.2. Behavioural level

On a behavioural level, the generous formal set-up for the president was extended by what Dolenc refers to as rule by discretion (Dolenc, 2013, p. 131). With the HDZ controlling two-thirds of the Sabor and the president's office, the lines between the party and the state were often not clearly delineated. Similar to what Ganev (2007) described for Bulgaria, Croatia was not characterized by a successful division of party and state after socialism.

One example of this is provided by the numerous informal decision-making structures such as the war-inspired councils, which brought together leaders of the most important institutions such as the governor of the Central Bank and the president of the Supreme Court, effectively sidelining formal decision-making processes.

⁴⁰Under the conditions of party government, the parliamentary majority usually lacks the motivation to sanction its own executive (Strøm, 2003, p. 71). The alignment of preferences along the chain of delegation from the parliamentary majority to the cabinet under conditions of strong partisanship often leads to the inability of party actors to provide meaningful control of their fellow party members in other parts of the political system (e.g. a parliamentary branch's capacity to control its own executive).

⁴¹ This implies both Tudjman's formal and Sanader's informal particularism.

Important in this respect was the “presidential council” which featured 32 high-ranking members of the legislature, executive and judiciary, the governor of the Croatian national bank and the general secretary of the HDZ. Tudjman also installed the extra-constitutional “Council on defence and national security”, which resembled a Politburo and took over important functions of parliament (Kasapović, 2000). The veto capacity that originally and constitutionally was located outside the chain of delegation was thereby neutralized.

Tudjman also made extensive use of decrees, even though the constitutional precondition for their use, namely a parliament unable to convene, was never fulfilled during the war years (Uzelac, 2001).⁴² In 1995, using an emergency decree, Tudjman overruled the new opposition majority in the Zagreb assembly four times to select a mayor.⁴³ He eventually appointed an HDZ mayor, who never received a majority from the opposition-dominated assembly. The situation was finally resolved by early elections (Kasapović, 2000, p. 53).

3.2.3. Sweeping replacement of the elite

Moreover, the HDZ secured its dominance in all important societal sectors, especially in the economic sphere, through an almost wholesale replacement of the elite (Sekulić & Šporer, 2000, p. 153). Due to the fact that most large companies were owned by the state, the HDZ also controlled managerial appointments. Tudjman replaced socialist manager elites with a new generation who lacked good education but were certain to be loyal (Grubiša, 2005, p. 67).

To provide some context for the extent of the sweeping replacement of elites in the state-owned media and the judiciary described below, the HDZ’s level of control was comparable to the control the LCC enjoyed during socialism, although this dominance was balanced to some extent by the growing private sector (Sekulić & Šporer, 2000). In 1989 managers were 6.6 times more likely to be a

⁴²It should be noted that the constitutional court allowed the usage of emergency decrees in 1992, despite the collision with the relevant article 17 in the constitution (Uzelac, 2001).

⁴³This law had never been applied before.

member of the LCC than of no party at all, whereas in 1996 managers were 5 times more likely to be HDZ members. When controlling for the lower degree of party-politicization during the 1990s, the level of influence enjoyed by the HDZ and the LCC was roughly equal (Sekulić & Šporer, 2000). At the same time, especially compared to the increasingly meritocratic recruited elite in the second half of the 1980s, the education of the new managers was significantly lower because they were mostly self-made men from the private sector (Sekulić & Šporer, 2000, p. 160).

The framework for this extensive elite replacement in the economic sector was Tudjman's vision of creating a Croatian economic elite by placing economic wealth into the hands of 200 "chosen families" that were to form the new entrepreneurial class. Part of this idea was to discourage buy-ins by foreign investors whenever necessary for Tudjman's plan. The 'original sin' in the history of state exploitation and corruption in Croatia (Grubiša, 2005), the privatization process, was built on a skewed privatization law (which was amended between 1991 and 1996 no less than twelve times) and concentrated control of former socially owned enterprises rather than dispersing it.

At the same time, the pool of available, high-quality candidates for positions in the state administration was limited and therefore a high number of people came to positions through the personal networks of Franjo Tudjman, Stipe Mesić (in his capacity as both Prime Minister and head of recruitment) and their advisers and colleagues (Budimir, 2011, p. 90). This recruitment served two purposes: firstly, to find adequate cadres as a matter of urgency and secondly, to overcome the information deficits that persisted because of the party's self-imposed restriction on recruiting candidates from "non-socialist" networks. The lack of a fully operational HDZ party organization at this time meant that no meaningful agent screening could be carried out that might have provided the new government with adequate administrators.

However, as mentioned above, with insurgent Serb groups backed by the Yugoslavian army, organizing military defence clearly had priority over ensuring transparent and democratically

controlled recruitment.⁴⁴ This in turn meant that the army and the ministry of defence around Minister Gojko Šušak had a very strong power base. The ministry of defence represented a parallel line of command which supported Croatian separatism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the informal funnelling of vast amounts of money to the Croatian para-state “Herceg-Bosna”. It consequently grew to become a state within the state, consuming more than a fourth (26.3%) of central government expenditure (International Crisis Group, 1998). This also meant that whoever had the illicit contacts necessary to organize a war machinery under conditions of an international arms embargo quickly rose in the official hierarchy, gaining a high level of influence on the regime’s decisions.

With respect to the HDZ party organization a respectable number of former socialist party members joined the HDZ in both rank-and-file⁴⁵ as well as executive positions.⁴⁶ In its early proto form the HDZ was a movement for independence rather than a party and was led top-down in an authoritarian manner. During the nineties, formal internal selection mechanisms were not defined (Čular, 2001) and candidates were hand-picked by a small and closed circle at the top of the party.

To sum up, the HDZ set up a system of largely formal particularism, which was in large part influenced by situative conditions such as the war, creating strong incentives to accumulate power in the hands of the President. While Tudjman was uncontested during wartime, after 1995 he tried to consolidate and extend his power but instead increasingly lost popular support, as will be seen in more detail in section 3.4. below.

⁴⁴This is consistent with the “transition paradox” which refers to the tension between the democratization of an authoritarian system and the power concentration that might be necessary to carry out large scale reform in a fragile societal context (Ágh, 1991).

⁴⁵It is estimated that between the end of 1989 and June 1990 rank-and-file membership in SKHLCC-SDP fell from 298,000 to 46,000, while 97,000 defected to the HDZ between late 1989 and the end of 1990 (Cohen, 1997, p. 115; Goati, 1991). Many of those purged during the Croatian spring, amongst them Tudjman himself, constituted many of the key founders of the party. Pickering and Baskin (2008, p. 529) suggest that the SDP is the more appropriate Communist successor party. They also emphasize that the HDZ’s victory by no means represents a full rupture from Communist structures, which remained largely intact. For information about the value characteristics of SDP and HDZ voters on day one, see Šiber (1992).

⁴⁶The latter group included influential individuals such as Josip Manolić, Vladimir Šeks, Hrvoje Šošić, Luka Bebić and Ivan Bobetko. Vladimir Šeks, accused of having played a role in killings of Serbs in the war, is one of the key figures in the HDZ and still active to this day.

Elite change was initiated by democratic elections but completed by an authoritarian regime (Higley & Lengyel, 2000b, p. 13). The transition was not negotiated or the result of a pact but sudden and forced, involving a wide and deep replacement of the old elite (Higley & Lengyel, 2000b, p. 12). Due to this coup-like character many positions in the state administration had to be filled in short order from a very limited pool of potential candidates.

The initial conditions of the first transition as outlined above were moreover not conducive to executive actors respecting and supporting the autonomy of control institutions such as the media, which had initially enjoyed increasing independence with the demise of the old socialist system. The following section is provided to demonstrate that the HDZ-dominated nomenklatura primarily used formal particularism in taking over the state-owned media and harassing the private media.

3.3. Transition in the media

By May 1989, two and a half years before the declaration of independence of Croatia, the cracks in the repressive system of Yugoslavia had become chasms. A reprint of all censored texts of the student paper "Studentski list" was not withdrawn by the public prosecution as it would have been only one year earlier. As the later president of the Croatian journalists association Zdenko Duka noted, it had become obvious that "not only the circumstances but also the people have changed" (Duka, 1989). What resulted was a leap in press freedom to an extent that until then had been unthinkable. This period of time where "the Communists were too weak to stop anything, and the HDZ hadn't yet appeared" (Thompson, 1994, p. 157) has been perceived by many of the interviewees as one of the freest periods in their journalistic careers.⁴⁷ While the legal framework practically remained the same, its enforcement by the repressive organs and particularly the public prosecution waned. This, according to Duka was the consequence of the more liberal political climate (Duka, 2014).

⁴⁷Essentially the same has been reported by interviewees in respect of the second transition from Franjo Tudjman's presidential-parliamentary system to premier-presidentialism in 2000.

In the first free elections in April 1990, the HDZ had campaigned on the promise of unrestricted freedom of speech and a free press (Civic Initiative for Freedom of Expression, 1992). And freedom of speech, for instance, was indeed anchored in the new constitution. After the change to democracy, however, even though journalists enjoyed all liberties on paper, in practice they did not.

By encroaching on the media, the HDZ government, uncertain about the stability of its own leadership, sought to make sure that media reporting supported its rule. At the same time, it was aware that it did not have the military means to resist an attack by the YPA. By conveying a certain view on the war developments, it therefore also aimed to “inspire people to resist, but without demoralizing them by showing them how badly Croatia is faring” (Thompson, 1994, p. 198). This included silencing atrocities committed by the Croatian army, which would have damaged Croatia’s international support, and, more importantly, the legitimacy of Tudjman’s rule.⁴⁸

As the following sections will show, in the general context of the war and its aftermath the government essentially followed a three-pronged strategy to control the media. Firstly, as described above, it used rigged privatizations to bring the most important mainstream media under party control. Secondly, it harassed private media to sanction independent reporting through formal particularism. Thirdly, Tudjman secured formal particularism with a tight grip over the judiciary.

⁴⁸ The non-reporting of Croatian war crimes was seen as a vital national interest, which justified “robust” measures against and raw pressure on journalists, which often came from local strongmen. The journalist Drago Hedl from Osijek, for instance, received continual death threats (including against his family) from local HDZ politician Branimir Glavaš (through his messenger Ivica Vrkić) for writing about Croatian war crimes at the newspaper Glas Slavonije (Hedl, 2014). Later, when the HDZ won elections in the area in 1991, Glavaš simply invaded the editorial offices of the newspaper with men armed with Kalashnikovs (Ivanović, 2011, p. 30). Glavaš was convicted in 2005 for the brutal murder of Serbs in the Osijek area, shortly after falling out with Ivo Sanader and leaving the HDZ.

3.3.1. Putting the mainstream media under state control

Influenced by the emergency of the war, Tudjman was open about sacrificing the independence of the media and the judiciary for the sake of the “unity of the state”.⁴⁹ Exemplary for this attitude is his famous sentence that lies are allowed when the Croatian state is in question (cited after Interview Matić, 2014). Similar to the way things were organized in socialism, the most important media were either closed down or taken over directly or indirectly by the HDZ in a command-and-control approach.

In the summer of 1992 alone, 128 senior staff members of *Vjesnik*, a serious, large-circulation daily, were replaced (and even more by the end of the year; Klaic, 1993). *Vjesnik* editor-in-chief Stevo Maoduša, a Serb by nationality, was replaced by a group centring on Hido Biščević, an HDZ loyalist who was a high ranked figure in the foreign policy department and would go on to become ambassador to Turkey (Thompson, 1994, p. 177).

Similarly, the HDZ retained a tight grip over the national broadcaster HRT. It decided on the licensing of new newspapers (Alaburić, 1997; Kabelka & Matanić, 1999) and, through its control of the Telecommunications Council, of broadcast media (Ottaway & Maltz, 2001, p. 378). Moreover, the law on HRT from 1991 allowed parliament to appoint and dismiss the director general of the broadcaster, while directors of radio and television, usually party members (Asadorian, Ayre, & Newstrom, 2000, p. 4), were directly appointed by the government, following nomination by the director general. Veljko Knežević, for instance, the director general of Serbian nationality, was replaced by a member of the HDZ whose only relevant experience was to write television reviews for a magazine (Centre International de Formation Européenne, 1993). In the following three years around 970 of HRT’s 3,500 staff were replaced, most of them Serbs (Thompson, 1994, p. 151). Following this general

⁴⁹Tudjman’s advisor Stjepan Herceg had for instance said at the founding meeting of the Croatian society of judges that the president was entitled to direct insight into the work of judges, announcing that there was no separation of the branches of government (Daskalović, 1997).

pattern, major interventions took place aiming at replacing independent journalists with loyal but often inadequately skilled people.⁵⁰

As a consequence, the opposition remained severely underrepresented in the HRT program vis-à-vis the government. A content analysis of HTV news towards the end of the 1990s showed that the programming of the public broadcaster focused on promoting the government and the HDZ (Peruško Čulek & PULS, 1998). Opposition parties had a slot of 5 minutes in a weekly programme on political parties, and related contributions would appear as one of the last items in the main evening news. The leader of the second-biggest opposition party, Dražen Budiša, did not appear on the main current affairs programme “Slikom na Sliku” until November 1993 (Thompson, 1994, p. 152).

The large-circulation regional newspaper Slobodna Dalmacija from Split was initially transformed under Yugoslav federal legislation into a shareholding company, with employees owning 60 percent of the stocks (Thompson, 1994, p. 185). As late as 1990 the paper was proclaimed as the best edited newspaper in the former Yugoslavia (Malović, 2004, p. 127). Despite its tabloid style, during the hot phase of the war in Croatia the daily still wrote critical reports, for instance about attacks on Serbian civilians in Osijek (Ivančić, 1993). This changed when the media enterprise was sold in the same year to Miroslav Kutle, an HDZ crony close to the party’s hardliners around Ivić Pašalić and the powerful Minister of Defence Gojko Šušak. In a sequence of highly dubious moves, the initial privatization of Slobodna Dalmacija was declared irregular and by October 1993 Kutle owned the controlling majority of the paper (Kaić, 2001). The takeover had been carefully prepared by repeated attacks by the public broadcaster, which reported on alleged scandals in the company. Simultaneously, the vast majority of the editorial staff was substituted by journalists close to the HDZ (anonymous interviewee 1). As a consequence, critical reporting on the war stopped, not least since professional and independent journalists such as Drago Hedl⁵¹, had been either sidelined or fired. Kutle was also given

⁵⁰Thompson tells the stories of the journalists Aleksandar Milošević and Heni Erceg, who had to leave HRT for reporting on the war in a way that was independent and balanced instead of suited to the war propaganda (Thompson, 1994, p. 156 f.).

⁵¹Hedl, as noted above, was first removed from Glas Slavonije. After being thrown out of Slobodna Dalmacija in 1994 he later moved to the most resilient pocket of independent reporting, Feral Tribune.

control over TISAK, the monopoly distributor of newspapers, which sanctioned critical reporting by remunerating newspapers deliberately late in order to keep them on the brink of collapse (IREX, 2004).

In short, whereas all relevant media and the distribution monopoly had been taken over by the executive, the private media, as will be seen below, were comparatively free.

3.3.2. Limiting freedom for the private press

Even though Tudjman's formal particularism allowed him to sanction media selectively, it did not aim at eradicating certain media altogether. Opposition to the regime was tolerated to some extent and the example of Feral Tribune is a point in case for how the 1990s HDZ dealt with harsh criticism from privately owned media.

Feral Tribune started out as a satirical supplement in the weekend edition of Slobodna Dalmacija. After Miroslav Kutle's takeover of the Split daily, the journalists of Feral Tribune decided to split and publish an independent satirical weekly with an investigative profile. Feral was among the first to write about Croatian war crimes, all the more difficult as some of Feral's leading figures were Serbs. In 1994 the governing HDZ classified Feral as a pornographic magazine, justifying an additional tax of 50% - a step which was overturned by the constitutional court in 1995 (Interview Ivančić, 2014). One title cover showed Tudjman and Milošević as homosexual lovers as a satirical metaphor for their cooperation in the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Three days later, co-founder Ivančić was drafted for military service but eventually let go after a month (Interview Ivančić, 2014). While Feral was regularly convicted of libel and had to pay huge fines, it was nevertheless not closed down or taken over by the government.

It is difficult to identify a central theme in the HDZ's patchy media policy, given that it contained elements of both, repression and liberalization. In 1996, for instance, not only was libel integrated into the criminal code, with threats of high sanctions for potential offenders, but also the act on

public information liberalized domestic media ownership and triggered the creation of many new print-media organs (H. Popović, Bilić, Jelić, & Švob-Đokić, 2010, p. 28).

As a consequence of the more liberal legislation, Ninoslav Pavić with Jutarnji List founded a liberal mainstream newspaper that quickly grew in circulation. Even though Pavić stood ideologically closer to the moderate techno-managerial faction in the HDZ (especially Nikica Valentić and Hrvoje Šarinić), it was possible for media entrepreneurs such as Pavić to generate a constant inflow of cash (anonymous interviewee 2). Jutarnji List, owned by parent enterprise Europa Press Holding (EPH), was an important step in the expansion of Pavić's media empire, which had started when he co-founded the daily Globus in 1990. As will be seen in the subsequent chapters, Pavić was to become one of the central figures in collusion between the executive, the public prosecutor and the media.

While Tudjman strictly controlled the media in direct or quasi state ownership he did not directly censor private media. In fact, several interviewees emphasized the relative freedom during the 1990s compared to Ivo Sanader's informal particularism (anonymous interviewee 17, 2014; anonymous interviewee 5, 2014; anonymous interviewee 7, 2014; Interview Ivančić, 2014; Interview Peratović, 2014). Sanctions were enforced when media ignored the two main taboos: reporting on Croatian war crimes and criticism of the president himself. The HDZ regime under Tudjman combined strict control over state-owned media with harsh, but nonetheless intermittent ad hoc sanctions of the private media. The most likely explanation for this mixed picture comprises three main points.

Firstly, the HDZ gave the media freedom because the Croatian government had to appear democratic (see opening quote). Tudjman was concerned about the international perception of his regime because military and political support from the Americans and the Europeans hinged on a minimum of rule-of-law and media independence. Secondly, Tudjman did not intervene after media scandals uncovered corruption because in many instances the stories came to light as a result of inter-factional infighting within the HDZ. It was Tudjman's first goal to preserve the delicate balance of his party and in order not to upset it he let things largely run their course. Thirdly and most importantly, Tudjman

had already brought the judiciary under control in the course of the sweeping replacement of elites that took place during the first years, the move that made possible his system of formal particularism in the first place. The extent to which the Tudjman regime controlled the judiciary will be briefly outlined in the next section.

3.3.3. The HDZ controls the judiciary

Controlling the judiciary was a precondition for the executive to make use of formal particularism since legal rules had been formulated very vaguely, which made it necessary that these rules were judicially interpreted in the “correct” way. During socialism the judiciary was comparatively independent from political influence, mostly because the profession was widely ignored and sidelined by politicians (Uzelac, 2002). While the new government had formally committed to rule of law, it required control over the judiciary as a major part of its strategy of formal particularism.

At the same time, however, the new state leadership was afraid that the Serbs in the state apparatus and especially in the judiciary could follow to the example of the insurgent Serbs and sabotage the new state structures. This fear was at the root of the replacements in the political and economic spheres discussed above, but nowhere was it more widespread than in the judiciary. The HDZ under Tudjman took control over the judiciary in the war years by adopting a law which put the nomination of judges into the hands of a simple majority in parliament.⁵² The HDZ, which commanded almost a two-thirds majority in the first years, used this leeway to undertake a sweeping replacement of judges.

There is widespread agreement among independent experts that the replacement of judges was nearly wholesale and that it aimed at political control over the judiciary’s decisions. According to the

⁵²The actual appointments were made by the Upper House, equally tightly controlled by the HDZ.

Croatian Legal Centre, in 1990 and 1991 alone about 200 judges (one sixth to one fifth of all judges) left the judiciary. By the mid-1990s 50-60% of the cadres in the judiciary had been replaced.⁵³

After the war had ended in 1996, the new State Judicial Council (SJC) took over judicial appointments from parliament. Since Tudjman did not want to give up the powers he had acquired during the war, the SJC was turned into a “remote control” instrument (Matijanić, 2000) for the transmission of orders from the political centre to the judiciary.

While officially the Supreme Court was tasked to put together a list of candidates for the new SJC, an informal parallel body, headed by Tudjman’s close adviser Ivić Pašalić, was set up to present its real candidates.⁵⁴ Many of the candidates for the SJC were, again, HDZ loyalists, completely unknown among judicial experts. Only two candidates were elected who were not on the list of the Pašalić commission – two law professors who were jointly nominated by four Croatian law schools and who later turned out to be the most pronounced critics of the actions of the SJC (Uzelac, 2001, p. 17).

After the SJC took over a whole new wave of replacements rolled through the judiciary, with 361 judges, roughly a fourth of all judges in Croatia, being removed without any explanation (Uzelac 2001:13).⁵⁵ In 1996 alone thirty experienced judges were dismissed in Zagreb and more than ten were appointed with no involvement of the SJC (Gabrić, 2000).

According to Ćedo Prodanović, a prominent Zagreb lawyer, the resulting changes in the judiciary were like travelling back in time to the 1960s: there was practically no cadre selection, people who did not know what they were doing were appointed based on a political formula, they were submissive and carried out political orders. This was possible since during the 1990s it was crystal clear which advocates and judges were close to the governing party (Tagirov, 2011). Only in 2000 did the

⁵³ Former Supreme Court judge Vladimir Primorac cited numbers from the ministry of the interior saying that since independence 60% of all judges had been replaced according to political and ethnical criteria (Erceg, 1994). Former president of the Supreme Court Vjekoslav Vidović confirms this number (Daskalović, 1997).

⁵⁴ According to former Supreme Court judge Vladimir Primorac, this kind of parallel body was typical of the previous socialist regime (Erceg, 1994).

⁵⁵ In addition to these cases, many judges left in anticipation of their dismissal (Uzelac 2001).

constitutional court decide that the appointment practice of the SCJ was unconstitutional (Ustavni Sud, 2000).

In sum, controlling the judiciary was a precondition for the usage of formal particularism - formalistic interventions reducing the independence of control institutions following legal rules, which had been very vaguely formulated to allow “flexibility” in their interpretation by those governing.⁵⁶ Since vaguely worded legislation could have theoretically been interpreted either way, the government needed to make sure the right judges were in place. With this level of control the government could be sure to win most cases in the courts.

3.3.4. Tudjman used formal particularism to control the media

Transferred to the media system, formal particularism during the 1990s included repressive measures such as emergency presidential decrees, the cancellation of media licenses, the imposition of “special taxes” and most commonly floods of lawsuits based on a legal system which regulated slander in the criminal code.⁵⁷

In the case of Feral Tribune, for instance, a number of people close to the HDZ took turns in bringing lawsuits against the weekly, so that the paper was under constant fire and was forced to pay high amounts of compensation (Interview Ivančić, 2014). This is also supported by official numbers: the number of libel cases grew from one in 1989 (Peruško, 2007, p. 234) to 230 in 1997 (Pusić 1998).⁵⁸ By the end of the Tudjman regime, there were more than 2,000 court cases pending against a small number of journalists, with some facing more than 100 proceedings against them (IREX, 2004).

⁵⁶ An indicator for this is the length of the legal prescriptions, which jumped between the 1990s and the post-2000 years. The section on the public prosecutor in the Croatian constitution, for instance, grew from 78 articles from 1995 to 154 in 2001. The reformed version specified the responsibilities of the public prosecutor (for details, see Ljubanović, 2001, p. 9).

⁵⁷ One of the more prominent critical voices, former Superior Court judge Vladimir Primorac, commented on this institution thus: “With laws like these a few powerful people are protected while public criticism is suppressed”.

⁵⁸ This comparison refers to 1989 as the year of transition, in which neither self-censorship nor the repressive system did much to suppress press freedom anymore (see the relevant discussion above).

Presidential decrees citing national security, issued to cope with urgent situations in wartime, were abused. In one instance *Slobodni Tjednik* was banned for publishing a conversation between Franjo Tuđman and Mile Dedaković Jastrebović concerning the evacuation of Vukovar, six weeks after a massacre committed by Serb soldiers. After it had been put under control, *Slobodni Tjednik* performed “dirty tasks” for powerholders. In several cases, people (often Serbs) mentioned in the paper were later murdered (Lovrić, 1998).

Another particularly serious example of formal particularism was the widespread wiretapping of journalists. The first order for wiretapping investigative journalists was signed by the Minister of the Interior, Ivan Jarnjak, in 1993 (Ivanović, 2011, p. 108). In Split *Feral Tribune*'s editorial offices were tapped by history professor Alojzije Šupraha, director of the Split office of the secret service, SZUP, who later justified his behaviour by saying that “the official request for surveillance had all the necessary rubber stamps.” (Ivančić, 2010). Another secret service officer revealed to journalist Nebojša Taraba that the secret services sought primarily to discredit critical journalists publicly, for instance by snooping on their private lives and uncovering their personal habits, sexual affinities and the way they spent their free time (Latin, 2007). By the end of the 1990s 126 journalists had been under surveillance. Wiretapping of journalists was so widespread that all of the non-regime journalists were most likely bugged at some point (Čulić, 2011, p. 7).

3.4. The HDZ loses popular support after 1995

Tuđman's grip over both media and the HDZ started to wane after the war ended in 1995. Dissatisfaction among the population increased with the bad economic situation and the incipient banking crisis, which led to a selling-off of almost the entire Croatian banking sector by the end of the decade. At the same time the “robust” governing style, which had been acceptable to a majority during the war years, evoked increasing resistance after fighting ceased.

After the end of the war in 1995 people expected change, and although Tudjman did not relax his grip, his power slowly faded. The increasing frustration among the population became manifest and the opposition grew in popularity. In the parliamentary elections in October 1995 Tudjman's HDZ lost 2.5 percent even though voting was called only six weeks after a big success in the form of the recapture of occupied territory and despite a change in the electoral rules giving further advantage to the HDZ (Bellamy, 2001, p. 2). In November 1996 150,000 Zagreb protesters successfully demonstrated against the Interior Minister's decision to shut down the regime-critical radio station Radio 101. The Interior Minister retracted his decision – and was subsequently fired by Tudjman. In short, citizens felt increasingly disaffected by the poor economic situation, Croatia's international isolation and the high levels of cronyism and corruption (Bunce & Wolchik, 2011, p. 78).

Increasing inter-party competition started to materialize through growing support for the opposition, which was establishing itself as a serious alternative to the government for the first time since 1991. In 1997, in the traditionally liberal Istrian region, the HDZ suffered an electoral defeat which was far more severe than initially expected (Lalović 2000, 53). One year later it had to concede victory to the opposition even in one of its traditional strongholds, the region around Dubrovnik. It became increasingly clear that, although the HDZ had successfully limited polarized pluralism in an originally competitive party system (Sartori, 1976), it had not managed to remain the dominant party in the resulting non-competitive party system (Lalović 2000, 53). By 1999 public polls were showing that 71 percent of the surveyed population believed it was time for change (Irvine, 2007).

Electoral competition, however, could only play a limited role when the elections themselves were not manipulated. According to Freedom House none of the elections held after 1990 were free and fair until 1999 (Freedom House, 2007). Although the level of presidential control decreased with Tudjman's increasing health problems, there is strong evidence that he would not have conceded victory to the opposition easily. In spring 1999 Tudjman established the "Presidential Council" which included a whole network of committees. The purpose of this body was to establish a "preventive counter-government" at a time when it became clear that the opposition was likely to win the next

parliamentary elections and manipulation was no longer an option (Kasapović, 2000, p. 50). At the same time, as will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, the hardliners around Pašalić and Kutle retained a strong grip important media outlets through the so-called Grupo cartel.

The loss of popular support was accompanied by Tudjman's loss of control over the HDZ, whose factional infighting got increasingly out of hand – infighting which took the shape of dirty-laundry campaigns pursued via the media.

3.4.1. The moderates and the hardliners use the media for their infighting

The loss of popular support and especially recurring reports about Franjo Tudjman's serious illness opened up conflicts among HDZ factions, the centrifugal forces of which brought the party to the brink of collapse, even before the parliamentary elections in 1999. The breadth of the "movement of independence", which was the parties' biggest advantage in its early years of mobilization, increasingly fuelled factional tensions which had emerged after the unity of the war years had come to an end. It was especially this competition within the governing HDZ which caused widespread media coverage of corruption scandals. This is in line with Balán (2011), who uses examples from Chile and Argentina to show that politicians seek to capitalize on high levels of competition within governing parties by leaking incriminating details of their intra-party adversaries to the press.

Conflict in the HDZ had already led to a parliamentary crisis between March and June 1994. The HDZ chairmen of the two houses of the Croatian parliament, formerly members of Tudjman's inner circle, were forced to resign. Stipe Mesić and Josip Manolić, two influential HDZ members, vociferously criticized illegal appointments to the SJC and the motivations of the Croatian government to split up Bosnia and Herzegovina (Lalović, 2000, p. 52). They also condemned the general state of Croatian democracy and the concentration of power in the President's hands (Vjesnik, 1994, p. 2). While in the short term (that is, until the end of the electoral period) the new party founded by the expelled

members proved to be an effective parliament-based critic of the government's conduct, in the long term this split consolidated the dominance of the hardliners over the HDZ.

The moderate "techno-manager" faction around Franjo Gregurić, Hrvoje Šarinić and Mate Granić used the newly-founded and comparatively aggressive political weekly *Nacional* to publish scandals, especially relating to privatization and corruption scandals perpetrated by the Tudjman regime. As will be seen in more detail in the following chapter, both politicians and publishers profited from this collusive arrangement. *Nacional* published the biggest and most dangerous affairs, which were fed to them by their contacts among the HDZ techno-managers, while *EPH* and *Jutarnji* were more careful and criticized only latently.

Hardliner Pašalić for his part controlled much of the state-owned media but was also involved in the weekly *Imperijal*, which was close to the secret service SIS and similarly sought to compromise their political opponents from the moderate faction (International Crisis Group, 1998; Lovrić, 1998). Both Šarinić and Gregurić accused Pašalić of using the SIS against them and of plotting their political assassination by publishing sensitive information obtained by the secret service (Stallaerts, 2009, p. 65). Moderate Šarinić in turn defended himself against Pašalić's attacks, giving interviews to *Jutarnji List*, *Globus* and *Nacional*. Tudjman, however, was more supportive of the hardliners, not least because of the divisive policies against Bosnia and Herzegovina (International Crisis Group, 1998). With this position he also increasingly isolated himself and Croatia in the international community.

From the transcripts of conversations in the presidential office it becomes clear that Šarinić was sure that Tudjman had lost control over the party and that Pašalić and Kutle had taken control of all important areas, especially regarding the media, the economy and the financial sector. Šarinić resigned in 1998 after Tudjman openly sided with Pašalić.⁵⁹ Defence Minister Andrija Hebrang, who sought to reform the Ministry and the untransparent flow of money to "Herceg-Bosna", had to resign in October 1998 (International Crisis Group, 1998, p. 9). The moderate faction had lost.

⁵⁹This became evident at the latest during Šarinić's last meeting with Tudjman in May 1998, shortly before his withdrawal (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia 1998).

3.4.2. Run-up to the 2000 elections

The victory of the hardliners had several consequences for the development of the HDZ and for Croatia as a whole. Firstly, the strong faction of Bosnian Croats, represented by Pašalić pushed the HDZ and Croatia further into international isolation. Secondly, the move of the HDZ to the right bolstered the liberal opposition at a time when the people had grown tired of the bad economic circumstances, which were connected to the burgeoning corruption, committed particularly by the HDZ hardliners. The SDP and a liberal party had formally agreed in November 1998 to form a coalition together with a bloc of four smaller parties. The six opposition parties had already issued a common draft for a new electoral law in September 1998. They had also put forward a secular programme that included abandoning support of nationalist Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina⁶⁰ and announcing cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague.

The six-party coalition won an almost two-thirds majority that allowed them to introduce a parliamentary system and restrict the President's powers, even though Stipe Mesić, an opposition candidate, had become Tudjman's successor. The HDZ had now lost its control of both parliament and presidential office.

Despite earlier signs that the regime would make use of manipulative measures, the elections were in large part free and fair, not least because monitoring by the two big NGO coalitions, Glas99 and GONG, prevented electoral fraud. Bunce and Wolchik (2011) demonstrate that the NGOs were supported by activists from Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia as well as by substantial contributions from the US government, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI).⁶¹ Before and during the elections the activities of the NGOs grew rapidly (Bunce and Wolchik 2011:80), with GONG especially active (Irvine 2007).⁶²

⁶⁰This measure, like so many others, was certainly not entirely altruistic as the electoral base in Bosnia overwhelmingly supported the HDZ in Croatia.

⁶¹The U.S. contribution was significant with over \$ 5,200,000 (Fisher & Bijelić, 2007, p. 67). USAID provided financial aid to GONG and the election monitors were trained by the NDI (Bunce and Wolchik 2011:52 ff.). The

Consequently, the run-up to the parliamentary elections in 2000 was marked by two trends: firstly, the anticipated introduction of parliamentarism in November 2000, already announced by the leading opposition bloc, markedly increased the level of party control of the policy process and upgraded internal party competition as a means to ex-ante screen candidates. The HDZ, in particular, experienced a higher level of internal competition following Franjo Tudjman's death in December 1999 (see in more detail in the chapter on intra-party competition). Secondly, the period was marked by what Grzymała-Busse (2007) calls "robust" party competition: due to President Tudjman's demise, the HDZ faced a worthy adversary with a credible political programme for the first time in its ten-year history. This party competition, however, did nothing to moderate the hardliner-dominated HDZ, which would have appealed to the electorate or alleviated its potential for corruption. Instead, the hardliners had finally largely eliminated the moderates from the most important positions in the party and were free to realise their political programme – which sent them straight to the opposition benches.

3.5. Conclusions

This chapter provided a historical context for the empirical analysis by sketching key developments during the 1990s relating to transition to formal democracy, independence, war and important implications such as the HDZ exerting broad control over the media and judiciary. It explored the preconditions for the political scene after the second transition in 2000 by explaining factional infighting in the HDZ and its alliances with certain media organs, which laid the groundwork for collusion between politicians and media-mafia conglomerates in Croatia from 2000 onwards.

As the democratic regressions of the Tudjman regime after the end of the war demonstrate, important elements within the governing party had not committed to liberal democracy, which in

American Ambassador to Croatia requested that IRI take Croatian opposition leaders to Slovakia to meet with former opposition leaders (Irvine 2007).

⁶²GONG registered as an NGO following a ruling of the constitutional court which decided that independent observers should be allowed to participate in all phases of the elections.

turn implied that a democratic development was not yet locked in. Even though I apply “traditional” drivers to conditions under which democracy is already firmly established (see the introduction), it should be noted that inter-party competition had, for most of the decade, been severely distorted and not in a position to drive universalistic behaviour. And with the increasing international isolation of the Tadjman regime, Europeanization had clearly very little impact in influencing domestic actors’ calculations. Instead, the split of the HDZ elite and the infighting between the two dominant factions within the party during the last years of the decade provided the context in which citizens were able to make informed decisions in largely fair elections.

The next chapter connects logically and chronologically to the historical overview presented here. It looks at the association between the executive and certain media organs, politicians’ efforts to advance universalism by increasing the autonomy of the media, and the factors impeding such developments.

4. Ivica Račan and Jadranka Kosor: steps to universalism

"I claim responsibly for the fact that neither President Mesić, nor Premier Račan, nor this government have the real power in this country. It is led by these four secret partners. Those who govern the media and the financial resources also govern the country. The government and the president can be the ones who get photographed"

Ivo Pukanić, assassinated publisher of Nacional, December 2000 (Latin, 2008)

This and the subsequent chapter present the results from 47 semi-structured interviews conducted in Zagreb in April and May 2014. Taking a principal-agent perspective, they connect to and expand the historical overview presented earlier and explain the long-term interaction between key political players and influential media houses - the public broadcaster HRT, which is especially important in forming public (mass) opinion, and the mainstream press with its strong influence on policy makers. The two chapters seek to reconstruct the inner workings of collusion relationships. They draw on the concepts developed in the introduction: politicians' usage of universalism, formal or informal particularism and the dynamics induced by two democratization drivers - EU influence and party competition. They thereby serve two purposes: firstly, to illustrate the shifts between particularism and universalism in Croatia between 2000 and 2014, and secondly to demonstrate that the presence of the above-mentioned drivers alone was not enough to produce universalism. Instead, as will be argued in more detail in the chapter on intra-party competition, the level of party-internal contestation, developed in greater detail in the introduction, is a more promising factor in making sense of these shifts.

This chapter tells the story of universalism and illustrates how - and, to a lesser extent, why - politicians initiated universalistic shifts, understood as increasing horizontal accountability by increasing the independence of the media. Even though the introductory quote, made in the heat of revelations that had uncovered the existence of a media cartel, understates the agency of politicians, both

the PM and the president were able only gradually to take control of the security apparatus. From a total of four prime ministers, two, Ivica Račan and Jadranka Kosor, have initiated universalistic shifts for different reasons, as will be seen in the remainder of the chapter.

As outlined in the theory and methods chapter, I have only used information from journalists who, through their work record as well as from the feedback from their journalistic colleagues, were valid and reliable sources of information.

4.1. Ivica Račan, 12.1999 – 12.2003

Ivica Račan was a long-standing member of the LCC and a reformist, who campaigned for internal reforms of the federal communist party and its tolerance towards criticism. He advocated a democratization of society, but intended to reform the socialist system and keep Yugoslavia together (Muić, 1989). Račan was elected President of the LCC in December 1989 and transformed it into a Social Democratic party one year later.

During the 1990s Račan envisioned the SDP as a constructive opposition, supporting Tudjman in war-time but also criticizing him, and especially the hardliner faction in the HDZ, for their divisive policy towards Bosnia and their efforts to undermine democratic control. After the six-party coalition, which besides the SDP also included a liberal-conservative party (HSLs) and four smaller parties, came to power in January 2000, it became obvious that the coalition was ideologically too heterogeneous to effectively deal with state-level corruption and the crime left over from the war and largely sponsored by the HDZ hardliners.

Stipe Mesić, who had been surprisingly elected as Tudjman's successor in January 2000, had been the last rotating president of Yugoslavia and, after the dissolution of the federal institutions, became a highly positioned moderate in Franjo Tudjman's HDZ. As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, in 1994 Mesić and Josip Manolić defected from the HDZ amidst infighting with hardliners who sup-

ported a more authoritarian governing style and supported secessionist Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ivica Račan's and Stipe Mesić's mandates have to be seen in the context of what has widely been referred to as the second transition, which formally included the change from a presidential-parliamentary to a premier-presidential system.

Together with President Mesić, the new centre-left governing coalition introduced an essentially parliamentary system by making government responsible solely to the parliament while simultaneously limiting the president's responsibilities to procedural and foreign/ security policy areas. Together with the coalition, Mesić played an important role in reducing the burgeoning executive power he had inherited from Tudjman. In March 2001 the parliament adopted constitutional changes that abolished the (HDZ-dominated) Upper Chamber of Parliament.

Mesić also sought to "disarm" the HDZ hardliner faction around Ivić Pašalić and Miroslav Kutle which, as the previous chapter demonstrates, commanded a dominant share of the national media. The faction was informally connected to the "secret service underground", a big threat to the irreversibility of the democratization process initiated by the new government and now working to gain the upper hand after the death of Franjo Tudjman. This media power was exercised through the secret Grupo cartel, which features prominently in the subsequent sections. Through its dominance of about 80% of the Croatian market the cartel might have acquired what was suggested in the opening quote, namely precedence over politics in defining the basic rules for the functioning of society.

4.1.1. The media scene at the outset of the "second transformation"

After 10 years of both intensive and extensive use of formal particularism against the media under Franjo Tudjman, the six-party coalition led by Ivica Račan was elected on a platform of democratization. After the change of government, groups of leading hardliners who were linked to former secret service factions, local strongmen, war criminals and the nouveau riche (Čulić, 2011, p. 9) turned into

underground clans. With Tudjman's control over the HDZ waning towards the end of the 1990s, inter-factional wars spiralled out of control after the disciplining factor of governing had ceased to exist and former formal institutions were pushed into informality.

As a consequence, violence, which had existed to some extent in the 1990s, exploded in the early 2000s, and especially so among media owners involved in Grupo. As already mentioned, in March 2003 the car of EPH owner Ninoslav Pavić was blown up. Former media tycoon Zdravko Jurak was beaten up in front of his house. Just as Ivo Pukanić was killed in 2008 after selling his shares of Nacional, NOVA TV owner Ivan Čaleta was attacked when he was in negotiations regarding the sale of his TV station. Čaleta was shot in the legs, a "warning" according to the police, given that the gunman could have easily killed him (Malović, 2004, p. 120). Miroslav Kutle's jeep was shot at and Andrej Maksimović, editor-in-chief of OTV, was beaten up twice (Malović, 2004, p. 120).

Cartels need not only their own enforcement mechanisms but also government support, if they want to endure (Levenstein & Suslow, 2006). Since the illegal collusion contract that was created by Grupo couldn't be enforced through formal institutions such as the judiciary, the informal rules of the cartel lacked a central sanctioning authority (Lauth, 2000, p. 25), in turn creating unpredictable and often violent outcomes (Varese, 2010, p. 6).⁶³

The mafia violence which broke out at the outset of the new millennium did not stop at politics. Both Ivica Račan and Stipe Mesić reported being continually subjected to death threats, and remarked that they did not have full control over all areas of the repressive apparatus. At the same time, the assassination of reformist Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić in March 2003 exemplified the very real danger that taking on the mafia involved. This was especially a problem for Stipe Mesić, who as the commander of the army was determined to reform and depoliticize the military, which was still dominated by politicized hardliners.

⁶³ For the description of the inner-workings of a well-documented newspaper cartel in 2nd WW France, see Bignon and Flandreau (2012).

While Mesić had a clear hands-on approach but limited constitutional powers in dealing with these problems, the oversized coalition led by Ivica Račan lacked the political force to push through central lustration projects. It largely failed to come to terms with privatization crimes of the 1990s committed by members of the former nomenklatura, and like all subsequent governments ignored the Grupo cartel's 80% controlling share of the Croatian media market. This was partly a consequence of the heterogeneity of the coalition, the imminent danger that came from the media-mafia conglomerates and the fact that the judiciary was still largely under the control of HDZ loyalists.

From this perspective, the alignment of both Račan and Mesić to two warring media conglomerates, themselves connected to mafia-based muscle, was a move motivated by sheer necessity. These blocks had their political patrons, their secret media owners, their allies in the intelligence structures and their Mafiosi in the streets (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014). Nevertheless, as the evidence presented will show, both Ivica Račan and Stipe Mesić made universalistic strides by working towards increasing horizontal accountability of the media. Given the market dominance of the media involved in Grupo, Ivica Račan was not likely to be a partner on equal footing in the relationship with Ninoslav Pavić's EPH. Stipe Mesić in contrast cooperated with the weekly Nacional to aggressively attack the corruptive involvements of Grupo, targeting especially the secret media dominance of some HDZ hardliners who tried to cling to power after their de-authorization. Given that Nacional based its market power on the exclusiveness of the information it most likely received from Mesić's circles, the president was much more able to exert some control over the political weekly than Račan was able to keep Ninoslav Pavić and his partners in crime at bay.

This section starts with an explanation of the Grupo media cartel, which was founded in 1996 to structure market competition and set the conditions for political alignment with publishers for years to come. It presents evidence for the existence of the cartel by discussing silenced competition among the media involved, laying out the media war between EPH and extra-Grupo Nacional and showing how the politicians named in the Grupo contract were actually linked to their respective media. Secondly, as suggested in the opening quote, during the mandate of the six-party coalition

Račan played a rather passive role and was connected to EPH owner and Grupo participant Ninoslav Pavić, therefore being in no position to deal with media-mafia conglomerates that ruled the market. By retreating from particularism, however, Račan nevertheless carefully introduced elements of universalism. Thirdly, the following sections discuss the role of President Mesić in the second media conglomerate centring on Nacional, and the extent to which he contributed to universalism. The fourth section in this sub-chapter will discuss the comparatively minor role EU pre-accession pressures played in driving universalism. In contrast, there is evidence that Ivica Račan's stable rooting in the SDP helped to loosen principal-agent ties between government and the public broadcaster HRT, which in a state of horizontal accountability should not exist. As will be argued at greater length in the chapter on intra-party competition, internal party dynamics are better suited to explaining universalistic developments in an institutional environment in which the ancien regime still was not entirely de-authorized.

4.1.2. The Grupo contract and its impact on the Croatian media scene

As section 3.4. of the previous chapter demonstrates, the course of events suggests that in 1996 the political and media scene was divided into two blocks in which large parts of the Croatian media were connected to certain politicians, secret service factions and mafia groups (henceforth referred to as media-mafia conglomerates). After Ivo Pukanić had split off Ninoslav Pavić's Globus in 1995, and especially after he fell out with then presidential advisor Ivić Pašalić one year later⁶⁴, his weekly Nacional started to fight the HDZ hardliners aggressively, especially by publishing evidence of their involvement in a number of corruption scandals. In this they were supported by the HDZ moderates around Hrvoje Šarinić and Franjo Gregurić.

Shortly after Nacional's split from the media mainstream, the first media-mafia conglomerate, Grupo, was founded, unifying the media market between four "big players": Ivić Pašalić, who report-

⁶⁴ Neven Barač, a banker from the Dubrovnik bank, reportedly got into a fight with Pašalić in the affair involving this bank, in which Pukanić took sides against the latter (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014; Stanković, 2008).

edly steered Večernji List, Miroslav Kutle, who dominated Slobodna Dalmacija, Ninoslav Pavić, who retained operational leadership of the EPH group and Vinko Grubišić, the owner of Nova TV. Their common firm Grupo, legally registered as an “anonymous shareholder society” in 1996 with 51% stock ownership, became the secret majority owner of EPH, publishing the daily Jutarnji List and the weekly Globus under formal owner and operative director Ninoslav Pavić.⁶⁵ In addition to the important mainstream media, Grupo also held the paper Imperijal, the TV channel OTV and a number of smaller media organs, altogether making up around 80% of the Croatian media space (J. Babić, 2000).⁶⁶

The Grupo contract was published in all its details in Ivo Pukanić’s daily “Republika” (J. Babić, 2000), which together with three further outlets was the only organ not part of the cartel.⁶⁷ The contract itself was written in coded terms and therefore also incorporated a decoding table explaining the real persons behind the ciphers in the contract. It specified financial sanctions of 3m Deutschmarks if a signatory broke confidentiality. The authenticity of the material published in Republika has never been denied. Ninoslav Pavić in an interview in his own weekly Globus even openly admitted that he had signed the contract.

The deal did not affect Ivić Pašalić’s influence in Večernji List and Miroslav Kutle’s dominance of Slobodna Dalmacija. It was therefore especially useful for the HDZ hardliners who had lost the parliamentary elections in 2000 but retained widespread influence through their newspapers. Pašalić and Kutle were moreover still closely networked to former secret service factions, which to some extent had become unemployed after the change in government.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Kutle had become co-owner of Globus back in 1995 (J. Babić, 2000).

⁶⁶ The list of media organs included in the contract encompasses TV stations OTV, TV Marjan and the independent TV Pula, radio stations Narodni Radio, Obiteljsko Radio, Radio Dalmacija and Radio Libertas, the newspaper Poslovni Tjednik, Mega Marketing along with the enterprises Cikada and Kutle’s Cibala bank (J. Babić, 2000)

⁶⁷ The other non-Grupo media entities were Ivo Pukanić’s weekly Nacional, Novi List, Feral Tribune and Radio 101.

⁶⁸ During the 1990s twelve different secret services existed (Hatzadony, 1999). According to estimations, alone the SZUP, the secret service of the ministry of the interior, employed some 4-5000 staff with dual functions in the ministry (Milivojević, 1994).

4.1.2.1. Interlinked media empires and a “pacified” market: evidence for the links between Jutarnji List, Večernji List and Slobodna Dalmacija

Two years after the publication of the Grupo scandal by the second media-mafia conglomerate around Nacional publisher Ivo Pukanić, a bomb exploded under the car of Ninoslav Pavić in front of his house. Pavić remained unharmed, but the police did not find the perpetrator(s). The exact reasons for this attack are unknown, but there is reason to speculate that they were connected to dynamics between Grupo participants since after this attack editors were employed in Jutarnji List who introduced smear campaigns based on real or forged evidence and the discrediting of political or business opponents (anonymous interviewee 4). Formally employed as editors, many of the people had secret service backgrounds and in some instances were close to Ivić Pašalić. They held powerful positions as they took many of the decisions on employing journalists or ordering them to write articles with a certain spin (anonymous interviewee 4). It was, for instance, not unusual for journalists to receive incriminating documents from one of these persons and be asked to write a story to a short deadline. In one particular case from 2003 a journalist was asked by an editor with a secret service background to smear a HDZ moderate based on documents which alleged that this person had stolen paintings from the ministry of foreign affairs (anonymous interviewee 4). Upon crosschecking the allegations, anonymous interviewee 4 found the incriminating story to be a hoax. The interviewee reports that this particular editor with a secret service background is employed alternately by Jutarnji List and Večernji List, confirming that Jutarnji and Večernji List, formally owned by two different media enterprises, are linked in some way (anonymous interviewee 4). This specific example has been confirmed as a general pattern by anonymous interviewee 9 who reported that at some point almost the entire editorial structure came from Jutarnji List to Večernji List.

The existence of the Grupo cartel had two major consequences in terms of infringing media autonomy. Firstly, the signatories and all other people of their liking were not to be criticized in any way by the member publications. When, for instance, journalists of the ideologically rather liberal-left positioned EPH publications suggested topics such as the financial dealings of HDZ hardliner Miroslav

Kutle to their editors, such topics were declined as “uninteresting” or “too complicated” (anonymous interviewee 2).

Secondly, the respective papers still do not attack each other, a pact that some journalists called a “gentlemen’s agreement” (anonymous interviewee 9, 2014). The media outlets participating in the Grupo contract fabricated fake competition (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014; anonymous interviewee 9, 2014), including public quarrels between Jutarnji and Večernji List, with the newspapers purportedly taking sides between SDP and HDZ politicians, and secret consultations between the participants before important market moves, such as the publishing of a new tabloid (anonymous interviewee 14). The fake competition for instance included mild attacks on the hardliners by the nominally liberal Jutarnji List, attacks which were designed to strike the right balance between generating circulation and satisfying the political intentions of the partners in Grupo. In reality, however, there is no enmity between the two, not even between columnists (anonymous interviewee 14).

Instead, the main focus remained on dividing up the media market, controlling prices and using the harnessed media to fulfil the diverse underground business interests. For the Croatian distribution company TISAK, for instance, itself a monopolist, its unique market position guarantees a profit of around 40% - an margin that is usually associated with arms or drug trafficking and rarely with the legal production of cultural goods (Peruško, 2003, p. 41).

As Grupo has never been prosecuted, there is also evidence that Miroslav Kutle and Ivić Pašalić both retained influence in “their” respective dailies Slobodna Dalmacija and Večernji List, even though they have not had no formal connections with the respective ownership structures for years.

There are three pieces of evidence that Kutle has long had influence in Slobodna Dalmacija. Firstly, according to anonymous interviewee 14, the editorial cadre of the paper in 2014 was almost identical to the editorial staff during the time that Kutle was officially in charge (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014). Secondly, it is a fact that no article has been even slightly critical of Kutle in any of Ninoslav Pavić’s publications. In 2010 the internationally recognized journalist Boris Dežulović made pub-

lic a conversation with Ninoslav Pavić, who justified the censorship of one of Dežulović's columns on the basis that critical articles on Miroslav Kutle could not be published (Lasić, 2010). Also anonymous interviewee 2, a reliable and reputable investigative journalist who worked many years in EPH publications, describes how Pavić repeatedly had texts on Miroslav Kutle and other HDZ hardliners removed. Moreover, the fact that Kutle and his dealings have not figured prominently in Jutarnji List is confirmed by the quantitative text analysis in chapter six. Thirdly, a mass of under-the-counter payments involving the firms Dalta and Kamensko have shown that Pavić had secretly transferred millions to his old partner Miroslav Kutle (Bajto, 2014). According to a police investigation in 2011, Pavić was paying Kutle in return for his secret share in EPH, which he had bought as one of the Grupo participants (L. Tomičić, 2011).

Similarly, Večernji List has a long and "diverse" history of ownership changes since the first transition in 1989 in which Ivić Pašalić consistently figured prominently. Since 1993, when Miroslav Kutle, the business tycoon closely connected to the HDZ hardliners, took over Večernji List, the newspaper had been a base of authors of the (nationalist) right. In 1998 the paper was taken over by a group of investors from the Caiman islands, who later turned out to be directed by Ivić Pašalić on the order of Franjo Tudjman.⁶⁹ In 2000 Večernji List was sold to the Austrian publisher Styria. Styria is a media enterprise publishing newspapers all over Central and Eastern Europe. One of their central products, the tabloid 24sata (24 hours), was introduced in Croatia in 2005.

According to anonymous interviewee 14, today a columnist at 24sata, Večernji List had been organizationally separate from 24sata within the Austrian publishing company Styria. The only Croatian in Styria's management is Pater Ivan Tolj, closely connected to Ivić Pašalić (anonymous interviewee 14). Tolj is known to be very well networked in the Croatian political elite, with connections that span a range of political parties and include not only president (and former SDP member) Ivo Josipović, for-

⁶⁹ This is proven by a transcript from the presidential palace: Ivić Pašalić: This is legally perfect and nobody will ever see that this is actually us. (...); Tudjman: And how much would we then have?; Pašalić: We would have the controlling package. (Slobodna Dalmacija, 2000). President Mesić had later asked for a revision of the sale of Večernji List to Caritas before the re-sale to the Austrian Styria, but according to sources from the period it seemed that Račan's oversized six-party coalition did not have the political force to push through a revision. Ivica Račan later said that his hands were tied and that the "pressure was too high" (Index.hr, 2005a).

mer minister of the interior and current HDZ president, Tomislav Karamarko and Mladen Bajić while he was public prosecutor but also members of the actual SDP government such as Rajko Ostojić (anonymous interviewee 5; anonymous interviewee 7; anonymous interviewee 8; anonymous interviewee 9; anonymous interviewee 14; anonymous interviewee 17; Interview Tomičić, 2014).⁷⁰ Journalists were very careful when talking about Tolj and very little is known about him, which is due to the fact that journalists who have tried to investigate him have encountered major problems.⁷¹

While Ivić Pašalić was “Alpha and Omega” in *Večernji List* until at least 2001 (anonymous interviewee 9), the first years under Styria’s ownership were described as comparatively free, which was attributed to the time needed by the new owner to settle in. In 2005 Miljenko Manjkas, a journalist who always cultivated his close connection with Ivić Pašalić (Interview Manjkas, 2014), became editor-in-chief of *Večernji List*. With the arrival of Manjkas rumours circulated that Pašalić had taken control of *Večernji List* to meet the conditions of the Grupo contract. In fact, under Manjkas, who appointed editors from Pašalić’s circles (anonymous interviewee 9), *Večernji List* went back to covering the preferred topics of the nationalist right. The paper started to “turn against Serbs” and subtly supported the separatism of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Index.hr, 2005a). In addition rightist authors were hired and the paper received a conservative “make-over”. One possible sign that Manjkas became editor-in-chief thanks to Pašalić’s influence is the fact that henceforth journalists were nudged into writing negatively about Sanader and the HDZ, even though the paper primarily catered to a conservative readership and even in the absence of concrete occasions or reasons to do so (anonymous interviewee 8). Given that before and after Manjkas’ stint as editor-in-chief *Večernji List* had always been close to the HDZ in its editorial policy, this was clearly a counter-intuitive development.

⁷⁰ Almost none of the interviewees was prepared to speak about Tolj on the record even in a general, unproblematic way. Knowledge among journalists about the role of Tolj is scarce and it was only experienced journalists who were able to say something about him at all.

⁷¹ Ladislav Tomičić, for instance, reports that when he started to investigate a trail of money embezzlement in connection with Tolj, not only did Tolj let him know that he was following each of his investigation steps (Tomičić conducted a number of interviews in Bosnia and Herzegovina), but his newspaper *Novi List* also received threats that it would encounter problems with its distribution (Interview Tomičić, 2014).

In sum, there is strong evidence not only for the creation but also for the continued existence of the Grupo cartel, of Miroslav Kutle's likely influence over Slobodna Dalmacija and, to a lesser degree, Ivić Pašalić's involvement in Večernji List.

4.1.3. The media-mafia conglomerate around Nacional

While infighting among Grupo papers was silenced, the only real media war took place between EPH publications Globus and Jutarnji List on the one hand and Ivo Pukanić's Nacional on the other. The publication of the Grupo scandal was, according to conventional wisdom among Croatian journalists, fed by documents coming from Stipe Mesić's circle and had a strong political dimension since it showed the criminal energy expended by Ivić Pašalić and Miroslav Kutle in clinging on to power after Tudjman's deselection. It also had a media market dimension as Ivo Pukanić hoped to bring down and take the place of EPH as the dominant Croatian publisher (Interview Matić, 2014). Even though there were clearly tensions between Ivica Račan and Stipe Mesić over how to deal with the hardliners, the media war that had developed between the two media-mafia conglomerates since 1996 was not driven by the two politicians but by the business ambitions of Pavić and Pukanić.

Since economic success was clearly a priority for Ivo Pukanić, he happily published almost anything which contributed to a higher circulation. As editor-in-chief, Pukanić made sure by means of numerous interventions into his journalists' texts that they conveyed his view and drew the right conclusions. Publishing reliable information was not considered supportive to that goal and journalists not sticking to this philosophy were moved from the interior desk to less contentious foreign policy topics (anonymous interviewee 14).

However, even according to a former EPH employee who was part of a crusade against Ivo Pukanić, Nacional took the highest risks in publishing scandals centring on the hardliner faction, which was still influential and dangerous (Interview Malić, 2014). EPH, and especially Jutarnji and Globus, criticized Kutle and Pašalić for their influence within Grupo only latently, to pay lip service to its liberal

readership base (Interview Malić, 2014). While it is unclear when exactly Pavić and Pukanić buried the hatchet, an sms transcript from May 2008 – only months before Pukanić’s violent death – suggests that, once again, the reason may be found in the financial benefits of secretive cooperation.⁷²

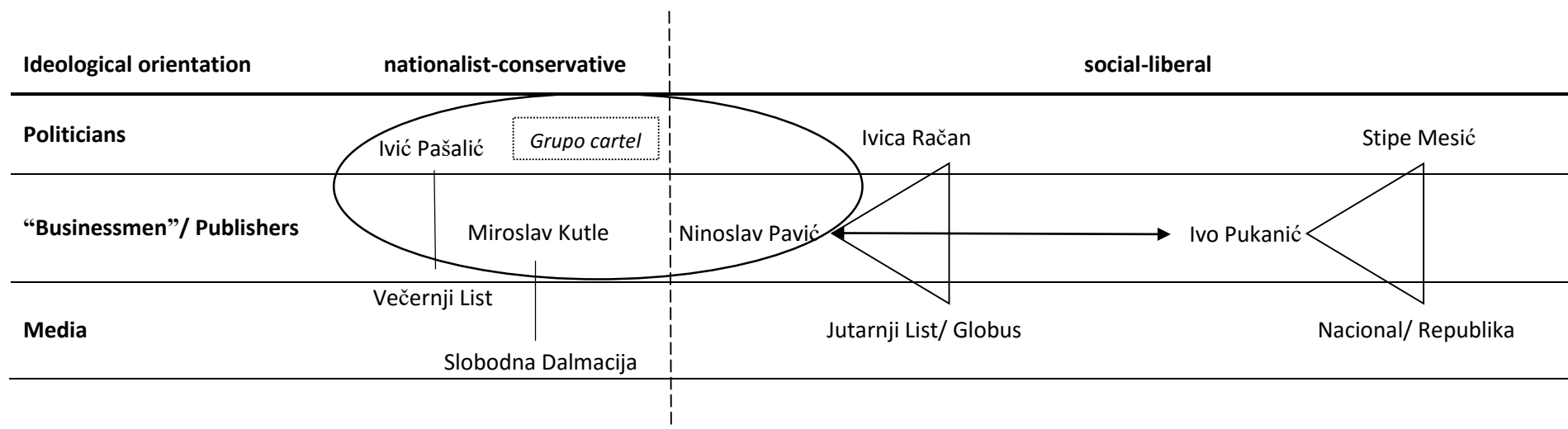
Pukanić was well known for his excellent connections not only in president Mesić’s office, but also in the Croatian underworld. He never denied, for instance, his close friendship with criminal Hrvoje Petrač – the “muscle” in the media-mafia conglomerate around Nacional – who maintained close ties to members of the Tudjman family and was linked to many mafia-style killings in Zagreb and other crimes⁷³ (Interview Malić, 2014). In a letter sent illegally from a Greek prison to Pukanić and subsequently leaked, Petrač used code. When publicly asked why he thinks Petrač did this, Pukanić replied: “I really do not know. We always communicate this way, but not to hide something, it is just how we speak.” (Stanković, 2008).

Ivo Pukanić was killed in 2008, together with his marketing manager Niko Franjić, in a bomb attack during daylight in the centre of Zagreb. While six suspects from the Croatian and Serbian mafia were indicted for executing the attack, its sponsors remain unknown.

⁷² The two publishers illegally discussed the timing of a price raise for their political weeklies Globus and Nacional: Sent to Nino Pavić on July 31, 2008 16:19: “Nino, if you go from 7 Kuna for the daily newspapers, what about the magazines? Do you plan to raise the prices? I’m in favour if you go”; From Nino Pavić on July 31, 2008 17:46: “Hi, we decided to increase Globus and Gloria to 14 Kuna. I know that this will anger you. I thought that my people informed you.”; Sent To Nino Pavić on July 31, 2008 17:51: “Ok. We will also go to 14 Kuna. But do not mess with me (...)” (Index.hr, 2010d).

⁷³ In 2002 the Serbian Nedeljni Telegraf published transcripts of convict Hrvoje Petrač, which suggest that he was a large-scale cigarette smuggler and was in frequent contact with high-level Croatian politicians, mafia bosses from the region and the secret services (Latin, 2008).

Overview of main actors and their relationships 2000 - 2003



4.1.4. PM Račan: Careful universalism

The uncovering of the Grupo scandal set the scene for Ivica Račan and Stipe Mesić to make good on their electoral promise of de-Tudjmanization and eliminate the long shadow of the hardliners. Račan and Mesić, departing from their widely different contexts, chose different approaches in dealing with these challenges.

4.1.4.1. Račan did not tackle the Grupo cartel and EPH's role in it

Even though there is evidence of some kind of mutual support between Račan and Pavić's EPH, this connection was neither systematic nor permanent, as the definition above requires, and hence cannot be classified as either media capture or collusion. The new Social Democratic PM had already been supported by Pavić's media empire since 1998 and especially so in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in 1999. It is difficult to know whether he was aware of the Grupo cartel at the time and whether he would have picked different alliances if he had been. By December 2000, when the Grupo contract was published in the daily "Republika", Račan had already started to make strides in withdrawing from media influence (see in more detail below).

According to anonymous interviewee 14, Pavić saw himself as a kind of Rupert Murdoch - he thought of himself as a political actor and kingmaker. Račan not only accepted that role, but also thought of Pavić as an ideological ally" (anonymous interviewee 14), whose main focus, however, did not lie in supporting universalistic policies but in opportunistically expanding his profits, as Grupo and later developments show (anonymous interviewee 1, 2014; anonymous interviewee 11, 2014; anonymous interviewee 14, 2014; anonymous interviewee 17, 2014; anonymous interviewee 2, 2014; anonymous interviewee 5, 2014; anonymous interviewee 6, 2014; Interview Đikić, 2014; Interview Selimović, 2014).

Pavić was to become the key person of collusion between politics and the media in Croatia. Through EPH's main publications, Globus and Jutarnji List, and their (light) participation in uncovering scandals

of the Tudjman government, Ninoslav Pavić's publishing house had gained circulation and therefore influence over the Croatian public towards the end of the 1990s.

As mentioned by one current and one former journalist from *Jutarnji List*, Račan's and Pavić's informal collaboration was evident from Pavić's endorsement of Račan and the "general supportive tone" towards the centre-left government (anonymous interviewee 2, anonymous interviewee 5, anonymous interviewee 14). Shortly after the 2000 parliamentary elections for instance, Račan and Pavić together awarded prizes for the "most meritorious work in support of democratic change", which to a large extent went to Pavić's own journalists. Moreover, Mirko Galić, at the time editor-in-chief of Pavić's *Globus*, was made the new director of HRT, allegedly decided in a meeting between Račan, Pavić and Galić, as reported by some media (Malenica, 2000a).

The events surrounding the uncovering of the Grupo media cartel provide the best insight into the real distribution of power in post-Tudjman Croatia – and the close connection between Račan and Pavić. In the aftermath of the publication of the scandal, Pavić was detained together with other suspects. It is widely believed that the Minister of Justice, Stjepan Ivanišević, who followed president Mesić's tougher approach to high-level corruption, supported this move of the police.⁷⁴ After only two days in investigative custody, however, Pavić was released following what is widely believed to have been informal pressure from Račan (Đikić, 2001).

Pavić returned the favour by starting a media campaign against Ivanišević⁷⁵, whom Račan suspected of being closer to the president than to himself. Anonymous interviewee 2, a highly respected investigative journalist working in *Globus* at the time, reports being approached by Davor Butković, one of Pavić's loyal editors, to write "something incriminating" about Ivanišević. The journalist adds that the request to smear Ivanišević came down the Račan – Pavić – Butković line (anonymous interview-

⁷⁴ Transcripts later showed that Minister of Justice Stjepan Ivanišević had complained to a secret service agent about Ivica Račan's inertness in dealing with organized crime (J. Babić, 2002).

⁷⁵ Ivanišević was declared a family violator (Klauški, 2010b).

ee 2). Secondly, Ranko Ostojić, a close ally of Pavić⁷⁶, was head of the police (and later Minister of the Interior) when details about the police investigations leaked to the press.

Some interviewees described Račan as somebody who did not want to interfere with the media but wanted “his house to be quiet” (Interview Malić, 2014). In the case of the highly dubious (but never investigated) privatization of *Večernji List*, Račan later admitted that his “hands were tied” (Index.hr, 2005a). Also, while Račan’s administration was opening the confidential secret service dossiers of journalists under surveillance during the Tudjman regime, it was also blacking out important details and names, effectively precluding court proceedings against the perpetrators. Ultimately, Račan’s government lacked full control over the security apparatus, especially over those parts of the police and the secret service where Ivić Pašalić still had considerable influence (anonymous interviewee 9, 2014).

Probably the best example of Račan’s administration’s inertia in dealing with organized crime is its effort to follow through on a central electoral promise it had made before the elections in 2000: dealing with the illicit privatizations of the 1990s. In 2001, at the beginning of its mandate, the new coalition government adopted a Law on the Revision of Transformation and Privatization, led by the State Audit Office. Completed and published only in 2004, during the first year of Ivo Sanader’s governing period, the final report claimed that less than eight percent out of a total of 1006 privatization transactions had been carried out without any abuse or wrongdoings. Capital value had been destroyed, the number of employees had fallen dramatically and while 23% of the companies filed for bankruptcy, 64% showed no development whatsoever (Grubiša, 2005, p. 69). Still, the publication of the report went without consequences, “owing to the fact that the new government (under Ivo Sanader, *T.M.*) was ideologically very close to those who ran the ‘great robbery of the century’”

⁷⁶ Shortly after Račan’s government had left office, Ostojić took a management position in *Slobodna Dalmacija* which Pavić had bought in 2005 (anonymous interviewee 6). At this time, the former head of the police was unemployed and being investigated for alleged intransparent funding of secret service operations. Moreover, Ostojić does not deny that he lived for seven years in an apartment owned by Ninoslav Pavić. Further developments involving the failure of the police to finalise investigations against Pavić under Minister of the Interior Ostojić in 2014 confirm this connection (for more evidence, see A, 2012). While Ostojić stated publicly several times that the investigation against Pavić had been suspended without outcome, the public prosecutor Dinko Cvitan, successor to Mladen Bajić, claimed the opposite.

(Grubiša, 2005, p. 70). Also the World Bank quickly identified “insiders” and the political elite as those who drew the greatest private benefit out of the privatization (World Bank, 2001). The Račan government also made a rather unfortunate attempt to implement an anti-corruption programme. Although the programme was not fully carried out during the short mandate of the SDP coalition, the government set up USKOK (Ured za suzbijanje korupcije i organiziranog kriminaliteta), the Office for Fighting Corruption and Organized Crime, as part of the Public Prosecutor’s office. Accompanied by pressure from the EU, USKOK slowly grew into a properly staffed and formally potent body to investigate illicit transactions.

This mixed track record – a PM tied to a media publisher, pushing through, as will be seen, universalistic measures but still falling short of a forceful and complete investigation of the past – can largely be attributed to Račan’s oversized and unstable six-party coalition which lacked the political force – rather than the political will – to deal with the mafia and secret service underground.

4.1.4.2. The new administration stopped formal particularism

Račan took several universalistic steps by retreating from influencing and aligning the media, as had been the day-to-day practice under the old regime, increasing the autonomy of the public broadcaster HRT and liberalising the market in order to cut principal-agent ties between the state and some media. The general assessment that Račan’s government stepped back from formal particularism is widely shared among media scholars and journalists (anonymous interviewee 12, 2014; anonymous interviewee 14, 2014; anonymous interviewee 16, 2014; anonymous interviewee 17, 2014; anonymous interviewee 21, 2014; anonymous interviewee 2, 2014; anonymous interviewee 26, 2014; anonymous interviewee 5, 2014; anonymous interviewee 6, 2014; anonymous interviewee 9, 2014; Interview Božić, 2014; Interview Đikić, 2014; Interview Duka, 2014; Interview Selimović, 2014; Interview Zovko, 2014; Malović, 2004, p. 121; Peruško, 2007, p. 231). Many also explicitly mention that even journalists in the state-owned press could freely criticize the government and its members

(anonymous interviewee 14, 2014; anonymous interviewee 16, 2014; anonymous interviewee 26, 2014; anonymous interviewee 6, 2014).

While defamation and libel laws were decriminalized, one of the urgent measures taken to stop formal particularism concerned the ceasing of wiretapping operations which many journalists had been under during Tadjman's time. The new Minister of the Interior, Šime Lučin, assured journalists that the new government would not be eavesdropping on their phones anymore and made existing dossiers individually available (Pulić, 2000).⁷⁷

The new government also stopped the practice of the Tadjman regime of confronting critical media with legal action. Ivica Đikić, formerly deputy editor-in-chief of the anarchic-leftist Feral Tribune, which had been swamped with lawsuits during the 1990s, confirmed that the Račan government, despite an interview boycott of the paper, neither initiated lawsuits nor applied pressure (Interview Đikić, 2014). This is also supported by official numbers: the number of libel cases dropped from 230 in 1997 (Pusić, 1998) to three cases in 2003 (Peruško, 2007, p. 234).

Eventually, in 2002, the media NGO IREX came to the conclusion that direct legal assistance for fighting assaults on freedom of expression in Croatia was no longer necessary (Cagorovic & De Luce, 2002, p. 18). Towards the end of Račan's term, most international media NGOs had pulled out of Croatia since they saw their overarching task fulfilled. IREX was the last NGO to leave Croatia, in September 2004. The Open Society Institute, Press Now, the Helsinki Committee, and the US Information Service had already withdrawn their support from Croatia (IREX, 2004, p. 39).

4.1.4.3. Developments of universalism

The largest advance in universalism by the Račan administration consisted in media being allowed to widely criticize the government. This is evident from interviews conducted across several media or-

⁷⁷ It needs to be qualified that the dossiers of journalists Željko Peratović and Slavica Lukić were not opened, due to reasons unknown.

gans. Anonymous interviewee 2 from Ninoslav Pavić's EPH for instance reported that government members could be criticized, especially when seen in contrast to untouchables such as Miroslav Kutle and Ivić Pašalić. For the state owned press, journalists reported that contrary to the 1990s, it was now possible to freely criticize the government in ways which had not been possible before.

This development took place despite the new government's initial move to reverse some of the personnel changes in the state media from the 1990s, especially with respect to journalists who had engaged in hateful and aggressive slurs (anonymous interviewee 13, 2014). To do so, Željka Antunović, Račan's deputy PM, drew up a list of journalists to be exchanged in state-owned media outlets (anonymous interviewee 1). The most important area of personnel change concerned the main evening news of the public broadcaster HRT. As an experienced journalist put it: "Whoever controls the seven-thirty news controls Croatia" (Asadorian et al., 2000, p. 2).⁷⁸

The first aim of the government was therefore to replace the news anchors, who doubled as editors and therefore had great influence on the content of the news. They were replaced by journalists who were close to the SDP but also had reputations as professionals. While a former SDP spokesperson was made one of the main news anchors, the new editor-in-chief of Television and the head of news – critical positions for the political colouring of the news programme – were praised for their professionalism in an independent piece of consultancy for the then BBC World Service Trust (Asadorian et al., 2000, p. 17).

Essentially the same happened at the state-owned newspaper Slobodna Dalmacija. According to anonymous interviewee 13, an investigative journalist, there were big expectations that the nationalist-minded journalists who had helped to incite hatred during the war and who had played "very ugly roles" would be dismissed. While the degree of cadre changes seems to have been limited, some traditional journalists were dismissed or downgraded. They included Miljenko Manjkas, openly close to Ivić Pašalić, who had to leave HRT, where he had edited and hosted a popular political show (In-

⁷⁸ In 2002 HTV was by far the most influential medium with 87% of the public obtaining their news from the state broadcaster (Cagorovic & De Luce, 2002, p. 3). Even in In 2006 it was still watched by 80% of the Croatian population (Peruško, 2006).

interview Manjkas, 2014), and Davor Ivanković, a journalist at Slobodna Dalmacija, who saw his status severely downgraded and his wage reduced. The changes were organized centrally by the government.

The interview evidence clearly shows that Račan did not limit the horizontal accountability exerted by independent media, thereby cutting principal-agent ties with publishers and journalists that had existed during the 1990s, especially with, but not limited to, the state-owned media. While a content analysis of HTV news towards the end of the 1990s showed that the programming of the public broadcaster focused on promoting the government and the HDZ (Peruško Čulek & PULS, 1998), a further study, published in 2003, revealed not only that the government no longer dominated programming but also that it was the most criticized actor in the news programmes (Stantić, 2003). This finding, surprising at first glance, is probably the clearest indicator of Račan's very limited intervention in HRT, since it showed the degree to which journalists close to the nationalist right still dominated HRT. Robert Bajruši, a journalist at Nacional in 2002, depicted the situation about halfway through Račan's term thus:

“With a view to the programming, HTV remained the main propagandist of the right and its positions, from the time of the anti-American demonstrations in the centre of Zagreb in March 2000 up to the coverage of the government's attempts to prosecute Mirko Norac and Ante Gotovina or the extremist outbursts of Mirko Čondić, Marinko Liović and Ante Kovačević” (Bajruši, 2002).

Similarly, three journalists from the newer cohort in then state-owned Slobodna Dalmacija reported that the climate then was more conducive to the free expression of opinion than in any subsequent period (anonymous interviewee 13, 2014; anonymous interviewee 6, 2014; Interview Selimović, 2014). In retrospect, several journalists called the time a “golden age” for journalism, because, again, journalists could freely criticize any minister of Račan's government (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014; anonymous interviewee 6, 2014).

During Račan's mandate there was a loosening of classical principal-agent ties between principal-politicians and supervisor-media – as represented by a formal delegation chain from parliament to HRT. Politicians refrained from censoring criticism of the government.

Due to the somewhat peculiar timing of two laws on HRT in 2001 and early 2003, there is evidence that inter-party competition drove further independence of the public broadcaster towards the end of the coalition's mandate. The early reform of the public broadcaster in 2001 had brought some progress in terms of its independence but retained a clause which granted government ministries the right to "supervise the legality of the HRT operation" (Art. 35, "Zakon o Hrvatskoj Radioteleviziji," 2001) - an article which left the government considerable unspecified leeway. In a second amendment of the law, adopted in February 2003, ten months before the parliamentary elections, the government increased the independence of the public broadcaster dramatically by eliminating the controversial board of managers (directly appointed by the government) from HRT's organizational structure and elevating the new, more autonomous Broadcasting Council to the top of the internal governance structure. Appointments henceforth still needed to be approved by parliament but had now to be made through a public tender ("Zakon o Hrvatskoj Radioteleviziji," 2003).

The timing of these laws suggests that inter-party competition was the driver of this particular instance of universalism. Firstly, the imminence of parliamentary elections points to increasing pressures to create a system that would make it more difficult for political opponents to access the public broadcaster for party-political ends. In addition, the fact that only since 2002 has the HDZ presented itself as a serious contender to the Social Democrats (after Ivo Sanader had imposed himself as new party leader) underpins inter-party competition as a cause of this particular instance of universalism.

A particularly important part in Račan's strategy of self-binding lay in privatizing state-owned media and liberalising the media market in order to pluralize media ownership structures and limit the state's influence through direct ownership channels. Račan turned HRT from a state-run station to a public broadcaster and sold off the third HRT channel to Radio Television Luxemburg. Večernji List

was eventually sold to the Austrian publisher Styria while his administration also actively pushed for the sale of Slobodna Dalmacija, which a conflict with neighbouring Slovenia, however, did not permit.⁷⁹ Lastly, TISAK, which enjoyed the important monopoly on distribution, was privatized in 2002 and its debts to EPH, Večernji List and Rovinj Tobacco (the owner of the largest chain of kiosks, now owned by tycoon Ivica Todorić) were turned into three 25% packets of shares.

At the same time, Račan's government introduced ownership regulations to limit the market share of media owners. This included countering non-transparent ownership practices with new media laws in 2003, introducing restrictions on media monopolies and upgrading the agency for the protection of market competition ("Zakon o medijima," 2003, "Zakon o medijima," 2004).⁸⁰

4.1.5. President Mesić and Nacional

Since president Stipe Mesić lacked the formal power to alter legislation, he took a more aggressive approach and looked for allies to actively fight and get rid of Ivić Pašalić and the hardliners, whom he saw as dangerous for Croatia's democratic development.

The newly elected president had won the elections on a platform of de-Tudjmanization and, as the formal leader of the military in peace times, was trying more pro-actively to root out Pašalić's faction—not least since it was the HDZ hardliners who had made Mesić leave the HDZ in 1994.⁸¹ In addition to taking over the highly politicized military, in the transformation from a presidential-parliamentary to a premier-presidential system Stipe Mesić retained the right to co-appoint secret service directors together with the PM. Mesić used his clout in the secret services and his control over the presidential archives to leak a number of transcripts from conversations in the presidential

⁷⁹ Račan's government was already in negotiations with a Slovenian publisher who was interested in buying the daily newspaper. Bilateral bickering over the shared border between Croatia and Slovenia, however, stirred up tensions, rendering impossible this rather sensitive transaction (anonymous interviewee 6, 2014).

⁸⁰ The 2003 law was rejected by the constitutional court and was slightly revised before its final adoption in 2004.

⁸¹ The reasons for the split of a group of moderate politicians around Stipe Mesić were the illiberal tendencies among the HDZ hardliners, their involvement in criminal privatization and corruption and their goal of integrating Croat-populated areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina into Croatia.

office under Tudjman which documented corruptive dealings among the hardliner faction.⁸² These transcripts revealed, for instance, that the Tudjman government, orchestrated by Ivić Pašalić, had secretly bought the daily newspaper and market leader *Večernji List* using proxies (see fn 52) and showed how Kutle, the “economic arm” of the hardliner faction, was involved in illicit economic transactions, banking businesses and other highly dubious deals. Even though Kutle’s involvement in many major scandals⁸³ in Croatia’s short history fills pages and books, he has been convicted only once, to two years and eight months in prison (Jurasić, 2010).

Moreover, Mesić had very close ties to the political weekly *Nacional* (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014; anonymous interviewee 9, 2014; Interview Đikić, 2014; Interview Malić, 2014; Interview Matić, 2014), which he used to leak evidence of corruption, such as the *Grupo* contracts (Interview Malić, 2014; Interview Matić, 2014), to the public. Generally, Mesić is seen to have had a positive relationship with the media as there are no reports of undue pressures and usage of informal particularism to sanction a media organ. He maintained good relations with those media entities outside *Grupo*, to which he was available for interviews, especially *Feral Tribune*, *Radio 101*, *Novi List* and *Nacional* (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014; anonymous interviewee 9, 2014; Interview Đikić, 2014).

Ivica Đikić, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper for the Serb minority in Croatia *Novosti*, which under his leadership has developed a strong investigative profile, concedes that Mesić preferred centre and left journalists over those on the right of the spectrum. In fact, Mesić had frequent public discussions over the media with right-wing journalists such as Milan Ivkošić from *Večernji List*, Josip Jović from *Slobodna Dalmacija* and Nenad Ivanković from *Vjesnik*. According to Đikić, Mesić never called or pressured anybody, but openly said what he thought (Interview Đikić, 2014). This could be harsh at times, since Mesić entered into polemics with journalists and sometimes criticized and called to or-

⁸² Mesić also cooperated closely with the ICTY in The Hague, to which he submitted presidential transcripts clarifying the role of the Croatian military in the war against resurrect Serbs.

⁸³ Kutle is, together with Ninoslav Pavić, the central figure in the biggest Croatian scandal involving the Austrian Hypo bank, in which, despite thousands of pages of evidence (partially transferred from the Austrian public prosecutor), only Ivo Sanader was charged. Among the more important scandals is also Kutle’s implication in the affair centring on *Kamensko*, a company which, as will be seen in the chapter on particularism, seems to have had a key role in the paying out of Kutle’s secret share in EPH by Ninoslav Pavić.

der publishers and editors, by speaking of “pro-ustasha pamphlets” and “trash” (Klauški, 2010a). At the same time, however, Mesić supported the political investigative TV show *Latinica* during 2005, when it was severely attacked by HDZ politicians for airing a programme critical of the Croatian army.

While from the interviews there were no reports of formal or informal particularism by Mesić or people from his closer environment, two rightist interviewees, Miljenko Manjkas and Tihomir Dujmović, report that Mesić had played a negative role in their professional lives. Former *Večernji List* columnist Tihomir Dujmović is convinced that Stipe Mesić was one of the sources from which pressure on him originated in various forms (Interview Dujmović, 2014). Also Manjkas was “removed” from the state-owned HRT for being one of the faces of Tudjman’s regime. Manjkas claims that in 2006, after roughly two years as editor-in-chief of *Večernji List*, a coalition between Ivo Sanader and Stipe Mesić worked to expel him from the conservative tabloid for criticizing Budimir Lončar, who as former Yugoslav foreign minister maintained the arms embargo on Croatia in 1990 (anonymous interviewee 20, 2014; Interview Manjkas, 2014).⁸⁴

As will be detailed more closely in the chapter on particularism, it should be noted, however, that both the HDZ and the SDP “removed” journalists to varying extents, something which, given the size of HRT’s personnel and the lack of reliable numbers, is very difficult to investigate. Never were interventions more necessary, however, than after the second transition, before which, as detailed in the previous chapter, Tudjman had carried out widespread replacements of professionals, positioning loyalists in the economy, media and judiciary. As anonymous interviewee 13 points out, some of these journalists have participated in racist slurs and were employed precisely because they did not adhere to journalistic best practices (anonymous interviewee 13, 2014).

In 2001, both Račan and Mesić agreed to nominate Mladen Bajić as new public prosecutor, to be elected by the new parliamentary majority (Klauški, 2013). In general, Bajić kept out of both *Gruppo* and the shady business of *Nacional*, especially *Petrač*. While the chapter on particularism will

⁸⁴ In this context it should be noted that former Yugoslav foreign minister Lončar was a leftist intellectual and ideological socialist and at the same time a projecting screen for all kinds of “Yugoslav, anti-Croatian paranoia” from the nationalist right (see previous chapter on the discussion of the left and right in Croatia).

demonstrate the multiple links between Bajić and Ivo Sanader, former president Josipović and Ninoslav Pavić, there is also evidence that Bajić protected Stipe Mesić in at least one case in which he was suspected by the Finnish public prosecutor of having taken bribes for buying military vehicles from the Finnish military vehicle company Patria. While Bajić's Finnish counterparts made clear to the press that they had provided the relevant evidence to Croatia, Bajić kept a low profile and ignored journalistic inquiries on the subject (Modrić, 2013).⁸⁵

4.1.6. Summarizing the roles of Račan and Mesić

There is strong evidence that the Grupo media emulated market and ideological competition but essentially silenced selected topics according to the wishes of their mafia and business principals. Ivica Račan wanted to make good on his promises to democratize the country and, aside from some occasional cooperation, was not interested in permanent and systematic media capture or establishing a collusive relationship. While this can partly be ascribed to his limited leeway in an unstable six-party coalition, there is also evidence that Račan had a strong party-internal rooting that made him structurally less inclined to capture media (see chapter on intra-party dynamics).

Stipe Mesić, in contrast, chose a more hands-on approach and tried to expose the hardliners with all available means. While there is evidence that Mesić took a bribe in at least one case, which has not been prosecuted by public prosecutors until today, his overall role was to advance universalism by increasing horizontal accountability of the media. Mesić has a mostly "clean" track record of dealing with the media, as is evident from the interviews. Moreover, the nature of the leaked documents clearly show that his cooperation with Nacional aimed at ridding the country of the burgeoning influence of Pašalić, Kutle and the connected mafia structures, which he obviously saw as a dangerous threat to Croatia's path of democratization. Instead, in the absence of a stable rule of law and faced

⁸⁵ The former Slovenian PM Janez Janša had been convicted to two years in prison for taking bribes from Patria (Modrić, 2013).

with the continuing strong position of the hardliners in the police, the secret services and the judiciary, Mesić sought to increase the independence of the media using informal universalism.

4.1.7. The effects of traditional drivers

Renewed efforts regarding European integration was a central part of the six-party coalition electoral platform and of utmost importance for the largest part of the electorate. At the same time, there are several reasons why it is not likely that the EU drove the changes implemented by Račan's government.

Firstly, Europeanization at the policy level had little real influence, because formal rules such as legislation could easily be ignored. There is little doubt that EU integration drove wholesale change in the Croatian media regulatory framework through the harmonization efforts to adopt the *Acquis communautaire*. This was the rationale behind the new media regulations, adopted between 2000 and 2004, which revised the regulatory framework for broadcasting that had been put in place in the mid-1990s. This includes the new law on HRT ("Zakon o Hrvatskoj Radioteleviziji," 2001, "Zakon o Hrvatskoj Radioteleviziji," 2003), the new law on electronic media ("Zakon o elektroničkim medijima," 2003), which established a new media regulatory authority and liberalized the broadcast media market while introducing cross-media concentration controls. The new law on the media ("Zakon o medijima," 2004) pertains to freedom of expression in general and journalists' rights in particular. Thus the regulations protecting the freedom of speech and of the press, which the EU had asked for, were all there on paper.

However, since most laws did not contain sanctions, their stipulations were never properly enforced. Two examples illustrate this point: the above-mentioned media law enacted by Račan's government in 2003 foresaw the introduction of editorial statutes within six months of coming into force. As the law did not prescribe any sanctions, Pavić's EPH and many other publishing houses ignored media statutes for years to come. Moreover, even where the respective laws stipulated fines for non-

compliance, such as in the case of the law on free access to information, successful lawsuits requiring the government to disclose a certain piece of information could be ignored with no consequences (Index.hr, 2005b). While Croatia did not begin to officially transpose the Acquis into domestic law until 2005, it had already unilaterally started the process in certain areas. At the same time, however, in light of the well-known problem of weak or selective enforcement, laws generally do not mean much.

Secondly, as Schimmelfennig (2005) notes, conditionality as part of the rapprochement to the EU is only effective in causing democratization when the government is already primarily liberal-democratic in orientation. Therefore, a seemingly extrinsic driver such as Europeanization is first and foremost contingent on a decision of the government to pursue EU integration and liberal policies in the first place (Schimmelfennig, 2008). In fact, Račan's behaviour went much further than what the EU itself had asked for at this stage. In terms of concrete expectations, the new Croatian government faced clear incentives to comply with the Copenhagen criteria, which aimed at scaling down the dominant Ministry of Defence, depoliticizing the army and reducing the overwhelming role of the state in the economy. Given that these conditions were important but at the same time quite general, EU pressures did not have the intervention depth to effect fine-grained change in the media sector, especially when compared to later stages, where policy-level conditions had been formulated more precisely. With its high level of generalization, the pressure exerted by democratic conditionality was political rather than technical.

In sum therefore, the hard goals of the Račan government – establishing contractual relations with the EU, signing a Stabilization and Association Agreement and becoming a candidate country for accession – were never in danger and all the less so because of its media policy. The interview evidence clearly shows that Račan's government introduced measures of universalism by cutting principal-agent ties with state-owned media and the public broadcaster – measures which were not related to the incipient stages of Croatia's EU rapprochement. Only increased levels of autonomy in HRT towards the end of the coalition's mandate can be attributed to inter-party competition.

Instead of pressuring the Račan government, the EU had, if anything, supported the new Social Democratic government in its implementation of universalistic changes that it already had intrinsic motives to make. The EU for instance had nothing to do with Račan's and Mesić's plan to transition to a premier-presidential system and voluntarily give up the far-reaching presidential powers Franjo Tudjman had wielded. Moreover, both Račan and Mesić had intrinsic interests to once and for all de-authorize the potentially anti-systemic HDZ hardliners around Ivić Pašalić and establish democracy as the only game in town. While there was no need to actively pressurize the Račan government, the EU was helpful to the coalition in that it locked in the democratic changes. At the same time, the existence of the Grupo cartel and Račan's maintaining links with EPH publisher Ninoslav Pavić did not provoke reactions from EU institutions, because these were considered domestic issues. Instead, Račan's restraint in actively instrumentalizing the media for his purposes is more likely to have been motivated by his deep rootedness in the SDP (see chapter on intra-party competition). With the strong anchoring in his party, he did not need the media to consolidate his leadership and to discredit or smear internal opposition.

Even though Jadranka Kosor can also be said to have initiated universalism, this move was motivated by a different set of factors. With Kosor being strongly contested within her party, the HDZ, she pushed public prosecutor Mladen Bajić to investigate Ivo Sanader and Damir Polančec while she took on stiff intra-party competition especially in preparation for the internal elections in 2012. Since this argument will be more closely investigated in the chapter on intra-party competition, the following section lays the ground work by illustrating Kosor's universalistic shifts in the context of the traditional drivers investigated here.

4.2. Jadranka Kosor, 07.2009-12.2011

Jadranka Kosor began her term in office by continuing Ivo Sanader's informal particularism, as reflected in the contract with EPH, which, as the below evidence suggests, supported her with positive reporting – at least during her first year in office. As will be shown in more detail in the chapter on inner-party competition, driven by motivations of her own political survival and re-election, Kosor engaged in a universalistic clean-hands campaign, which deterred the duopoly of the public prosecutor and Ninoslav Pavić that had developed during the mandate of Ivo Sanader (see in more detail in the following chapter on particularism), especially since it did not achieve one of its most important goals: the silencing of opponents within her own party. Kosor was swept out of office following a wave of popular disapproval, arguably stirred up to some extent, or at least reinforced, by EPH's negative press.

Opinions among the interviewees concerning Kosor's behaviour towards the media are mixed, but the evidence points to a number of universalistic elements, not least because she did not engage in formal or informal particularism, for instance by silencing journalists or media (Interview Đikić, 2014). While Jadranka Kosor didn't collude with media owners, her relations with the media resembled more a constant argument (anonymous interviewee 10; anonymous interviewee 16, 2014; anonymous interviewee 20, 2014; anonymous interviewee 25, 2014; anonymous interviewee 27, 2014; anonymous interviewee 6, 2014; anonymous interviewee 9, 2014; Interview Božić, 2014; Interview Matić, 2014). While interviewees agree that she didn't build systematic influence that way, she called journalists extremely often, for instance to complain about feeling wrongly represented or to express disapproval. In contrast to Sanader, Kosor was not in a position to threaten the livelihoods of journalists. Moreover, while Sanader preferred to exert indirect pressure on media through intermediaries, Kosor in most cases took action by herself. Kosor issued a very large number of disclaimers (Nataša Božić speaks of up to 15 a day, Interview Božić, 2014). In contrast to Sanader and also Zoran Milanović, who threatened journalists at an existential level, Kosor's threats consisted in announcing law suits, which rarely, if ever, materialized. So even though she intended to control jour-

nalists' reporting, she also stepped back from influencing the media, especially in direct comparison to her predecessor Ivo Sanader – but partly due to lack of cooperation from Ninoslav Pavić.

Jadranka Kosor's constant inner-party contestation also opened a space for cabinet ministers to communicate with the media direct (anonymous interviewee 17, 2014), which during Sanader's time was limited to executive politicians from his narrow circle. Instead, the events during Jadranka Kosor's premiership show that PMs did not have the resources to force media publishers such as Ninoslav Pavić into collusion by the weight of their office alone. As will be seen in the subsequent analysis, the reinforcement of the duopoly between the public prosecutor Mladen Bajić and Ninoslav Pavić – a connection more closely investigated in the chapter on particularism – introduced an element of permanence in an otherwise unpredictable political environment and at the same time reduced costs for its two members when Kosor opted out of the collusion. This suggests that it is precisely the creation of stable expectations that publishers require if they are to consider collusion with an executive politician.

Jadranka Kosor was as surprised as the Croatian public when she learned that she was to follow Ivo Sanader as the leader of the HDZ and the government. Even though Kosor did not have a recognisable profile, she had been the HDZ's presidential candidate in 2005 in a race against popular incumbent Stipe Mesić. A journalist by training, she entered the HDZ in the mid-nineties and spent her first years in politics as an MP. In the 2000s she progressed under PM Sanader to become Vice-President of the government.

Sanader, as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, suddenly stepped down from all offices in July 2009 and promoted Jadranka Kosor to be his successor. As she was without a power base within the party, he hoped to control her from behind the scenes (Interview Božić, 2014). As a single mother and comparatively young candidate in a party characterized by traditionalism, conservatism and patriarchy, Kosor was considered an outsider on several levels. Moreover, at the same party convention at which Kosor was crowned, Sanader had himself elected to the newly created position

of HDZ honorary chairman, which included the right to participate and to vote in all meetings of the party at all organizational levels.

From the outset of her career as PM Jadranka Kosor was under-resourced in terms of internal party support and was not able to respond to Ninoslav Pavić's increasing criticism, not least because public prosecutor Mladen Bajić did not follow through on investigations against the media mogul. Kosor's election at the hastily organized HDZ party convention consisted in a public acclamation, which in many ways did not fulfil the party's own democratic standards. It was obvious that the organizers of the party convention, Ivan Jarnjak and Vladimir Šeks, were concerned about whether she would receive enough votes to be elected (Božić & Ciglencčki, 2009b). After her election, Kosor tried to expost consolidate her control over the HDZ. She not only defeated Ivo Sanader, who six months later in January 2010 tried to putsch himself back to the HDZ leadership; she also "informally" excluded his followers from the party's presidency. Despite these efforts, however, she remained a weak and highly contested leader. In short, the circumstances in which Kosor took over the PM seat were far from ideal and she suffered from this lack of legitimacy for her remaining 2.5 years in office.

4.2.1. HRT

Kosor's most important target of intervention was the public broadcaster HRT, her former employer where she was still well networked. Typical complaints were directed at the HRT newsroom (anonymous interviewee 10). But also Aleksandar Stanković, host of the influential weekly interview show *Nedjeljom u dva* ("Sundays at two"), reported at least five complaints and lawsuit threats. Especially in the pre-election phase starting early in 2011 Kosor was almost desperate in her attempts to make use of her influence on the public broadcaster. In addition, there were also major incidents that cast a spotlight on censorship pressures on the public broadcaster, incidents that went beyond Kosor's high-frequency but low-intensity complaints.

The most prominent case concerns the political investigative TV show *Latinica*, which had reported on controversial topics such as the role of the Croatian army against Serbian civilians during the war or political corruption scandals. *Latinica*, the show named after TV host Denis Latin, had always been subjected to political pressure because of the choice of its topics, but the only instances of concrete censorship took place under Sanader's (second) mandate (anonymous interviewee 24, 2014) – and during Kosor's stint in office, when *Latinica* was finally cancelled.

As the chapter on Ivo Sanader's informal particularism will demonstrate, Sanader instrumentalized HRT editor Hloverka Novak-Srzić, who, aside from her own conservative agenda, intervened on behalf of the HDZ PM by stopping or marginalising contributions which shed light on his corrupt involvements (see the chapter on particularism for more detail). According to several interviewees from within HRT (anonymous interviewee 20, 2014; anonymous interviewee 21, 2014; anonymous interviewee 25, 2014), Kosor did not "control" certain journalists in HRT and did not maintain a principal-agent relationship with them. Even Novak-Srzić, the main hub for silencing unfavourable coverage, was pressured by Jadranka Kosor - and like everybody else, she ignored her (anonymous interviewee 16, 2014; anonymous interviewee 20, 2014). Rather than Kosor exerting pressures to cancel *Latinica*, anonymous interviewee 24 sees Novak-Srzić acting on her own, driven by corruptive interests (anonymous interviewee 24, 2014).

Kosor was also careful when it came to entering into a collusive relationship in the case of the newspaper *Novi List*, which had been taken over by Robert Ježić, one of Sanader's cronies in 2008 (see chapter on particularism). With Ježić owning *Novi List*, it became possible for politicians from Sanader's closer circle to call Ježić and, for instance, prevent the publication of articles that were in the investigative phase (Interview Đikić, 2014). This extended to politicians with a strong internal power base such as Božidar Kalmeta, and, by inheritance, to Jadranka Kosor. While Kosor did intervene and call *Novi List* editor-in-chief Đikić, her complaints were nowhere near the pressure Sanader had exerted during his time (Interview Đikić, 2014). Simultaneously, after Sanader had left the stage, Ježić

tried to cultivate his links to the new PM, possibly with intentions for collusive trades, but Kosor remained wary and distanced of Sanader's close partner (Interview Đikić, 2014).

4.2.2. Kosor's relations to Ninoslav Pavić and EPH

This section is to show that collusive cooperation between the public prosecutor Mladen Bajić and Ninoslav Pavić continued after the departure of Ivo Sanader (see chapter on particularism). Jadranka Kosor's relationship with both Pavić and Bajić started out strong, but turned sour when Kosor's intra-party position started to show serious cracks (see chapter on intra-party competition). Pavić had lost interest in a cooperation with Jadranka Kosor and had already turned towards Zoran Milanović, the new leader of the opposition.

During the first months of her mandate, Kosor enjoyed EPH's supportive media service, like any premier before and after her. After she had excluded Ivo Sanader from the HDZ in January 2010 – a response to the putsch Sanader had initiated to return to the party leadership – she was at the peak of her popularity and of her influence in EPH. Jasna Babić, for instance, a member of the Globus editorial board, said in April 2010, shortly after leaving EPH, that Jadranka Kosor had practically "edited" the political weekly (Klauški, 2011).

Kosor had taken over the PM's office in the midst of the worldwide economic and financial crisis and the ensuing recession hit the Croatian economy especially hard. In reaction to the massive economic downturn (a contraction by 6.9% in 2009 alone; International Monetary Fund, 2014) the new premier had come forward with an array of unpopular budget cuts. When the crisis increasingly translated into widespread unemployment, Jadranka Kosor's popularity crashed from a 77% approval rate in February 2010 (Bago, 2010) to only 22% in October of the same year (Bago, 2011).

With strong leverage over Mladen Bajić, who sought to have his mandate renewed in the election procedure scheduled for February 2010, Kosor started a clean-hands campaign against corruption, especially targeting Ivo Sanader and his followers. As will be shown more closely in the chapter on

intra-party competition, her primary motivation in this was to bolster her position against her internal competitors, who became increasingly aggressive. Public prosecutor Bajić, who had remained impassive to the numerous and severe allegations of corruption against Ivo Sanader, now turned against his former principal, spurred on by hopes of re-election.⁸⁶

Bajić, however, did not limit himself to Sanader but also opened a large number of other investigations with the direct participation of the HDZ and the state leadership. This did not come as a surprise, given that the HDZ's former treasurer Mladen Barišić had publicly testified that he personally brought suitcases filled with cash both to Sanader's private home and to the HDZ headquarters (Kri, 2010). Kosor herself did not have to fear anything from thorough investigations; she was quietly promoted through the HDZ ranks without having to issue many political IOUs. Also, Kosor had never herself been brought into contact with corruptive behaviour.

Given that Kosor's clean-hands campaign first and foremost targeted Ivo Sanader and Damir Polančec, one important motive is likely to have been the desire to eliminate the internal opposition that Kosor faced during her entire mandate. Given that candidates challenging her for the position of HDZ president had started publicly contesting her leadership as early as 2010, her public image as well as her authority within the party quickly deteriorated (see chapter on intra-party competition).

Almost simultaneously, EPH had started to turn against the PM and to move closer to Milanović's SDP, which slowly took precedence over Ivo Sanader and the HDZ in most popularity polls (see section 6.3.1.1.3. in chapter six). Negative reporting on Jadranka Kosor went so far that, based on sources close to the EPH leadership, Kosor reportedly called Pavić in mid-2011 to ask him to spare her for at least some time (Lasić, 2011). This development is specifically confirmed for EPH in the interviews (anonymous interviewee 16, 2014; anonymous interviewee 35, 2014; anonymous interviewee 7, 2014; anonymous interviewee 9, 2014; Interview Božić, 2014; Interview Đikić, 2014; Inter-

⁸⁶ This connection between Sanader's putsch in early January 2010 and Bajić's desire to be re-elected can be drawn from the fact Bajić confirmed to the American ambassador that he had opened investigations against Sanader, one day after the former PM was excluded from the HDZ (Foley, 2010). Bajić praised himself that there was likely much more to be uncovered involving the former PM. As he pointed out, "Al Capone was brought down for tax evasion rather than for his more notorious activities." (Foley, 2010).

view Lulić, 2014) as well as more generally in the sentiment analysis of Croatian media texts (see chapter on quantitative text analysis).

Interestingly, Kosor tried to oppose Pavić's constant negative coverage in June 2011 by publicly announcing that the Government Council for National Security would discuss dubious media ownership, obviously aiming at Ninoslav Pavić's (operative) leadership of EPH in the context of the still unprosecuted scandal around the media cartel Grupo.⁸⁷ She also supported Tomislav Karamarko, the Minister of the Interior, who through the chief of police, Oliver Grbić, had started a number of investigations into the affairs of Ninoslav Pavić, such as the Kamensko scandal, in which he allegedly tried to cheaply get hold of land and real estate in the centre of Zagreb worth millions, the associated scandal around the firm Dalta and, not least, the dubious take-over of Slobodna Dalmacija in 2005 (Bajto, 2014).

Despite the clean-slate campaign Kosor had initiated, she had to be very careful because her environment was mined with Sanader loyalists. As Kosor once defended herself, it was impossible to know about Sanader's corruptive deals because nobody dared to speak about him when he was absent (anonymous interviewee 9). Moreover, in 2010 a picture leaked to the press showing Ivo Sanader and Ninoslav Pavić casually sipping a glass of wine on Sanader's yacht, a scene that suggested they were spending the summer holiday together. Even though the picture had been taken in 2005, the message – a continuously close relationship between Sanader and Pavić – was clear (anonymous interviewee 7, 2014).

While Mladen Bajić had publicly supported and carried out an array of investigations, especially against Ivo Sanader and the HDZ, he was not enthusiastic about the investigations against Ninoslav Pavić. Then chief of the police Oliver Grbić claims today that Bajić asked him not to investigate the Kamensko and Dalta scandals (in which Pavić figured prominently) before the elections (Vidov, 2014b). Since at that point anything other than a Social Democratic victory in the upcoming parlia-

⁸⁷ The Council consists of the President, the prime minister, the relevant line ministers (defence, interior, foreign affairs and justice) and the heads of the secret services, *inter alia*.

mentary elections would have been a big surprise, and the likely new Minister of the Interior Ranko Ostojić was known to have close ties to Pavić (see section above), it can be concluded that Bajić never intended to investigate Pavić after the elections (which, as will be seen in the next chapter, he did not).

The then chief of the police Grbić also reports tensions between him and the public prosecutor, especially when mentioning that he soon intended to “finalize” the investigation by arresting Ninoslav Pavić. According to Grbić, both Bajić and Jutarnji List editor-in-chief Mladen Pleše warned him “to be wise” concerning the finalization of these investigations (Vidov, 2014b). Bajić had also publicly announced that he would consult with the police leadership on a weekly basis in order to make their investigative work more effective, which, however, never happened. Bajić finally stopped the Kamensko and Delta investigations shortly before the elections in December 2011 and never resumed them before his thirteen year stint ended in early 2015 (Vidov, 2014b).⁸⁸

In sum, the reinforcement of the duopoly between Pavić and Bajić on the one hand and Jadranka Kosor’s demise on the other lend support to the hypothesis that Pavić in some cases unilaterally offered or withheld support based on a PM’s likelihood to assert him or herself within the governing party. As the case of Jadranka Kosor suggests, Pavić not only approached politicians when he deemed it appropriate; he also decided when to terminate cooperation. Moreover, the course of events supports the hypothesis that Bajić protected publisher Pavić against Kosor - after he had secured his own reelection by her government.

As developed in the introduction, politicians have to appear as credible and reliable partners to publishers if they want to engage in a collusive relationship. This implies that they are powerful enough to secure the rewards for positive reporting, such as tax relief or tax paybacks. As the chapter on intra-party competition will show in more detail, Jadranka Kosor was little rooted and highly contested

⁸⁸ There is a debate on why Mladen Bajić ignored Ivo Sanader’s open corruption and why he became active only in 2010 (see for instance Rajković, 2011, pp. 19–20). His supporters argue that a reform of the criminal code in 2009 provided him with the tools to prosecute suspects. However, his refusal in 2011 to prosecute Ninoslav Pavić, who is linked to a wide array of well documented cases of corruption, invalidates this argument.

within the HDZ and was therefore in no position to credibly signal to Pavić that she was in command of the rewards necessary for positive reporting. In turn, both, Ninoslav Pavić and Mladen Bajić defected from the cooperation they had maintained with Sanader knowing that the game with Jadranka Kosor would not be repeated.

Given the lack of sanctions for their behaviour, the resulting equilibrium from the collusive duopoly led to distorted costs for those partaking and therefore created a perverted incentive structure according to which the cost of collusion, i.e. ineffective operation of the horizontal oversight, was to be paid by the citizens, who had to take electoral decisions based on distorted information. At the same time, the duopoly collusion between the public prosecutor and Ninoslav Pavić prevented the incurrance of additional costs when the PM defected from the original agreement of mutual protection.

4.2.3. The effects of traditional drivers

In line with the finding that Kosor's universalistic turn likely originated in internal party dynamics (as will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven), there is little evidence that EU pressure importantly motivated this outcome. For instance, even though in its 2011 progress report the European Commission explicitly called on members to maintain the decriminalization of defamation (European Commission, 2011, p. 33), the new so-called law on humiliation (prepared by the Kosor government and adopted by the incoming centre-left coalition) stipulated that journalists (instead of publishers) could be directly sued even when articles in question were factually correct.⁸⁹

Moreover, there is evidence that the EU expected more political investigations and judicial convictions as part of the Croatian accession process than had been the case in earlier enlargement rounds. The European Council in 2010 demanded that Croatia "proactively prevent, detect, effectively prosecute and judge corruption, especially high level corruption and organized crime, including a convinc-

⁸⁹ According to anonymous interviewee 5 this law considerably increased the pressure on investigative journalists personally while at the same time releasing publishers from possible sanctions. The law on humiliation as it stands can ruin a journalist financially.

ing track record of convictions in the area of corruption” (European Council, 2010). While from today’s perspective this certainly could be read as a demand that Ivo Sanader be investigated, detained and convicted, Sanader himself had started to build this track record back in 2007, with several high-level anti-corruption investigations which led to the arrest of managers of state enterprises, the head of the privatization fund and former Minister Damir Polančec. There was no indication from the EU at the time that Sanader’s investigations would not have sufficed to satisfy the European Council conditions.

At first glance the pressure from the EU, with closing of accession negotiations in sight, correlate with the increased activity in terms of investigations into media ownership during Kosor’s mandate. Upon closer inspection, however, and taking into account the events that led up to this point, the reform dynamic initiated under Kosor aimed at eliminating Sanader and his followers from the stage, which clearly and directly coincided with Sanader’s exclusion from the HDZ in January 2010.

Given that the investigations were limited to politicians from within her own party, there is no evidence that party competition was driving Kosor’s universalism. Moreover, as a counterfactual point, Kosor would not have confirmed Mladen Bajić in early 2010 as public prosecutor if party competition had been relevant in this context, since according to the logic of this driver, instead of a known opportunist she would have appointed a true reformer to his position in order to bind her successors. Bajić’s servitude was instead one of his recognizable traits, which Kosor sought to make use of herself.

While the discussion suggests that both EU-pressure and party competition did not contribute much to drive the change to universalistic policies, the evidence points to internal HDZ dynamics explaining some of the movement away from informal particularism. As indicated above, Jadranka Kosor was highly contested within her party, even though she had successfully countered Ivo Sanader’s attack on her leadership. Given the uncertainties about her control over the party and central rewards for publishers, both Ninoslav Pavić and public prosecutor Mladen Bajić quit the unwritten cooperation

agreement with the PM – after it became increasingly obvious that Kosor would lose both the parliamentary and intra-party elections. The chapter on intra-party competition will go into more detail in reconstructing how the intra-party setup contributed to altering the actors' assessments of the usefulness of collusion.

4.3. Conclusions

This chapter demonstrated movements to universalism under PM Račan and president Mesić after 2000, and, to some extent, under PM Jadranka Kosor in 2009-2011. These shifts largely consisted in increasing autonomy of the media as institutions of horizontal accountability, even though the circumstances differed widely between the early 2000s and 2010. Where Ivica Račan and Stipe Mesić sought to establish a democratic precedent against a hardliner faction that was trying to cling to power with the help of a media conspiracy, Jadranka Kosor responded to continuous threats of her position as HDZ party leader.

As the discussion demonstrates, neither inter-party competition nor Europeanization, for different reasons, can provide convincing accounts for the majority of these shifts. While for the early 2000s there is evidence that political actors had democratic motives beyond the minimal standard of the EU (as indicated, for instance, by the dismantlement of the dominant president), the events during Jadranka Kosor's period in office suggest that the primary reason for her universalistic behaviour lay in internal party dynamics. The universalistic shifts that occurred during both terms, therefore, took place largely independent of the two most prominent explanations proposed by the literature.

The following chapter extends the analysis to particularistic shifts and identifies instances of predominantly informal behaviour (Ivo Sanader) and formal behaviour (Zoran Milanović).

5. Ivo Sanader and Zoran Milanović: regression to particularism

“All these dark stories wouldn’t have happened if we had had another Bajić, an un-networked, independent and uncompromising one, somebody who would have done his job as public prosecutor without connivance, without nurturing cosy friendships with those whom he was supposed to prosecute. Then again, let’s be realistic, this country wouldn’t have allowed something like this. In this country only a Mladen Bajić can survive.”

Tomislav Klauški (2013)

5.1. Formal and informal particularism

Before showing how the events support the hypothesis of democratic regression during Ivo Sanader’s and Zoran Milanović’s mandates, I will discuss systematic differences in the shape and effects of formal and informal particularism. The aim here is to provide a better understanding of how the typology, supported by examples from the interviews, adds to our understanding of the regressive shifts that took place against the backdrop of successful democratic consolidation.

The cases of formal and informal particularism in this chapter can be classified according to how politicians reward cooperation and sanction non-cooperation. Where governments after the second transition sanctioned publishers using formal particularism, they did not capture media. In a similar vein, where they did, they did so informally.

The informal particularism employed by Ivo Sanader to tighten his grip over all relevant Croatian media was a consequence of the lock-in effect that Croatia’s goal of acceding to the EU had brought about. It was a different way to achieve the same result as that obtained using formal particularism, namely the ability to change the state’s policies without changing the law. Interestingly, as will be seen in the following sections, after Croatia had entered the EU, the new Social-Democrat administration under Zoran Milanović reverted to formal particularism. This is in line with the expectation derived from Ivo Sanader’s episode, discussed below, emphasizing EU accession dynamics as driving

the establishment of a democratic façade, behind which informal particularism aims at limiting horizontal accountability on a permanent basis.

Like the previous section, this chapter seeks to analyse the cases of particularism and, in doing so, scrutinize the two “classical” drivers, Europeanization and inter-party competition. While I expect these two drivers to explain some of the shifts between universalism and particularism, it will also become apparent that they fall short of providing a complete picture of the changes that are discussed here. Instead, as will be shown in the chapter on intra-party competition, it seems more relevant for us to look at inner dynamics in making sense of these shifts.

Formal particularistic sanctions as used by Milanović and his Minister of Finance Slavko Linić did not primarily aim at media capture. While informal particularism seeks to permanently bind media outlets, formal particularism, by comparison, exerts open but intermittent repression to sanction undesirable media behaviour. Franjo Tudjman’s preferred mode of limiting horizontal accountability consisted in formal particularism because, firstly, he had already taken over a large share of the mainstream media, and secondly, he had widespread control over the judiciary. As the analysis of Ivo Sanader’s mandate demonstrates, informal particularism – with media capture through collusion as its most extreme form - represents a far more effective strategy in permanently undermining horizontal control. For an easier understanding, the following table classifies the examples discussed below into rewards and sanctions.

Overview of political rewards and sanctions

	Rewards for cooperation	Sanctions for non-cooperation
Formal particularism	VAT reduction: Jutarnji List, Večernji List Pre-bankruptcy settlement: Jutarnji List	“Intelligent”, case-sensitive taxes: 24sata Institutional harassment (tax police): index.hr
Informal particularism	Political support for cross-media activities of publishers: Pavić’s real estate business Media capture: Slobodna Dalmacija	Advertisement boycott: Feral Tribune, Business.hr

The sections below will detail how Ivo Sanader and Zoran Milanović made use of particularism – informal and formal – and, along the way, explain how advertorials and *komproimat* (see the discussion of the terms in section 1.4.3.3.) were used, highlighting the principal-agent relationships between politicians, publishers and the public prosecutor.

5.2. Ivo Sanader, 12.2003 – 07.2009

Ivo Sanader took office from Ivica Račan in an environment which had generally been characterized by universalism, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. At the same time, the driver of EU integration increasingly constrained the Croatian government, improving democratic standards through Acquis conditionality. The interview evidence suggests that EU pressures led Sanader to cover up his efforts to establish control with relevant media using informal particularism. Journalists report that the HDZ PM engaged in collusion and media capture by making sure that reporting would systematically and permanently silence significant criticism. He intensified the principal-agent links with EPH owner Ninoslav Pavić, which Račan had maintained during his mandate, and brought them to a new level through a system of collusive cooperation from which both actors drew considerable profits.

At the same time, Sanader created strong links with the public prosecutor Mladen Bajić, who himself was already connected to many journalists in several mainstream media - especially in Pavić's Jutarnji List and Globus.

Through this collusive triangle between the PM, the main publisher and the public prosecutor Sanader managed to neutralise two important instances of executive control, the media and the public prosecutor, and work towards his personal gain. As will be shown in the chapter on intra-party competition, Sanader eliminated all contestation within the HDZ and was therefore more credibly able to deliver on the rewards for media silence over his corruption affairs: massive tax reliefs, attractive business deals subsidized by state money and other spoils that required control over public resources and, ultimately, over potential competitors within his party, the HDZ.

Ivo Sanader had been Deputy Foreign Minister in the 1990s and became leader of the opposition in 2001 when, after a spell of murky infighting, he defeated Ivić Pašalić, the leader of the nationalist hardliner faction (see chapter on intra-party competition). Beginning with his dubious enthronement, Sanader removed his internal adversaries and anybody who was connected to them. In ignoring HDZ statutes he co-opted his most loyal followers into the HDZ presidency – a body which in many internal setups controls the party executive, given that its members are mostly to be elected by the plenum at the party convention (Ciglencečki, 2007).

For the parliamentary elections in 2003 Sanader campaigned on conservative-nationalist sentiment, but in programmatic terms as well as in terms of personnel he adopted a strictly secular and pro-EU stance: he fully cooperated with the EU and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) by not only starting domestic court trials against some Croatian army members, but also by extraditing army generals to The Hague, some of whom were highly popular among mainstream conservative voters. In a similar vein, he dismantled an Ustasha statue in Gospić and made accession to the EU the overarching goal of his mandate.

At the same time, Sanader was a corrupt politician, responsible for embezzling funds from the state budget worth more than 13m euros and for a crack-down on media independence that many journalists experienced as worse than Tadjman's formal particularism during the 1990s (Rajković, 2011). Even though he had passed on some of the money he extracted from his numerous corrupt operations to the HDZ, from the interviews it becomes increasingly clear that Sanader's intrusive media policy served not to advance his party, the HDZ or other cabinet members but to promote his image, smear internal competitors and to cover up his organized theft.

The lethal car bomb attack in October 2008 on Ivo Pukanić, the owner of the weekly Nacional, and his director of marketing Niko Franjić, marked the beginning of Sanader's end as PM. These killings forced Sanader to replace his Interior and Justice ministers with Tomislav Karamarko and Ivan Šimonović, two people from outside the HDZ. Karamarko in turn appointed a new chief of police, Vladimir Faber, who proved to be a driving force in removing politically loyal regional police chiefs. In June 2009, less than a year later and in the middle of his mandate, Sanader stepped down as PM, unexpectedly and without explanation. The reasons for his withdrawal are still the subject of speculation.

Based on varying degrees of control of media ownership, Sanader followed three basic strategies to bring the media in line: direct intervention in the state-owned media, collusion with publisher Ninoslav Pavić and capture of Večernji List, and an economic boycott of the independent media.

5.2.2. Control of media through a classical principal-agent contract

The most direct way to align media reporting and silence criticism is to control appointments to the editorial structure of media through classical principal-agent delegations. In the case of Ivo Sanader, this took place in two contexts.

Firstly, Sanader illegally bought media, such as Hrvatski list. During Ivo Sanader's mandate the HDZ maintained grey funds which were filled from the embezzlement of state resources, such as the mas-

sively overpriced PR services of the firm FIMI media, which every ministry and state body was obliged to hire.⁹⁰ The money from these grey funds was to finance “supplemental wages” for certain individuals, massive spending on HDZ electoral campaigns (Toma & Bohutinski, 2011) and, in one prominent case, the buying of a local newspaper.

Ratko Maček, the HDZ’s and Sanader’s spin doctor, admitted that in 2007 he received around 415,000 euros in cash from HDZ treasurer Mladen Barišić, and delivered the money to the Zadar newspaper *Hrvatski list* in a secret deal to acquire 80% of the paper’s shares (Poslovni.hr, 2013; Rajković, 2011, p. 363). *Hrvatski list*, a nationalist-conservative local newspaper which had criticized Sanader from the right, was to be silenced before the parliamentary elections in December 2007. In a similar case, the former owner of Television Osijek, Drago Veselčić, testified in a court case that the HDZ made sure the TV station would pass a technical assessment even though it was not in possession of even the most basic equipment (Pavelić, 2013). Also, according to the testimony of Mladen Barišić, the HDZ’s treasurer, he paid out 300,000 euros to cover the TV station’s debt (Rajković, 2011, p. 363). This happened in exchange for favourable reporting, especially in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in 2007. According to the same testimony, Ivo Sanader secretly arranged with Zagreb mayor Milan Bandić through his emissary Ratko Maček that the HDZ would take over 50% of the management of Zagreb TV station Z1 (Rajković, 2011, p. 363).

Secondly, in his interference with the public broadcaster HRT Sanader made use of formal particularism, allowed by the existing law on HRT and its prescribed system of delegation, which gave him (through his supporting parliamentary majority) a certain leeway in appointments. Early in Sanader’s mandate a large number of key employees were replaced, with dismissals extending down to the editor level (anonymous interviewee 37, 2014; anonymous interviewee 5, 2014). Anonymous interviewee 10 estimates that around 80 percent of the new chiefs and directors came in on a HDZ ticket

⁹⁰ At the time of writing the respective court proceedings have not come to a conclusion. The testimonies, especially from the director of FIMI media and the whistle-blower Damir Mihanović, former manager at the state-owned company, Croatia Insurance, however, provide very credible and consistent accounts of the events.

and took special care of politics and the PM. As seen above, this pattern of personnel exchange had also been an established practice with Račan's SDP-led coalition.

However, even though the law on HRT during most of Račan's mandate formally allowed the government some freedom to influence⁹¹, there are no known cases of censorship. And even though Račan had tightened this law in the pre-electoral period, probably spurred by inter-party competition, Ivo Sanader's government was the only one of four Croatian cabinets since 2000 to introduce widespread censorship of the public broadcaster. While direct interventions by the HDZ and Sanader were rarely reported in the interviews, pressures and censorship consistently aimed at either suppressing negative or emphasising positive information about Ivo Sanader and certain ministers.

Through this direct chain of appointments, Sanader was able to place Siniša Grgić in the HRT Council, who was responsible for recruiting editors and managers at the public broadcaster (Rajković, 2011, p. 360). The most prominent and most vocal HRT-editor accused of censorship on Sanader's account was the aforementioned Hloverka Novak-Srzić. Novak-Srzić became a member of the HDZ on Franjo Tuđman's initiative and was still close to the narrower party circle when she became editor-in-chief of HRT's informative programme in 2007. Novak-Srzić was the main reason for a strike of HRT journalists, who in November 2009 publicly protested against censorship at the public broadcaster (Index.hr, 2009b). The interview evidence also shows that Novak-Srzić was the hub for Sanader's interventions in HRT, suppressing negative information about him (anonymous interviewee 16; anonymous interviewee 24, 2014). Extremely successful investigative shows like *Latinica* were cancelled following pressure from Novak-Srzić and politically sensitive contributions never aired at all (anonymous interviewee 24).

Aleksandar Stanković, host of the most watched political programme on HTV, a weekly interview, also mentioned Novak-Srzić first when asked about pressure and censorship (Interview Stanković, 2014). Pressure from editors close to Sanader and notably Novak-Srzić came to the fore particularly

⁹¹ This especially pertains to the unspecified discretion for ministries to "supervise the legality of the HRT operation" which was eliminated one year before the parliamentary elections (Art. 35, "Zakon o Hrvatskoj Radioteleviziji," 2001).

where Stanković had invited whistle-blowers or other witnesses of corruption to speak on the programme. One example here is the whistle-blower Robert Matijević, a former employee in the customs administration, whose public testimony not only HRT editors but also public prosecutor Mladen Bajić tried to prevent (Interview Stanković, 2014). In another case, an editor invited journalist Goran Malić onto a political-investigative TV-show, who presented documents showing Sanader's involvement in the corruption scandal around the Austrian Hypo bank (see below for the role of Goran Malić). Anonymous interviewee 16 reports heavy and continuous pressure from editors close to the HDZ not to go on air with the show. In one of the rare open interventions, Ratko Maček, Ivo Sanader's speaker, called to prevent an airing of the show. Finally, the editors were successful in shortening the interview to only 20 minutes and moving it to a late time slot (anonymous interviewee 16, 2014).

In general, journalists who were critical of Sanader quickly lost their jobs. Mislav Bago, a leading political journalist known for his investigative interviewing style, had to leave HRT. The above-mentioned Aleksandar Stanković received a reprimand in 2008 (the next step would have been a dismissal) because he openly said that talking about corruption was not in the interest of some of HRT's editors. Also the investigative show Dossier.hr hosted by Petar Štefanić and Ana Jelinić was removed from the programme schedule (Vidov, 2014a). At the same time, and despite these events, a certain degree of criticism was possible even during Sanader's time. The reason for the incapacity of the HDZ entourage to silence HRT in its entirety lies in the chaotic structure of the public broadcaster, which allowed for certain oppositional "pockets of resistance".

Apart from the censorship that Sanader made use of in the case of the public broadcaster, his preferred strategy to bring the private media in line consisted in informal particularism. The evidence suggests that this is what happened in two cases - the EPH publication Jutarnji List and Novi List, the leftwing opposition daily from Rijeka.

5.2.3. Capturing media using informal particularism

5.2.3.1. Capturing Novi List

Novi List, one of the rare examples of the successful privatization of a socially owned newspaper into one owned by its journalists, had managed to keep an independent profile. During Ivo Sanader's mandate this was only possible because of the honesty of the journalists. As this section will show, even though one of Sanader's allies had bought the paper, it largely continued independent reporting because the new editor-in-chief Ivica Đikić secured editorial independence by representing the interests of journalists to the management – rather than the other way round.

There is overwhelming reason to believe that industrial tycoon Robert Ježić acquired Novi List in March 2008 on the order of Ivo Sanader, whom he later described as a man “whose wishes you do not reject” (Klauški, 2012). In a court trial in which Sanader was convicted of selling Croatia's state oil enterprise INA to Hungary's MOL in return for a 10m Euro bribe, Ježić admitted that he was one of Sanader's confidants and secretly routed half the amount from Hungary through his Swiss bank account to the former PM (Vidov, 2012). It was obvious from the beginning that Ježić not only had never had anything to do with journalism but also had never had any plans to get more deeply involved in the publishing business (Interview Đikić, 2014). Ježić was primarily interested in his petrochemical enterprise Dioki and political support was key to carrying out his commercial operations. Shortly after Ježić had taken over the Rijeka daily, long-standing journalists such as Boris Pavelić experienced censorship in the paper for the first time.⁹² Novi List also started to publish concealed PR for Ježić's other companies through advertorials written by the enterprises' own managers (Interview Ponoš, 2014).

Hence, even though Novi List had been taken over by Sanader's crony Robert Ježić, Ivica Đikić as new editor-in-chief deflected many of the pressures that the new owner passed on from the political

⁹² Pavelić had written a comment in which he questioned the advertorial interview Sanader had given to Miljenko Jergović, a celebrity author for Jutarnji List. Even though the Zagreb office of Novi List was to some extent shielded from the pressures in the headquarters in Rijeka, Pavelić was instructed by his editor-in-chief to attenuate the article. Pavelić's refusal resulted in the article not being published (Interview Pavelić, 2014).

sphere. Đikić had come to Novi List together with other key authors from the satirical-investigative Feral Tribune, which had just been boycotted into bankruptcy, as discussed in more detail in sections below. It can be assumed that this happened in an effort to control the “damage” these critical journalists might have caused, since despite very generous wages some of them were asked to wait for some time before starting to write at Novi List. Viktor Ivančić, the co-founder of Feral Review, reported that it was some weeks before he started to realize that in return for these wages he was expected to remain silent. Only after the repeated insistence of Ivančić did Ježić agree on a meeting with the defiant journalist, who then learned that his neutralization had been personally ordered by Ivo Sanader (Interview Ivančić, 2014).⁹³

Meanwhile, the new editor-in-chief Ivica Đikić spent a large part of his energy shielding the editorial office from pressures articulated by Ježić, who acted upon complaints from “above” (Interview Đikić, 2014).⁹⁴ By the end of an average day, Ježić would have called between five and fifteen times to complain about texts. Ježić would usually tell Đikić to “not allow something like this again” or to do an advertorial for a previously criticized person to “iron out” the situation. In some cases Ježić also contacted Đikić for texts which hadn’t been published yet. In all this, the editor-in-chief was absolutely sure that Ježić was not acting on his own initiative but passing on the pressure from above (Interview Đikić, 2014). Đikić described Ježić as somebody who had no concept of editorial autonomy, who was convinced that as the owner he had a natural right to order what had to be written. Đikić completed his one-year term but due to the unprofessional conditions left Novi List to become editor-in-chief in Novosti. Shortly thereafter Ježić was detained.

⁹³ In this conversation Ježić told Ivančić that he could not take on his (Ivančić’s) enemies. The journalist said that he had only one enemy higher than Ježić - Ivo Sanader - at which Ježić replied: “Well, you said that” (Interview Ivančić, 2014).

⁹⁴ This includes Vladimir Šeks, Luka Bebić, and Jadranka Kosor from the HDZ. The most “dangerous” interventions came from Ivo Sanader and people from his closest circle such as Ratko Maček, Božidar Kalmeta and Damir Polančec, who were part of the same “clique” as Ježić (Interview Đikić, 2014). Đikić also reported that local politicians from the Rijeka area used to call him, usually on minor issues. These politicians came from the regional Istrian party IDS and the SDP and included Vojko Obersnel, Zlatko Komadina, and Slavko Linić (Interview Đikić, 2014).

The episode around Novi List is important because it highlights the role of editors-in-chief vis-à-vis the management. Editors-in-chief such as Ivica Đikić can shield the editorial offices from pressures when they see themselves as representatives of the journalists rather than as the operative extension of the management. This is the case in the mainstream papers Večernji List and especially Jutarnji List, where political trades are part of day-to-day business, as the following sections will demonstrate.

In the media hierarchy, editors-in-chief have gradually had to succumb to pressures from the management, especially since the advent of the economic crisis in 2009 which, given severely reduced advertising revenues, additionally limited the leeway of journalists and editors to find alternative employers. While in earlier years editors-in-chief actually dealt with the content and layout of the newspaper, today they have to mediate political and financial pressures and represent the owners' interests to the journalists, if they want to keep their jobs.

5.2.3.2. Colluding with Ninoslav Pavić

Capturing Novi List can be seen as an attempt by Ivo Sanader to suppress coverage of his most severe misconducts, but this idea was taken to a whole new level in Ninoslav Pavić's publishing house EPH. In order to effectively prevent horizontal control, a plethora of evidence suggests that Sanader organized a collusion triangle together with Pavić and the public prosecutor Mladen Bajić, using informal particularism.⁹⁵ In cases where several relevant institutions of democratic control participate in collusion, mutual checks – and balances are effectively neutralized. During Sanader's mandate, a permanent collusion duopoly developed between the public prosecutor Mladen Bajić and Ninoslav Pavić. The duopoly saw three prime ministers come and go and was dismantled only in 2014.

⁹⁵ There is no judicial evidence of this claim, not least because Mladen Bajić, who would have needed to initiate investigations against himself, left office only in February 2014. The evidence provided below, however, will substantiate these assumptions.

Ninoslav Pavić started his career as editor on the Yugoslavian youth magazine *Polet*, where he followed a rather non-confrontational course (Interview Selimović, 2014). As the previous chapter demonstrated, during the mandate of Ivica Račan Pavić had asserted a dominance over the information market that no politician could ignore and he was eager to further grow his business and his influence (Đikić, 2014). Entering into a collusive agreement with the PM did not only have disadvantages for Pavić. During Sanader's reign he was not only given ownership of the state-owned newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija* from Split but also rose to become a "business partner" of Ivo Sanader. His strong ties to public prosecutor Mladen Bajić were primarily motivated by his desire to be spared prosecution for the Grupo scandal and other instances of corrupt behaviour which came to the surface in later years.

Ivo Sanader's incentive to participate in the collusive triangle lay in his need to smear internal party rivals and cover up his theft of millions of euros from state coffers.⁹⁶ Given that Pavić's EPH was the biggest publisher in terms of circulation, Sanader's motivation also consisted in making sure that positive reporting helped him to achieve re-election – one of the major findings of the quantitative text analysis – and to suppress any information that connected him to allegations of serious misconduct.

There is reason to believe that the same motivation made Sanader seek control over the public prosecutor, using not only informal but also formal particularism, by threatening to withhold the latter's re-election. According to the Croatian constitution, the public prosecutor is independent but is elected by a simple parliamentary majority and only serves a four-year term with unlimited re-election.⁹⁷ While there is world-wide variation in judicial systems, especially regarding the independence of public prosecutors vis-à-vis the executive, the majority opinion on tenure of the public prosecutor supports permanent or, at least long tenure. As the Venice Commission states in its report on European standards in the prosecution service, it is especially important that the public prosecutor

⁹⁶ Sanader was sentenced to ten years in prison for corruption and taking bribes while embezzling major amounts from the state budget. As already mentioned in the introduction, the proceedings will have to be repeated because of formal errors in the first trial.

⁹⁷ In Croatia the public prosecutor's office was a part of the interior ministry until 2001. With a reform initiated by the foregoing SDP coalition, the public prosecutor became affiliated with the judiciary, and thus formally autonomous and independent.

should not be eligible for re-appointment by a political body since seeking re-appointment motivates him to “behave in such a manner as to obtain the favour of that body” (European Commission for Democracy Through Law, 2011, p. 8). And as the evidence will show, the resulting incentive structure for Mladen Bajić had indeed rewarded loyalty to the PM rather than independent investigation.

The new public prosecutor, appointed in 2002 by the SDP-majority in parliament, came out on top after the first transition in 1991 and retained his influential position as regional public prosecutor. During Sanader’s mandate Bajić developed into a Croatian version of J. Edgar Hoover, an eminence grise who accumulated large amounts of information about many central figures and who was prepared to use this information to serve his strategic needs, which included pressuring courts or polishing his own image through the media (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014). Evidence for the principal-agent relationship between Sanader and Bajić also includes Bajić ignoring testimonies which heavily incriminated the Prime Minister, while at the same time leaking witnesses’ names to Pavić’s Jutarnji List.⁹⁸ According to the celebrity lawyer Ćedo Prodanović, now defending Sanader, politicians were easily blackmailed by Bajić, given that many of them were entangled in some shady business (interview with Ćedo Prodanović by Tagirov, 2011).

As developed in the introduction, if a politician’s position is contested within the party, this limits his/her ability to provide publishers with spoils and consequently makes him undesirable for collusion. Given Sanader’s undisputed position within the HDZ, Pavić had manifold incentives to allow Sanader to capture his media: political protection from prosecution for the Grupo cartel he was part of (and other scandals he had been linked to; see below) and political support for other economic activities (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014). These activities notably comprised his real estate business, to which he transferred large sums from his publishing activities (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014). In

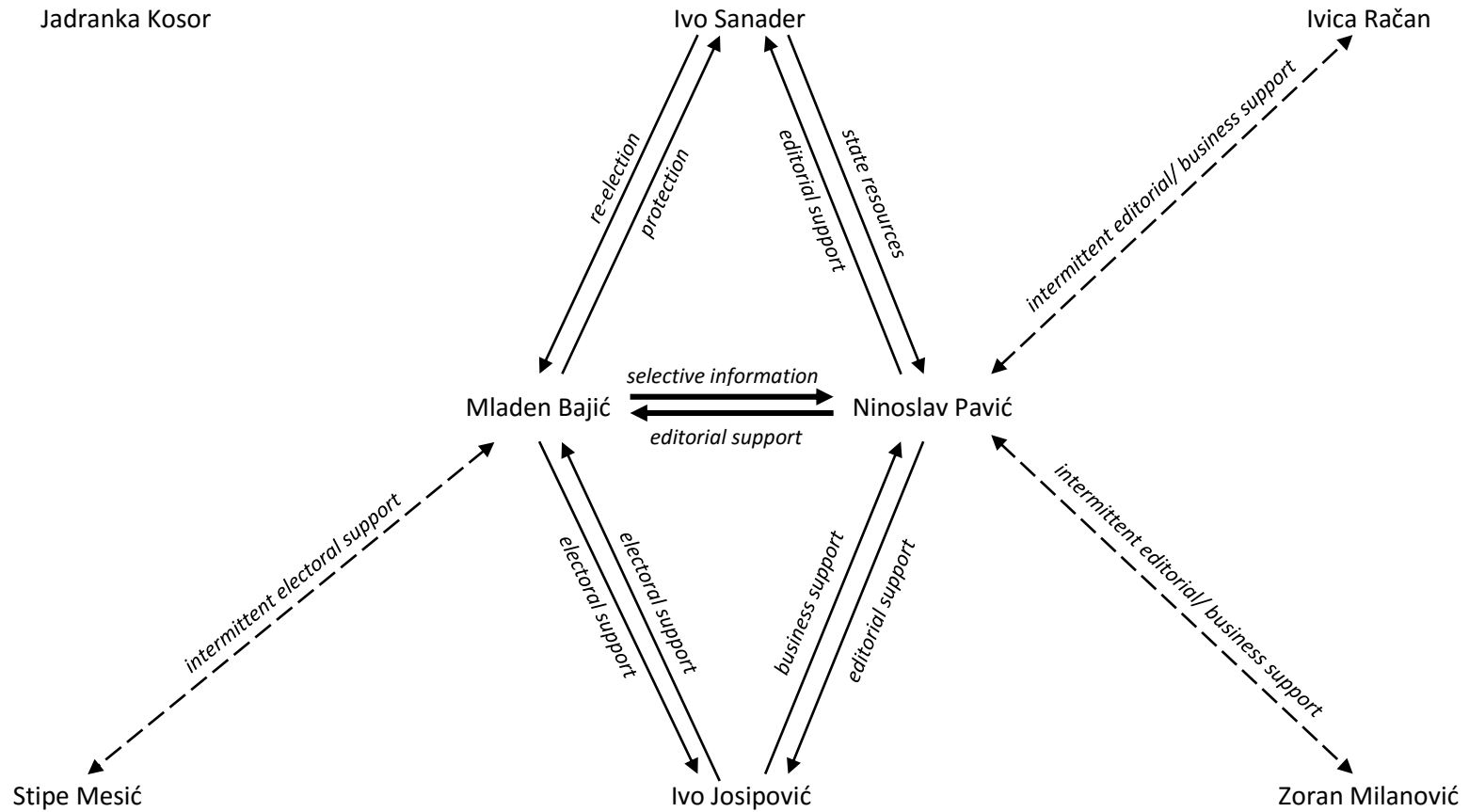
⁹⁸ In one proven instance Bajić assisted Sanader with a text message in which he illegally informed him about the confidential testimony of Milena Šenator, a witness in one trial against Sanader. In the message Bajić suggested that her testimony was not dangerous to him (see footnote below for more details). The fact that Bajić was under Sanader’s control is suggested by several journalists as well as by the fact that only with Sanader’s sudden withdrawal did Bajić become active.

this phase he created a close-knit network of contacts from the world of politics, the business sector and, to some extent, the underworld⁹⁹ (anonymous interviewee 2, 2014).

Before going into the mechanisms of these mutual connections, the following figure summarizes the relationship between politicians and the permanent collusive duopoly of Ninoslav Pavić and Mladen Bajić over time. With its focus on collusion the illustration concentrates on informal particularism (for formal particularism, see the introductory section of this chapter).

⁹⁹ This last point refers especially to Miroslav Kutle, who served two sentences for embezzlement during the privatization wave in the 1990s. Kutle is one of the co-signatories of the Grupo contract and has since been protected in Pavić's publications, as stated by Pavić himself to his journalist Boris Dežulović (Lasić, 2010).

Overview over executive – media relationships 2000 - 2014



Pavić cooperated with the PM where he had to but was not in total control over everything that was published on a daily basis.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, despite its political servitude, EPH also employed very serious journalists with great integrity such as Slavica Lukić, Nataša Škaričić, Šenol Selimović, Davor Krile, Hrvoje Appelt, Nataša Božić or Tomislav Klauški and Đurđica Klancir in the early 2000s. In the earlier years, therefore, Pavić tried to balance political loyalty and investigative journalism, at least to a minor degree.

Given Sanader's incentive structure to suppress media reports about his corrupt nature, he also had a direct motivation to limit media diversity by placing media outlets in the hands of a trusted agent such as Ninoslav Pavić. When Sanader came to power in December 2003, Slobodna Dalmacija was still officially in state ownership and its privatization was high on the new government's agenda. In order to simplify his control of Croatia's media landscape, Sanader, who effectively directed the privatization of Slobodna Dalmacija, made use of informal particularism by selling the newspaper to Ninoslav Pavić, despite concerns about excessive market concentration.¹⁰¹

Even before EPH got to buy Slobodna Dalmacija, it was the largest publisher not only in Croatia but across the entire region, with three dailies, five weeklies, two bi-weeklies and eleven monthly magazines selling a total of 100m copies annually around 2004 (Malović, 2004, p. 128; Stipić, 2003). Media scholars estimate that EPH holds about 60% of total circulation in Croatia (H. Popović et al., 2010, p. 9). If this number is accurate¹⁰², it would exceed by a third the maximum ownership concentration

¹⁰⁰ This basic limitation can be seen from the sms conversation between Ninoslav Pavić and Ivo Pukanić showing that the publishers were not almighty in controlling the content of their media. Pukanić for instance complained to Pavić for attacks against him by EPH journalists: "Nino, stop this. If you are not able to, tell me this openly, as well as who to talk to. Because I see this as an open war of EPH against me. Mine are f***** with me because we spare you. I will have to let them go, and then nobody wins." (Index.hr, 2010d).

¹⁰¹ From documentation which was handed to the public prosecutor, Mladen Bajić, in 2008 it becomes evident that Pavić did not even have to invest 271m kunas – a sum agreed beforehand as a condition of sale (Ćimić, 2010b). In a similarly strategic move, Ivo Sanader gave Slobodna Dalmacija's share in the distribution monopolist TISAK to business tycoon Ivica Todorčić, which made him majority owner. Todorčić was (and still is at the time of writing) in a key position when it comes to coordinating advertising boycotts, such as those against independent media (see below).

¹⁰² Despite provisions in media law, publishers still do not disclose accurate circulation figures. Hence, circulation numbers are only estimates.

laid down by law (“Zakon o medijima,” 2004). Despite these serious objections, on 30 August 2005 EPH became the majority owner of Slobodna Dalmacija (Stapić, 2005).¹⁰³

The interview evidence shows that Pavić’s daily Jutarnji List had a well-functioning system by which editorial policies conceived in the management could reliably be put into practice in a top-down process. The evidence relates to (1) the special editorial rights certain cabinet members enjoyed, (2) the internal organization of Pavić’s chain of command and (3) Pavić’s use of this system in his collusive relationship with public prosecutor Mladen Bajić.

EPH publications not only favoured government politicians in their articles; it also gave them special editorial rights. On a political level, Sanader had direct contact with Pavić. While this general connection had been suggested by some journalists such as Šenol Selimović (2014), there is also direct evidence for this link. In November 2008, Minister Darko Milinović invited journalists to brief them on “how to report” his health care reform. Then highly ranked anonymous interviewee 13 contacted editor-in-chief Mladen Pleše to tell him that she would report on this meeting and give her personal analysis of the event. Pleše replied that he did not have to write this analysis as they had an agreement with the “boss” that the health care reform was to be exclusively followed from the perspective of the “common man” – a euphemism for favourable coverage. When anonymous interviewee 13 asked if he meant Pavić, Pleše answered: “The one above Pavić”, which according to the interview source was Ivo Sanader (anonymous interviewee 13, 2014). This type of instruction from the government is paralleled, for instance, by the Ukrainian case circa 2002, when President Kuchma responded to a deep economic crisis by introducing the so-called “temnyky”, informal directives to media outlets (Ryabinska, 2011).

Other ministers participated in co-editing EPH publications as well. Dragan Primorac, the extremely media-savvy Minister of Science was seen on at least one occasion in Jutarnji List’s editorial office

¹⁰³ In a controversial decision the relevant agency for the protection of market competition allowed the merger by looking at the combined media markets. This lowered the total market share of EPH and enabled the merger (Agencija za zaštitu tržišnog natjecanja, 2004). To date, the police have opened three investigations relating to the acquisition of Slobodna Dalmacija, still with no results (Rajković, 2011, p. 361).

discussing with EPH management officials who should be attacked next (anonymous interviewee 11, 2014). On another occasion, Primorac changed the title of one of anonymous interviewee 11's articles during massive student protests in Zagreb (anonymous interviewee 11, 2014). Also, minister Darko Milinović, Sanader's Minister of Health with a strong party base in the Lika region, was frequently seen in the editorial offices of Jutarnji List (Stanković, 2009).

On a more "operational" level and acting on the direction of the PM, Ratko Maček, formally the government's speaker and Sanader's close collaborator, usually approached journalists to "convince" them of collusion in good faith. Maček would call editors-in-chief or line editors, often "solving problems" before they even arose (anonymous interviewee 11, 2014; anonymous interviewee 16, 2014; anonymous interviewee 17, 2014; anonymous interviewee 21, 2014; anonymous interviewee 2, 2014; Interview Božić, 2014; Interview Đikić, 2014; Interview Lulić, 2014; Interview Manjkas, 2014; Interview Zovko, 2014; H. Popović et al., 2010).

Secondly, the political messages devised by the EPH leadership, sometimes under direct political influence, were placed in the newspaper through a network of editors and journalists. While in earlier years Pavić personally appeared in the editorial offices to direct editorial policy, later his system of loyal journalists was reliable enough to ensure appropriate reporting on its own (Buchfelder, 2012, p. 31). Based on the interview evidence, two of Pavić's cornerstones for the organization of his political game were Davor Butković and Mladen Pleše, who organized the political attacks carried out by EPH papers. This system is best explained by the journalists from Slobodna Dalmacija who had enjoyed journalistic freedom during Račan's state ownership and who had to learn the EPH system from scratch.

Anonymous interviewee 14 reports that the situation changed drastically with the change of ownership to Ninoslav Pavić, who made Mladen Pleše editor-in-chief at Slobodna Dalmacija. The new philosophy consisted in "more freely interpreting facts, which meant to lie and construct" (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014). Šenol Selimović remembers a presentation journalists were given by the dep-

uty editor-in-chief, who told them to forget about reliable and correct reporting. Stories had to be exclusive, interesting and bombastic. Whether they were entirely true was not important; they could always be denied the next day (Interview Selimović, 2014). Also, as anonymous interviewee 13 reports, the new editor-in-chief Mladen Pleše created a vague “atmosphere of fear” to let journalists know that everybody should be scared of losing his or her position (anonymous interviewee 13, 2014).¹⁰⁴

Pleše held tête-à-tête meetings with every journalist to explain the changes and the angles from which their respective domains were henceforth to be covered. He told anonymous interviewee 13 unambiguously that his stories on corruption were not interesting to EPH and that the publisher expected her to write something that was interesting for the “common man” (anonymous interviewee 13, 2014). Also his stories covering the public prosecutor’s investigations into one of the most influential doctors in Croatia, would have to stop. After this conversation he was censored multiple times on the basis of these and other investigative topics. Anonymous interviewee 14 reports that Pleše intervened directly in his texts and in some instances prevented the publication of his articles and comments (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014).

In addition to this selective censorship, Pleše and other EPH editors extended the system of fabricating stories, which had started around the time of the bomb attack on Pavić’s car (see above). Nataša Božić, at the time employed in Jutarnji List, confirms that editors approached journalists in Jutarnji List to ask them to write stories on demand based on documents they already possessed. Upon closer inspection, this information often proved to be wrong or misleading (Interview Božić, 2014).

Especially important in these articles “written to order” are the headings, which often do not reflect the actual content of the text (anonymous interviewee 2).¹⁰⁵ That this is a widespread phenomenon

¹⁰⁴ In this context, there is a famous interview with former EPH owner Ninoslav Pavić, who said that every journalist should come to work with a cramp in his/ her stomach.

¹⁰⁵ One example is the way Jutarnji List smeared judge Mislav Kolakušić (see in more detail the section on formal particularism below). The headline on the title page suggests that he “photographs young girls as a hobby” and shows a suggestive picture of a young woman lying on a couch. The article itself, however, states that he owns a photo studio and that pictures are not overly eroticized or suggestive (Novak & Lukić, 2013).

is shown by the low degree of congruency between headings and actual contents of articles in the mainstream papers *Jutarnji* and *Večernji List*. Several scholars found that on only 60-70% of headlines faithfully represent the content of articles in Croatian newspapers (Dragojević, Kanižaj, & Žebec, 2004, 2006; Kanižaj & Šalaj, 2004; Kanižaj, 2007).

Šenol Selimović reports that Pleše asked him in their first formal meeting to write a story based on information which, as Pleše phrased it, was the “absolute truth” (Interview Selimović, 2014). Selimović admitted that he wrote the article, quietly hoping that this would be the first and last time he would be asked to. When Pleše approached him for a second and third time, Selimović resisted and has since then not been allowed to work. Selimović is convinced that these pressures came directly from Sanader and Minister of Foreign Affairs Miomir Žužul. Žužul was compromised early in his ministerial career by numerous affairs and proven cases of tax evasion, which later forced Sanader to dismiss one of his closest collaborators (Interview Selimović, 2014).

In the same way that certain people were protected, others – people whom Sanader sought to get rid of, for instance – were attacked, either on direct orders or with passive complicity. Anonymous interviewee 13 reports that while Minister of Health Darko Milinović was off-limits, his predecessor Andrija Hebrang, Sanader’s Minister of Health between 2003 and 2005, could be harshly criticized because he had opposed the PM internally (anonymous interviewee 13, 2014).

Sanader also received direct electoral assistance. In the election year 2007, a time when especially independent media such as *index.hr* were increasingly reporting on leaked details of numerous scandals involving high-ranking HDZ politicians, Jelena Lovrić from *Jutarnji List* explained to the readers why “this time” she would vote for Ivo Sanader (Vidov, 2014a). That this is not just anecdotal evidence but part of a systematic phenomenon is suggested by the results of the quantitative text analysis (see next chapter), which demonstrate that Ivo Sanader enjoyed an unusually positive press in his first incumbent election year in 2007.

The second key journalist to carry out Pavić's wishes, according to a wide majority of interviewees, was the editor and columnist Davor Butković (anonymous interviewee 1, 2014; anonymous interviewee 2, 2014; anonymous interviewee 5, 2014; anonymous interviewee 11, 2014; anonymous interviewee 12, 2014; anonymous interviewee 14, 2014; anonymous interviewee 20, 2014; anonymous interviewee 27, 2014). While Butković had already executed Pavić's orders in the Račan era (see the related example in the foregoing chapter), according to anonymous interviewee 11 he used all means at his disposal to prevent reporting on corruption affairs involving Minister of Foreign Affairs Miomir Žužul. Moreover, Butković was aware that he was covering politicians with corrupt intentions. He later even conceded in one of his columns that he had suppressed information about Sanader because he allegedly did not want to endanger Croatia's path into the EU (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014).

Thirdly, interview evidence strongly suggests that this system was also put to use for public prosecutor Mladen Bajić, the third point of reference in the triangle of collusion. Even though Bajić remained under Sanader's control¹⁰⁶, he maintained his own links to the media and especially Pavić's EPH. The following evidence suggests that Bajić used EPH's system of loyal and corrupt journalists not only to accuse or slander anyone (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014) and leak investigation details but also to forward testimony details to the accused Ivo Sanader.

Milena Šenator, financial manager of Globus co-owner Miroslav Kutle testified with the public prosecutor in 2000 that Sanader, alongside Ninoslav Pavić, had been on a list of people Kutle made secret payments to from a grey budget ("Latinica - Projekt Hypo", 2010). This was the first piece of evidence for Sanader's involvement in the scandal around the Hypo bank, for which he was convicted in 2012. Šenator's claims were later substantiated with evidence provided to the Croatian public prosecutor by his Austrian colleague according to which a credit from Hypo bank was provided through

¹⁰⁶ This is for instance suggested by information from the Wikileaks cablegate (Foley, 2010), according to which Bajić told the American ambassador in January 2010, very shortly after Kosor had Sanader thrown out of the HDZ, that he had just started investigating him. Sanader was eventually found guilty based on evidence which has been known since 2000, thereby indirectly proving Bajić's inactivity.

Kutle's company Diona in 1996 (Ćimić, 2015). Her testimony remained in Bajić's drawer for ten years, and he started prosecuting Sanader only in 2010, when he was pressured by the new PM Jadranka Kosor (see the preceding chapter on universalism). Šenator's codename "Djuro" and a large part of her testimony was leaked to Ninoslav Pavić's Jutarnji List, putting her in considerable danger. Šenator herself said in the investigative TV show Latinica "The public prosecution office sold me out to the media owned by Miroslav Kutle" ("Latinica - Projekt Hypo," 2010).¹⁰⁷ Despite Šenator's very well-founded testimony, which was an important factor in the conviction of Ivo Sanader, Ninoslav Pavić has never been charged. This is even more striking given the vast amount of evidence regarding the Hypo case which Mladen Bajić's Austrian colleagues had transferred to Zagreb (Ćimić, 2015).

Concrete evidence of connections between Bajić and EPH journalists were uncovered in an effort to track repeated leaks to newspapers about ongoing investigations. The police under Oliver Grbić, appointed by then-Minister of the Interior Tomislav Karamarko, found that there were frequent telephone communications between Bajić, Pleše and Jutarnji List journalist Dušan Miljuš surrounding the leaking of investigation details to the press, which generally put Bajić in a good light (Radaljic, 2013). Later in 2014 Grbić also publicly reported that both Bajić and Mladen Pleše, then editor-in-chief of Jutarnji List, warned him in a tête-à-tête meeting to behave "wisely" with regard to certain criminal investigations (especially the one against Pavić in the scandal around the Kamensko firm), since it would not be good if his face and name were circulated in the press (Vidov, 2014b).¹⁰⁸

In this context, anonymous interviewee 14 reports that shortly after EPH bought Slobodna Dalmacija, Mladen Pleše, the new editor-in-chief, made him cover the public prosecutor. When Pleše noticed that he would not get the type of texts he expected, he shifted the responsibility to one of his colleagues, who from then on regularly wrote tracts as commissioned by the public prosecutor, causing

¹⁰⁷ Šenator alluded to EPH, which was co-owned by Miroslav Kutle through the Grupo contract.

¹⁰⁸ Even though there is little doubt as to the factual accuracy of these events, it should be mentioned that Grbić was appointed by, and an ally of, Tomislav Karamarko, the current leader of the HDZ and an opponent of Pavić and Bajić. Moreover, the fact that Grbić criticized Mladen Bajić in a TV show hosted by Gordan Malić shortly before the 2015 presidential elections once more suggests the close connection between Malić and Karamarko. This is at least suggested by the fact that Malić's open turn against Bajić coincided with his continuously positive coverage of Bajić's later rival, Tomislav Karamarko.

lawsuits that cost Slobodna Dalmacija millions (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014). Journalists who did not raise objections started off doing dirty work, selling accusations against people as journalistic unveilings, “settling accounts” with others, praising the public prosecutor or deflecting criticism of his inertia in prosecuting corrupt individuals (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014).

Authentic transcripts of SMS conversations between the public prosecutor Mladen Bajić and publisher Ivo Pukanić from 2008 show that both Pukanić and Gordan Malić had been fed documents by Bajić.¹⁰⁹ Today one of Bajić’s bitterest critics, Malić in particular was known for the enthusiastic advertorials he had written about him.¹¹⁰ In addition to Malić, Pukanić and other journalists at EPH and Nacional, Bajić was also connected to editors at HTV and to everybody else who was useful to him. According to anonymous interviewee 14, Bajić had more influence in EPH’s publications than any PM or president (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014).

Taken together, the evidence presented on cooperation between Pavić, Račan, Sanader, Kosor (to some extent) and, as will be seen, Milanović, suggests that the owner of EPH made a basic offer to every prime minister: limitation of negative coverage, additional positive coverage and cooperation over public manipulation in the principal’s interest (such as smear campaigns) in return for protection from prosecution and economic cooperation. While this basic offer in itself does not constitute capture (cooperation would need to be systematic and permanent to meet the definition), PMs took Pavić up on this offer to varying degrees, as the four cases show. As the evidence further suggests, Sanader entered into this contract and in addition to protecting him from prosecution rewarded Pavić with enhanced business opportunities, as he had when Pavić started to spread his business

¹⁰⁹ A translated excerpt of the relevant sms conversation between Nacional owner Ivo Pukanić and Mladen Bajić: Sent by Ivo Pukanić: “A certain Malić was noticed leaving the office of M. Bajić at the public prosecution. In his hands he carried a bundle of documents.”; Mladen Bajić: “Ha ha”; Ivo Pukanić: “You will get ha ha when I sue you”; Ivo Pukanić: “Mladen, I did not manage to contact you earlier. Reading Jutarnji today I saw who between me and Mr GM (Gordan Malić, TM) you like more. Greetings from sad Puki.” Mladen Bajić: “You’re not right, not today and not yesterday” (Index.hr, 2010c).

¹¹⁰ Malić must have been aware of Bajić’s highly dubious role in covering high-level corruption since strong evidence against the public prosecutor in the Hypo case had been accumulating in 2009 – one year before publication of his article titled “HDZ and partners: we’ll support Bajić”, which, despite a few lightly critical remarks, is a strong “objective” endorsement of Bajić’s work (Malić, 2010).

empire beyond publishing, especially into the real estate business (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014).

Based on the evidence provided by Jadranka Kosor and presented in this chapter so far, it can be argued that Ninoslav Pavić moved first in establishing principal-agent contracts with party leaders. As the evidence in the case of PM Kosor has shown, Pavić initiated and terminated cooperation as he saw fit. Moreover, anonymous interviewee 2 reported that Pavić contacted politicians while they were still leaders of the opposition, especially if it seemed likely that they would win the next parliamentary elections. This cooperation offer was something “politicians could not turn down” (anonymous interviewee 2, 2014).

5.2.3.3. Capturing journalists: the case of Helena Puljiz

The evidence moreover suggests that the power centre around Ivo Sanader made use of secret-service practices such as capturing journalists, usually vocal and influential ones who would spread, at best, selective information - and at worst, open lies. One particularly appalling example is the case of the journalist Helena Puljiz who was to be used by the secret services to acquire material to attack President Stipe Mesić in the electoral campaign in 2004 (Čulić, 2011, p. 8).

Around 2002, Helena Puljiz, a promising young journalist, was increasingly boycotted within the editorial office of her employer at Jutarnji List, through actions by the secret service POA, until she gave notice in autumn 2003 (Interview Puljiz, 2014). Shortly afterwards she received an offer from another big newspaper in Croatia to work for them. However, the day before she was due to start the employer called suddenly and withdrew from the contract without further explanation. This happened three times, with three consecutive employers.

After several months of this she was financially ruined and desperate. In a phone call with a friend she started crying and repeatedly said “I can't do this anymore” (Interview Puljiz, 2014). The next morning, she received a phone call from POA agent Mario Bušić, who introduced himself as an em-

ployee in the department for organised crime of the Ministry of the Interior. He asked her to appear for an instant meeting, threatening physical harm to her brother and her mother. Terrified, she appeared at the meeting, where Bušić and agent Mario Puček ordered her to report for interrogation at the offices of the POA in Zagreb, where Zagreb director Mladen Frlan joined them (Interview Puljiz, 2014).

Puljiz was repeatedly interrogated for several hours and threats were made against her life and that of her family. She was questioned about the president,¹¹¹ subjected to vulgar insults and attempts were made to blackmail her. Judging from the questions she was asked, Puljiz was sure that they had long since been wiretapping her apartment. The agents also offered her to solve all her financial problems and give her the free choice over where to work if in exchange she would agree to write articles on demand for them (Interview Puljiz, 2014).

Puljiz repeatedly declined to cooperate and made the incident public. HDZ speaker Ratko Maček denied that she had been taken for interrogation, which later was proven to be a lie. Ivo Sanader and Miomir Žužul tried to discredit her by telling foreign ambassadors that she had links to organized crime (Interview Puljiz, 2014). Also, journalists such as Gordan Malić and Denis Kuljiš, considered by several of their colleagues to be compromised, slandered Puljiz, repeating Sanader's and Žužul's slurs (see below).

Ever since then Helena Puljiz has been under surveillance by what is often referred to as the secret-service underground, informal structures of formerly employed secret-service agents, now working for mafia structures. The goal of this endeavour is intimidation, and, in her case, probably also revenge. For instance, she reported returning to her apartment to find all the lights on. Puljiz's brother, who speaks two languages and has a university education, has been stuck at the lowest level of traffic police for ten years.

¹¹¹ In particular they asked if the president had a child born outside of wedlock, if Hrvoje Petrač had financed his presidential campaign and if he had connections with the Albanian mafia (Interview Puljiz, 2014).

In order to prevent removal of her file's classified status, the public prosecutor eventually accepted responsibility for the secret service's legal and constitutional violations.¹¹² Even though in an unlikely chain of events the state of Croatia was found guilty of the charges¹¹³, Puljiz is still being harassed today. During and after the interview with Mrs Puljiz, I was myself repeatedly photographed in Zagreb with the obvious goal of intimidating me. These people appear whenever she meets somebody from abroad or somebody who is highly ranked (Interview Puljiz, 2014).

In sum, it is judicially confirmed that the secret services violated two laws and three constitutional prescriptions. Puljiz was awarded 20,000 euros compensation for more than 10 years of continuous harassment and a ban on working. Even though shortly after the scandal the director of the POA Joško Podbevšek was replaced and the POA reformed, the public prosecution appealed to have the sum halved. Only when the local media outlet "Varaždinski vijesti" offered her a job in 2008 was she again able to work, although her "ban" on working for nationwide media organs continued. Today Helena Puljiz is employed at the online platform t-portal.hr.

The case of Helena Puljiz is important because it sheds light on the general phenomenon of captured journalists, who enter a "pact with the devil" (anonymous interviewee 2, 2014). According to journalist Željko Matić, many "investigative" journalists in Croatia are really spokespersons for the sources of their material and often consensually abused into manipulating public opinion. These corrupt journalists are linked to the public prosecutor, the police or informal secret-service factions.

One of these journalists is the "carrier of documents" (Klauški, 2009), Gordan Malić, whose dubious role has been touched upon above. Malić has acquired a measure of authority deriving from his ex-

¹¹² According to Puljiz they also accepted responsibility in order to save Karamarko, the new chief of the POA, from having to testify (Interview Puljiz, 2014).

¹¹³ A part of the tactic to psychologically wear her down consisted in having several hearings, in each of which she would have to repeat all the details of everything that had happened to her (Gojan, 2014). The trial took eight years and four judges were exchanged during the court procedure. Two of them called for only three hearings in five years. In the seventh year of the trial the third judge unexpectedly brought the case forward and summoned key witnesses such as Ivo Sanader and Stipe Mesić. Then, with only one hearing left, that judge was exchanged again, so the only task the fourth judge had to accomplish was to speak the verdict. When it became obvious that the last judge, a young woman, was about to convict the state, she started receiving threats. The judge surprisingly still decided to Puljiz's advantage (Gojan, 2014).

cellent command of classified documents. Interview evidence and the macro perspective on his journalistic opus, however, suggest that Malić publishes basically everything he gets fed by various sources, and he publishes it unchecked (anonymous interviewee 2, 2014; anonymous interviewee 5, 2014; anonymous interviewee 11, 2014; anonymous interviewee 14, 2014). It is undisputed that some of the documents published by Malić are authentic and of high value in uncovering high-level political affairs, especially in the context of the involvement of Ivo Sanader in the Hypo scandal. Where they are trustworthy and where they were recognized as court evidence, they will be therefore used as evidence here. Also information about general events from the interview with Malić will be used where careful assessment suggests that they accurately reflect events.¹¹⁴

Malić, however, also engaged in slander of the worst kind, as evinced in the case of journalist Helena Puljiz. Malić published a fabricated transcript of Mrs Puljiz's interrogation at the POA in Globus that was to "disprove" her testimony and whitewash the secret services that had terrorised her for years (Interview Puljiz, 2014; Ivanović, 2011, p. 89). This document was indirectly shown to have been falsified when the public prosecutor admitted the severe violations of Mrs Puljiz's civil and human rights by the POA agents. That Malić not only has privileged access to (authentic or falsified) secret-service documents but also enjoys political protection is suggested by the fact that, unlike journalistic colleagues such as Željko Peratović, Malić had never been prosecuted for waiving secret material in his numerous TV appearances (Index.hr, 2007). Today, influential and reliable journalists acquainted with Malić's work see him serving HDZ president Tomislav Karamarko (anonymous interviewee 2, 2014; anonymous interviewee 4, 2014; anonymous interviewee 5, 2014; anonymous interviewee 11, 2014; anonymous interviewee 14, 2014).

5.2.3.4. Boycotting media through advertisement oligopolies

Not only Sanader but also his speaker Ratko Maček and the Minister of Traffic, Božidar Kalmeta, made use of an escalation strategy that consisted in offering rewards for cooperation. Only when

¹¹⁴ At the time of the interview with Malić I was not aware of his shady dealings.

this strategy of carrots failed did they start using sticks by threatening people or simply taking over media outlets to silence criticism.

Using the informal strategy of commercial pressure had two important advantages over formal particularistic approaches: firstly, this pressure was very effective as it directly threatened the existence of a given media outlet. Secondly, censorship pressures dispersed since they became increasingly difficult to identify and localise (anonymous interviewee 4, 2014). With the creation of an artificial oligopoly of advertisers in the Croatian media, Ivo Sanader could easily steer and direct commercial pressures to keep media in line.

As a consequence of the shift of media ownership from the state to the private sector, advertising gained in importance. While during Tudjman's reign the print media could only live off circulation, after 2000 advertising generated significantly higher revenues for publishers. In 2002, with newspapers still generating over 60% of their income from sales (IREX, 2004, p. 23), this ratio switched due to a fast growing advertising market: between 2004 and 2006 the sale of advertisements had already generated around 67% of the income of a newspaper, while the revenue from circulation had decreased to a share of around 33% (Maletić, 2008: 350-355, cited after Kanižaj, 2010).

And the political power of advertisers thrived in proportion to the growth of advertising income over revenue from circulation. The commercialization induced by market liberalization changed the main dependencies of newspapers, whose first priority was no longer to provide relevant news but to make sure that advertisers stayed on board (Gross, 2002, 2008; Jakubowicz & Sükösd, 2008a). Advertisers commanding budgets large enough to threaten the existence of entire media outlets through the possible withdrawal of their advertisements can use this weight in influencing media content. EPH and Styria, as well as Ivo Sanader during his time, directed a small number of advertising agencies which combine the financial power of Croatian economic heavyweights (anonymous interviewee 2, 2014). This applies especially to big enterprises such as big Croatian banks (Zagrebačka banka, Privredna banka), the chemical firm Pliva, and, more specifically, to individual busi-

ness tycoons such as the aforementioned Ivica Todorić (owner of Agrokor, the single biggest company in Croatia), Ante Vlahović (owner of the Adris group), Emil Tedeschi (owner of the Atlantic group) and Ivica Mudrinić (Croatian Telekom).

Moreover, Ninoslav Pavić's EPH itself was for many years the largest advertiser in Croatian media (Peruško, 2013, p. 716; H. Popović, 2014). For instance, EPH stopped advertisements in HRT for three years because Aleksandar Stanković interviewed former EPH sports journalist Romana Eibl, who openly talked about the business connections of Ninoslav Pavić and tycoon Ivica Todorić (Interview Stanković, 2014). For HRT, with a stable fee-based subscription income covering an overwhelming portion of the budget (89% in 2012; H. Popović, 2014, p. 226), the possible consequences of criticizing a big advertiser are much less problematic than in any printed media, where this kind of boycott could easily lead to bankruptcy.

Not least under Ivo Sanader the state itself had bundled its financial power through the big marketing budgets of state enterprises in order to use their commercial weight to pressurize, or "incentivize", media (Rajković, 2011, p. 363). Damir Mihanović, former manager at the state-owned company Croatia Insurance and a central whistle-blower, expressed in an interview his concern that "the media public can be blackmailed with the concentrated financial means of all state enterprises" (Dnevnik HTV1, 2010).

While earlier research on Argentina has shown that newspapers carrying a high share of advertisements financed by state enterprises and those reporting on corruption are inversely correlated (Tella & Franceschelli, 2011), big advertisers in general are often "out of bounds" in media reporting (McCargo, 2012, p. 213) due to the existential threat they exert on media outlets. Even though interviews with these tycoons might be occasionally published, they are never critical or even vague in content (anonymous interviewee 8, 2014). The large fees paid for advertisements and the high dependence of publishers on this money translate into a disproportionality where even light criticism of a well-networked tycoon can result in ruin. The following two examples demonstrate how Ivo

Sanader used this lever and managed to shut down Business.hr and Feral Tribune, two important critical voices on the newspaper market.

With respect to Business.hr Sanader first tried to reach a deal in a silent and cooperative manner. Business.hr, founded by the Swedish Bonnier group, was a weekly that launched in late 2005. The paper openly reported on scandals involving politicians and tycoons including Ivica Todorić, Ninoslav Pavić, Ivo Sanader and one of his closest allies, Božidar Kalmeta. Just one month after the paper launched, Miroslav Kovačić, a man who openly introduced himself as Sanader's envoy appeared in the office of editor-in-chief Đurđica Klancir to negotiate an agreement so his boss would not be attacked (Interview Klancir, 2014). Backed by a financially potent and professional owner who adhered to the highest standards of editorial independence, Klancir refused any kind of cooperation.

In the next step, the PM unsuccessfully contacted the owners of business.hr in Sweden and simultaneously had Ratko Maček exert direct pressure on Klancir (Interview Klancir, 2014). At the same time, ministers from Sanader's cabinet who had a particularly good standing within the HDZ made wide use of threats. They included Božidar Kalmeta, a minister from Sanader's closer circle (today under investigation for corruption).¹¹⁵

As a consequence of the ongoing advertising boycott, the Bonnier group, which runs media in 21 countries, decided to sell its Croatian operations in 2009 (Index.hr, 2009a). When it became known that business.hr was for sale, Sanader activated two of his closest and richest allies, Robert Ježić and Ivica Todorić. According to Klancir, Ježić flew to Sweden "at precisely the same moment" that he had heard that business.hr was for sale (Interview Klancir, 2014). Eventually Bonnier decided to sell the paper to Mujo Selimović from Bosnia and Herzegovina, an important client of Todorić's company, Agrokor. In one of his first moves the new owner dismissed Klancir as editor-in-chief. In a second step he erased the searchable online archive, a rich and revealing database on corruption and collusion in Croatia (Interview Klancir, 2014).

¹¹⁵ Through his right hand man, the state secretary Davor Livaković, Kalmeta tried to bribe anonymous interviewee 8 to stop writing about scams in road building. When the journalist would not accept bribes, he was threatened to be physically attacked (anonymous interviewee 8, 2014).

Sanader used the same tactic to silence Feral Tribune, something even Tadjman had not dared to do. While the case of Business.hr serves to show the destructive nature of economic pressure, the economic boycott of Feral Tribune is a show-case for how EU pressure pushed particularism into informality.

Feral Tribune had for a long time been a critical weekly, consistently reporting on the most contentious topics. Knowing that he would not achieve anything, Sanader avoided any direct interventions with the owners and the editor-in-chief (Interview Đikić, 2014; Interview Ivančić, 2014). Instead, according to one of the founders, owner and former editor-in-chief Viktor Ivančić, and former deputy editor-in-chief Ivica Đikić, Sanader had EPH papers regularly attack Feral Tribune (Interview Đikić, 2014; Interview Ivančić, 2014). According to Ivančić, Sanader did not dare to pressure Feral formally because he was scared of international responses, especially ones coming from the EU (Interview Ivančić, 2014). Ivica Đikić thought that Sanader was “obsessed” with joining the EU, a goal which he would not have jeopardised for anything. Even though it was entirely clear that Sanader wanted Feral to disappear from the media scene, he was so concerned about his image as a democrat that he even helped to defer Feral’s bankruptcy in the election year 2007, when his government allowed the management more time to settle a tax debt (Interview Đikić, 2014).

This debt was a consequence of Sanader’s informal pressure, which he exerted through the advertising cartel. Feral’s editorial staff had already tried several options to escape the advertising boycott it had increasingly been under. It decided to change from a black-and-white Berliner format to a coloured magazine style in order to make advertising more attractive, but to no avail (Interview Đikić, 2014). In one edition the editorial staff tried to draw attention to its isolated position on the advertising market by plagiarizing ads from big Western brands and putting them into Feral unilaterally. Despite these desperate moves, all Feral journalists who were interviewed report that during Sanader’s mandate the advertising boycott intensified dramatically (anonymous interviewee 12, 2014; Interview Đikić, 2014; Interview Ivančić, 2014). Thanks to Sanader’s tax payment deferral, the weekly

went bankrupt in 2008, one year after the parliamentary elections. Feral Tribune, which survived a semi-authoritarian system, was eventually forced to shut down in a parliamentary democracy.

5.2.4. The effects of Europeanization

This chapter discusses the cases of governments with primarily particularistic policies – where drivers of universalism by definition do not play a prominent role. While these drivers relate to universalistic effects, they do not boast much currency in making sense of particularistic shifts, as is mostly the case in this chapter. Consequently, even though there were periods where inter-party competition should have been formally at work (for instance during the election year 2007 in which the SDP became what is referred to as a “credible competitor” again), there are no observable universalistic effects that require explanation. And even though the same is the case for Europeanization, there is evidence that it can be linked to informal particularism, which is important for governments establishing a “façade of democracy”, as discussed in the introduction. More precisely, events during the mandate of Ivo Sanader suggest that Europeanization pressures played an important role in pushing particularism, which had been formal and therefore open during the Tadjman era, into informality. At the same time, there is little evidence that it (1) caused major universalistic changes, and (2) that, where they took place, it made these changes stick.

Sanader was mostly concerned with his democratic image, especially among his colleagues at an EU-level. Given that Croatia’s EU accession figured high on his priorities, he could not afford to allow his corrupt practices or his control of the media to become public. At the same time, the evidence suggests that the Sanader administration was very much aware of the EU’s red lines and that it was careful to display an image of Western orientation and secular government. Consequently, during the accession process there were never any real problems with respect to transposing the EU Acquis into Croatian jurisdiction. Indeed, there need not have been, as the Acquis had little relevance for media independence but was more directed at developing the media market. Despite its strong focus on

the big domestic media players, the EU's media policy was not a subject of great dispute along ideological and party political fault lines. The person responsible for media strategy in the HDZ at that time, for instance, is of the opinion that its objectives have not changed since the time of the SDP coalition government in 2002 and 2003 (H. Popović, 2014, p. 195). Three pieces of the most important media legislation, the media law in 2004, the law on electronic media (2009) and the law on HRT (2010), were passed during the time of the HDZ. Instead the main topic in the media discourse was the role of state interventionism, which, given the country's past, was "a relic from socialist times", while at the same time, the free operation of the media market was seen as the highest priority (H. Popović, 2014, p. 196). Given that Sanader had successfully managed to silence public discourse over his media practices, this also meant that censorship or political pressure was not particularly high on the agenda. The progress reports of the time provide an image of moderate politicization of the media sphere, perhaps akin to what was the standard in Italy, which did not cause much concern in Brussels. With an image of a largely free media market, Sanader was able to informally extend his influence over media content and thereby effectively undermine the EU's already-low expectations concerning media freedom.

With Brussels' general lack of attention to the topic, domestic events were easily more important in altering policy makers' incentive structures than the EU's unclear and rather diminutive expectations. The events around the state press agency HINA in 2006 are a point in case. Vladimir Lulić, today vice-president of the journalists' association HND, had been appointed the employees' representative for the HINA management council and his confirmation by the Sabor was merely a formality. Given that Sanader did not support Lulić, the Sabor did not endorse his nomination, in turn provoking the protest of the US State department and the EU Commission. Only under pressure from them did the Croatian parliament eventually revise its decision (Interview Lulić, 2014).¹¹⁶ During day-to-day work, however, Lulić was sidelined by the remaining four (government-picked) members so that after two

¹¹⁶ This pressure took the form of reports by the EU Commission.

years he was faced with no choice but to leave the council again. So while the foreign pressure, partially exercised by the EU, did make a difference, the changes resulting from it did not stick.

Moreover, Croatian governments correctly anticipated red lines as set explicitly or implicitly by the EU Commission and certain member states,¹¹⁷ and even where explicit criticism from the European Commission were brushed off Croatian authorities did not have to fear sanctions. Just as regular criticisms in the EU progress reports over the years pointed up “political interference” in the operations of the public broadcaster HRT (European Commission, 2004, p. 22, 2005, p. 62, 2006, p. 36, 2007, p. 34, 2009, p. 39), these protests could be ignored even in the last assessment before accession, with no sanctions attached (European Commission, 2012, p. 22). Here, too, the government complied with EU expectations only where absolutely necessary while simultaneously watering down reforms aimed at depoliticizing the judiciary and the police. In one concrete case Ivo Sanader pushed the appointment and election of two constitutional judges through his supporting majority in parliament, judges who either did not satisfy the formal appointment criteria or had a history of tax evasion (Transparency International Croatia, 2009). While the EU diplomatically criticized the general transgression behind this behaviour in its reports, it did not properly address, let alone sanction, the concrete instances of it.

A central argument for the effectiveness of the Europeanization driver in the case of Croatia is often cited in the case of the amendment of the law on criminal proceedings from December 2008, which considerably increased the leeway of the USKOK as the central anti-corruption agency. USKOK was founded in 2002 as a formality, as a toothless tiger with few staff. Constantly promoted by the EU, USKOK grew in importance and resources. Josip Kregar, a well-known anti-corruption activist and politician was tasked by Ivo Sanader in 2006 to draft a stronger anti-corruption strategy, not least, as Kregar said, because foreign pressure, especially from the EU, had become a “decisive element” (Kuris, 2013, p. 5). Therefore, some argue that the EU played an important role in pushing the Croatian

¹¹⁷ Several member states such as Germany, Britain, the Netherlands and to some extent France were known for their more demanding line on conditionality.

government to develop the law on criminal proceedings and has therefore had its share in the prosecution of Ivo Sanader. It is a fact, however, that the critical push to considerably extend resources, jurisdiction and responsibilities of the investigation police and USKOK was motivated only by two open assassinations in the centre of Zagreb in October 2008, which sent shockwaves through the country and the political class.¹¹⁸ While the timing and the causation of these important changes can be closely traced to these assassinations in Zagreb, it is still plausible that Sanader's plan to grant his new Minister of the Interior Tomislav Karamarko and his chief of police Vladimir Faber a *carte blanche* were prompted by the EU accession process, especially given the timing of the assassinations, which happened a few weeks before the publishing of the yearly EU progress report. It therefore seems justifiable to conclude that the *cause* for the extension of the investigative forces' mandate lay in the domestic arena, while the EU has likely played a *catalysing role* in these extraordinary circumstances. Moreover, the fact that in 2011 public prosecutor Bajić stopped all investigations against Ninoslav Pavić which were in their final stages underlines the fact that, despite the universalistic progress in the formal rules on criminal proceedings and the jurisdiction of the USKOK and the police, the role of the public prosecutor, as the central veto point with discretion to decide about taking up criminal proceedings as he sees fit, remained untouched. As the above events demonstrate, despite the considerable evidence that had accumulated against Pavić in the last decade (a limited extent of which has been presented here), Bajić actively stopped the investigation of the publisher. In sum, therefore, while the EU certainly helped to lock in changes, the evidence supports the conclusion that these changes were initiated if, and only if, the domestic conditions allowed for it.

All these examples show that EU pressures and requirements contributed to merely superficial change that did not last. They also show, however, that Sanader achieved his goals, despite the pressure from Brussels. In sum, the evidence shows that Europeanization was an important reason for

¹¹⁸ The two politically relevant targets were the owner of Nacional, Ivo Pukanić (including his director of marketing), and the daughter of a prominent Croatian lawyer defending a former Croatian general who was widely accused of links to the criminal underworld.

covering up corruption and media infringement but was not effective enough to make universalism last.

As regards the driver of inter-party competition, the opposition was a credible competitor only at certain points in time, and even where that was the case this did not lead to the expected results. While Ivica Račan was an experienced politician, he was not very popular and therefore not credible as a serious candidate to take over government again after Sanader had taken over in December 2003. Only when the young and promising Zoran Milanović was elected party leader did the party's ratings rise to levels which posed a serious challenge to Sanader's HDZ (for the respective evidence, see chapter six). Hence, we would expect that Ivo Sanader, faced with his opponent's possible victory at the next parliamentary elections in December 2007, would want to secure his future position as leader of the opposition by getting the media out of reach for the government.

Instead, however, it is precisely in the run-up to the elections with a strong outlook for the opposition that Sanader intensified his grip on the mainstream media by paying out considerable amounts to media owners in the shape of a tax cut from 22% to 10% - during a time at which the economy was still robust (anonymous interviewee 17, 2014; anonymous interviewee 24, 2014). Hloverka Novak-Srzić, his main agent in HRT, became active in 2007.

5.3. Zoran Milanović, 12.2011 – 12.2015

After Ivo Sanader's mandate, in which not only the cabinet but also the system of corruption and media control were clearly concentrated in one person, political power dispersed, with the opposition taking the Prime Minister's office. Whereas Sanader's decisions would be carried out usually unquestioned, Zoran Milanović had to share his influence with two competing internal power centres: having already been Minister of Finance in Račan's cabinet, Slavko Linić not only looked back on a long-standing career in the executive; he was also backed by the most influential SDP regional organisation in Istria. Moreover, one year before Milanović took public office former SDP MP Ivo Josipović had been sworn in as president.

It will be seen that Milanović and Linić turned to formal particularism shortly after EU pre-accession pressure lapsed with Croatia's accession to the bloc in July 2013. At the same time, evidence suggests that the duopoly between Bajić and Pavić initially remained stable, and for the first time since Ivo Sanader's incumbency Ivo Josipović, a high-level politician, revived the close contacts to both. In 2014 both Bajić and Pavić lost their influential positions. As previously announced by Zoran Milanović, the SDP majority in parliament did not re-elect the public prosecutor, who finally had to retire after two re-elections and thirteen years in office. Having gone bankrupt after suffering severe losses in his real estate business, Ninoslav Pavić was forced to sell his shares in EPH to the Zagreb advocate Marijan Hanžeković under dubious circumstances.¹¹⁹ It will become evident that traditional drivers do not sufficiently account for Milanović's regression to formal particularism and Josipović's actions aimed at capturing media. This constellation of competing internal power centres and its relevance to understanding the shifts to and from particularism will be investigated more closely in the chapter on intra-party competition.

Zoran Milanović originally started his career as a technocrat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ivica Račan wanted him in the SDP's executive committee and made him the party's spokesperson in

¹¹⁹ Pavić claims that Hanžeković took over EPH even though they had initially agreed on a construction that would have allowed him to continue the operational leadership.

2006. When Račan stepped down as party chairman in April 2007 shortly before his death, Milanović asserted himself against three more experienced competitors in a direct standoff. In the media, the young technocrat was perceived as a “fresh face”, educated and eloquent. At the same time, however, Milanović’s sudden rise meant that he had skipped a major part of the party hierarchy and therefore lacked a deep rooting within the SDP. He therefore always remained wary and distant from his own party.

In contrast to Ivo Sanader, there have been no allegations of corruption against Milanović and most journalists agree that he is not likely to be involved in more severe transgressions. Also, Milanović’s government in April 2012 decided to cut principal-agent ties with the loss-making state-owned newspaper Vjesnik, which had previously acted as a reliable mouthpiece of the Sanader government (anonymous interviewee 6, 2014; Interview Matić, 2014; Interview Ponoš, 2014).

At the same time, however, the Social Democrat PM used informal, and, to a larger degree, formal particularism to limit horizontal accountability of the media. However, apart from making use of EPH’s informal services, Milanović did not put special effort into receiving “all-round protection”, as President Josipović did.¹²⁰ There is no known case of a journalist having lost his or her job as a result of an intervention by Zoran Milanović, even though in at least one case he threatened to do so (anonymous interviewee 26, 2014). Also, at the public broadcaster HRT, informally part of Ivo Josipović’s sphere, (party) political influences did not seem to play a significant role (anonymous interviewee 24, 2014). Milanović did not intervene against media campaigns, such as the one 24sata led against him in the course of his effort to exempt it from a VAT tax relief. His complaints, such as one he made with the then editor-in-chief of Večernji List, could be ignored without fearing consequences (anonymous interviewee 7, 2014).

¹²⁰ As some journalists put it, while Milanović “had his journalists, he did not have his media” (Interview Pavelić, 2014). Milanović’s government was close to neither Večernji List nor 24sata and was one of the few politicians not closely networked with Ivan Tolj (anonymous interviewee 8, 2014; anonymous interviewee 9, 2014; anonymous interviewee 14, 2014).

This does not mean, however, that he did not encroach on media independence. Even though his leeway to do so was narrower than Sanader's, his approach certainly goes beyond what Jadranka Kosor thought of as acceptable behaviour. Zoran Milanović established a network of reliable journalists who were essentially pushed to give up their critical distance to the government in return for information. Secondly, despite his earlier threats to put Pavić in prison (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014), he resorted to especially to formal particularism, a step which was "strongly reminiscent of the way Tudjman censored the media" (anonymous interviewee 37, 2014).

5.3.1. Informal particularism

5.3.1.1. Milanović established a system of trading information for objectivity

Milanović set up a system which artificially limited the information output of his government in order to reward journalists who took a benevolent perspective of the government and punished those who insisted on conducting their own critical analysis. In a first step the new government stopped all press conferences and closed informal channels of information, even to journalists with whom Milanović had been in contact while in opposition (anonymous interviewee 27, 2014; Interview Pavelić, 2014; Interview Selimović, 2014).¹²¹ In a second step he boycotted those whose texts or interview questions he found "not acceptable" (anonymous interviewee 6, 2014; anonymous interviewee 9, 2014; Interview Božić, 2014; Interview Stanković, 2014; Interview Tomičić, 2014; Interview Zovko, 2014). Affected journalists would not be invited to press conferences and would be cut off from the general flow of information. Editors-in-chief were specifically asked not to pass on certain information to boycotted journalists and not to send them to certain events (anonymous interviewee 9, 2014).¹²²

¹²¹ After complaints by the HND, ad-hoc press conferences were re-introduced.

¹²² One editor-in-chief showed anonymous interviewee 9 an sms from the PM's spokesperson saying "Milanović will never talk to him."

Zinka Bardić, company director of Madison and Milanović's informal but influential speaker, organised this system on an operational level. Bardić recruited the journalists who agreed to give up part of their journalistic integrity. This lever, designed to artificially reduce information about the government and force newspapers to be appeasing, proved an effective strategy and there are several instances of journalists reporting that Zoran Milanović or his speaker made use of it. Milanović himself frequently called the editor-in-chief to complain about articles (anonymous interviewee 8, 2014). Nataša Božić reports for instance that during her time at Novi List Milanović threatened editor-in-chief Ivica Đikić, warning that Novi List would be struck from the government's information flow if she kept on covering the SDP.¹²³ From then on she was boycotted (Interview Božić, 2014). Večernji List editor-in-chief Goran Ogurlić tried to strike a balance between getting some inside information about the government from Bardić and preventing her from influencing articles (anonymous interviewee 8, 2014).

Even though there is at least one incident in which Zoran Milanović directly threatened a journalist with the sack, there is no known case in which this threat actually materialized (Interview Božić, 2014). And in contrast to Ivo Sanader's mandate, in general journalists did not have to fear for their professional existence when criticizing the PM (anonymous interviewee 7, 2014).

5.3.1.2. Milanović uses informal particularism in infighting over EPH

Although Zoran Milanović's relationship to Ninoslav Pavić is not unambiguous, it is indicative of Pavić's leverage in initiating and maintaining collusive relationships. Even though Milanović had boldly announced that he would put Pavić behind bars while still in opposition (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014), the evidence below strongly suggests that Milanović, too, received support from the publisher, especially in eliminating contestation for his position. Moreover, two central ministers in Milanović's cabinet had previously been collaborating closely with Ninoslav Pavić: Minister of the

¹²³ Milanović also called Božić directly, and threatened a lawsuit (Interview Božić, 2014).

Interior Ranko Ostojić, besides being linked to Pavić on a number of other levels,¹²⁴ had been the director of EPH's Slobodna Dalmacija; Orsat Miljenić, Minister of Justice, was formerly EPH's advocate. Still, after considering the evidence presented in more detail below, we can say that full-scale collusion between Pavić and Milanović does not seem to have occurred, even though evidence does show that the SDP PM made use of EPH's services to get rid of powerful internal competitors (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014; anonymous interviewee 5, 2014).¹²⁵

The PM had been in open conflict with his Minister of Finance Slavko Linić since 2013, and reports that the two had not spoken to each other privately for a year have not been denied by either men. Given his long history in the SDP, Linić was without doubt the second most powerful man in the cabinet but kept a profile of internal opposition, pushing the PM on behalf of his power base in Istria (Interview Matić, 2014).

EPH, caught up in a conflict of loyalty between the two most powerful SDP politicians, were cautious in reporting on the ongoing clash between Milanović and Linić. The infighting between the two SDP heavyweights escalated over Linić's assistant minister Branko Šegon, a wealthy SDP member with a police background, who was accused by the independent news portal index.hr of among other things abusing his position in order to obtain loans for his own company under favourable conditions (Interview Ćimić, 2014). After months of simmering conflict, Milanović finally decided to dismiss Linić's assistant in January 2014, against the declared will of the Minister of Finance. After this public sign of distrust, it was only a question of time until Linić, too, was dismissed.

Soon afterwards Pavić's Jutarnji List opened two days in a row with stories smearing Linić. On 3 May in a front-page article author Robert Bajruši listed "four reasons why he has to step down" (Bajruši, 2014). One day later, Jutarnji claimed on the title page that it was in possession of documents which allegedly showed that Linić had overruled a decision of the tax administration which reportedly had

¹²⁴ These links are described in more detail in footnote 81.

¹²⁵ This was the case with Minister of Health Rajko Ostojić (whose name is very similar to the Minister of the Interior, Ranko Ostojić) - under fire of EPH for internally opposing Zoran Milanović (anonymous interviewee 5) - but especially the case with Milanović's main internal opponent, the Minister of Finance, Slavko Linić (for more detail see the chapter on internal party competition).

cost the state budget between 6 and 27m kunas of lost tax revenue (Plišić & Bajruši, 2014). This story served as the formal reason for Milanović to dismiss Linić, which happened two days later, on 6 May 2014. At the press conference, where Milanović justified his decision, he committed a sort of Freudian slip, saying that he would not be pursuing criminal proceedings against Slavko Linić (cited after Interview Matić, 2014). According to Croatian law, this decision is not for him but for the public prosecutor to make. In February 2015 the anti-corruption watchdog USKOK came to the conclusion that Linić had not overstepped his authorities (USKOK, 2015).

5.3.2. Formal particularism: Dispensing rewards and sanctions via formal policies

There are several examples of how members from Milanović's cabinet made use of formal particularism in order to punish media or provide incentives to change their behaviour, with tax pressures as the most common form. Three examples of formal particularism are presented here, harassment of index.hr using the tax police, the so-called institution of pre-bankruptcy settlement and the rewarding and punishing of media corporations by means of fiscal policy.¹²⁶

5.3.2.1. Media harassment using the tax police

When Slavko Linić was still Minister of Finance, and a strong and independent one at that, he had far-reaching powers to provide the media with financial incentives and to impose sanctions. The media war Linić waged against index.hr in the case Šegon is only one of several examples where the SDP government made use of formal particularism in order to silence its critics.

According to Ilko Ćimić, a prize-winning investigative journalist at index.hr, serious pressure from the government started with a critical story about Linić's holiday in Dubai around New Year 2012/3 (In-

¹²⁶ Further examples of formal particularism not covered in detail here include the effort made by Minister of Finance Linić to push the government internally to discontinue per-text contracts between publishers and authors. These ad-hoc contracts especially with small employers such as index.hr were an important way of circumventing fully-fledged contracts, which were very costly for smaller companies already burdened by taxes. Linić's plan was eventually rejected.

interview Ćimić, 2014). Ćimić reported that from the time this article was published, the tax police performed recurring inspections on an almost daily basis at the offices of index.hr in Zagreb. Even though, as he conceded, spot checks had been carried out on several companies by the tax police in recent times, in no case did this happen with this frequency and over a sustained period of months. Index.hr responded with a series of texts about factional infighting in the tax administration, in which Šegon's son was spared an investigation despite obvious tax irregularities (Interview Ćimić, 2014). The police and the public prosecutor in turn escalated investigations into index by prosecuting the director of the portal for allegedly extracting money from the web portal, demanding the provision of detailed reports from every author since 2004 about each written article (Interview Ćimić, 2014).¹²⁷

While the public broadcaster HRT reported on the case in its main news show Dnevnik (Ćimić, 2014), the original investigative work in Večernji List was stopped by the paper's editor-in-chief (anonymous interviewee 7). Even after Šegon had stepped down, the topic remained taboo. It can be assumed that an important reason for why both Večernji and Jutarnji List had held their hands over Linić lay in the new institute of the so-called pre-bankrupt settlement, in which the Minister of Finance had considerable discretion in deciding over substantial tax-debt relief.

5.3.2.2. Pre-bankruptcy settlement

The newly created and controversial instrument of a "pre-bankrupt settlement" aimed at forcing creditors to find a settlement with debtors so as to support companies which were on the verge of bankruptcy. It also represented an effective formal mechanism to reward newspapers for their loyalty.

Ninoslav Pavić's EPH, for instance, which meanwhile was forced to apply for a pre-bankruptcy settlement, led a campaign against everybody who criticised the arbitrary nature of the instrument.

This included the judge Mislav Kolakušić, an expert in commercial law, who criticized in index.hr the

¹²⁷ From the scraping endeavour, explained in more detail in the introduction, it is obvious that this would have comprised hundreds of thousands of texts.

generous recognition of inter-company loans and in some cases foresaw potentially substantial tax-debt reliefs for certain companies, leaving a high level of discretion to the Minister of Finance (Stanković, 2014). Shortly after Kolakušić had come forward with his public criticism, Jutarnji List alleged on its title page that he was taking suggestive pictures of young girls (Novak & Lukić, 2013). Jutarnji List also attacked index.hr founder Matija Babić, whose news portal had given the topic widespread space (M. Babić, 2014).¹²⁸

5.3.2.3. Formal economic pressures

In addition to sticks from the tax police and carrots in the form of pre-bankruptcy settlement, the Minister of Finance also pushed the government internally to discontinue per-text contracts between publishers and authors, which had been employed for several years. These contracts allowed publishers to formally employ journalists on a text-by-text basis, thus circumventing permanent employment, even in cases where journalists had been working on such contracts for the same publisher for several years. While these contracts had long been criticised by the journalist union, in the case of index it represented an attack on the financially weak news portal because it would not have been able to financially sustain fully-fledged contracts with all its contributors. Linić's plan was eventually rejected.

In addition to pressure from the tax police, Linić and Milanović used fiscal policy to reward and sanction media. In contrast to Ivo Sanader, who decreased media VAT by 12 percent in an election year and in a favourable economic climate, Milanović and Linić followed publishers' wishes to reduce VAT from 10% to 5%, "clearly an attempt to materially support privately owned press media in a period of economic crisis" (H. Popović, 2014, p. 200).¹²⁹ In terms of electoral timing, the tax was passed in July 2013, about two and a half years before the next parliamentary elections. That Jutarnji List, for instance, did not reciprocate is also demonstrated by the quantitative text analysis, which for Mila-

¹²⁸ Jutarnji alleged that Babić led a luxurious lifestyle while his news portal was on the brink to bankruptcy.

¹²⁹ According to media scholar Helena Popović, the initiative for the tax cut came from publishers in autumn 2012 (H. Popović, 2014, p. 200).

nović shows a negative reporting trend into the election year 2014 (see next chapter). Moreover, the HNS Minister of Culture, prompted by the head of the ministry's media department, Milan Živković, had successfully pushed to make the tax cut contingent on the introduction of editorial statutes. As already mentioned, EPH had got into serious financial difficulty after Ninoslav Pavić's misfortunes in his real estate transactions (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014). In this situation, Pavić needed the government more than ever in his effort to keep EPH alive (Pauček Šljivak, 2013a). The gains for the two largest beneficiaries of the tax decrease, EPH and Večernji List, translated into a loss to the state budget amounting to 24m kunas (H. Popović, 2014, p. 200).

In another instance, Milanović used the government's tax policy to sanction the paper 24sata. In an effort to increase circulation, the tabloid had attacked him in, as anonymous interviewee 37, then working for 24sata TV, admitted, "an unmeasured and not very intelligent way" (anonymous interviewee 37, 2014). Milanović responded to the attack by adding a paragraph to the draft VAT law which aimed at exempting papers from the tax decrease that contained less than 25,000 words. This move was widely perceived as clear retaliation against 24sata, which was the only mainstream paper that consistently remained under this arbitrary word limit.¹³⁰ The amendment was eventually struck down by the Constitutional Court in December 2013 (Ustavni Sud, 2013).

5.3.3. Ivo Josipović 2011-2015: informal particularism and collusion

The third SDP power centre gravitated around Ivo Josipović, a professor of law, renowned composer of contemporary music and former MP for the SDP, who was president between January 2011 and January 2015.

By definition, the president is not able to use formal particularism because he is not in possession of the formal powers to importantly influence the media's legal framework. Josipović's efforts to cap-

¹³⁰ 24sata even started a billboard campaign saying: "From now on containing more than 25,000 words. Because that's what Zoki (*i.e.* Zoran Milanović, TM) wants!" (24sata, 2013).

ture media outlets through informal particularism were therefore both more extensive and more intensive when compared to the more formal interventions of the cabinet. The sentiment analysis shows in this context that against the common decreasing trend Josipović's reporting index increased towards the election year 2014, suggesting systematic media capture (see next chapter). So even though his massive efforts to maintain a benevolent press coverage were to a large extent successful, Josipović was not re-elected after his first mandate. In sum, the evidence suggests that for the first time since Ivo Sanader a politician was colluding with media and at the same time closely linked to the public prosecutor Mladen Bajić. Similar to Ivo Sanader, Josipović's informal particularism is characterised by very careful, indirect media pressures resulting in little concrete evidence.

Articles about untouchable people such as Josipović are rejected by editors or editors-in-chief in the planning phase, because they have the means to aggressively threaten the economic existence of entire media outlets. This leads to a situation where editors are scared to mention the name of an untouchable person even in a positive context, as was the case with the HDZ hardliners as discussed in the previous chapter (anonymous interviewee 13, 2014). An important characteristic of the informal particularistic influence exerted by untouchables is its limitation to very discreet interventions at higher levels of the editorial hierarchy, interventions which in most cases remain clandestine. At the same time, as discussed above, editors-in-chief have in many cases become part of the collusion at the top, since they have to put into journalistic practice what has been decided by the management or the owner.

Therefore, when journalists suggest opening untouchable topics, they are met with excuses, lies and stalling tactics and as a result learn by experience to censor themselves. Journalists are also often reluctant to talk about untouchables themselves, which resulted in predominantly anonymised interview evidence. Therefore, given (1) fear among journalists, (2) self-censorship, and (3) a high non-response rate among editors-in-chief to interview requests, instances of concrete interventions from untouchables are likely to be under-reported.

Many of the interviewed journalists agree that Ivo Josipović was the most influential contemporary politician, aiming to silence all negative information about him (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014; anonymous interviewee 5, 2014; Interview Đikić, 2014). As anonymous interviewee 14 put it: “Mesić kept his media and some of “his” journalists in line, but he did not want to keep on line ALL media and ALL journalists. Josipović really wanted to cover everything.” To date, the most telling evidence on Josipović’s ambitions to collude is reflected in four cases: his efforts to close down the paper *Novosti*, his connections to public prosecutor Mladen Bajić, his leading function in HRT and his relations to EPH and *Večernji List*.

5.3.3.1. Ivo Josipović tries to remove ‘Novosti’ from the market

Josipović’s reaction to reporting relating to ZAMP, the service for the protection of music authors’ rights, demonstrates the ruthlessness of the former president when confronted with critical journalism.

The private company Emporion, owned by Josipović’s close ally Marko Vojković¹³¹, is in charge of the operations of the State office for intellectual property. According to the respective law, only technical tasks such as accounting may be outsourced from the office to a private company. In practice, however, Vojković’s firm has taken over the entire business of the responsible State office, yielding a lucrative and stable income of around 33m kunas per year (Interview Đikić, 2014). The weekly *Novosti* showed that Josipović had used his position to allocate the business to Vojković, who hence has secured a huge source of income without having to go through a public tendering process (Bajto, 2012a, 2012b). Both Josipović and Vojković have confirmed the facts, not least since the process is legal by Croatian law, and *Novosti* pointed to the moral deficiency of this operation.

¹³¹ While Josipović claimed for a long time that Vojković was a superficial acquaintance, from the documents published in the police surveillance action *Juda* (see above) it is evident that within six months (10.2010 – 04.2011) Vojković directly dialled Josipović’s number 129 times and called the Presidential office 166 times (Novi List, 2013). It was also Vojković who, according to Serb minority representative Milorad Pupovac, tried to talk him into leaving Jadranka Kosor’s government in order to force early elections (Bajto, 2013). While this move would have suited Ivo Josipović at the time, there is no reason why it would have suited Vojković himself, since he never held any political position.

While the story was taken over only by index.hr, the mainstream media ignored it entirely (Interview Đikić, 2014) and only started reporting in response to Josipović's first public reaction. This reaction consisted in an aggressive public campaign against Novosti, lobbying to stop public financing for the paper, which makes up more than two-thirds of the media's budget and would have effectively led to its closure (Interview Đikić, 2014). His campaign was not successful in the end, not least, as Đikić speculates, because of the special position of minority financing. Had it not been for this special protection, the outcome could have been different.

5.3.3.2. Josipović's influence in HRT

One year after Josipović's arrival in office the new government under Zoran Milanović was sworn in. When the areas where PM and President had shared responsibility were distributed, they agreed that the prime minister would have a say over the secret services while the President would have the authority for HRT.¹³² Josipović lobbied for his loyalist Goran Radman to become director of HRT (anonymous interviewee 5, 2014; anonymous interviewee 20, 2014; anonymous interviewee 21, 2014).

After Goran Radman was appointed, he replaced almost all editors of Dnevnik, the main news show (anonymous interviewee 10, 2014). Additionally, amendments to the law on HRT from March 2012 changed the organisational structure of the public broadcaster, which now consists of four bodies, the general director, the management board, the supervisory board and the program council (H. Popović, 2014, p. 224). The amendments re-centralised political control since parliament, dominated in this case by the SDP fraction, now directly appointed the general director, the majority members of the management board and the program council. In addition, the position of the general director was bolstered through his authority to appoint the directors of the four organisational units as well as all editors-in-chief (H. Popović, 2014, p. 224).

¹³² Josipović confirmed this personally to anonymous interviewee 20.

At the same time, Radman has been involved in a number of scandals, including withholding information about his assets and appointing editors and managers who did not meet the formal criteria.¹³³ Due to these inconsistencies the supervisory board of HRT requested the dismissal of Radman in September 2013. Following the recent amendments of the law on HRT, he was able to retain his position thanks to majority support from the parliamentary committee on information, computerisation and the media.

As briefly mentioned above, political influence has always plagued the public broadcaster and it has not stopped with the SDP taking over government and Ivo Josipović taking over HRT. Helena Popović, a Croatian media scholar, has put it thus (2014, p. 228):

“The legislative framework has strengthened the political control of HRT. The current case of the General Director clearly shows that political support enables leading figures to stay in position regardless of the evident breach of legislative provisions or incompetent actions. It also shows the persistent and continuous influence that political power has in the operation of HRT.”

Notwithstanding the affairs around Radman, despite his far-reaching powers, there is no evidence that he imposed himself on the content of the programme (anonymous interviewee 16). Moreover, anonymous interviewee 21, who was one of the central editors of the main evening news and therefore de-jure in reach of Goran Radman, maintained an authentic, critical distance to Josipović, as (s)he confirmed not only that Radman was Josipović’s candidate but also that his affairs and wealth needed to be investigated. Anonymous interviewee 16 reports that he has never experienced any pressures from the Milanović government. Also other examples show that during this mandate censorship did not seem to be a problem on HRT. In the only political show not cancelled, “Nedjeljom u dva”, host Aleksandar Stanković was able to invite the controversial SDP prefect of the Sisak district, Marina Lovrić-Merzel, to appear and managed to press her on allegations concerning the abuse of her position as well as the dubious way she received her diploma. In a later show Stanković also interviewed the whistle-blower who gave the key evidence for the investigation and detainment of

¹³³ Some of the appointees had falsified their biographies or had insufficient work experience (H. Popović, 2014, p. 251)

Lovrić-Merzel, again, without any pressure from his editors or politicians (Interview Stanković, 2014). While it could be argued that Josipović would not mind pressure being applied on the SDP under rival Zoran Milanović, Josipović also appeared in Aleksandar Stanković's talk show, answering questions on ZAMP, which is a rare exception among Croatian executive politicians (Stanković, 2012b).

5.3.3.3. The mainstream press: Jutarnji and Večernji List

With reference to the two big newspapers, Večernji and Jutarnji List, there was widespread agreement that Josipović enjoys a high degree of protection in both publications.

President Josipović is among the untouchables in EPH (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014). Anonymous interviewee 4 agreed that Pavić was very supportive of President Josipović, meaning that articles criticising the President would not be published (anonymous interviewee 4, 2014). (S)he pointed to a common tourism business (Adriatica.net) that Ninoslav Pavić and Josipović's confidant Marko Vojković own jointly (anonymous interviewee 4, 2014). The same firm also played a critical, albeit still opaque, role in the highly dubious privatisation of Slobodna Dalmacija in 2005 (H. Popović, 2014, p. 207; see above in this chapter).

Many journalists also reported on Ivo Josipović's strong influence in Večernji List, which materialised through Pater Ivan Tolj (anonymous interviewee 17, 2014; Anonymous interviewee 8; Anonymous interviewee 14; anonymous interviewee 5, 2014; Interview Tomičić, 2014; on the role of Tolj, see above). Anonymous interviewee 5 added that Tolj visited the President very often and entertained very intensive connections with him. The paper also frequently published PR interviews with Josipović containing little relevant content, little serious tackling of issues and a generally positive undertone (anonymous interviewee 8, 2014; anonymous interviewee 9, 2014).

Večernji List journalist anonymous interviewee 20 was of the opinion that, while the paper's rightwing columnists were allowed to criticise Josipović, there was no criticism in the news section,

where investigative stories were published. Many of Večernji List's columns are authored by rightwing journalists and criticise the former president, who is firmly anchored in the political left. This type of criticism is not only much less dangerous than investigative reporting; it can even be welcome, especially in a pre-electoral setting, where polarisation helps shape a candidate's profile and mobilize voters. Anonymous interviewees 9 and 20 agreed that the rightwing critics in Večernji List's columns were the exception rather than the rule since overall the former president would get a positive treatment in the paper. Censorship on scandals concerning the former President went so far that even an article about an operation on Josipović's eye (that had made its way into the printed version of the newspaper) was withdrawn from the website after a phone call from the director of content (anonymous interviewee 8, 2014).

As in Večernji List, the embargo on Josipović did not affect opinion pieces in Styria's second mainstream paper 24sata. The journalists interviewed from Styria report that they were guaranteed by their employer Styria to openly write about everything they deemed important, including Ivo Josipović.

5.3.3.4. The relationship of Josipović and Milanović to the public prosecutor Mladen Bajić

In contrast to the PM, who will be discussed below, there is evidence that in at least one case former President Josipović received electoral support from Mladen Bajić. Anonymous interviewee 14 reported that one of his former colleagues, a journalist who regularly wrote tracts on Bajić's behalf and later worked at index.hr, published a story about 25 indictments the public prosecutor allegedly prepared against one of Josipović's competitors in the presidential elections. Even though the prosecutor's office formally denied everything the same evening, the story was out and Josipović won the election (anonymous interviewee 14, 2014).

A further clue supporting a connection between Bajić and Josipović are the numerous phone calls between the office of the public prosecutor and Josipović confidant Marko Vojković, who between January and April 2011 were in telephone contact 385 times (288 times with Mladen Bajić directly)

(Bajto, 2013). Moreover, in June 2014, Josipović decorated Bajić for his achievements in the fight against corruption, which, given Bajić's active protection of Ivo Sanader (see above) and his inactivity especially with reference to Ninoslav Pavić (see above), seems to be a rather questionable move (Ćimić & I., 2014). Back in 2010 Josipović had freed Bajić from responsibility for co-operating with Ivo Sanader, saying: "If Bajić had crowed earlier, he would have certainly ended up in the pot" (Ćimić, 2015).

The former chief of the police, Oliver Grbić, who reported having been told by both Mladen Bajić and Jutarnji List editor-in-chief Pleše not to conduct investigations into Ninoslav Pavić, stated publicly and repeatedly that Bajić, Ninoslav Pavić and Ivo Josipović were mutually connected, similar to the triangle during Sanader's times (Vidov, 2014b).¹³⁴ This is also supported by intensive telephone communication between the public prosecutor and Pavić at a time when the former was simultaneously investigating the latter for his involvement, together with Miroslav Kutle, in the scandal around the Kamensko firm (Bajto, 2013).

In contrast, judging by the available evidence, the public prosecutor was not in collusion with Zoran Milanović. Still in opposition, Milanović repeatedly criticised the public prosecutor and announced in an interview in January 2010 that he would not extend Bajić's mandate should his party receive a majority in parliament (Butković, 2010).¹³⁵ Milanović made good on this announcement.

Another piece of evidence suggesting that the relationship between the PM and the public prosecutor was not collusive consists in Bajić's investigation and detainment of a number of SDP politicians, such as the popular and powerful district prefect Marina Lovrić-Merzel and the mayor of Vukovar Željko Sabo. As publicly announced by the PM in advance, Bajić was not re-elected in April 2014. At the same time, Milanović's public statements that the SDP would support Bajić's nomination as constitutional judge were ascribed to the influence of President Josipović (T., 2014).

¹³⁴ At the same time, some of Grbić's statements need to be taken with a grain of salt, because he is loyal to Tomislav Karamarko, who had an interest in smearing Josipović in the run-up to the presidential elections in late 2014.

¹³⁵ During that time some SDP politicians conceived the term "Standbajić", alluding to Bajić's selective approach to open prosecutions (rtl.hr, 2010).

In general the evidence of this recent history is scarce and interpretations have a more speculative character. Based on the events so far, however, the “dismantling” of Bajić as one of the most influential persons in Croatian recent history was certainly helped by the fact that Pavić, now “under control” through the process of EPH’s pre-bankruptcy settlement, was not able to actively intervene in the formation of public opinion with respect to Bajić’s possible re-election. As a consequence of the six-year economic recession and past real-estate excesses, Ninoslav Pavić was forced in February 2014 to reduce his ownership of EPH shares from 50% to 5%.

5.3.4. The effects of Europeanization

Given that accession negotiations had closed in June 2011, six months before Zoran Milanović’s administration took over, pre-accession conditionality was no longer driving developments in Croatia. Consequently, Milanović’s government was in a situation where European governments were busy ratifying the accession treaty and facing an intervention threshold that had to be rather high to justify reopening the entire package. The fact that this threshold for pressuring the new EU member was high but not insurmountable is demonstrated by the case of former senior secret-service official Josip Perković, who was wanted by a German court for a series of murders during the 1980s. Milanović’s government tried to circumvent extraditing Perković and his former colleague Zdravko Mustač by modifying the law that regulates the domestic application of the European arrest warrant only a few days before Croatia’s official accession date.¹³⁶

This episode shed light on two developments. Firstly, even though the threshold for EU member states to actively pressurize a candidate country through democratic conditionality was high, it was only applied in contexts where the interests of other EU member states were directly affected. This was the case here, as German pressure caused Milanović’s government to withdraw the amendment only a few days later. Secondly, the fact that Milanović’s government even dared to unilaterally

¹³⁶ Germany had applied for their extradition for the largest series of murders on German soil targeting Croatian political activists, which was allegedly carried out by Yugoslav secret services. Following the name of the officer this law became known as “Lex Perković” in the Croatian press.

change a key law covered by the Acquis shows that it no longer took regular EU pressures very seriously – pressures that by this time were mainly exerted by the Commission’s six monthly monitoring reports. And it emphasises that the EU still lacks an effective post-accession conditionality to act upon a deterioration of the quality of democracy in its member states. A point in case is Hungary, an example of the EU’s incapacity to intervene even in cases of major threats to media freedom. Thirdly, all the instances of formal particularism presented above took place after Croatia’s accession in June 2013. This is consistent with the finding from the previous chapter that the EU did not produce permanent shifts away from particularism but merely gave politicians an incentive to informalize their behaviour. As soon as Croatia had become an equal member state, the EU driver lapsed, and the executive was free to revert to formal particularism, which, due to its open nature, is less costly than keeping up a façade of democracy, as required with informal particularism.

Thus, there was no EU pre-accession pressure (either technical or political) which could have worked to informalize motives to influence media output, as was the case during Sanader’s times. This is emphasised by the fact that all instances of formal particularism happened after Croatia had already acceded.

5.4. Conclusions

The two foregoing chapters presented the findings from 47 field interviews, laying out the development of relationships between agent-politicians, supervisor-publishers and the public prosecutor from the second transition in 2000 until 2014. The course of events points to three findings: firstly, it provides evidence as to the patterns of principal-agent connections between agent-politicians, supervisor-publishers and the public prosecutor. Based on these patterns, it establishes a series of shifts - towards universalism during Ivica Račan’s mandate, followed by a regression to informal particularism under Ivo Sanader. His former deputy and successor Jadranka Kosor again took steps towards universalism. Zoran Milanović made extensive use of formal particularism, while President Ivo Josipović, supported by the SPD, captured media using informal particularism. Thirdly, the evidence

shows that the two traditional drivers of democratization, Europeanization and inter-party competition, did not play decisive roles in effecting these shifts. Both the theory and the empirical data show that the reason for their comparatively low effectiveness seems to lie in their ex-post approach in sanctioning particularism. Instead, the course of events suggests that another driver might have been at play: the level of competition for power within a party. The workings and mechanisms of this driver, which were developed in the theoretical and methodological chapter, will be applied in the chapter on internal party competition, based on separate empirical evidence. In comparison to the traditional drivers, its strength lies in its ex-ante character, preventing particularism before it can actually happen.

In the next chapter, a quantitative analysis of 34,407 articles from eight media outlets covering the fifteen years between 2000 and 2014 is going to provide more robust evidence for the patterns of principal-agent relationships identified from the interviews above.

6. Quantitative text analysis

“How do you today look at Ivo Sanader, about who Jutarnji List back then first wrote the best and later the worst things?”

“Jutarnji List did not write the best and not the worst things. Where do you have that from? Did you count and read those texts?”

Ninoslav Pavić, owner of the EPH group until December 2014 (Buljan, 2013)

6.1. Introduction

This chapter is linked to the empirical chapters that drew on qualitative interviews in portraying the principal-agent relationships between politicians, publishers and the public prosecutor. Through quantitative text analysis of a sample of 34,407 media articles taken from eight media outlets and spanning over 15 years the chapter aims to support - or question - central hypotheses drawn from 50 interviews with journalists. One major goal of this endeavour is to triangulate the interview data, thereby lending additional credibility to the patterns of collusion outlined in the previous chapters.

As theorized in chapter two, I expect the data to reflect principal-agent relationships between politicians and media, undermining horizontal accountability through a systematic lack of criticism - or excessive praise. ‘Systematic’ in this context means that there is, firstly, a temporal dimension against which this can be measured and, secondly, a degree of co-variation of the sentiment data with interview narratives.

This chapter is organized as follows: the first section presents the method of sentiment analysis and gives a quick overview over the nature of the data. This seems necessary given the novel approach of performing sentiment analysis on a large-n text basis in order to trace collusive principal-agent relationships. Using sentiment analysis it becomes possible to detect long-term developments in the way media organs cover certain politicians. This method is therefore particularly appropriate in ad-

addressing questions regarding informal cooperation between agents and supervisors, cooperation which, in a further step, will be explained using the concept of intra-party competition. Subsequently, I will offer hypotheses relevant for media capture that have been drawn from the interviews and tested against the sentiment data. The closing section discusses the validity and reliability of the method.

6.2. Brief description of method and data

6.2.1. Method

As described in more detail above, sentiment analysis is a relatively new method in political science and has been used to measure party or policy positions in manifestos, to analyse legal documents, laws or constitutions (Hopkins & King, 2010; Laver et al., 2005) or to measure political sentiment within social media, especially Twitter and Facebook. In the context of this thesis the intuition was to use this technique to measure illicit cooperation between agents (politicians) and supervisors (the media) by gauging the degree to which media systematically report positively or negatively on particular executive politicians. Its main purpose is to test hypotheses derived from the narratives extracted from the interviews and, in passing, to test the broad applicability of this method in measuring forms of censorship across newspapers, publishers and time.

Sentiment analysis is most advanced in the English language, where respective software tools not only use sophisticated code but are also widely available in well documented open source applications (such as the nltk project for python). Sentiment analysis generally yields good results, for instance in predicting election outcomes based on real-time analyses of social networks (<http://elections.oii.ox.ac.uk/>).

For the Croatian language such open source tools do not exist. The sentiment analysis was carried out using Slavomjer, a sentiment software tool developed by four former students at the faculty of electro engineering and computing at the University of Zagreb (Petra Almić, Siniša Biđin, Goran Gašić

and Luka Krajcar). Slavomjer combines automatic aspect/ entity recognition (such as names, organizations and countries), sentiment analysis (i.e. recognition of positive and negative words) and the automatic association of entities and sentiment (pairing). Slavomjer was coded as part of a university degree and is not publicly available; running the newspaper data through the tool was a courtesy of its authors, especially Siniša Biđin and Petra Almić. The code is documented in a published paper (Glavaš et al., 2013). Given the lack of similar approaches for the Croatian language, the authors tested the effectiveness of different configurations of the sentiment tool against each other.

Slavomjer identifies “opinionated aspects”, i.e. instances, where politicians are linked to a positive or negative sentiment. The support vector machine (SVM) carrying out this task uses a number of strategies to determine whether entities and sentiment are associated: the distance between entity and sentiment (measured in “tokens”¹³⁷); the number of entities and sentiment in a sentence; the sentence length; punctuation; the order of the entity and the sentiment; lexical features indicating whether sentiment is conjoined with other entities, and “part-of-speech” (i.e. grammatical) features of entities and sentiment (Glavaš et al., 2013, pp. 19–20).

Given that sentiment analysis as a method to measure criticism and principal-agent relationships is new, the conditions for reliable sentiment values are established by drawing on first experiences with the data. While the entity recognition engine, which automatically identifies and extracts individuals and institutions from the text, was observed at an accuracy of 95.1% (Ljubešić, Stupar, Jurić, & Agić, 2013), the reliability of the SVM relating sentiment to a given individual in a text was assessed by one of the authors, Petra Almić, at around 60%. This level of reliability in turn requires a sufficient number of observations to render the data valid.

As will be discussed below in more detail, the method shows a satisfactory degree of validity, when matched to the narratives drawn from the interviews and polling data. Given the novelty and the idiosyncrasies of the Slavomjer implementation, however, the benchmarks for reliable data have not been established yet. Moreover, the methods used to acquire lexicons and algorithms associating

¹³⁷ Tokens are words, punctuation marks and special characters.

positive/ negative aspects differ widely among sentiment analysis approaches so that a comparison with other software solutions is not possible. Strong fluctuations between sentiment values, for instance from year to year, are an indication of unreliable data, especially in cases where there is a mismatch between sentiment data and well-founded expectations as derived from the interviews.

These potential problems were addressed by resorting to two strategies. Firstly, the numbers of observations are thoroughly discussed throughout the text. This is particularly relevant for the analysis of the Jutarnji List archives, which were comparatively scarce, especially for earlier years. Secondly, in some cases doubts over reliability stem from a high level of heterogeneity and fluctuation of authors over a given period of time in a specific newspaper. To address this caveat, I have “zoomed” in on the author-level sources and compared specific journalists over time to obtain a more consistent picture - with good results, as will be seen below.

6.2.2. Data

Using Outwit software I scraped 883,316 newspaper articles from eight Croatian news websites covering the time span from 1 January 2000 until 30 September 2014. The sources for the texts are the online news website index.hr and the web archives of the daily newspapers Jutarnji List (jutarnji.hr), Večernji List (vecernji.hr), Novi List (novilist.hr), Slobodna Dalmacija (slobodnadalmacija.hr) and the weeklies Nacional (nacional.hr) and Feral Tribune (feral-audiolinux.hr) (for the nature of these sources, their internal structure and questions connected to the scraping process, see section 2.3.3.2. in chapter two).

The scraping process consists of analyzing the archive structure of a given media website, identifying the location of each individual article and copying the article content based on a filter that needs to be programmed for each website individually. Given that website structures not only differ across media outlets but also change (substantially) over time, this posed a considerable logistical challenge.

Limited computational resources for the sentiment analysis¹³⁸ required a practical trade-off in addressing the above problems and favoured a smaller data set than the original text body. This reasoning led to me to narrow the data down to texts containing at least three mentions of politicians' names, resulting in 34,407 articles. This course of action has two advantages: a higher degree of relevance in the analysed articles, and a volume of texts corresponding to the available computational resources.

From this body of texts Slavomjer automatically detected and extracted 30,119 entities (i.e. popular individuals, politicians, places, organizations, etc.) and made altogether 251,520 observations in which these entities were associated with a positive or a negative sentiment value. From the population of entities 16 were drawn that are of interest here, encompassing 117,297 positively or negatively connoted observations:

Politician	Mentions	Percent
Ivica Račan	5034	4.29%
Stipe Mesić	6113	5.21%
Ivo Sanader	45502	38.79%
Jadranka Kosor	2403	2.05%
Ivo Josipović	8727	7.44%
Zoran Milanović	8494	7.24%
Tomislav Karamarko	1713	1.46%
Slavko Linić	1960	1.67%
Ivić Pašalić	1020	0.87%
Miroslav Kutle	405	0.35%
Ninoslav Pavić	51	0.04%
Ivica Todorčić	235	0.20%
HDZ	15069	12.85%
SDP	5723	4.88%
EU	6526	5.56%
Government	8322	7.09%
Total	117297	100.00%

The sentiment lexicon consisted of 1,028 positive and 1,784 negative words. As described in more detail in chapter two, the sentiment lexicon was acquired semi-automatically, based on online user reviews from a Croatian food-ordering website. User-assigned ratings were used as a gold standard

¹³⁸ The analysis was carried out by Siniša Biđin as a courtesy in November 2014.

for supervised learning. Positive (or negative) clues were automatically identified from words which appeared more frequently in positive (or negative) reviews. In a second step, false positives were filtered out manually (Glavaš et al., 2013, p. 19). While entities paired with positive sentiment are assigned the value 1, entities associated with negative sentiment receive 0. Sentiment data here are reported as pooled and aggregate several break variables such as mean sentiment by politician, year, newspaper or ownership. The sentiment averages are rarely below .4 and only in a few cases exceed .7. Presidents, for instance, who often maintain a public image of being “above politics” score an extremely favourable .6 or above.

6.3. Testing the hypotheses

Drawing on the central topics in the empirical chapter, a number of questions have been formulated and will be tested in this chapter.

6.3.1. Media capture

6.3.1.1. Is there evidence for media capture in election years?

The majority of interviewees categorized Ivo Sanader and Ivo Josipović as politicians who not only aimed at cultivating loyal journalists and intervening in individual media but also sought to systematically silence criticism of any kind. This qualitative difference as established by the interviews is the main hypothesis to be tested in this chapter. In a first step, pooled sentiment data of politicians over time will provide a first overview from which patterns may be distilled that might indicate evidence for media capture.

6.3.1.1.1. Aggregated results from the sentiment analysis, 2000-2014

The aggregated sentiment developments of the four PMs broadly confirm the results from the interviews. The data exhibit two broad patterns: the first pattern shows that governing politicians (and this includes the President) witness a gradual decline in positive reporting for every year they are in office. This trend can be observed for Ivica Račan¹³⁹ (2000-2003), Ivo Sanader (2003-2009), Zoran Milanović (2011-) and President Ivo Josipović (2010-2014; see figure below).¹⁴⁰ For the opposition politicians Ivo Sanader (-2003) and Zoran Milanović (-2011; see the dotted lines), this pattern is reversed into a gradual increase, which reverses again when the politician is elected to office.¹⁴¹

The graphs of PM Kosor and President Mesić show a different development, possibly connected to the way they came into office. Jadranka Kosor inherited the PM office in the middle of a parliamentary mandate. President Mesić in contrast had an outsider position in the presidential race leading up to the elections in January 2000 and had not been rising in the ratings, as other candidates had.

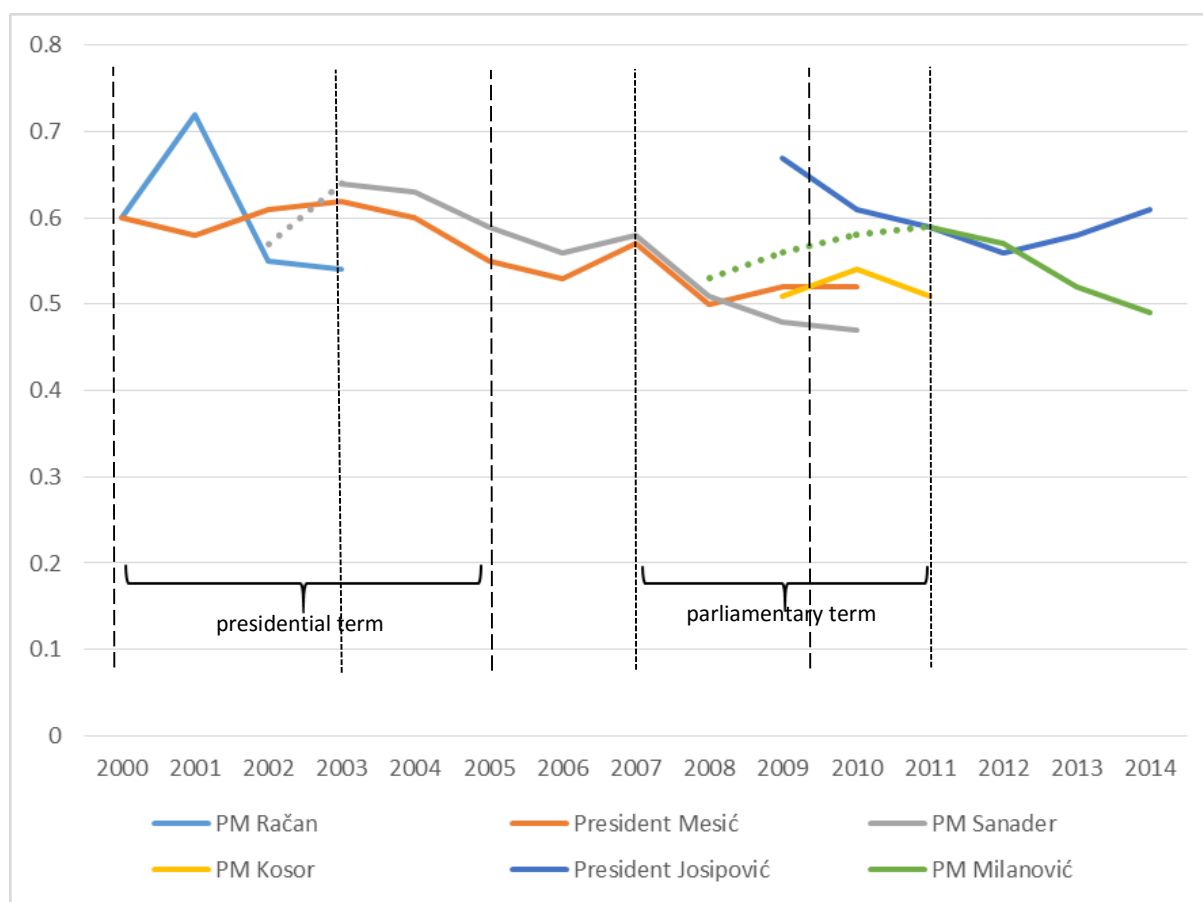
The second pattern - and the key finding so far - shows a sudden increase of positive reporting in election years for executive politicians who have been reported as capturing media: Ivo Sanader in 2007 and Ivo Josipović in 2014.¹⁴² Furthermore, in support of the narrative above, the data suggests that both Ivica Račan and Jadranka Kosor were not colluding as their indexes continued their downward trends into the election years 2003 and 2011 respectively. A further sign of the validity of the results is that Jadranka Kosor's somewhat peculiar reporting index confirms the events as described in the interviews: after surprisingly coming to office in 2009, mid-term, her popularity increased in the first months of 2010 and crashed afterwards, remaining low in the election year 2011.

¹³⁹ There were unfortunately too few observations for an assessment of Račan's reporting index after he was ousted.

¹⁴⁰ Given the in many ways unusual election of Jadranka Kosor as PM, the trend of her reporting index differs from this general pattern. However, it supports the above narrative (see 3.3).

¹⁴¹ Sanader defeated his internal opponent Ivić Pašalić in 2002. Prior reporting was characterized by party infighting led by the two factions. Milanović's high levels of positive reporting in 2007 can be explained by his surprising election as Račan's successor and is supported by extremely favourable poll data (see section 6.3.1.1.3.).

¹⁴² Given that parliamentary and presidential elections since 2000 have taken place at the end of the year (December), the sentiment measured in media articles capture reporting for the entire election year.

Aggregated reporting index for PMs and presidents, 2000-2014

The second pattern becomes clearer when comparing sentiment-value averages in incumbent election years (i.e. election years which politicians enter as incumbents) with averages of sentiment in non-election years.

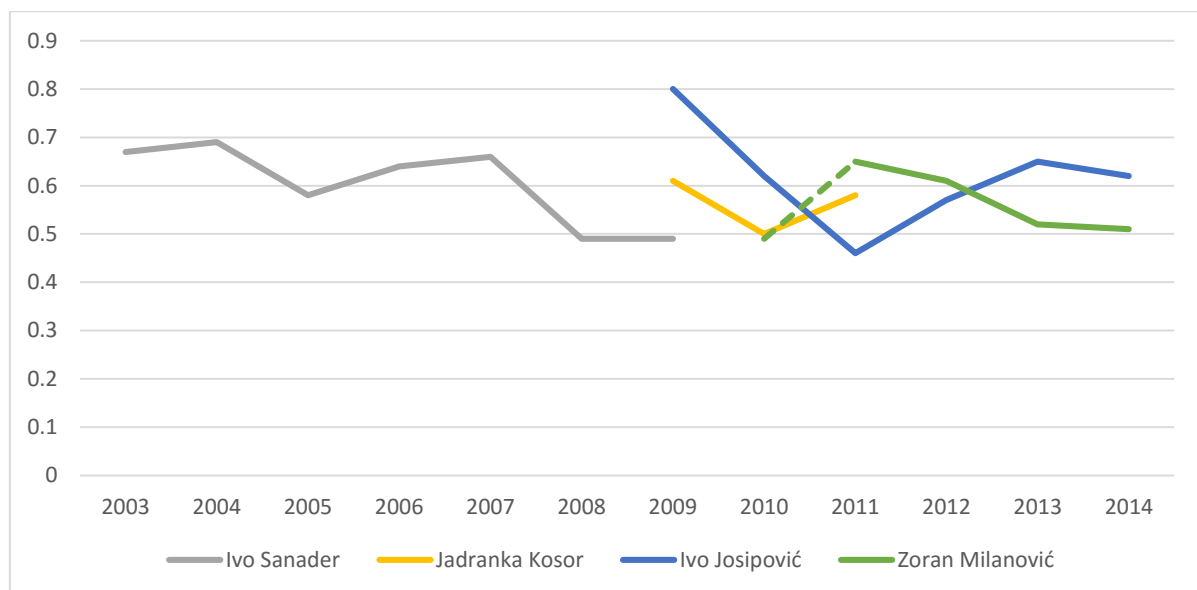
Incumbent election years

	no election year (averages)	election year (averages)
Ivica Račan	.55	.54
Stipe Mesić	.55	.54
Ivo Sanader	.51	.58
Jadranka Kosor	.51	.51
Ivo Josipović	.59	.67
Zoran Milanović	.54	.

The sentiment values show that while Ivica Račan, Stipe Mesić and Jadranka Kosor have nearly the same values in election years as in non-election years, Ivo Sanader and Ivo Josipović both have a significantly higher rating in the election years that they entered as office-holders. Zoran Milanović's first election year as an incumbent was 2015 and is therefore beyond the scope of this analysis.

With these promising aggregated results, the next step is to analyse how politicians fared in the individual newspapers. Jutarnji List, owned by Sanader's and Josipović's ally Ninoslav Pavić, is of special interest here particularly due to the degree to which the sentiment data support the patterns derived from the interviews regarding Pavić's changing loyalties towards outgoing and incoming PMs.

6.3.1.1.2. Reporting index in Jutarnji List



The narratives from the aggregated results are broadly confirmed, especially the rising trend for Ivo Sanader in 2006 and 2007 (based exclusively on articles by Ninoslav Pavić's right-hand man, Davor Butković), the improvement in Milanović's rating as leader of the opposition followed by his decline after taking executive office and Josipović's upward curve in 2013, maintaining his position as the highest-rated politician in Jutarnji List. Confirming the expectations from the interviews, this data indicates that Milanović did not receive support from Jutarnji List for his 2012 VAT reduction.

It speaks for the reliability of the overall approach that the three measurements which contradict the interview data are also based on a particularly low number of observations per year. This relates to Ivo Josipović's sudden drop in 2011, supported by only 52 observations, Zoran Milanović's outlier in 2010 with only 41 observations and Jadranka Kosor's steep rise in 2011 to a more-than-solid rating of .6, based on 36 observations.

In such cases some reassurance can be taken from the consistency of author-based reporting. When singling out reporting on Jadranka Kosor by Jutarnji List's flagship commentators, Davor Butković and Jelena Lovrić, the data for 2009 and 2010 (124 and 156 observations respectively) makes a solid impression, showing internal and external consistency with the interview data.

Reporting index for Jadranka Kosor

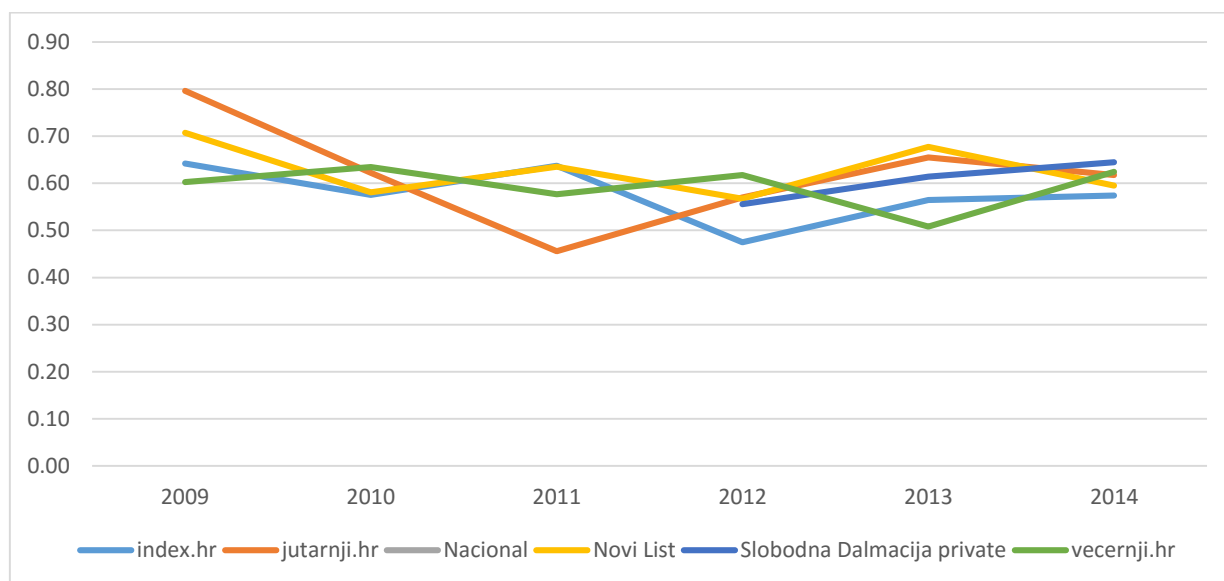
	2009	2010
Davor Butković	.48	.41
Jelena Lovrić	.59	.55

Again, this data supports the narrative based on the interviews (and Kosor's crashing popularity polls cited in chapter four) that Jadranka Kosor did not receive EPH support after an initial period in office.¹⁴³

One of the major goals of this chapter is to measure the support of the media-capture hypothesis regarding the collusion of Ivo Josipović and Ivo Sanader with Ninoslav Pavić. Again, the first step is to disaggregate the data into individual media outlets.

¹⁴³ Unfortunately the data is not rich enough to trace the reporting by month, in order, for instance, to test the extent to which Kosor's limitation of the public broadcaster's advertisement time was rewarded with positive reporting in the private media.

6.3.1.1.3. Ivo Josipović disaggregated according to media outlets



The media-outlet curves showing levels of media support rising into the presidential election year 2014 broadly confirm the interview data:¹⁴⁴ while this trend is predictably weaker with index.hr (and at a predictably low level), the increase is comparatively strong in Večernji List. A decreasing trend is only visible for Novi List, a broadly independent newspaper, and Jutarnji List, where Josipović's levels of support began, and ended, very high.

These trends are based on several hundreds of observations suggesting a reliable outcome. Slobodna Dalmacija's index rise in 2014 is backed with an observation count of 107, helped by a comparatively homogenous author structure for the year. Lastly, the three newspapers mentioning Josipović most favourably are those reported to be especially close to him in the interviews: the two EPH papers Jutarnji List and Slobodna Dalmacija, and Večernji List.

The somewhat unexpected decline of Jutarnji's reporting index in 2014 warrants some closer investigation. Broken down into the most active authors it becomes obvious that a large part of the downward trend is based on shorter, less important news snippets, with the anonymous byline "Portal

¹⁴⁴ The year 2014 has been covered only partially as data collection was completed in September. While articles covering three quarters of the year can provide a reasonably accurate impression of developments, the last quarter coincided with the hot phase of the presidential election campaign which, if the hypothesis of media capture is borne out, would be likely to have skewed results upwards.

Jutarnji". Again, observations arranged by author remain stable and show the expected increase in observations by Davor Butković, whom many interviewees saw as the spokesman for Ninoslav Pavić's political plans.

Reporting index for Ivo Josipović

	2013	2014
Portal Jutarnji	.86	.42
Hina	.73	.53
Davor Butković	.64	.80
Jelena Lovrić	.63	.59

Ivo Josipović's coverage in Jutarnji List shows an unexpectedly deep dip in 2011. This dip coincides with only 114 observations distributed over more than 20 authors, representing small numbers of observations per author (for instance only one observation by Davor Butković in 2011) and hence unreliable results.¹⁴⁵

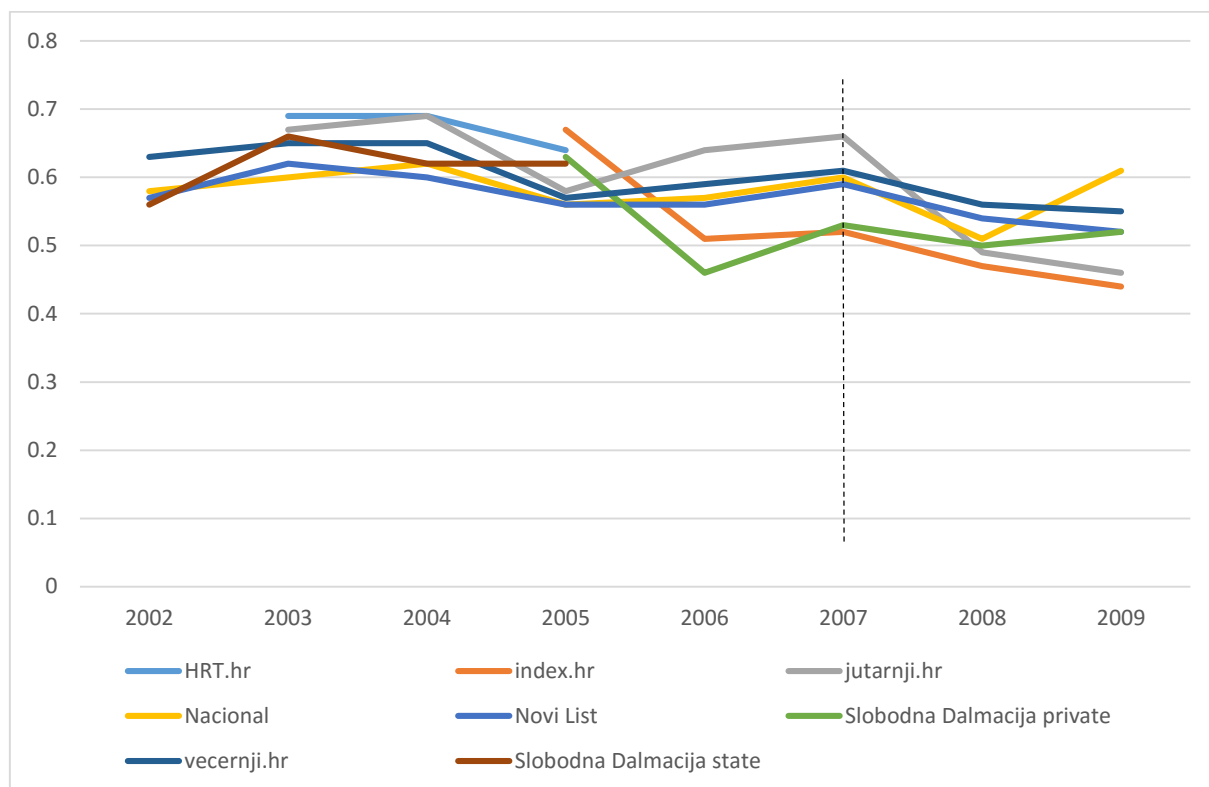
Interestingly, in contrast to Jadranka Kosor, where the sentiment data is consistent with poll data (see section 4.2.2.), the broad increase in support depicted above is independent of what polls were measuring at the time.¹⁴⁶ While Josipović's poll rating remained stable at a high level (with about 50% of respondents supporting him for president), the dynamic was clearly in favour of his main opponent Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, who steadily caught up from 17.4% in January (SRNA, 2014) to 28.4% in March (HRT vijesti, 2014) and rising to 40.8% in September (Lovrić, 2014), eventually taking victory in the second round of elections in January 2015.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ The observations for the surrounding years number 344 for 2010, 225 for 2012, 216 for 2013 and 185 for 2014.

¹⁴⁶ Even though research on this relationship is inconclusive, a majority of scholars support the hypothesis that opinion polls influence journalistic reporting to some degree. One study by Dobek-Ostrowska and Łódzki (2008) found for Poland that journalists displayed a positive bias towards parties and politicians with a good public standing. While Brettschneider (1996) sees journalists making use of opinion polls to forecast election results, Aalberg and Van Aelst (2012) argue that opinion polls might indirectly impact on the political process given that influential actors (including journalists) believe that they have a public effect. Also Atkin and Gaudio (1984) argue that journalistic assessment of a candidate's strengths is based largely on poll findings.

¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately, there is not sufficient data for reliable sentiment trends for Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović.

6.3.1.1.4. Ivo Sanader disaggregated according to media outlets



With Sanader as the most frequently mentioned politician, even the otherwise scarce data from Jutarnji List is thick enough to allow some sound conclusions. The indices disaggregated according to media outlets preserve the clear pattern showing a sudden improvement in Sanader's figures in the 2007 election year, especially in EPH publications, i.e. Slobodna Dalmacija¹⁴⁸ and Jutarnji List.

Jutarnji List (consisting exclusively of observations from articles by Butković, 150 on Sanader in 2007) leads the pack with a score close to .7, which is usually only reached by presidents. The surge in 2007 also reflects the possible political effects of the 2007 reduction in newspaper VAT from which all newspaper media benefited (except index.hr).

As is the case with Ivo Josipović, public opinion neither reflects nor precedes this increase in positive reporting. Sanader had been seen as a successful and competent PM since taking office at the end of

¹⁴⁸ Slobodna Dalmacija's sentiment is based on 155 observations.

2003. By December 2006, however, he and the HDZ came under increasing pressure. Firstly, the HDZ, which had led the polls for a long time, lost ground to the SDP, which levelled up by the end of 2006 (Daskalović, 2007a). During 2007 Sanader lost increasing ground to the new and instantly popular chairman of the SDP, Zoran Milanović, elected in June. By the July polls Milanović was already topping the list of most positive politicians; by October, for the first time, a public majority was supporting a change in government (Daskalović, 2007b). At the same time, Sanader's ratings as most popular PM candidate, a status he had held convincingly until early 2007, melted away. Sanader now regularly topped the list of the most negatively-viewed politicians (33.6%) – with a 20% gap to the second-placed Vladimir Šeks (HDZ) (Bartolović, 2007). This amounts to a major disconnect between the surge in positive reporting (in this case supported by a strong sentiment data base) and the unfavourable poll development.

Some interviewees advanced the hypothesis that Sanader had widespread control over the media in his second term (2008-2009). This is not supported by the data, even though the incumbent election support is still visible for Ivo Sanader and even more dramatic for Ivo Josipović.

6.3.1.2. Who organizes media capture?

A further important question aims to clarify the identity of those organizing media capture. Editors-in-chief have been frequently mentioned as playing a key role in either organizing and orchestrating media capture or shielding journalists from the wishes and pressures emanating from the management. While journalists were quite open about pressure from their superiors, the response rate of editors-in-chief, in particular those who reportedly passed political pressures down to journalist level, was very low. A question potentially clarifying the nature of media capture therefore addresses developments of sentiment data across editors-in-chief who were reportedly undermining media independence and those who were reportedly protecting it.

6.3.1.2.1. Novi List

In the empirical chapter the hypothesis is advanced that while after the take-over of Novi List by Sanader's crony, Robert Ježić, the newspaper was increasingly pushed into silencing negative information about leading HDZ politicians, the new editor-in-chief Ivica Đikić reportedly shielded the editorial offices from those pressures. This is essentially confirmed by the sentiment data, showing no major change in the reporting index of Ivo Sanader during the years of Ježić's ownership 2008 and 2009. Instead, Sanader's index even dropped from 2007 (the last year under the old ownership structure) to 2008.

Ivo Sanader in Novi List

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
.57	.62	.60	.56	.56	.59	.54	.52

6.3.1.2.2. Večernji List

One further prominently cited example of an editor-in-chief influencing editorial policy is Miljenko Manjkas, Pašalić loyalist and editorial director of Večernji List in 2005-2006. Unfortunately, the data is too weak to robustly support or rebut the assertion that Ivić Pašalić exerted influence in Večernji List over time. Also the coverage of Ivo Sanader, Pašalić's bitter rival, does not show any peculiarities which would warrant such a conclusion.¹⁴⁹

Reporting index for Ivo Sanader 2003-2008

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
HRT.hr	.69	.69	.64	.	.	.
index.hr	.68	.68	.67	.51	.52	.47
jutarnji.hr	.67	.69	.58	.64	.66	.49
Nacional	.6	.62	.56	.57	.6	.51
Novi List	.62	.6	.56	.56	.59	.54
Slobodna Dalmacija	.66	.62	.63	.46	.53	.5
vecernji.hr	.65	.65	.57	.59	.61	.56

¹⁴⁹ While Sanader's reporting index decreased during 2005 and 2006 in Večernji List, a similar trend can be observed in most other news outlets.

6.3.1.3. Capture of public media

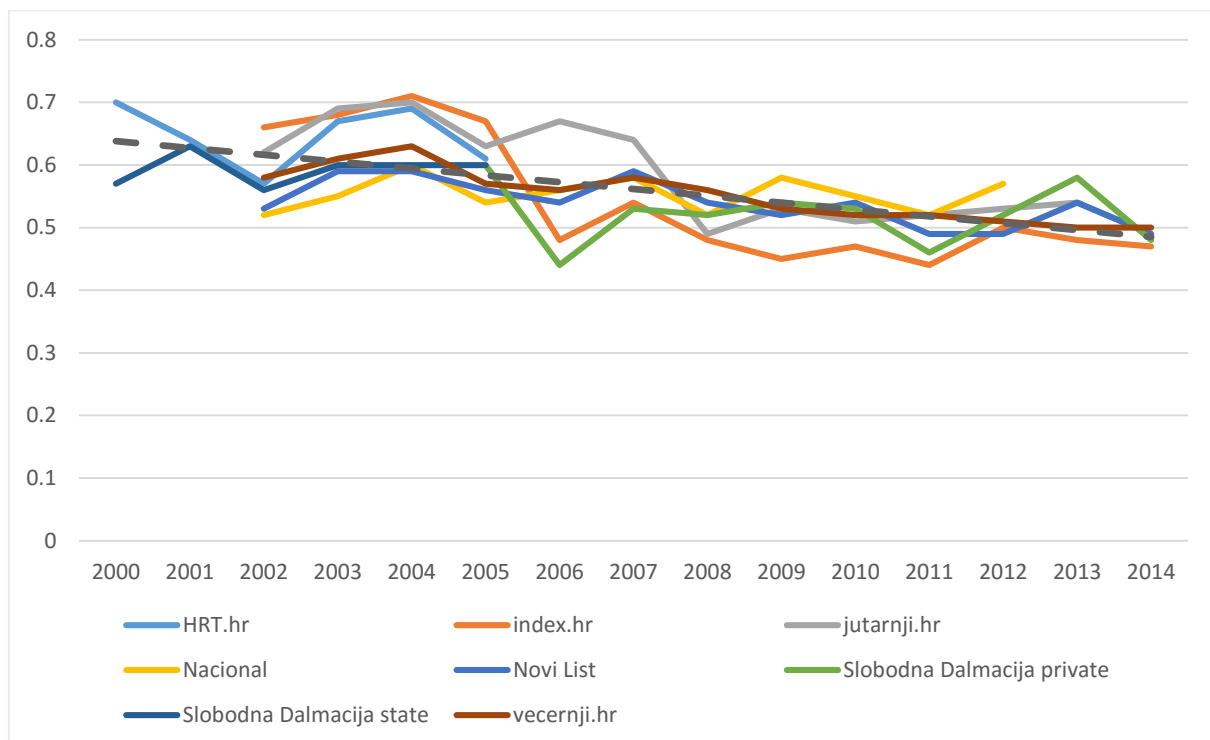
Similarly, it is important in a principal-agent sense whether changes in newspaper ownership lead to a difference in reporting. It was repeatedly suggested in the interviews that type of individual publisher (such as Ninoslav Pavić or Robert Ježić below) and the ownership form (state/ private) have a great deal of influence over the extent to which political pressures reach journalists. Interesting in this context is therefore the question of whether there is evidence that supports principal-agent relationships between politicians and public/ state media.

A first global look at the pooled sentiment data broken down according to individual media sources shows a higher level of positive reporting in the public broadcaster HRT and Slobodna Dalmacija during the time it was state-owned. Confirming the relationship between state ownership and positive reporting, Slobodna Dalmacija's pooled sentiment levels drop to 51.2% during the period of private ownership. In contrast, Index.hr, the only internet-based medium without a paper version, is the most critical media outlet and the only one with a majority of negative sentiment ascriptions.

6.3.1.3.1. Positive reporting according to source

	Positive	Negative
HRT.hr	65.40%	34.60%
Slobodna Dalmacija state	58.80%	41.20%
Nacional	55.00%	45.00%
Novi List	53.70%	46.30%
vecernji.hr	52.50%	47.50%
jutarnji.hr	52.30%	47.70%
Slobodna Dalmacija private	51.20%	48.80%
index.hr	48.20%	51.80%

However, this striking difference disappears when controlling for a long-term trend of ever-decreasing sentiment values over time, a phenomenon which could be ascribed to increasing sensationalism as a consequence of profitability pressures since the privatization and marketization of media in the early 2000s. This interpretation is supported by the sharp drop in positive reporting by Slobodna Dalmacija after it was privatized in 2005.

Aggregated reporting trend across media sources 2000-2014¹⁵⁰

In light of this qualification, the above figures for state-owned media need to be re-interpreted to take account of this decrease in positive reporting over time. As a consequence of the limited availability of HRT's media archive (1999-2005) and the privatization of Slobodna Dalmacija in August 2005, data on media in state ownership is only available for the first half of the 2000s. When comparing sentiment by source and controlling for the factor time, the picture changes considerably and state-owned Slobodna Dalmacija ends up below the average of 60.99%.

¹⁵⁰ It is important to mention that the data is not primarily suited to helping identify general trends of sensationalism because it has been pre-selected to reflect a particular group of politicians, who also appear and disappear over time, introducing a moving target element.

Reporting according to media outlet between 1999 - 2005

	Positive	Negative
index.hr	67.70%	32.30%
jutarnji.hr	66.30%	33.70%
HRT.hr	65.40%	34.60%
Average (by media)	60.99%	39.01%
Slobodna Dalmacija private ¹⁵¹	59.50%	40.50%
vecernji.hr	59.30%	40.70%
Slobodna Dalmacija state	58.80%	41.20%
Novi List	56.60%	43.40%
Nacional	54.30%	45.70%

6.3.1.3.2. The impact of state ownership on media reporting

In two concrete cases from the interview data the question arose as to the extent to which a change in media ownership might have resulted in a change in reporting. In the first case of Slobodna Dalmacija, two questions were especially relevant: (1) to what extent did Slobodna Dalmacija's state ownership result in a partisan bias in favour of government politicians, and (2) are there indications for a possible adaptation or a change of reporting after the HDZ government took office in early 2004?

Ivo Sanader and Ivica Račan in state-owned Slobodna Dalmacija

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Ivica Račan	.58	.72	.57	.48		
Ivo Sanader			.56	.66	.62	.62

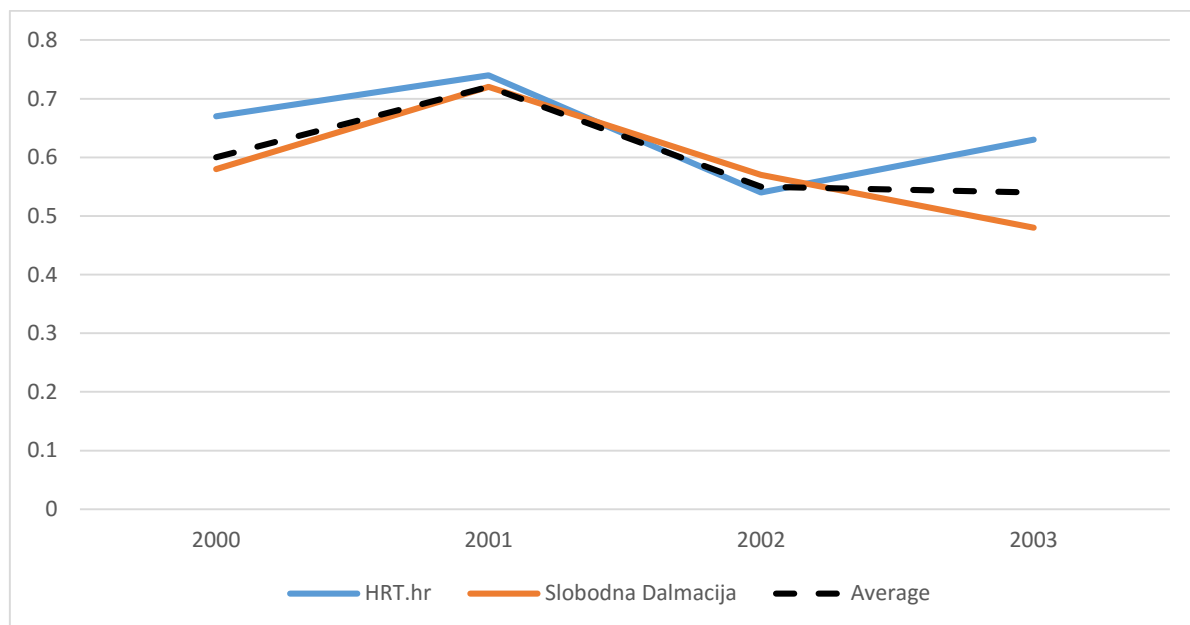
Broken down to reflect the successive PMs Ivica Račan and Ivo Sanader, the index of Slobodna Dalmacija in state ownership supports the interview data, according to which harsh criticism of the government was possible during Račan's time. PM Račan values were high at the outset but declined sharply in line with other (private) media sources. At the same time, however, Ivo Sanader's positive scores did not change much when he took over the cabinet in 2004. This could reflect the political flexibility of the editorial structure (which had not changed much between Račan and Sanader). Both

¹⁵¹ Data base: August–December 2005.

trends are significant and their gradual dynamics point to self-censorship rather than direct executive influence on the media's reporting.

In order to make more general assessments of the state-owned media, it is interesting to compare reporting dynamics with the other state-owned media outlet in the sample, the public broadcaster.

Coverage of PM Račan in the state owned media



Interpreting the development from a perspective of political servitude, the editorial office at HRT.hr made a slightly different calculation. Instead of appeasing one and “dropping” the other, the sentiment values for HRT.hr indicate that editors chose to simply appease both the PM, whose political fate was difficult to predict, and the new leader of the opposition. While Slobodna Dalmacija continues the downward trend on Račan into the election year 2003, thus more or less following the average reporting trend (excluding HRT and Slobodna Dalmacija), HRT in contrast shows a steep increase in positive reporting in 2003.

At the same time, as seen above, reporting on the leader of the opposition, Ivo Sanader, also displays an increase between 2002 (.46) and 2003 (.69). This result therefore does not support the hypothe-

sis of direct state intervention in the media (in which case Sanader's rating would have remained lower in the election year) but rather points to adaptive behaviour on the part of the public broadcaster, which was "keeping its options open".

6.3.1.4. The role of so-called "untouchables"

"Untouchables" were repeatedly described as having played a central role in Ivo Sanader's strategy to capture Business.hr and shut down Feral Tribune. According to the interviews the danger they posed, not only for journalists' employment but also for the entire financial base of newspapers, is reflected in an almost total silence with respect to these individuals. Many journalists pointed to Ivića Todorić as one of the most dangerous people to even lightly criticize, due to his status as tycoon and his control over financial means, which could potentially ruin any newspaper.

While this phenomenon was particularly important during the Sanader years, it is still of relevance today. Some journalists go as far as saying that press freedom in Croatia can be measured by the level of criticism towards Todorić (Šimičević, 2015). As the quantitative text analysis below demonstrates, if this were the case, not a single media organ - except one, index.hr - could be referred to as "free".

From the interviews two types of "untouchables" can be made out. Firstly, those who wield strong influence over one or more newspapers, such as Ivić Pašalić and Miroslav Kutle and, secondly, those who are very influential in all print media due to the economic threat they pose. Based on the interviews, this is especially true in the case of Ivića Todorić and Ninoslav Pavić.

Using the frequency of mentions as an indicator (expressed as a share of the overall number of observations), the existence of both categories of "untouchables" can be confirmed by the data.

Weighted mentions

	Overall mentions (in % of all observations)
Ivo Sanader	38.89
Zoran Milanović	7.26
Average (all politicians)	6.25
Ivica Račan	4.30
Ivić Pašalić	.87
Miroslav Kutle	.35
Ivica Todorić	.20
Ninoslav Pavić	.04

Even when these raw mentions are roughly controlled for by the amount of time politicians have been active, the number of scandals they have been associated with and the level of financial and political influence these individuals wield, their coverage in relation to the average is extremely low.

Ninoslav Pavić, was mentioned only 52 times (.04%) - in altogether 34,407 news articles. In his own paper Jutarnji List his name was dropped only three times, in Večernji List never.

Miroslav Kutle was mentioned 405 times (.35%)¹⁵² in all newspapers. The narrative that Kutle violently enforced his secret cartel deal with Ninoslav Pavić is supported by a steep decline of mentions after Pavić takes over Slobodna Dalmacija in 2005 (77 observations during the six years of Slobodna Dalmacija's state ownership and 18 in the following ten years under Pavić (.02%). In Pavić's own Jutarnji List Kutle features only eight times over a period of thirteen years (.05%). Even when Kutle was convicted 2010, his name was mentioned only 103 times in the filtered text body.

Ivica Todorić was also mentioned disproportionately rarely, only 235 times in total, or 0.2% of all observations by all media sources throughout the entire time span. His name comes up most often (141 times) in the renegade online media index.hr (.71%), 41 times in the critical leftist newspaper Novi List (.14%), and significantly less frequently in mainstream media such as Jutarnji List (eight times, .05%), 15 times in Slobodna Dalmacija¹⁵³ (.11%) and 28 times (.11%) in Večernji List.

¹⁵² When mentioned together with certain media, percentages indicate the share of occurrence in those sources.

¹⁵³ All mentions of Todorić were made during Pavić's ownership.

An analysis of Todorčić's sentiment values supports the statement quoted earlier which linked reporting on the tycoon to a test of press freedom. The only media with a relatively critical stance towards Todorčić is index.hr.

Reporting index of Todorčić in four media outlets¹⁵⁴

Source	sentiment	mentions
index.hr	.55	141
Novi List	.62	40
Slobodna Dalmacija	(.67)	15
Večernji List	(.93)	28

Ivić Pašalić, a serious contender for the HDZ presidency until 2002, was, given his public role, very rarely mentioned in the sample (1020 mentions altogether; .87% of all observations) during the 14 year period in the mainstream media Večernji List (177, .69%) and Jutarnji List (36, .23%). Pašalić was most frequently mentioned in Nacional (305, 2.95%), the political weekly close to former president Stipe Mesić, which had been in an open media war with Pašalić's hardliners. The second-highest number of mentions could be found in Novi List, the critical regional newspaper (.92%), which during Tudjman's reign already had a special status in the Croatian media scene, given its strong rooting in the opposition stronghold of Rijeka.

6.4. Summary of the reliability assessment

Sentiment analysis yielded interesting results in testing hypotheses relating to politicians, parties and media outlets and based on expectations derived from the interviews. In the context of its application here, the quantitative data reflect realities in the media market derived from the interviews and thereby demonstrate both the general validity and the reliability of the approach. To summarise, these episodes consist of the following:

¹⁵⁴ Given small numbers of observation in Slobodna Dalmacija and Večernji List, brackets indicate possible reliability problems.

- The reporting indices confirm the media capture by Ivo Sanader and Ivo Josipović reflected in increased levels of positive reporting in their incumbent election years, validated by the contradictory poll data.
- Reporting index levels reflect the actual popularity of politicians at the time as measured by poll data. Jadranka Kosor's lack of popularity, for instance, is correctly reflected in the data, with sentiment levels at or below .5.
- Newspaper reporting matches the predictions from the interviews. Index.hr is measured consistently as the most critical media outlet.
- Specific expectations, for instance the reporting of Davor Butković in the interests of Ninoslav Pavić, as mentioned in the interviews, have been confirmed. Butković's reporting index on Ivo Sanader for the years 2006 and 2007, for instance, is at a "presidential level" of .7. In a similar vein, the special attention Sanader received in the election year 2007 can be read as confirmation of the hypothesis that the VAT reduction shortly before the parliamentary elections induced publishers to support Ivo Sanader.
- The data supports the existence of "untouchables" with respect to the widespread silencing of particularly influential individuals.

6.4.2. Limitations of method and data

Given that in modern editorial offices journalists, editors and political forces with diverging interests influence media output, the limitations of quantitative text analysis in its reduction of reporting to a single number are obvious. Also, aware readers compare the different segments of newspapers, especially the title (often in contrast to the content of the related article), something that is not possible in quantitative text analysis.

Moreover, as can be seen from the interviews, some papers are subject to complex political dynamics, through the simultaneous influence of several often-contradictory voices. As discussed in chapter four, Slobodna Dalmacija, for instance, showed clear signs of an enduring influence of former HDZ

hardliner Miroslav Kutle but at the same time had a liberal owner (Ninoslav Pavić) and leftist authors with regular columns. Obviously it is impossible to capture such stark contradictions in a single aggregated value. This has an important implication for further applications of this method, namely that a focus on author-level data – requiring well-structured online archives – can lead to revealing results.

As this chapter showed, however, it is possible to illustrate larger macro trends – as long as the patterns identified are substantiated with qualitative research, in order to specify temporal and institutional contexts, and the mechanisms to make sense of them.

Two major problems affected the quality of the data. First and foremost, data collection did not always yield consistent results. While the data structure of newspapers such as Novi List, with its good online archive, resulted in a text body that produced a consistently thick article base, other papers such as Jutarnji List and Slobodna Dalmacija, for a number of reasons going back to the technical infrastructure, yielded inconsistent - and in Jutarnji List's case small - text bases for certain years. This unfortunately led to limitations in testing hypotheses related to EPH and Ninoslav Pavić.

The claim, for instance, that Pavić gave Račan preferential treatment until the parliamentary elections cannot unfortunately be further substantiated with data since Jutarnji List's online archive offers only a very small number of texts covering the early years. In the period between 2003 and 2010 the Jutarnji archive is made up almost exclusively of texts by Davor Butković and Jelena Lovrić. Afterwards the author structure becomes more heterogeneous but remains limited in terms of observations per year. This results in a fragmentation of observations among a larger number of authors and therefore to a further loss of validity and reliability.

6.5. Conclusions

This chapter has analysed sentiment data generated from a large number of newspaper articles in an effort to test a novel approach to measure levels of media criticism of politicians as an indicator of

the congruence of agent-politicians and supervisor-publishers. The combination of qualitative and quantitative research strategies provides especially reliable data through effective triangulation and as such has confirmed the shifts between particularism and universalism as laid out in the interview-based chapters.

In addition to the interview data largely supported by the sentiment data, the analysis reveals an interesting pattern in terms of (1) a general trend showing the decreasing popularity of politicians in media reporting and (2) a deviation from this pattern in the cases of Ivo Sanader and Ivo Josipović, who experienced unusually favourable coverage in their incumbent election years, supporting the narrative of the interviews that these two politicians engaged in widespread collusion, especially with EPH. From a theoretical perspective, this systematic positive reporting in an election year against a common decreasing trend shows that levels of horizontal accountability can be measured as limitations in the variation of the criticism of control institutions, as theorized in chapter 2 (section 2.3.1.).

Having empirically established the shifts between particularism and universalism that took place between 2000 and 2014, the next chapter connects to these shifts by empirically applying the explanatory approach developed in the introduction. Based on principal-agent theory, I analyse party leaders' paths to power and the levels of rooting and contestation in order to provide a more complete account for media capture and collusion than the discussion of traditional drivers above has produced.

7. What motivated the shifts between particularism and universalism?

“I can say from experience: whoever organizes the party convention will win”

Josip Manolić, co-founder of the HDZ and former Prime Minister (Rašeta, 2009)

7.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide an explanation for the shifts in particularism, which, as the empirical chapters show, can be accounted for only to some extent by “traditional” drivers of democracy such as Europeanization and inter-party competition.

This chapter therefore provides an empirical application of the concept of intra-party dynamics developed in the introduction. The analysis is based on the rules of intra-party accountability and focuses especially on the de-facto institutionalization of these de-jure rules. Organized according to levels of rooting, the discussion lays out the position of Croatia’s prime ministers within their respective parties, contextualized in their internal paths to power and the contestation they encountered, their individual responses and their success in silencing internal competition. The last section summarizes the findings and connects them to politicians’ behaviour towards the media.

7.2. Summary of the argument

The chapter addresses the question of how patterns of internal party competition impacted on the party presidents’ position to collude with media publishers. I present here an inductive argument suggesting a strong causal link which can only be conjectured at this stage due to the relative paucity of cases and the possible influence of path dependency. I suggest that in addition to the drivers singled out earlier, internal party dynamics are likely to have played a key role in bringing about the shifts between particularism and universalism that I have explained earlier.

Following the three-step structure laid out in the introduction, I break down these intra-party dynamics into (1) *rootedness*, (2) the level of *contestation* of politicians and (3) the *institutionalization of rules* regulating party-internal competition.

Rootedness affects the incentives of party leaders, especially as regards their decision to look for publishers' support in securing their leadership. The concept focuses on the process of how politicians acquired power within their parties and looks at the history of whether they acquired the necessary support networks to do so. Empirically, I expect that rootedness can be detected in the paths taken by politicians to internal power. Indicators for whether principals are more or less rooted can be found in (1) the degree to which internal contestation is ideological/ programmatic and (2) the degree to which party leaders allowed or effected a decentralization of internal decision structures.

Contestation influences the incentives of publishers to cooperate with party leaders, given that only when politicians can control party-internal attacks do they signal credible access to the spoils that publishers are interested in in return for their editorial support. Ivica Račan, who had been a member of the LCC for decades before being elected party leader, was deeply rooted, so he had the support networks necessary to tolerate internal competition. He used the media not to safeguard his position as party leader but in a one-off tussle with president Stipe Mesić.

Ivo Sanader, Jadranka Kosor and Zoran Milanović, all politicians who were weakly rooted, needed the support of Ninoslav Pavić and his publications in their efforts to ex-post consolidate their leadership positions. Jadranka Kosor did not manage to limit or channel contestation in a way that attracted support from Ninoslav Pavić. Empirical evidence for rootedness and contestation will be looked for in the areas of party-internal accountability identified in the introduction: competitive leadership selection, free and fair leadership elections, selection rules for executive deputies, fixed term limits, impeachment procedures, and selection rules for arbitration court members.

Thirdly, it will be argued that the choice for formal or informal particularism is influenced by the mode of intra-party competition and the institutionalization of rules in particular.

Sanader made wide use of informal rules in acquiring power in the HDZ. With the opposing hardliner faction being eliminated from the party right from the beginning of his mandate onwards, he was not only uncontested but also managed to induce fear in everyone who dared to question his leadership. Sanader circumvented formal rules to achieve this goal, for instance by rigging internal elections. This way of acquiring and ex-post consolidating his party leadership was later reproduced in his approach to control of the media. In a similar vein I argue that Zoran Milanović reproduced the conditions he encountered when he became president of the SDP. Being confronted with a comparatively strong set of formal rules, the Social Democrat PM made comparatively little use of informal rules in eliminating contestation.

7.3. Rootedness relaxes the need for media control

7.3.1. Summary

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, the politicians who had to work their way up through their own parties passed internal checks and were therefore less likely to succumb to temptation. Since Ivica Račan was deeply rooted, the internal contestation he met revolved primarily around questions of ideology. As demonstrated in the empirical chapter, Račan used the media not primarily to safeguard his position as party leader but as part of his differences with the president.

This section is based on evidence that Račan was rooted within the party and that the quality of the competition for his position did not preclude strong leadership on his part. He (1) slowly worked his way up to a position of power within the party, (2) he was opposed less over his authority than along ideological fault lines. Despite the constant and open criticism Račan endured, he was (3) in control of the party and especially its most important body, the presidency. This is why (4) he was able to allow decentralization of the party's decision-making bodies and factions. Therefore, (5) Račan had no urgent need to make use of the EPH machinery and thus no interest in what Ninoslav Pavić could potentially have offered.

7.3.2. The way Račan acquired party leadership

Ivica Račan was a professional politician who joined the socialist party at age 16 and became a politician in 1972 at age 29. In the mid-eighties he was elected as a member of the presidency of the central committee of the LCC – the most important body in the Socialist party of Croatia. In December 1989 he headed a reformist faction and after some infighting with orthodox socialists he was elected the new party leader, exchanging the entire leadership structure and challenging Slobodan Milošević's usurpation of the Yugoslav federal presidency (Pickering & Baskin, 2008). In 1990 the new party leadership announced multi-party elections and quietly handed over power to the winning HDZ.

7.3.3. Contestation was not personal but over ideological questions

At the same time, however, the formerly monolithic LCC was about to undergo big structural changes. On top of the radical fall-off in party membership (from originally 298,000 to about 46,000 (Goati, 1991)) the new LCC-SDP leadership sought to purge orthodox hardliners but only succeeded in this after its disastrous electoral defeats in 1992 (5,5%) and 1995 (8,9%).

This constellation affected Račan and his party as it caused unrest among the remaining orthodox leftists, who were represented in both the party leadership and in local party organizations (Rossin, 2003a). The constellation also empowered SDP's own conservatives, whom Račan struggled to contain. Consequently the course plotted by Račan for the SDP was contested on ideological and programmatic grounds and his role was that of a moderator who had to consolidate the SDP programme by integrating the rival factions on a coherent platform.

This is best exemplified by the pressures from the HSLs, the SDP's conservative coalition partner. Facilitated by American diplomacy, the SDP had signed a coalition agreement back in 1998 with the centre-right HSLs in an effort to build a credible challenger to an HDZ that was crumbling but fiercely determined to cling on to power. The HSLs was not a natural partner of the mainly centre-left coali-

tion parties but was considered necessary because of the share of votes it could potentially take away from HDZ-dominated constituencies. The HSLs in turn felt constantly challenged to sharpen its rightist profile and to “robustly” defend its positions vis-à-vis the coalition partners. In so doing, it also strengthened the national-conservative faction within the SDP, represented by the intellectual Zdravko Tomac and his protégé, the young populist Zagreb strongman Milan Bandić.

While on the one hand, therefore, the pressure from the right catalysed Račan’s steady move towards the centre in terms of both programme and personnel and consequently stirred up protest among the party leftists, it also strengthened the party’s right on account of the party’s polarization.

Tomac, and more indirectly Milan Bandić, put Račan under constant public pressure by opposing the party president in important matters. Given his rootedness, Račan was able to moderate these tensions but at the same time contributed to an external party image of confusion and weak leadership. Tomac openly attacked Račan on numerous occasions, for instance for making decisions in the coalition triumvirate, bypassing the wider SDP leadership. In these constant criticisms he also cooperated with President Mesić (Sinovčić, 2000).

After the smaller coalition partner, IDS, had left the government in June 2001, by early 2002 the differences between the SDP and the HSLs grew insurmountable, leading to early elections in September 2002. Despite the catastrophic public image of the SDP, Tomac kept publicly criticizing Račan and even increased the severity of his attacks in the run-up to the scheduled parliamentary elections in November 2003. Račan did not stop him, even though Tomac was “actively subverting some of his party’s tactics on elections”, according to American ambassador Rossin:

“We and many in the media thought Tomac had finally crossed the line when, as a guest at the annual convention of the moderate opposition party Democratic Center (DC), he was quoted as saying he would support DC president Mate Granić as a candidate for Prime Minister. However, Račan’s only response was to remark that “Tomac seems to be distancing himself from the SDP.” (Rossin, 2003b)

Tomac received support from other SDP conservatives, such as Minister of War Veterans Ivica Pančić, and from Milan Bandić, the president of the important Zagreb district organization and Tomac’s polit-

ical protégé. Račan, therefore, was meeting internal opposition, albeit mainly on ideological grounds. He was able to withstand these criticisms because, based on his support network, his party leadership was never called into question. As a consequence, Račan's leadership style was rarely confrontational. He was known for his careful approach, even with respect to his internal opponents, and it was unusual that Račan would retaliate (Daskalović, 2000).

7.3.4. Permitted contestation

Since Račan's position was contested on ideological and programmatic ground rather than his personal authority, this allowed him to open the debate instead of eliminating his critics. Račan tolerated criticism not because he was weak but because he could afford to do so without his authority being endangered. Unlike his successors, he did not require media support in the party infighting. This was a direct consequence of his rootedness in the party.

However, the public image of internal quarrels and indecisiveness¹⁵⁵ portrayed by the coalition, the SDP and Račan had further suffered from these constant open discussions. In January 2002 the American ambassador wrote in a cable to Washington that the SDP displayed an image of "intra-coalition and intra-party fractiousness" (Rossin, 2003c), which he considered as one of the major factors potentially inhibiting his success in the upcoming parliamentary elections in December 2003 (Rossin, 2003b). Paradoxically, however, this fractiousness did not make Račan a party leader without control.

On the contrary, Račan retained "a firm hold" (Rossin, 2003a) over the composition of important internal bodies such as the executive committee (the institutional predecessor of today's SDP presidency). At the party convention in November 2000, the first since assuming executive office in January, he managed to have his loyalists Tonino Picula and Gordana Sobol as new vice-presidents, simultaneously excluding Tomac and preventing Bandić from getting elected in the first place.

¹⁵⁵ As shown by a poll commissioned by the International Republican Institute (IRI) (Vjesnik, 2000).

7.3.4.1. Decentralized the party and allowed factions

This leverage was reflected in the poise with which he dealt with internal criticism. Račan could afford to tolerate dissenters, for instance, even at the party conventions, where they were allowed to openly vent their dissatisfaction with the party leadership.¹⁵⁶ Račan had also agreed to formalise the creation of internal factions in the party's statutes (SDP, 2004, para. 11).

Despite these mainly ideologically motivated types of open contestation, Račan's position as party leader was never really in danger. This acceptance, based on his early rise through the party hierarchy, allowed him to decentralise the party.

With the socialist LCC coming from a model of democratic centralism, according to which the party will was formally aggregated by bottom-up delegation, Račan gradually decentralized the organization during the 1990s, gradually increasing the autonomy of its local organizations (Čular, 2005, p. 162).

Of all parties, Račan's SDP adhered most closely to what Čular (2005, p. 137) called the "party convention model", where all central bodies were elected by the party convention, including the party president and his/ her vice-president. The party convention was the most important collective principal for electing the members of the central party bodies (Čular, 2005, p. 143). At the same time, the formal decision to disband local or district organizations, an important measure to discipline rebellious competitors and their local organizations, was decentralized from the presidency to the main committee (SDP, 2004). Consequently, towards the end of his stint in public office, Račan's SDP was one of the least centralized parties in the Croatian party system (Čular, 2005, p. 135).

¹⁵⁶ One example is the open criticism by Ian Meštrović from Zadar of the 1996 SDP party convention. He said that Ivica Račan's behaviour inflicted more damage on the Zadar SDP than the Bolševik (J. Popović, 1996). At the SDP's party convention on 2 December 2000 Jerko Zovak, a less prominent but very vociferous member of the SDP right, initiated the formation of a new faction within the SDP at the 8th party convention in December 2000. Zovak had announced this new faction in several media appearances months earlier, presenting an alternative statute for the SDP which was to democratise "the party" (Pavić, 2000) and overcome its "socialist comitization".

7.3.5. Required comparatively little media support from Pavić

In sum, through his “natural authority” as party leader and the lack of serious competition, Ivica Račan was an attractive potential partner for collusion, as shown by Pavić’s ongoing interest in keeping Račan close (see chapter four). At the same time, however, given his strong rootedness in his party, Račan had no need for direct access to the EPH papers, as party infighting would have required. As chapter four shows the interviews indicated only one case where the SDP PM had used the media – an episode in which Račan smeared a minister in Pavić’s *Globus* in a dispute with the president. At the same time the government had by no means a preferential position in EPH, as the evidence on criticism of the executive in chapter 4 has demonstrated (anonymous interviewee 2).

Moreover, there is no evidence of spoils going to Pavić. Račan did open and privatise the media market, which made institutional compensations to publishers considerably easier to organize, but this happened in a context of widely supported EU policies of media market modernization in order to end the dominance of the state as media owner (see section 5.2.4.). For instance, even though Račan was actively looking for a buyer for the state-owned *Slobodna Dalmacija*, he did not sell the high circulation paper to Pavić (as Ivo Sanader did later).

Pavić, however, eventually got the message. Taking Davor Butković’s texts as an indicator for Ninoslav Pavić’s strategic orientation (a link that many interviewees made), it becomes obvious that *Jutarnji List* distanced itself from the SDP towards the end of 2002 and turned towards the Sanader HDZ, which had more to offer to a businessman such as Pavić. EPH’s switch has to be seen as a discreet reorientation of attention, not an open confrontation to the Račan government. Indicative in this regard are Butković’s comments of 21 December 2002, one year before the parliamentary elections, titled “Seven reasons for the fall of the SDP” (Butković, 2002) and of 23 March 2003 titled “Sanader and the Americans” (Butković, 2003), where he praises Sanader’s numerous successes in gathering political support around him.

7.4. Party-internal contestation and the need to control media

Where party leaders have not been rooted, they have come to lead a party that they are not fully familiar with. They have not won local or district positions and have not worked their way up through the hierarchy, gaining support or at least respect for their intellectual wit, organizational capacity and tactical finesse in organizing majorities for their programmes. This lack of rooting can contribute to party leaders' insecurity, inducing them to consider collusive cooperation with publishers.

Publishers, as theorized in the introduction, base their preferences for collusion on party leadership contestation within the various parties. Contestation, as the following sections demonstrate, seems to be reinforced by a lack of rootedness but can also be controlled by party leaders to some extent. However, where publishers see that party leaders remain weak despite their continuous efforts to eliminate competitors, they are likely to eventually turn towards a more promising oppositional candidate.

This section discusses the non-rooted politicians Jadranka Kosor, Ivo Sanader and Zoran Milanović and in particular the success with which they defended themselves against internal party rivals. As developed in the empirical chapter, publishers in the long run require partners in government who are largely uncontested within their own parties. Where they are not, they are more likely to be busy with their own fight for political survival rather than interested in pushing through potentially controversial policies.

7.4.1. Jadranka Kosor – weakly rooted and highly contested

7.4.1.1. Jadranka Kosor is appointed to party leadership

Kosor, a journalist by training, was made HDZ vice-president by Franjo Tuđman in 1995, before she was co-opted to become a member of the party's presidency. It did not help her image as a token woman when Sanader made her vice-president of the HDZ after assuming the HDZ leadership in 2002 and appointed her his deputy PM after he had won the parliamentary elections.

Clearly Kosor never had to assert her position in local and district party organizations or withstand internal elections which amounted to more than a mere rubberstamping of backroom decisions. The fact that she had stood in a popular election only once and lost – when in 2005 Sanader made her the HDZ presidential candidate against the very popular incumbent, Stipe Mesić – did not improve her image either.

Before stepping down suddenly as party president in summer 2009, Sanader tried to make sure through various statute changes that he would maintain control over the new party leadership. Consequently, Kosor's authority as party leader was very limited not only because she was gifted her leadership but also because it was apparent that she had received the position because of her reputation as a loyalist. At the hastily organized HDZ party convention, where the transition from Sanader to Kosor was to be formalized, it was entirely clear that Kosor was an emergency candidate who had to make the best of a situation that had arisen at very short notice.

The initially planned reporting party convention in 2009 was turned into an electoral one, basically improvising around the organizational difficulties and impossibilities that this ad-hoc decision had created. In a great hurry new delegates were invited, given that the old ones had not been elected by their local party organizations but only appointed as simple envoys for a reporting party convention (Božić & Ciglencečki, 2009b).¹⁵⁷ This ex-post selection of additional delegates happened in an unformalized and chaotic fashion. Even on the day of the party convention it was unclear how many delegates were present, speculations ranged from 10,000 (the estimation of former party secretary Ivan Jarnjak) to 12,000 according to Andrija Hebrang (Božić, Ciglencečki, & Roller, 2009).

The same party convention which “enthroned” Kosor also clipped her wings, following Sanader's wish to disperse the power of the presidency. The number of vice-presidents (which Sanader had earlier reduced in order to concentrate the body's decision-making on his person) was to be increased again from three to six (Božić & Ciglencečki, 2009a).

¹⁵⁷ According to the HDZ statute, envoys, unlike delegates, do not enjoy voting rights at party conventions.

In addition to the non-transparent ad-hoc selection of delegates, the six new vice-presidents were put to the vote as a single package, rather than individually, and elected in an open show of hands. The entire election procedure of the new party president and the six new vice-presidents took place in less than five minutes (Božić, Ciglencečki, & Marić, 2009). Before the president of the party convention asked who was against or was abstaining, the crowd yelled “noobody”.¹⁵⁸

7.4.1.2. Kosor fails to contain contestation

Kosor’s confirmation as dual leader of party and state executive was not promising given that she did not enjoy a strong position within the HDZ presidency. Even though denied at the time, Sanader tried to give Kosor directions from behind the scenes and his channels of influence consisted in his loyalists in the presidency, especially Luka Bebić. On one occasion, Bebić yelled at Kosor in a presidency meeting – something that had been unthinkable when Sanader was in charge (Ciglencečki, 2009). Even though both Kosor and Bebić sought to play down the incident, it showed how drastically the situation had changed.

One reason for Sanader’s efforts to steer the party from backstage certainly lay in the corruption allegations that surfaced increasingly in the media after he stepped down from office. They were also the reason for Sanader’s attempt to return to the HDZ. In early January 2010, only six months after surprisingly quitting politics, he held a press conference with a number of HDZ MPs, where he announced that his decision to withdraw had been a mistake and criticized the current party leadership under Jadranka Kosor. He also announced that he be invoking the privileges of honorary chairman, which he had had enshrined in the party statute (see below), allowing him to take part in presidency

¹⁵⁸ Journalists of the daily “Novi List” described events as follows: “Ivan Jarnjak who presided at the party convention: “Who is in favour of Jadranka Kosor becoming president?” “Everybody”, he concluded a few seconds after the delegates’ hands went into the air. “Who is abstaining?” he then asked and in the same second yelled “Nobody! Is there anybody against? No.” and his declamation was echoed by the delegates in the hall. Deputy president Darko Milinović was elected in the same way and when it was the vice-presidents’ turn, the game was clear: “Who is in favour that we elect as our vice-presidents Božidar Kalmeta, Ivan Šuker, Andrija Hebrang, Vladimir Šeks, Ivan Jarnjak and Petar Čooooooooobanković?” Jarnjak shouted and the hall answered with raised hands and shouts of approval. “Who is against or abstaining?” “Nobody!” echoed the stands” (Božić, Ciglencečki, & Marić, 2009).

meetings. Jadranka Kosor herself later described the “awkwardness” of a situation where two party presidents sat at the top of the table (HRT.hr, 2015).

The press conference came as a surprise to those not taking part in it, including Jadranka Kosor (Index.hr, 2010a). Given Sanader’s obvious motive - to take control of the HDZ again - it was not too difficult for Kosor to mobilise her forces in the presidency, especially in light of the allegations of corruption against him. Kosor moved to push the presidency to “eliminate” Ivo Sanader from the party register (see below for more detail) from party membership on 4.1.2010, only two days after his press conference (Index.hr, 2010b). Five members of the 21-strong presidency did not support Kosor (Ciglencečki, 2010b) – a safe majority for her but still a noticeable amount of opposition given the centralized and clear top-down character of the HDZ (Čular, 2005, p. 140).¹⁵⁹

Even though Kosor managed to fend off Sanader’s attempt to putsch, her authority was damaged, not only within the HDZ but also in the media, as the empirical chapter shows. Even though, as this episode demonstrates, there was no doubt that she controlled the presidency, it was clear that there was considerable opposition to her within the HDZ.

In the following months much of her energy was devoted to infighting to get rid of this internal competition. While Sanader’s supporters such as Luka Bebić and Bianca Matković were quickly sidelined¹⁶⁰, Kosor also purged entire party branches loyal to Sanader. In January 2010 Kosor disbanded the Zagreb branch of the HDZ and named her confidant Gordan Jandroković (the then minister for foreign affairs and European integration) as its new leader (Ćimić, 2010a). A few days later, at a meeting of the HDZ parliamentary group, Kosor had Željko Rošin and Mario Zubović removed (Ciglencečki, 2010a). Head of the parliamentary group and long-standing opponent of Ivo Sanader, HDZ vice-president Andrija Hebrang explained that Zubović had to go for organizing Sanader’s coup attempt. Željko Rošin was exchanged for Branko Bačić, Kosor’s senior secretary (Ciglencečki, 2010a).

¹⁵⁹ The presidency decided, with sixteen ‘yes’ votes to eliminate Sanader from the membership; three voted against (Luka Bebić, Mario Zubović and Damir Polančec) and two abstained (Bianca Matković, Petar Selem). The formal justification for Sanader’s exclusion was the “irreparable damage” he had caused to the HDZ. The statute foresees exclusion for “major violations of membership duties” (HDZ, 2012, para. 44, sen. 5)

¹⁶⁰ Bebić for instance was no longer invited to presidency meetings (Stanković, 2011).

Simultaneously Kosor had initiated a clean-hands campaign with the overarching aim of preventing another putsch from Sanader once and for all. This is suggested by three points. Firstly, according to Sanader himself, Kosor pushed Mladen Bajić to investigate the former PM the same day that he was eliminated from the HDZ membership list (Klauški, 2013).¹⁶¹ Secondly, there is evidence that Kosor was not primarily interested in fighting corruption. Damir Mihanović, former manager of a state-owned insurance company and also a central and credible whistle-blower, said in a TV interview that he had reported Sanader's illegal construction to Kosor back in 2009 – with no reaction of the PM (Stanković, 2012a). Thirdly, the connection between the clean-hands campaign and the internal purges had also been made by the American ambassador in Zagreb (Foley, 2009).

In addition to having Sanader prosecuted she also intensified her efforts to remove his followers. By September 2010, for instance, former Sanader supporter and vice-president of the HDZ, Damir Polančec had been excluded from the HDZ for “inflicting damage on the reputation” of the party. Polančec had already been suspended from all party responsibilities after he was arrested in March 2010 for allegations of embezzlement at Podravka, whose manager he had been until 2005 (portal.hr, 2010).

When 2010 Sanader's immunity as MP was lifted on 9 December, he escaped the country the same morning. He was spectacularly arrested one day later on an Austrian motorway. In 2012 the former PM was sentenced to ten years in prison for taking bribes in selling off the state oil company INA to Hungary and for abuse of position in facilitating a credit from Hypo bank to Croatia in 1994.¹⁶²

Kosor's efforts to control the party did not last as she came increasingly under fire from internal competitors, who started preparing their terrain for the party elections that were scheduled to follow a few months after the parliamentary elections in December 2011. Among them were Kosor's

¹⁶¹ The timing is confirmed in a cable from the American ambassador, who explained to Washington that Bajić had praised himself for having started to investigate Sanader and his entourage, only days after his exclusion from the party (Foley, 2010).

¹⁶² Although his conviction was confirmed in 2014 by the Supreme Court, which reduced his sentence to 8.5 years (Raić Knežević, 2014), the sentence was annulled in late 2015 by the constitutional court, which had ruled that the trial would have to be repeated because of severe formal errors.

deputy-president of the HDZ, Minister of Health, Darko Milinović, and future HDZ president Tomislav Karamarko, Minister of the Interior, who, ironically enough, had been handed his HDZ membership card from Jadranka Kosor herself in autumn 2011.¹⁶³

Consequently, from late 2010 onwards, Kosor found herself in an ongoing election campaign for the party leadership. Continuously publicly challenged and criticized by five opposing candidates, she used all means at her disposal to silence the internal competition.¹⁶⁴ In January 2011 a rival, Milan Kujundžić, was not allowed to speak at a local HDZ event in Imotski (M, 2012). As the parliamentary elections approached she also entered into a pre-electoral alliance with a local candidate in Split in order to freeze out the HDZ branch which had opposed her. At the same time, she used her domination of the HDZ presidency to place her competitors in constituencies that offered them little prospect of success at the parliamentary elections (for more details of this institution see below). Rival Tomislav Karamarko, for instance, was placed in Međimurje county, where the HDZ traditionally performed poorly (Ferić, 2011). Last-minute initiatives, such as Kosor's plan to change the HDZ-president election process from a delegative to a direct system ("one member, one vote"), were blocked by her contenders (Ciglencčki, 2011).

After the HDZ lost the parliamentary elections, securing only two thirds of the support it attracted in the elections in 2007, Vladimir Šeks, Sanader's former king-maker who had changed sides to Kosor, publicly said that Jadranka Kosor should run uncontested at the upcoming party convention in May 2012. Instead of deterring Kosor's rivals, this move provoked more open antagonism (Veljković & Puljić-Šego, 2011). Also allegations were raised of pre-election engineering of the upcoming party convention, notably concerning the dismissal of the local HDZ branches in Valpovo (Barukčić, 2012) and Osijek (PolitikaPlus, 2012).

Kosor eventually lost the race for HDZ president to Tomislav Karamarko at the party convention in May 2012. Jadranka Kosor was the first incumbent party president in the history of the HDZ to be

¹⁶³ Karamarko was one of the founding members of the HDZ in Zagreb but had left the party in 1993.

¹⁶⁴ Besides Milinović and Karamarko, Milan Kujundžić, Domagoj Milošević and Drago Prgomet also ran for HDZ president.

formally de-authorized. Less than a year later, HDZ's internal high court, led by Florijan Boras who had already acted on behalf of Ivo Sanader when excluding Ivić Pašalić and his entourage (see above), decided to exclude Jadranka Kosor, this time on behalf of the new party president, Tomislav Karamarko. The justification given was Kosor's "inactive" behaviour, which had allegedly damaged the reputation of the HDZ. Kosor's objections, questioning the legality of the judges (who according to the statute were not allowed to simultaneously hold a position in central party offices) and the legality of her indictment (which according to the statute could not be initiated by a local HDZ branch), were ignored.

7.4.1.3. Kosor tried to fight competitors but was not supported by EPH

Jadranka Kosor was clearly not rooted in the HDZ as she had inherited her public and central office from Ivo Sanader without acquiring her own support networks. Kosor had therefore an incentive to turn to Ninoslav Pavić for support and protection against inner opposition. While early in her mandate Kosor did enjoy widespread influence in EPH publications, this influence waned as her position within the party deteriorated.

December 2010 was the turning point in Kosor's further political career. Although she had finally been successful in disempowering Sanader's following within the party, by the end of 2010 the first contenders for her leadership appeared on the scene. Given her catastrophic standing within the HDZ, the unsuccessful putsch of Ivo Sanader and the constant challenging by her contenders, Kosor ceased to be a desirable partner of publishers such as Ninoslav Pavić as she was clearly in no position to control her own party, let alone dispense spoils to publishers. The evidence suggests that Pavić moved first to revoke the "special editorial rights" the HDZ PM had enjoyed earlier. Deterred by the excessive amount of opposition faced by Kosor within her party, the publisher increasingly openly opposed the PM. As described in the empirical chapter, Kosor made several efforts to repair the damaged relationship with Pavić and only turned against him later in 2011, when his criticism had become unbearable.

Mladen Bajić's initially supportive role, however, was not unconditional, as his "uncompromising investigations" served primarily to polish his own image, which had suffered due to his likely collaboration in the protection of Ivo Sanader, as the evidence in chapter five suggests. The public prosecutor's support of Kosor, therefore, proved to be poisoned, as he did go after Sanader's corruptive network but at the same time slowed down and eventually stopped the prosecution of his ally, Ninoslav Pavić. The publisher could not have continued to attack the HDZ PM had he not been protected by Bajić, who had no intention to leave the collusive duopoly with Pavić.

7.4.2. Sanader and Milanović – controlling contestation for the leadership

Both Ivo Sanader and Zoran Milanović fit the profile of politicians who acquired their party leaderships without rooting and who were therefore forced to ex-post consolidate their positions. In contrast to Jadranka Kosor, the two were successful in eliminating all potential sources of contestation from within their parties and therefore proved worthy of the support of Ninoslav Pavić. Both politicians limited the horizontal accountability of the media – to different extents and using different means. While Sanader made use of informal particularism to capture media and to collude, Milanović made use of formal particularism to sanction media for non-cooperation. This section addresses the question which follows on from this: if they were both not rooted and not contested, why then did Sanader act informally and Milanović formally?

While EU integration has already been discussed in the empirical chapter as the major reason for Sanader's push to informal behaviour, this section aims to show that Sanader and Milanović differ regarding the internal contexts within which they acquired their respective leaderships. While in the HDZ informal means such as vote rigging were acceptable, in the SDP politicians mostly stuck to formal means. The way they dealt with internal competition reflected the conditions prevailing when they acquired leadership: informal for Sanader, formal for Milanović.

7.4.2.1. Mode of acquiring power within the party

Given their quick and sudden leap to party leadership, both Sanader and Milanović were desperate to secure their positions, but this happened in two fundamentally different ways: Sanader had to assert himself in a context where formal rules were little institutionalized and informal rules – or actual behaviour, which I use synonymously – could be formalized with little cost. Milanović, on the other hand, was elected in an environment with a higher degree of institutionalization of formal inner-party rules.

7.4.2.1.1. Sanader acquires party leadership after existential infighting

While electoral defeat according to Janda is “the mother of party change” (1990, p. 5), the HDZ changed its leadership and modernized programmatically but still retained a level of internal democracy that was lower than average when compared with the rest of the Croatian party system (Čular, 2005).

After the Tudjman HDZ had been de-authorized and the Račan government had taken over, the clashes between the two dominant HDZ factions, the hardliners around Ivić Pašalić and the moderate “techno-managers”, began to resolve themselves with the election of the new party leader. Pašalić was one of the main figures of the Tudjman HDZ of the 1990s, representing corrupt deals and an authoritarian understanding of power based on informal control of mainstream media (through the Grupo cartel, see empirical chapter) and secret-service organizations close to the military and the ministry of defence.

Sanader’s eventual victory against Pašalić can be traced back to the wily organizational skills of Vladimir Šeks, one of the authors of the Croatian constitution. Šeks managed to get elected as interim party president in an internal party coup in January 2000, only a few days after Tudjman’s death, and he used his new powers to influence the composition of delegates at the upcoming 5th party conven-

tion in March, when a permanent president was to be elected.¹⁶⁵ Since Šeks himself was not acceptable to the majority of the party, he supported the new and largely unknown candidate of a group of pragmatics, Ivo Sanader, who was eventually elected the new party president. Pašalić's hardliner faction, however, still remained influential and eager to take back the party leadership.

On the 7th party convention in 2002, after one year in central office, Sanader carried out another coup by barring Pašalić loyalists from the organizational committee of the event. Intimidating-looking bouncers at the Zagreb party convention, controlled by Sanader's ally Branimir Glavaš, not only made sure that only "desirable" delegates entered the facilities but also created an atmosphere which was so terrifying that it did not compare with anything that happened during Tudjman's times (Đuretek, 2002).

Krešimir Alerić, then deputy senior secretary of the HDZ and a Pašalić ally, stated in an interview that this included warning the responsible Joso Škara that they would "kill his children" if he did not sign off a "revised" list of delegates for the party convention (Hedl, 2002). Milivoj Ugrinić, who had participated in the party-internal electoral process, said four years later in an interview: "It is true that votes were stolen at the 7th party convention. We counted the votes three times until the morning and each time there was a different result" (Rogoznica, 2006). Ivan Drmić admitted in 2006 that, on Sanader's orders and with knowledge of Vladimir Šeks, he had transferred 300 votes from Pašalić to Sanader, who officially won by a margin of less than a hundred votes (Bartolović, 2006).¹⁶⁶

The international community turned a blind eye to these events since Sanader was widely perceived to be the lesser evil, given Pašalić's disastrous track record. Sanader got rid of Pašalić's following by introducing in the statute "elimination from the party register", a procedure for sanctioning mem-

¹⁶⁵ Šeks tricked Pašalić by touring HDZ grass root organizations and thereby influencing the composition of delegates, violating an informal agreement the two had made earlier that the composition of the party convention would remain the same, which would have favoured Ivić Pašalić (Malenica, 2000b).

¹⁶⁶ There are contradictory views of the events surrounding the 7th party convention in March 2002, varying in line with affiliation to the networks of Sanader and Pašalić. Even though Drmić had a clear motive for inflicting damage on Ivo Sanader at the time (given his membership to circles around Branimir Glavaš, who had been pushed out of the HDZ by Sanader), his opinion supports the dominant narrative of the events surrounding the 7th party convention espoused by most media observers.

bers that did not foresee the right of formal objection or an orderly arbitration process. The most restrictive rule in all Croatian party statutes at the time (Čular, 2005, p. 123), it was a helpful tool to remove Pašalić's large entourage quickly and without much upheaval.

Given that the HDZ statute granted its president the power to directly appoint judges to the party's national-level internal "court of honours"¹⁶⁷, the new central committee quickly increased its control over proceedings. The new party leadership sought to increase its leverage over the outcomes of proceedings by concentrating trials at the national HDZ court instead of initiating proceedings at the respective district courts as had been the practice before (Ciglencčki, 2002a). Without these statutory changes, Pašalić would have been tried by the Zagreb inner-party court, over which he exerted more control.

In June 2002 the presidency, now under the firm control of Ivo Sanader¹⁶⁸, initiated a trial against Pašalić through the president of the court of honours, Florijan Boras. One month later the court decided unanimously to unconditionally exclude Pašalić from the HDZ - the most restrictive sanction foreseen by the statute (HDZ, 2003, para. 44, art. 2d). The court decided that Pašalić had inflicted "serious damage on the reputation of the HDZ" and concluded that he was to be eliminated from the membership register (Milković, 2002).

The same Florijan Boras, as mentioned above, would later decide to exclude not only Ivo Sanader, on the orders of Jadranka Kosor, but also Kosor herself. This episode shows that acquiring the party leadership in the time after Franjo Tuđman was only possible through inter-factional infighting leading to a number of "sweeping replacements of elites" (Higley & Lengyel, 2000a). These events go to show that Sanader was not only not rooted in the party structure; he also took over party leadership in an ad-hoc fashion, not by "organically" acquiring support networks but by means of an aggressive and arbitrary exchange of large parts of the party's central office holders.

¹⁶⁷ The stipulation that the members of the internal court of honours be appointed by the members of the presidency was already part of the first statute of February 1990 (HDZ, 1990).

¹⁶⁸ Sanader made use of urgency provisions to convene the presidency on short notice and to push through decisions which would further alter the body's composition to his favour.

7.4.2.1.2. Zoran Milanović surprisingly takes over the party leadership

Like Ivo Sanader, Zoran Milanović did not have the time to become rooted by working his way up through the local and district party organizations of the SDP. He came to party leadership quickly and unexpectedly.

Zoran Milanović was a career technocrat before he entered the SDP in 1999 at age 23. After becoming a political bureaucrat in the ministry of foreign affairs in Ivica Račan's government he intensified his party career in 2004 by getting elected to the SDP executive board (a larger version of the later SDP presidency), where he held a technical, rather than political position. In the run-up to the parliamentary elections in 2006 he became the coordinator for the SDP in one of 21 district organizations.

When Ivica Račan withdrew from politics after a terminal illness was diagnosed in early 2007, Milanović still did not have a reputation within the party. Serious candidates for Račan's succession were considered, for instance Željka Antunović, who had played a leading role in the SDP since the mid 1990s and who had been deputy PM in Račan's cabinet. In the eyes of many SDP members, Milan Bandić, the ambitious and relatively young Zagreb mayor, was also a promising candidate to lead the party into the upcoming parliamentary elections. The SDP party convention, however, surprisingly elected Milanović who was perceived as a young technocrat, telegenic and unburdened with a socialist history.

While there were no doubts about the democratic election process, Milanović took over the party as a career changer supported by the party executive. He was one of numerous career bureaucrats who had been offered party membership to prove their political loyalty. With his sudden jump to the position of party president he had skipped much of the vertical party hierarchy (some say helped by direct promotion from Ivica Račan). In only one step he had overtaken the entire SDP party elite which had waited for their moment for years.

As further developments show, his lack of rooting triggered aggressive moves to secure his position as party leader, given the many and potentially dangerous contenders, who not only had more political experience but also were much more familiar with the party and its regional support structure. Despite the fact that Milanović followed a more ordered path to power, adhering to formal rules the statute prescribed, his first acts to ensure his political survival consisted in eliminating potentially threatening competitors and seeking control over the SDP's regional organizations. The loyalties of the regional organizations are important for voting behaviour at party conventions and, ultimately, for the choice of vice-presidents to be elected into the presidency.

7.4.2.2. The path of non-rooted politicians – eliminating intra-party competition

Politicians who are not rooted do not have a chance to gain legitimacy by climbing the party-political ladder and therefore need to consolidate their position ex-post, after they have acquired the office of party president. One indicator of this ex-post consolidation process is the low relevance of programmatic differences and a high level of personal attacks. Both politicians, Sanader and Milanović, managed to eliminate and therefore control internal competition in order to create the conditions for using particularism. Even though they faced the same incentive structure, the former made use of informal means, the latter of formal means. The sections below will demonstrate how they reproduced the predominant mode of intra-party accountability.

7.4.2.2.1. Sanader consolidates his intra-party power

In consolidating his party leadership Sanader made use of a mix of formal and informal rules. He did not meet significant opposition after Pašalić and his following were out of the way. Sanader consolidated his position firstly by centralizing powers in the presidency and secondly by increasing his leeway by rigging internal elections.

After excluding Pašalić, Sanader's next step had to consist in further consolidating his position by disbanding disloyal local party organizations. He disbanded the Zagreb party organization (including seven other local organizations in the area) and the local organizations in Split and Šibenik. Together these party organizations sent about 500 delegates to the party conventions, most of them supporters of Pašalić (Ciglenečki, 2002b).

Sanader also tightened his grip over all the important bodies of the HDZ. At the party convention in June 2003, and again with support from king-maker Vladimir Šeks, Sanader pushed to transfer the nomination of the HDZ's parliamentary candidates from the larger (and less controllable) central committee to the presidency, from which he had meanwhile purged all opponents (Ciglenečki, 2003).¹⁶⁹ Given the plethora of resources of public office, a safe spot on the electoral lists for parliament not only represented an important prize in Sanader's spoils system; it also allowed the party leader to build a loyal following in parliament, the central committee¹⁷⁰ and the presidency. These moves were rubber-stamped by the party conventions whose delegates had been carefully picked beforehand. There were no relevant open discussions about these rule changes.

In a further move to decrease the room for potential internal rivals to gain a public profile, the 9th party convention in April 2004 decided to reduce the number of deputy party presidents from three to one.¹⁷¹ According to media reports, Sanader came up with this change only seven days before the Rijeka party convention and got his wishes rubber-stamped without any signs of resistance (Podgornik, 2005). In cutting the number of deputy president positions, Sanader reversed a development originally initiated by Franjo Tuđman, who carefully expanded the number of vice-presidents in order to integrate all political currents within the HDZ. Given the pragmatic character of internal party

¹⁶⁹ More specifically, the presidency gained the power to veto the candidate lists for national elections assembled by local party branches (HDZ, 2003, para. 37, sen. 1k).

¹⁷⁰ By ensuring that all HDZ MPs and cabinet members (whom Sanader had practically selected in the first place) became ex officio members of the central committee, he indirectly took over this important internal body. The HDZ's central committee is comparable in function and size to the SDP's main committee – smaller versions of the respective party conventions, concentrating the most important responsibilities between the yearly full assemblies.

¹⁷¹ The one and only deputy president position was awarded to Jadranka Kosor. She had been nominated to this position back in 2002, when Sanader had just consolidated his control over the presidency.

discussions following the exclusion of the nationalist hardliners, big ideological differences were no longer an issue for the HDZ.

An important part of Sanader's success at this party convention can again be traced back to manipulations in which Ivan Drmić admitted to having stuffed ballot boxes on Sanader's orders so as to prevent internal critic Andrija Hebrang from receiving the highest vote count for presidency positions (Bartolović, 2006). This way, Sanader's allies Vladimir Šeks and Luka Bebić became the most influential people after Ivo Sanader himself.

In sum, by extending his powers, Sanader made use of a special opportunity, which had presented itself through the necessity to purge the hardliner faction from the HDZ. After Pašalić and his following had left the HDZ he was practically unrivalled both ideologically and personally. Therefore his strategy relied on concentrating and centralising power in the HDZ on his person. He did so by, firstly, sidestepping the party's already top-heavy rules and, secondly, making use of them in an especially aggressive way.

7.4.2.2.2. Milanović takes control of the SDP

Zoran Milanović, too, had to consolidate his position after he was elected party president without having worked his way up. Lacking the possibility of transgressing internal rules, he wasn't as successful as Ivo Sanader in eliminating inner-party opposition and had to go up against individual opponents one by one. This ongoing infighting, following the need to ex-post consolidate his position as party leader, forced him to practically reverse his promise to have Ninoslav Pavić prosecuted, a promise he had given as leader of the opposition. Instead he cooperated with the publisher in order to smear and discredit internal opponents, as demonstrated in the examples of Minister of Health Rajko Ostojić and Minister of Finance Slavko Linić in the empirical chapter.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Several interviewees emphasized Milanović's exaggerated and almost paranoid fight against anybody who developed a reputation (Interview Božić, 2014; Interview Matić, 2014).

Milanović's weak rooting can be seen by the lack of ideological and programmatic dimensions to the infighting. Instead the conflicts developed predominantly along fault lines of power distribution between the central office in Zagreb and rebellious but important SDP local and district organizations. Milanović's lack of trust in the party led him to prefer recruitment of people from outside party networks (Interview Božić, 2014). The new party president was especially wary of Minister of Finance Slavko Linić and his support base, which had been deeply rooted in the SDP since at least the early 1990s, when Linić had become mayor of the industrially important city of Rijeka.

Milanović's election as party president came with an important caveat: following mistakes by the party leadership in the electoral campaign, the SDP lost narrowly to Sanader, after months of being comfortably ahead in the polls. With this less than auspicious start Milanović could not expect to enjoy unreserved sympathy within the party and he was forced early in his mandate to appease the party leadership in order to ensure his re-election as party president, campaigning on a ticket of party democratization.

Consequently the next party convention, in 2008, transformed the SDP's executive committee into a smaller presidency. Under the new rules, the party president was no longer allowed to co-nominate vice-presidents. This regulation increased the independence of the vice-presidents as a controlling counterweight against the party leader. As a result, several of Milanović's critics were elected into the new body. Also, prompted by his weak result in the parliamentary elections, Milanović was forced to consent to increasing the selectorate for the party president to a one-member-one-vote system, making it considerably harder to rig internal elections.¹⁷³

With the fully inclusive electoral system this was not necessary anymore, since the SDP party leader had four years to eliminate all potential rival candidates. The actual elections in 2012 thus amounted to a crowning of the only candidate for the party leadership. The events following Milanović's confirmation in central office support fresh findings from party research showing that more inclusive selection methods for the party leader tend to lead to a more leadership-dominated party (Pedersen

¹⁷³ There is no evidence that SDP party convention elections had been rigged in the past.

& Schumacher, 2015). Trying to translate his new base of legitimacy into more power resources, Milanović managed to push through a centralization of selection procedures for vice-presidents which, alongside control over the main committee, still remained one of the party leader's "weak spots". Moreover, the responsibilities of the presidency were increased and some functions were transferred from the main committee (T. Tomičić, 2012a). Given that Milanović controlled the selection of cabinet members, this also meant an increase in his control over the presidency.

At the same time, following the SDP's structural dominance over larger cities (in relation to the HDZ's strength in rural areas) one important structural legacy implied that regional party branches were powerful in that they controlled a large section of the votes in the main committee. By introducing a formula for determining regional representation in the presidency, however, some of the strong but often critical district organizations were weakened in practice.

A new regional principle implied that candidates with the most votes entered the presidency only as long they did not exceed the fixed number of candidates for that region. This meant that the two most critical districts, Zagreb and Istria, were now limited to sending a maximum of three and two candidates respectively to the presidency (T. Tomičić, 2012b).¹⁷⁴ In addition to effectively functioning as a cap on the number of vice-presidents representing certain districts, this rule also stimulated competition within districts, which again served Milanović's interests at the top. Not least, given the large number of unknown candidates from smaller regions, this gave ministerial candidates – implicitly pre-selected by Milanović – a large advantage in the presidency.

Lastly, the process of disbanding local branches was "streamlined", since members of local party branches lost the right to file a formal complaint with the "oversight committee" when their respective party organization was disbanded. This re-centralization took place against the decentralization pursued by Ivica Račan, where the decision was transferred from the executive committee to the main committee (SDP, 1990, 2004).

¹⁷⁴ Plus potentially four further candidates, who were elected without regional affiliation.

The behavioural changes that followed these new rules indirectly confirm the finding of Ennsner-Jedenastik & Müller (2015) for Austria, whereby inclusive selection methods decrease the duration of leadership. Translated to the post-authoritarian context of Croatia, this means that Milanović, who could not rely on his own regional support network, aggressively eliminated the sprawling mass of competitors using the centralization of power he had just pushed through. While before his election by the membership his strategy consisted in sidelining popular and experienced opponents “with a certain weight” (Božić, 2010)¹⁷⁵, his aggressive drive to get rid of rivals became much more open afterwards.

Vociferous critics, such as Aleksandra Kolarić, were excluded without further ado.¹⁷⁶ In several cases Milanović directly disbanded local party branches (and had them re-elected) while in others his mere threat to do so sufficed to enforce their loyalty. In the cases of the local organizations in Varaždin and Dubrovnik Milanović pushed the presidency to disband these branches. Olga Muratti, for instance, the president of the Dubrovnik SDP, did not have Milanović’s support to run for mayor, because the SDP party chief preferred to leave this city to his coalition partner HNS and its convicted candidate Vlahušić. Muratti left the party in October 2013 after her party branch had been disbanded and re-elected with new personnel (Vidov, 2013).

The two district organizations that were the most critical to Milanović’s survival were undoubtedly the Zagreb and the Rijeka/ Istra districts, both of which had aspirations to install a party leader from their ranks. Davor Bernardić, the president of the Zagreb branch, was widely perceived to have a chance against long-standing and former SDP member Milan Bandić in the elections for the mayor of Zagreb.¹⁷⁷ Bernardić was a young, promising politician who had not only attained a convincing result in the elections as president of the important Zagreb organization (Smrečki & Hina, 2010) but also came second in the elections for presidency positions at the 2012 party convention.

¹⁷⁵ This includes Mato Arlović, Željka Antunović, Antun Vujić and Davorko Vidović (Pauček Šljivak, 2013b).

¹⁷⁶ Kolarić was found guilty by the presidency in September 2013 of committing a “verbal delict” – a concept unknown to the party statute (Vidov, 2013).

¹⁷⁷ Bandić had been excluded from the party in 2009 when he ran as presidential candidate against the official SDP candidate, Ivo Josipović.

Seeing Bernardić as a potential threat, the presidency under Milanović overrode the decision of the Zagreb branch to elect him as their mayoral candidate, threatening to disband the local branch unless he was replaced by Rajko Ostojić, a candidate who was widely perceived to be less attractive to voters (Ciglonečki, Crnčec, & Tomičić, 2012). Milanović's threat was successful, Ostojić ran for mayor - and lost. Having successfully prevented Bernardić from potentially becoming a serious competitor, the party leader also later removed Ostojić from his position as Minister of Health (Vidov, 2013).

Milanović's "endgame" in terms of ridding himself of potential competitors came when he decided to take on his Minister of Finance, Slavko Linić, after years of infighting between the SDP president and the Istria branch. Using corruption allegations published in Ninoslav Pavić's *Jutarnji List* (see section 5.3.1.2. in chapter five), Milanović eventually fired his most prominent competitor. Despite high risks of failure Milanović called a vote in the main committee, which passed very narrowly, with 50 votes for and 47 against.

In sum, Milanović's infighting did not follow any ideological or programmatic pattern but aimed at the systematic sidelining of candidates who might have threatened his position as SDP party leader. As can be seen from the direct comparison, while Sanader was able to bypass the HDZ's formal rules, Milanović was more constrained by the SDP's statute, given the strong oversight by regional district organizations.

7.4.2.3. Eliminating contestation allows the party leaders to make use of particularism

7.4.2.3.1. Sanader paid off Pavić using informal particularism

Ivo Sanader used the far-reaching leeway he gained with his aggressive full-scale take-over of the HDZ to rule as he deemed fit in both the party and state executive.

Even though the HDZ was formally in a coalition government, its coalition partners were not able to meaningfully check the PM's behaviour. Sanader's first government included Vesna Škare-Ožbolt, the representative from coalition partner DC, a moderate split-off from the HDZ, and Dragan Pri-

morac, a non-partisan, strongly career-driven pragmatist. In contrast to Primorac, whose quasi-editorial position in *Jutarnji List* has been touched upon in the empirical chapter, Vesna Škare-Ožbolt quickly paid the price for challenging Sanader when he ended the coalition agreement with the DC in February 2006, after which Sanader faced zero constraints in the cabinet.¹⁷⁸

Sanader thus did not even have to compromise with coalition partners on delivering financial inducements to publishers. His tight control over internal opposition enabled him to freely decide about rewards to cooperative business partners. It was therefore easy for Sanader to push his corrupt practices through cabinet, such as ordering the directors of state-owned enterprises to carry out all PR-related tasks through a firm owned by one of the PM's cronies. There are no transcripts of the cabinet meetings where the main spoil, the VAT reduction for publishers, was decided. There is however evidence in three significant cases that the Sanader government repeatedly rewarded companies by granting tax debt reductions.

Firstly, in the case of Kamen Ingrad, Sanader pushed through a tax exemption for criminal entrepreneur Vlado Zec, halving his tax debt from 120 to 60 million Kunas. As leaked transcripts from a cabinet meeting in 2004 show, Sanader forced through the tax windfall against the objections of ministers Ivan Šuker, Marina Matulović-Dropulić and Branko Vukelić, who pointed to the illegal nature of the mining from which Zec's company profited.¹⁷⁹ One year later, none of the (now halved) debt had been returned to the state budget (Appelt & Plišić, 2006; Appelt, 2006).¹⁸⁰ This kind of internal questioning of Sanader's wishes is reported extremely rarely, and Matulović-Dropulić and Vukelić – two of Sanader's closest allies – were clearly the exceptions rather than the rule (Krasnec, 2011).

Secondly, Sanader's foreign minister and close ally, Miomir Žužul, influenced the cabinet (and his supporter, Ivo Sanader) to write off a substantial portion of debt owed by Imostroj, a bankrupt arms

¹⁷⁸ Aside from formal considerations, Sanader was known to display despotic behaviour in cabinet. As Željko Matić put it, during Sanader's time ministers were "nobodies". In one particularly revealing piece of anecdotal evidence, Sanader once yelled at a minister in a cabinet meeting: "Who are you to ask?" (Interview Matić, 2014).

¹⁷⁹ Ivo Sanader has "doubted" whether these transcripts were accurate (Appelt, 2006).

¹⁸⁰ Zec was later sentenced to prison, and released in 2012 after three years and 10 months.

manufacturer, which was owned in equal shares by Žužul's wife and a relative of Žužul (Appelt, 2009). Even the Americans, who used to be quite fond of Žužul due to his close connection to the US, distanced themselves from the "increasingly awkward" efforts of the minister to justify his numerous involvements in corruption affairs (Frank, 2004). Sanader had to give up Žužul under massive public pressure in February 2005.

Thirdly, Ivica Todorčić, the single largest advertiser in Croatian media, owner of the Supermarket chain Konzum, and of the monopoly news distribution network TISAK is probably the single most powerful individual in Croatia (Klauški, 2012) – and Ivo Sanader's partner.¹⁸¹ Todorčić enjoyed massive tax refunds, totalling more than 400m Kunas.¹⁸²

It is in this light that the reduction of the newspaper VAT has to be seen, which Sanader's government announced in June 2007 and applied for August the same year – only four months before the parliamentary elections. Not only is the timing of the tax reduction revealing; the general economic context did not require government intervention, since 2007 was one of the most successful years in terms of GDP in Croatian history, with an equally flourishing advertisement market. Moreover, the direct connection between the VAT reduction and EPH's favourable reporting is also suggested in the country report on Croatia by the Bertelsmann Transformation index (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009) and by some interviewees (anonymous interviewee 37, 2014; Interview Đikić, 2014; Interview Tomičić, 2014).

¹⁸¹ That Todorčić was in a close relationship with Ivo Sanader can be established by two examples. Firstly, Ivica Todorčić received one half of Miroslav Kutle's financial legacy. Miroslav Kutle is a convicted former tycoon close to the 1990s HDZ hardliners around Pašalić who profited from illicit privatizations in the case of Slobodna Dalmacija (among other media outlets) and TISAK. Kutle's fall was initiated in the late 1990s by Franjo Tuđman and while Ivica Račan left the criminal structures around Pašalić and Kutle untouched, Ivo Sanader, seeking to root out Pašalić's faction from the HDZ which Kutle was a part of, distributed his acquisitions among his cronies Ninoslav Pavić, who received Slobodna Dalmacija, and Ivica Todorčić, who received the distribution monopoly TISAK (Bajto, 2010). Secondly, as described in chapter five, Todorčić was likely the channel through which Sanader eventually "disarmed" the critical weekly business.hr.

¹⁸² As a respective report in Večernji List from 2012 showed, debts had been written off primarily of firms within leading politicians electoral districts, public entities such as schools - and tycoons such as Ivica Todorčić (Šlabek, 2012).

7.4.2.3.2. Milanović made use of formal particularism and used EPH to address contestation

In contrast to Ivo Sanader, Milanović (and his Minister of Finance, Slavko Linić) made use of formal particularism, not to capture and reward media for their cooperation, but to intermittently sanction them for criticism. While formal particularism functions as a means to sanction and threaten media, it also implies that, in contrast to media capture, it is non-permanent in nature. Both formal and informal particularism require command over formal resources, for delivering both rewards and sanctions.

Intra-party contestation negatively impacts on politicians' control over these resources because party opponents point up these transgressions, thereby providing an additional layer of control. By controlling and aggressively dealing with inner-party competition, Milanović was able to go about achieving media control by means of formal particularism. Milanović needed the cabinet to impose tax penalties on 24sata, and due to his close control of the party he was able to deliver.

The Milanović story emphasizes the importance of the media in party leaders' efforts to secure their positions, as the relationship between the PM and the publisher experienced a total turnaround, starting with Milanović's wish to have Pavić prosecuted and ending in close collaboration to remove the PM's internal competition. His weak rooting in the SDP forced him to turn to EPH publications, as he did not have a chance of acquiring the necessary internal party support networks on his own.

It is difficult to assess whether the tax reduction that Milanović awarded to the media can be classified as spoils. According to the media scholar Helena Popović, the move to cut VAT from 10% to 5% was motivated by the wish to "materially support the privately owned press in a period of economic crisis" (H. Popović, 2014, p. 200). While it is debatable whether this present was necessary and justified, a clear distinction can be made between the moves of Milanović and Sanader. While Milanović's tax cut took place during a period of deep economic crisis, long before the next parliamentary elections, Sanader's financial gift was more than double in magnitude and came at a time of economic prosperity, only months before the parliamentary elections.

Milanović's use of formal particularism correlates noticeably with the comparatively high level of institutionalization of formal rules in the SDP – a hypothesis suggested by this doctoral thesis. These rules limited Milanović to some extent, even though the party president slowly increased his control over local and regional party branches, the main actors in the SDP's de-facto system of internal checks. Despite his best efforts, Milanović was not able to pick presidency members as actively as Kosor and especially Sanader, nor to remove Zlatko Komadina, for instance, one of Milanović's fiercest critics. While Milanović was eventually successful in excluding Slavko Linić from the party, he could do so only at high risk and tremendous cost, antagonising half of the immensely important main committee. Sanader in contrast, securing his internal reign with wide use of informal rules, had taken full control over the central committee, as the above events show.

In the same way that the undermining of formal rules had extended to Ivo Sanader's behaviour when dealing with the media in executive office, Milanović, with broad control over internal competition, mirrored his general adherence to formal rules in his efforts to sanction media for insisting on critical reporting on the government.

7.5. Conclusions

This chapter provided an empirical application of the driver of internal party competition, explaining the main reasons for particularism in Croatia, especially where traditional drivers of democratization have fallen short. It shows that (1) a weak rooting of party leaders leads to an elevated desire to safeguard their internal position using the media, (2) a lack of contestation makes them attractive partners in collusive cooperation with publishers, enabling them to make use of particularism, and (3) the type of particularism co-varies with the mode of intra-party competition.

The argument I presented here is based on induction and even though it is highly suggestive of a strong causal link, this can only be conjectured at this stage due to the small number of cases. A verification of the strength of the causality and the applicability of the argument to other contexts would

Controlling the party or controlling the media?

What motivated the shifts?

represent an important area of future research. The subsequent concluding chapter brings together the main strands of evidence. It synthesizes the empirical findings and theoretical implications of the data presented here and discusses policy implications as well as possible directions of further research.

8. Conclusions

“The way you lead your party today is the way you will lead your country tomorrow”

Jadranka Kosor (2015)

8.1. Introduction

This thesis set out to explore the shape, the dynamics and the main reasons for media capture and collusion in Croatia since the second transition in 2000. Drawing on the literatures of democratization, party research and media studies, I have aimed to connect these fields in arguing that intra-party dynamics such as the rootedness of leaders, contestation for leadership, and the institutionalization of rules play an important role in incentivizing executive politicians to capture or collude with media outlets. The empirical outcome of the study, showing drastic failures of horizontal accountability, contradicts dominant narratives regarding Croatia’s high level of democratic consolidation between 2000 and 2014 and therefore challenges the suitability of indicators primarily designed to reflect the institutionalization of institutions rather than the institutionalization of particularism.

Particularism as a concept for the behaviour of politicians necessarily comprises both formal and informal aspects and has therefore required a qualitative and quantitative research strategy. In emphasising internal party dynamics to avoid both moral hazard and adverse selection, I exploit principal-agent theory in identifying the theoretical advantages of this driver. These advantages consist chiefly in the early application of the driver in the delegation chain of parliamentary democracies and the vulnerability of this stage given that it is especially prone to agency loss. The thesis sought to answer three central questions:

- What was the shape and what were the dynamics of media capture and collusion in Croatia between 2000 and 2014?
- Why did traditional drivers largely fail to prevent regressions to particularism at a time when their effects should have been particularly strong, and what has instead driven media capture?
- Why did politicians in some cases revert to formal particularism and in other cases to informal particularism in limiting horizontal accountability?

These questions are important because media are effective supervisors of executives, who often transgress constitutional boundaries in times of transition. At the same time, very little attention has been given to politicians' incentives to engage in universalistic behaviour, especially in contexts where democratic processes are not entrenched.

Croatia was a particularly appropriate case to study in this context since none of the traditional universalistic incentives such as Europeanization, inter-party competition, a strong civil society or economic modernization can fully explain shifts in the way politicians limit or reinforce horizontal accountability of the media. In order to address this puzzle I have adopted a two-pronged research strategy based on both qualitative and quantitative elements in order to reliably and validly measure the shape and development of media capture and collusion. Interviews with a large sample of investigative journalists provided a sound basis for reconstructing patterns, strategies and mechanisms of media capture and collusion.

The emerging narratives regarding principal-agent relationships were tested using a novel quantitative text analysis approach in which sentiment analysis was used to quantify the level of criticism of media outlets. This approach rested on an operationalization of particularism that displayed a high degree of co-variation between the positions of politicians and media outlets, measured in the level of criticism of the former towards the latter. Based on a sample of 34,407 media articles, taken from

eight media outlets and spanning over 15 years, it aimed at supporting - or questioning - central hypotheses that emerged from the interviews.

Two drivers, Europeanization and inter-party competition, emerged from a process of whittling down alternative explanations and were applied to the emerging empirical picture of shifts between particularism and universalism. Given that these factors did not provide a convincing account for the patterns of variation in the dependent variable, I developed a theory, based on principal-agent logic, to explain the particularistic or universalistic behaviour of politicians vis-à-vis the media. This explanation emphasizes the effectiveness of ex-ante controls in avoiding moral hazard and advances the view that the extent and quality of the limitations on horizontal accountability fits a pattern of internal leadership-selection mechanisms, based on the concept of party-leader rootedness.

This concluding chapter is structured in the following way. The first section provides a synthesis of the empirical findings as answers to the research questions. After that I discuss the implications of the theory and show how my theoretical findings differ or support those of others and why. The last section presents possible directions of future research, which this thesis has not covered.

8.2. Synthesis of empirical findings

8.2.1. Shape and dynamics of media capture and collusion

8.2.1.1. (Informal) universalism 2000 - 2003

With a media market driven in large part by the underworld in the first years of the new millennium, the PM and the president were, for different reasons, forced to align with media-mafia conglomerates which, due to the participation of the secret-service underground and the associated danger, were difficult to deal with. Račan cooperated with Ninoslav Pavić, whose publishing company EPH cooperated intermittently with the PM, even though there is no evidence of media capture or collusion in the systematic and permanent sense set out in the introduction. Instead, the new government led by the Social Democrats under Ivica Račan introduced universalistic steps and increased

horizontal accountability. President Stipe Mesić, lacking formal responsibilities, aligned with liberal Ivo Pukanić and his publication Nacional to dismantle the illiberal right that, through its influence in both the media and the security apparatus, was posing a threat not only to the locking-in of democracy but also to politicians personally. While Račan's formal response to this essentially informal threat can be seen as an indirect approach, Mesić sought direct confrontation on an equal – informal – footing.

Hence, even though mafia and media wars were primarily driven by business motives (the violence among Grupo owners as part of the enforcement of an illegal contract and the media war for market share between Ivo Pukanić and Ninoslav Pavić's EPH), the real conflict line was political: Stipe Mesić in particular was strongly motivated to remove the HDZ hardliners from their informal positions of power once and for all. Therefore the violence and the instability of this period are part of a struggle in which de-legitimized groups from the old regime tried to maintain a grip on institutions relevant to their positions of power.

While the six-party coalition stopped practices of formal particularism, this does not mean that, in line with polarized-pluralist media systems (see section 1.4.1. in the introduction), the Social Democrats did not politicize the public broadcaster to some extent. Firstly, the new government sought to get rid of journalists who had incited nationalist hatred against Serbs and others. Secondly, it went some way towards replacing conservative journalists with leftist ones, especially editors in the main evening news show. At the same time, however, the evidence demonstrates that the government was the actor most criticized by the public broadcaster.

8.2.1.2. Informal particularism 2004 - 2009

Mirroring the way he came to power in the HDZ, Ivo Sanader used strategies of *informal* particularism to bring media organs under his control.

Sanader was not only the undisputed leader of both party and state but also in control of state resources such as tax gifts and other spoils that required formal cabinet approval. As he controlled these resources, Sanader had much to offer Ninoslav Pavić in return for his cooperation. Spoils included control over the state-owned newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija*, far-reaching tax reductions during an economic boom and “permission” for an extensive network of profitable business activity.

Sanader used four strategies to undermine independent reporting. He had newspapers secretly bought to silence their criticisms, he organized advertisement boycotts to dry out editorial pockets of resistance and, most importantly, he captured media such as *Večernji List* and colluded with Ninoslav Pavić, owner and de facto director of an important part of the circulation in the Croatian media market. There is also evidence that he (and other politicians) tried to force outspoken journalists to place covert *kompromat* and advertorials in their publications, under the guise of independent investigative journalism.

Sanader kept the public prosecutor Mladen Bajić on a tight leash through an institutional set-up which foresees direct appointment by a simple parliamentary majority and unlimited re-elections. In turn, Bajić himself developed into a political player, serving and protecting the PM and later justifying his inertia after the latter had left the stage. Bajić was equally well connected to editorial offices, especially to those of Pavić’s EPH. There is evidence that this collusive triangle covered up corruption by the PM and Pavić while simultaneously supporting the public prosecutor, who in turn did not initiate investigations.

8.2.1.3. Universalism 2009 – 2011

Jadranka Kosor tried desperately to gain control over the public broadcaster HRT and sought to establish a closer relationship with Ninoslav Pavić. In the light of the growing resistance within Kosor’s party, Pavić slowly turned against the PM and revoked the “quasi editorial rights” she had enjoyed at the beginning of her term.

Kosor thus became unattractive for collusion and saw her chance to gain public credibility by initiating a universalistic clean-slate campaign, which, however, was primarily defensively motivated. The collusive duopoly between Ninoslav Pavić and Mladen Bajić persisted under these circumstances, effectively supporting Kosor's demise.

8.2.1.4. Formal particularism 2011 - 2015

Early in the mandates of the new Social Democratic president Ivo Josipović (in office between January 2010 and January 2015) and the SDP coalition (in office between December 2011 and December 2015) there were no changes to this state of universalism; executive politicians largely respected media independence. After a while, however, both politicians, president Josipović and PM Milanović made use of particularism, especially formal particularism.

PM Milanović stuck to his promise not to re-elect public prosecutor Mladen Bajić, who had been an active part of the collusion arrangements with Ivo Sanader, Ninoslav Pavić and, as some evidence suggests, president Josipović. And even though Milanović did not maintain enduring and systematic relations with Ninoslav Pavić, he collaborated for instance in the smearing of internal competitors and his administration intermittently sanctioned the media for what it perceived as "excessive" criticism. These sanctions took the form of indirect tax increases for non-compliant media such as 24sata or using tax-enforcement police to harass critical media such as index.hr. At the same time, Milanović did not capture media and dailies such as Večernji List or 24sata, which kept a critical distance to the PM.

According to a number of interviewees, Ivo Josipović was not only closely linked to the questionable public prosecutor Mladen Bajić but also "off limits", implying that articles criticizing the president in the mainstream press would be pushed to the margins of a paper, deleted from the online archive or not published at all. Media outlets such as the newspaper of the Serb minority Novosti, which took

on the president and exposed questionable dealings, were attacked very aggressively and threatened in their very existence.

In sum, severe limitations in horizontal accountability, such as media capture and collusion, have not developed in linear fashion. It can be seen as progress that limitations of horizontal accountability, largely in the informal realm, shifted towards more formal interventions with a non-permanent character (see more on this point in the theoretical section below).

8.2.2. Why did traditional drivers fail and what has been driving media capture instead?

As discussed in the introduction, a large part of the literature ascribes relevant “transformative powers” to both the EU and inter-party (electoral) competition. In the Croatian case this prediction did not hold for the most part. Europeanization can be largely discounted as an explanatory factor since the most serious regression to informal particularism between 2006 and 2008 took place entirely under the EU’s radar. This general finding supports recent research which links the EU’s failure to effectively fight corruption in the Balkans to predatory domestic elites, which see EU support as spoils (Eskisar & Komsuoglu, 2015).

Both, Stipe Mesić and Ivica Račan had campaigned on democratization and an integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Their orientation towards democratization and preparing Croatia’s integration into the EU was therefore already firmly established before the EU’s rewards or sanctions were in a position to drastically alter this paradigmatic policy decision.

The empirical discussion also shows that EU pressures in the shape of democratic conditionality were too general and therefore too little focused to impinge on the quality of poorly regulated relationships between politicians and media publishers. While the government’s behaviour towards HRT was certainly part of the EU’s general assessment of the executive’s general democratic conduct, the Commission’s repeated reprimands as to the politicization of the public broadcaster remained without visible impact. Also, with enlargement fatigue starting to set in after the 2007 round of acces-

sions, the Commission had a vital interest in a successful induction of Croatia so as to retain the support of progressive actors in the (potential) candidate countries of the Western Balkans.

That EU accession pressures depended on how political elites interpreted them is demonstrated by the case of Ivo Sanader, where the pressures forced the PM to conceal and informalize collusion and media capture but in the end did not suffice to induce universalistic behaviour. This argument is supported by the behaviour of the successor SDP government, which engaged in open, formal particularism – after EU pre-accession pressures had lapsed.

In a similar vein, the evidence of inter-party competition is mixed and the instances where the sequence of events allows a sufficiently well documented assessment are rare. Even though the six-party coalition was unstable and conflict-ridden, during most of Ivica Račan's mandate pressures from inter-party competition were low since it took the HDZ until well into 2002 to overcome its internal split and to represent what the literature refers to as a "credible competitor" (Grzymała-Busse, 2007). One comparatively obvious case concerns the change in the law on HRT by the outgoing SDP-led coalition, which somewhat restricted government access to appointments in the public broadcaster, as discussed in the chapter on universalism (see section 4.1.4.).

Later evidence on the workings of this driver, however, contradict an important role of electoral competition. Jadranka Kosor exclusively pushed for (or at least allowed) the prosecution of members of her own party, the HDZ, which does not fit the argument of creating a "level playing field". Even though some scholarly accounts emphasise that domestic elites in some cases abuse EU pressures to lock away political opponents on of the pretext of conducting an anti-corruption witch-hunt (Börzel & Pamuk, 2011, p. 5), this does not seem to be the case here. The chronological sequence rather suggests that Kosor went against Sanader the moment he tried to putsch. And by informally exploiting state resources and undermining the independence of certain courts, Ivo Sanader's administration did almost everything *except* building effective formal institutions of oversight - one of the main expectations of the party competition literature.

Instead, as demonstrated in the chapter on internal competition, the sequence of events suggests that the way party leaders acquire leadership within their own parties goes some way to explaining their propensity to capture or collude with media publishers.

Ivica Račan had been a long-standing member of the LCC and after decades in the party was deeply rooted in its successor party, the SDP. As the chapter on intra-party competition shows, this does not mean that he was uncontested but it does suggest that the support networks he commanded contributed much to relieve him of the necessity of forcing or seducing the media into a state of capture or collusion as a way of organizing a minimum level of internal party support.

Ivo Sanader in turn not only lacked firm rooting in the HDZ; he was also fiercely contested, at least during the first years, when Ivić Pašalić was still a strong and unscrupulous contender for party leadership. Under these circumstances Sanader had to consolidate his position *ex-post* by eliminating not only his main competitor but also the entire circle around him, while at the same time securing a stable vote in internal elections by intervening informally in the internal delegative process of the party. Having eliminated all relevant opposition within the HDZ, Sanader was also in undisputed command of state resources to reward publishers.

Sanader's successor Jadranka Kosor never left the shadow of her political protector Sanader and therefore not only suffered from the same lack of rooting but also was constantly questioned over her ability to lead the HDZ. In the face of increasing internal attacks, Kosor, who had initially been comfortable playing an important role in Pavić's publications, lost the credibility to wield control over the state resources that she would have needed to keep publishers interested in a long-term cooperation. As the only PM not able to control internal contestation, Kosor was also the only PM who was actively campaigned against in the electoral campaign.

Zoran Milanović's path to the leadership of the SDP was spotless in terms of internal party democracy, but he was still no more rooted than his two HDZ predecessors because he did not have the opportunity to build internal support networks by working his way up through the party hierarchy. In-

stead, Milanović was forced to consolidate his position as party leader by eliminating internal contestation, which, as the empirical chapters show, he did with extensive support from Ninoslav Pavić's Jutarnji List. In contrast to Sanader, who seemed to have taken the informal environment he experienced in the HDZ and replicated it as head of state, Milanović was more forced to change the rules when he wanted to change his policies. Consequently, Milanović's intermittent formal particularism did not have the permanent and systematic character that Ivo Sanader's collusive relationships had.

8.3. Theoretical, conceptual and methodological implications

The main arguments advanced here were deduced from principal-agent theory. Using this theory as an "engine of empirical discovery" (see section 2.2.), the thesis then used inductive reasoning to identify the driver of intra-party competition. This section explores the contributions that I sought to make here: theoretically, by introducing the driver of internal party dynamics, conceptually by means of a refined structuring of politicians' behaviour using the concept of particularism, and methodologically by measuring media capture and collusion using sentiment analysis.

8.3.1. Party leadership selection

The explanation for media capture and collusion provided here has two implications, firstly, with a view to its consequences for the process of party leadership selection, and, secondly, concerning its theoretical relevance as ex-ante driver.

The connection between party leadership selection mechanisms and intra-party democracy is increasingly coming to the fore of party research. The discussion on party leader selection mechanisms to date, however, predominantly concerns inclusiveness and competitiveness of the leadership selectorate and party leaders' term lengths (Cross, 2013, p. 106). It has a clear focus on Western Europe and, secondly, emphasizes the input side of democratic leadership selection processes as a dependent variable. At the same time, very little is known about the consequences of certain leadership

selection mechanisms for the democratic conduct of party leaders, and even less so when it comes to post-authoritarian contexts where party leaders often usurp power through coups, nepotism and clientelism (for the case of Serbia, for instance, see Spoerri, 2008). Correspondingly little has been done to theorize or conceptualise – far less empirically understand – the paths to party leadership and their structural, long-term effects.

The evidence from the comparison of the four cases above suggests that party leaders have less incentive to organize their own survival through particularism, where inner-party environments allowed them to gradually build a following.

Theorising the empirical results shows that both extremes of the inclusiveness dimension of party leader selection methods (Kenig, 2009a), single individual selectorates (Jadranka Kosor) and one-member one-vote systems (Zoran Milanović), can produce party leaders who lack the minimum level of internal support and who therefore face incentives to engage in particularistic relationships with media publishers. This is consistent with Cross and Blais (2012a) and Kenig (2009b), who argue that a higher level of inclusiveness in party leadership selection does not necessarily lead to a more democratic selection process.

In contrast, the case of Ivica Račan shows that party leaders who worked their way through the party hierarchy and are rooted have less need to resort to external support to lead a party they are not familiar with. Therefore, one theoretical implication highlights the strong emphasis of leadership selection research on the inclusiveness dimension and conversely the relative neglect of the centralization dimension.

The evidence contradicts the hypothesis that variation in the levels of intra-party competition explains internal party democracy (Cross & Blais, 2012a, p. 113 ff. Kenig, 2009b).¹⁸³ The vast majority of leadership elections in the two big Croatian parties were de facto coronations, where candidates

¹⁸³ Kenig (2009b) measures competitiveness according to four indicators: the incumbent's success rate, the number of contests vs. coronations, the number of candidates in an internal party election and the distribution of votes index, calculated to indicate the 'relevance' of the other candidates. I have not discussed the distribution of votes index since, as mentioned above, my primary aim here is to point to the effects of intra-party competition as an independent, not a dependent variable.

were elected without contenders. There are three exceptions, in two of which the surviving candidates, Zoran Milanović and Ivo Sanader, were contested in their respective incipient elections in 2007 and 2002 and subsequently not only resorted to particularistic media support but also centralized their parties.¹⁸⁴ With a strong dominance of uncontested coronations and only three cases of contested leadership elections, the variable of competitiveness in intra-party elections does not co-vary with the dependent variable which could explain particularistic outcomes as described in the empirical chapters.

Again, given the small number of cases, the evidence gathered here does not suggest generalization. Their central dynamics and mechanisms, however, produce results that are internally consistent and which therefore warrant testing on a broader set of cases. In light of strong regional differences in the shape of parties and their intermediary roles, the argument proposed here should be tested on a sample of cases with similar characteristics if it is to avoid conceptual stretching. Given that the model here is based on a post-socialist South-Eastern European country, a possible set of cases could comprise the successor states of the former Yugoslavia and also Romania, Bulgaria and Albania.

I have also theorized that party leadership selection applies early in the delegation chain in parliamentary democracies and should therefore be of special practical value in preventing moral hazard. Empirically, the basic logic of internal competition as ex-ante driver is linked to the realization that particularism, such as the informal particularism under Ivo Sanader and Franjo Tuđman's formal particularism, aimed to neutralize institutions of horizontal accountability. The logic builds on the insight that parties in transitional contexts and especially in South-Eastern Europe are characterized by leadership selection mechanisms which put very little strain on party leaders in terms of functioning agency control (Čular, 2005; Spoerri, 2008). At the same time, the stage of party-leadership selection is especially vulnerable to agency loss, as certain conditions, such as the institutionalization of infor-

¹⁸⁴ The third exception, the contested HDZ leadership elections in 2012, where Tomislav Karamarko was elected to replace Jadranka Kosor, has not been covered here because the winner, Tomislav Karamarko, has not been elected to the executive since.

mal rules, might be an incentive for candidates to ensure their own survival through particularism rather than convince fellow party members in their ambition to lead the party.

8.3.2. Particularism

The concept of particularism used here is based on a concept conceived but never developed by O'Donnell (1998) and inspired by the need to grasp, systematize and adequately label the abuse of executives' factual norm-setting powers, given that terms such as 'lawful' or 'legalistic' carry little meaning in contexts where agent-politicians are confronted with little or ineffective control by principal-citizens. The terms formal and informal particularism/ universalism used here are therefore based on a cross-tabulation of the dimensions of behaviour and codification of formal and informal rules.

The concept proved helpful in detecting different qualities in the limitation of horizontal accountability during the 1990s and the 2000s and ultimately allowed for a better understanding of the context of its application. This concerns in particular the differentiation of subtle and incomplete universalistic shifts such as informal particularism, which has proved to be impermanent in nature since it is based on a mere façade of democracy. In terms of incentives for those governing, the differentiation between formal and informal particularism has helped identify the quality of informal particularism as a means by which supervisor-publishers hand down predominantly *systematic* and *durable* sanctions and rewards to agent-politicians. It has provided the corresponding insight that formal particularism is often impermanent and limited to one-off sanctions. Given that formalized sanctions are less costly for the executive to implement than informal ones, formal particularism was more widely used in Tadjman's presidential-parliamentary system, where the relevant judicial instances for moderating government behaviour had been largely neutralized. The concept has ultimately provided a more realistic picture of media accountability against a backdrop of indices suggesting a media independence that remains largely intact (see introduction).

Limited by the scope conditions briefly discussed in the introduction, the concept of particularism is useful in identifying the dynamics and effects of a simulated democracy, such as the one shaped by Ivo Sanader, and the attempts made to formalize and thereby legalize behaviour that is essentially particularistic, such as the harassment of media outlets. It also corresponds to and puts into context non-intuitive developments, such as the interplay between strict control of the judiciary and the comparatively high degree of freedom for the private press during the hybrid 1990s, and also the partial inversion of this relationship in the second half of the 2000s.

Under the conditions of parliamentary democracy, structured by largely functioning party competition and ex-post monitored by the temporary EU integration dynamics, Sanader's informal particularism developed an effect similar to the formal particularism Tudjman had employed, since both effectively neutralized horizontal accountability.

While Tudjman's strategy to control the judiciary using mass appointments could not be reversed after his reign, the pressures emanating from inter-party competition and Europeanization forced governments such as Sanader's administration to conceal particularistic cooperation with and control of the media, for the sake of the country's democratic image. At the same time, the empirical chapters demonstrated that the incentives provided by these two drivers did not suffice to push politicians to embrace universalism. Instead, I have identified intra-party competition as an important driver that likely had more clout to do so.

8.3.3. Sentiment analysis

Thirdly, I have attempted to contribute to the measurement of media capture and collusion as a systematic phenomenon over time. While using sentiment analysis in political science has generally seen a surge in recent years, I have proposed using it to provide a systematic and more objective measurement of censorship, one that goes beyond the usual interviews with journalists. The results are informative and in the context of the predictions that have been derived from the interviews

provide a triangulation point for the interview-based narratives. Thus the sentiment analysis provides a way of empirically proving the existence of permanent relationship structures between publishers and politicians, which in conditions of editorial autonomy should be random, rather than systematic.

As discussed in the introduction, this method complements qualitative approaches nicely. Given that no reliability tests have been performed with Slavomjer, it is not possible to gauge the method's reliability intervals. However, as the quantitative chapter demonstrates, the data is consistent with public opinion polls where - based on the interviews - we expect it to be consistent, and it is inconsistent (namely in the cases of Ivo Sanader and Ivo Josipović) where we expect it to be inconsistent. It also accurately reproduces the individual popularity of politicians and organizations (such as the exceptionally popular position of the EU) from the media texts.

Despite the lack of exact reliability measures, there is therefore good reason to believe that the method produces reliable results. The limitations in this study derived from incomplete and patchy data sets - especially in the case of Jutarnji List, the centre piece of Ninoslav Pavić's media empire - and the entire lack of data for the first years of the new millennium.

Where the database is thick enough, however, measuring censorship using sentiment analysis of media texts is a very promising method that can provide a revealing picture of the links between journalists and publishers on the one hand and individual politicians and parties or organizations on the other. Above all, it can provide hard evidence for censorship, a phenomenon which has usually been based on individual sources of information and therefore been easily dismissed as anecdotal evidence.

8.4. Policy implications and directions for further research

8.4.1. Better measures for media independence

The empirical findings of this thesis describe realities different from the picture provided by existing measures of media independence. Indices of media independence such as the media-sustainability index often rely on panel or focus-group interviews of media professionals to gather data about important developments in national media systems. The one-on-one interviews with a comparatively large number of journalists have shown, however, that some journalists are corrupt or even influenced by secret-service factions that feed them with selective or falsified material; they are in effect owned by special interests. A brief look at the participant lists of these panel and focus-group interview lists shows that journalists who have been credibly described as compromised were part of such interview groups, which creates severe bias and calls into question the validity of such indices.

A point in case is the bomb attack on Ninoslav Pavić's car or the assassination of Nacional owner Ivo Pukanić. Both incidents and other similar ones caused Croatia's press-freedom indices to substantially drop. As seen from the evidence in the chapter on universalism, however, it is more than questionable that these violent attacks were indeed connected to infringements of media autonomy.

The inter-personal dynamics of round-table formats in particular are not always conducive to assessing difficult and contentious topics of capture and collusion, which can easily cost journalists their jobs. At the same time, the background knowledge about these interdependencies is essential to a proper understanding of the informal rules that govern the media system.

8.4.2. Testing the intra-party competition hypothesis on a larger N

From a theoretical perspective, one obvious point is to further test the hypotheses generated by this doctoral thesis. This pertains especially to the development of quantitative measures of rootedness and contestation and the application of the concept in a larger N research design. Given the strong influence of post-authoritarianism on party types and party development and the similarly strong

impulse stemming from recent EU membership, a comparison with larger parties in South-Eastern European countries seems like an appropriate setting in which to isolate and test the wider relevance of rootedness. As mentioned above, a possible set of cases could comprise the successor states of the former Yugoslavia and also Romania, Bulgaria and Albania.

8.4.3. Empirical research on informal rules

From a theoretical point of view, more empirical research has to be done into the way formal rules interact with informal rules. This thesis has described a system where public goods such as independent prosecution or truthful reporting have been privatized. It is a collective prisoner's dilemma, where the community would be better off if everyone co-operated but where incentives to shirk are high, since succumbing to the regime of mutual threat can also produce substantial individual rewards. The research gap relates especially to the empirical reality of the self-enforcing nature of this informal collective prisoner's dilemma, its micro-logics and the necessary conditions and drivers for the institutionalization of more formal rules.

8.5. Final remarks

This thesis asserted that conditions within parties are important predictors of the behavior of politicians in government. It also argued that a study of formal and informal particularism provides us with a more precise understanding of the development of democracy and allows us to more accurately trace the drivers of these developments. The events in Croatia are indicative of the wider European context in two ways.

Firstly, the shift from informal to more open formal particularism seems to have become a trend in post-accession Central and Eastern Europe. The analysis above has shown that the EU was a major factor in pushing particularism underground in Croatia, and the absence of this pressure seems to have catalysed a return to more open forms of executive transgressions. It remains to be seen what

effect review and sanction processes according to paragraph 7 of the EU treaty will have, but universalism, as I suggested, is less likely to develop from external pressure than it is from internal incentives.

In Croatia, as in countries such as Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, the quasi-authoritarian insecurities of party leaders often prevent competitors from gaining a foothold, not seldom leading to abrupt modes of handover. Power transfers within such parties are rare moments of instability, not least because new party leaders have not acquired the internal support networks that would allow them to refrain from particularism in dealing with intra-party competition.

If the hypothesis offered here holds water, the next question relates to the conditions under which future party leaders get the time to root themselves in the party. Of particular relevance is the question of when and why they skip the process by which the swarm intelligence of fellow party members screens potential candidates for their leadership capabilities. As Cross and Katz (2013) note, the question of which processes and set-ups constitute intra-party democracy can be answered in vastly different ways. If one method of finding an answer to this question consists in tracing the conditions for the universalistic behaviour of party leaders, as I have attempted to do here, then investigating the consequences of rooting may be a promising way forward.

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