

## **Montenegro, NATO and the divided society**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper we are investigating the political and social effects of Montenegro joining NATO. This issue is highly controversial and follows the political divisions in Montenegro, which motivated us to apply social cleavage theory. As method, we applied logistic regression clustered for standard error. We found that besides socio-demographic variables (ethnic division between Montenegrins and Serbs), the main line of the cleavage indicated by support or opposition to NATO membership falls along the issues of the independence of Montenegro, its relationship with the EU vs. Russia, as well as the attitude toward political power and party identification.

**Keywords:** Montenegro, NATO integration, social cleavage, regression analysis

### **Introduction**

In 2017, Montenegro joined NATO and became the thirteenth post-communist member state of the alliance that was founded to contain the spread of communism. Unlike other recent NATO enlargements (Croatia and Albania were the last two countries which joined NATO, in 2009) the process of NATO integration of Montenegro is highly controversial, from both the internal, Montenegrin perspective, and from the perspective of global power relations.

To start with the later, Montenegro membership was heavily challenged by Russia, which perceives this expansion as a potential decrease of Russian influence in the Balkan region, as

well as creating division within the population of Montenegro. On the other side, EU and NATO countries perceive Montenegro membership as another expected step toward euro-Atlantic integration of the country and, therefore, as the indicator of stability and progress.

From the internal perspective, NATO membership is one of the most divisive issues in contemporary Montenegrin politics because it splits the society into two, almost-equal halves. Also, from the historical perspective, NATO membership represents one of the symbolic ends of the Yugoslav dissolution process, and one of the final steps (together with potential EU membership) of Montenegro's separation from Serbia and war-time legacies of the Milošević regime.

Montenegro's membership is also interesting because of several unique characteristics that separate this case from other eastern European countries which already have joined NATO, or plan to join. Some central European countries have significant objections regarding EU policies but support the NATO alliance (e.g. Poland or Czech Republic); however, in Montenegro, the situation is reversed: EU integration has had majority support for certain period, while NATO membership has had unstable support, as we show in the data. In this aspect, Montenegro is quite similar to Serbia, with whom it shares the 1999 experience of NATO intervention due to the Kosovo conflict.

Therefore, NATO membership of Montenegro is highly-contested by a significant part of the population of Montenegro, primarily by the Serbian community which makes 28% of the total population. The aim of this paper is to explain the roots of this opposition and to evaluate NATO membership as the potential source of internal conflict in the future. In the paper, we apply social cleavage theory because it enables us to link this issue to the main lines of political divisions within Montenegrin society. It also allows us to identify potential long-term

developments and the potential of political actors to articulate popular disaffection with NATO membership.

This paper consists of four parts. We will begin the article with the explanation of our theoretical approach in which we elaborate the ways to adapt social cleavage theory for the post-communist societies. Theoretical part of the paper will be followed by the background information on Montenegro, brief overview of the recent political and social history and presentation of the main parties, issues and lines of political competition. In the third part we will present data and variables, and provide descriptive analysis. In the final part of the paper detailed statistical analysis will be provided, followed by tests of our hypothesis and concluding parts with the discussion.

## **Conceptual framework**

Conflict studies in the second half of the twentieth century have been strongly influenced by Lipset & Rokkan's (1967) concept of social cleavage. It aimed to explain party systems as the outcome of the main social and political divisions. The explanatory strength of this concept was based on its ability to predict long-lasting and long-term alignments between parties and their constituencies and to explain the structure of political competition. The cleavage concept was strongly criticized in the decades following its introduction, mainly because of the decline of traditional ties between constituencies and political parties, e.g. the decline of trade unions and their influence on leftist parties (Clark & Lipset, 1991), as well as secularization and the decline of established ties between churches and conservative parties (Dalton, 1996). However, a number of innovative approaches kept the concept on the top of the research agenda, either by emphasizing a new understanding of social structure and its connection to political parties

(Evans, 2010), or by shifting the attention to value-based conflict (Inglehart, 1990; Kriesi, 2010), and/or to new reinterpretations of the old conflicts (Oesch, 2008).

Some scholars tried to reformulate the basic concept and make it more flexible and adaptable. In this paper we are also following the methodological approach of Deegan Krause (2007), who was inspired by Bartolini & Mair (1990). Following this approach, we focus on a three-level understanding of cleavage: socio-demographic (referring to a particular and self-conscious social group), attitudinal (the beliefs and interests of the identified group), and organizational (parties, movements or NGOs that represent the group). However, due to the aforementioned de-alignments in the second half of the twentieth century, Deegan Krause proposes a classification of phenomena that are similar to cleavage but do not fulfill all three criteria, and introduces *differences* (based on only one criteria) and *divisions* (based on the alignment of two levels). Therefore, the *full cleavage* has to include all three components, while there can be three variations of *the divisions*: issue divide (overlapping organizational and attitudinal), census divide (overlapping structural and organizational) and structural (overlapping structural and attitudinal).

In this paper, we are especially interested in so-called *issue divisions* that represent long-lasting divisions between parties based on their different standpoints regarding one of the main political issues. These issue divisions can have significant social rootedness, but it shall not be interpreted as a consequence of it (as in the classic theory), which makes this approach more appropriate for post-communist societies. Namely, post-communist societies are often characterized as societies with low class-differentiation because of the state controlled economy during communist rule. They also are viewed as societies without developed mezzo-levels of political organizing (Evans & Whitefield, 1993), which prevents interest-based organizing in the

first transitional years. This means that political elites have more freedom in articulating the interests and development of group identities, which reverses the initial cleavage theory direction from a bottom-up to a top-down process (at least to a certain extent). Finally, Elster, Offe & Preuss (1998) emphasized one very important distinction from the original theory, arguing that the main cleavages in transitional societies usually spring from identity politics rather than interest-based politics, which has zero-sum logic as the consequence and centrifugal political competition that often leads to polarized party systems (Pavlović & Antonić, 2007).

## **Background information**

Montenegro is the smallest of the six former Yugoslav republics (626.250 inhabitants), and the last one to gain independence, on May 21, 2006. Although Yugoslavia collapsed during the 1990s after the secession of four republics, Montenegro remained part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which consisted of Serbia and Montenegro. This demonstrates that the idea of a Montenegrin nation, and its relation to Serbian national interest still was not fully developed and clarified (Bešić, 2005)

There are two main political issues regarding the path of Montenegrin independence: the existence of the independent Montenegrin nation, and the (re)definition of its relationship with Serbia (Pavićević, 1997). First, the ruling communist party of Montenegro (League of Communists of Montenegro) transformed itself into the Democratic Party of Socialist (DPS), and it remains in power following the model of preemptive reform (Kasapović, 1996). During the first transitional years, the DPS and party leaders Momir Bulatović and Milo Đukanović supported politics led by Slobodan Milošević and his Socialist party of Serbia (SPS).

In the spring of 1997, the DPS split between two groups. The larger one was led by Đukanović and the smaller one by Bulatović, who founded Socialist People's Party (SNP) later in 1998. Conflict with the Serbian leadership initiated the party division, and "it turned into latent conflict between two nations – Serbian and Montenegrin" (Bešić, 2005: 223). Milo Đukanović won the conflict, taking over power in the DPS by beating his rival Momir Bulatović in the national presidential elections in 1997, then in the parliamentary elections in 1998, following a pro-democratic and pro-European agenda (Goati, 2013:120). After that, the DPS and its leader took the clear position regarding the future of state union with Serbia: the DPS had become the strongest promoter of the idea of the Montenegrin independence.

The problem of ethnic division in Montenegro simultaneously became an issue, intertwined with these state-related developments. In the broader perspective, there is a problem of ethnic identity of the Montenegrins as a nation. Historically, one part of the Montenegrins consider themselves as part of Serbian ethnic corpus, while the other part consider themselves as separate and autonomous nation. This old/new division became the main line of division inside the main ethnic group in Montenegro regarding the issue of Montenegrin independence. One part of the main ethnic group – claiming that Montenegrins are a separate nation – advocated for independence. The other, Serbian-oriented population advocated for remaining in the common state with Serbia. This line of ethnic division is followed by strong party polarization. The ruling DPS and a few smaller, so-called civic parties took the position of the independence of Montenegro, while the main opposition parties remained pro-Serbian, opposing Montenegrin independence. After ten years of clashes and deep political disagreement between these two sides, the referendum took place on May 21, 2006. The two sides, with international assistance, had negotiated the referendum rules, agreeing that a majority of 55% votes would be the

threshold for proclaiming independence. Block for Independent Montenegro led by Đukanović and the DPS won a narrow victory of 55.5% of the votes, and Montenegro declared independence.

Consequently, the political issue (the future of state union with Serbia) and the ethnic issue (Montenegrins vs. Serbs) overlapped and reinforced one, single line of division: political cleavage regarding Montenegro statehood. This cleavage has driven political developments in Montenegro since 2006. Also, the cleavage confirmed the hypothesis on the transitional divisions (cleavages) defined by Elster, Offe and Preuss (1998), since the identity issue became the most important one, disregarding the importance of economic interests.

The content of the cleavage goes further and includes more political issues and dimensions. The side that supports an independent state and separate Montenegrin nation also shares a strong identification with the West. This kind of identification attracted support from the Western states, United States of America and EU countries, in particular for the ruling political party. On the other side, the Serbian part of the same ethic and political community is strongly identified not only with the Serbs as nation, but also with the Eastern historical connection of Montenegro with Russia. Therefore, the cleavage between Montenegrins and Serbs, i.e. the independence of Montenegro vs. remaining in the united state with Serbia, overlaps with the historical identity of Montenegro and Montenegrins, i.e. western vs. Russian identification. With the exception of the ethnic issue, this cleavage constellation is similar to Serbia, in which the modernist side supports EU membership and integration into the western world, while conservative forces argue against EU membership and for stronger ties with Russia (Spasojević, 2016), or with other eastern EU cases of cleavages between Occidentalist and traditionalists (Stojiljković, 2009). Finally, this division also is underpinned by the economic cleavage in

Montenegro. Because the ruling DPS has been in power since the beginning of the post-socialist transformation, this political elite was directly involved in the process of transitioning economic wealth into the hands of a new economic ruling class (Szelenyi, 1995). As a consequence of the market transformation, the new economic elite became a part of the new political structure, identifying with and supporting one part of the society in line with the cleavage.

Reinforced cleavages in Montenegro led to a divided-society model and significant political instability. The constant rule by the DPS – which has been in power since the beginning of party pluralism – has increased the instability. Due to this lack of a second shift of government that can serve as the test of democratic consolidation (Linz & Stepan, 1996), some scholars raised concerns regarding the quality of democracy in Montenegro<sup>1</sup>.

Similar concerns are often expressed by the opposition parties, which have led to several boycotts of the parliament including the one in May 2017, when the Montenegro parliament voted to join NATO with 100% support (46 MP votes) with 35 MPs absent<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, we contend that the issue of NATO integration is not primarily an issue of military security, and almost not at all. In this social and political constellation, NATO integration is a salient part of the basic and deep social and political cleavage of Montenegrin society, and it produces stronger and more passionate polarization. As a result, in these conditions NATO membership has became the main issue and the driving force of the basic social and political cleavages in Montenegro. This is our main argument that we will try to defend in empirical analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Freedom House Index 2017, Montenegro is classified as 'partly free' with the score of 3.0 (Freedom house score range is from 1 to 7, higher score indicates lower levels of freedom), with negative trends indicated in 2016 regarding political rights and civil liberties. Montenegro is ranked as 90<sup>th</sup> in the world score out of 211 countries.

<sup>2</sup> More accurately, on the very day when the Parliament voted for NATO integration, these 35 MPs, representing mostly Serbian parties, organized a demonstration on the streets asking for a referendum on NATO

## **Data, variables and descriptive analysis**

For the analysis and hypothesis-testing, we use an extensive longitudinal data file provided by CEDEM<sup>3</sup> research department. The data were collected over the past ten years as part of the political omnibus CEDEM research which has been done as longitudinal trend analysis. In total, 27 researches dealing with NATO have been conducted between 2007 and 2016. Each research follows the same sample design and methodological procedures, i.e. multistage random sampling. In each research, exactly the same post-stratification sampling weights procedure was applied based on gender, age and ethnic identification. The composite longitudinal data file consists of 29,272 observations. The number of respondents<sup>4</sup> in each research is presented in Table I.

In each research, the support of NATO integration with the possible answers: 'Yes', 'No', and 'Don't know/can't say' was the main question regarding NATO integration. In Graph 1, we present the support of NATO for each research that has been conducted in the referent period. The average NATO support rate for the entire 27 researches is 32.7%, whilst the average percentage of those who are against NATO integration is 43.1%<sup>5</sup>. Only in November 2011, and November 2015, did the number of supporters exceed the number of opponents. In all the other researches, the number of opponents of NATO integration is higher. However, the number of supporters for the entire period significantly increases if we compare the first and last research: it increased from 29.1% in February 2007, to 40.6% in December 2016. Also noteworthy is that as

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<sup>3</sup> CEDEM: Center for Democracy and Human Rights – one of the most prominent think-thank and research-oriented NGOs in Montenegro. <http://www.cedem.me/en/>

<sup>4</sup> The number of respondents in the researches varies due to different research goals in each project.

<sup>5</sup> The percentages include described poststratification weights. Without weights, or if weighted differently, the percentage may change slightly.

the importance of the NATO increases in the political discourse, the number of those with no opinion significantly decreases, from 27.4% in February 2007 to 14.3% in December 2016.

However, this change of support over time is relatively low, meaning that most of the variation in the level of NATO backing is not due to the differences among research which has been done at different times, but to differences among observations. For this purpose we calculate Intra-class Correlation Coefficient in accordance to formula (1)

$$ICC = \frac{M}{M-1} \times \frac{SSW}{SST} \quad (1)$$

where:

M – The mean number of individuals per cluster

SSW – Sum of squares within groups

SST – Total sum of squares

According to Intra-class correlation, only 0.5% of the variation of NATO support is due to the differences between the periods of the research, while 99.5% of the variation is due to differences between observations. In other words, support for NATO does not depend on time: it depends on the same structural, social and political factors which are persistent over time. We argue that these factors are in line with the basic social and political cleavage that exists in Montenegro, and these factors, as such, are time-resistant. Moreover, one of the main arguments we stress is that, if they are resistant, they will continue to divide Montenegrin politics and society; and consequently, the status of Montenegro as a NATO country in the long run will be jeopardized, or at least its performance as a members state could be questionable. Considering its divisive effect, the NATO issue will not unite Montenegrin society. It will further divide the society in the future, and this division will be driven by the concrete obligations that would come from membership status.

Our dependent variable in the analysis was a dummy variable coded 1 for YES (supporting NATO) and 0 for NO (against NATO). Those who have no attitude about this issue are not included in the analysis. As predictors, we introduced the set of variables needed for the hypothesis testing in regression models. Gender is coded as 1 for female and 0 for male. Age of the respondents is the only variable in the model that has been used as numeric/continuous. Education has been re-coded into four dummy variables: ‘no education or elementary school’, ‘high school third and fourth degree’, ‘higher education’, and ‘faculty and more education’. We used, ‘no education and elementary education’ as a reference category in the regression analysis. Income is also recoded into three categories based on the equal variance criterion. We used ‘low income’ as reference category, while in the regression analysis, as dummy variables, ‘medium income’ and ‘high income’ were included. Ethnicity is also included as a number of dummy variables, and we used ‘Serb’ as a reference category in the regression analysis. Independence of Montenegro—which we refer to as ‘referendum’— is a dummy variable coded 1 for YES (supporting independence) and 0 for NO (against independence). Those who have no opinion about independence/referendum are not included. A variable about the ‘direction of the country’ is respectively recoded as dummy variable 1 for claiming that the country is moving in ‘right direction’, and 0 for the country is moving in ‘wrong direction’. Those who cannot say or refuse to answer on this question are excluded. On whom Montenegro should rely in foreign policy was a separate question in the questionnaire for the EU and Russia. On this question, respondents estimated to what extent the country should rely on the EU and Russia in foreign policy, with the options of ‘completely’, ‘mostly’, ‘little’, and ‘not at all’. We produced dummy variables coded 1 for ‘completely’ and ‘mostly’, and 0 for ‘little’ and ‘not at all’. Those who have no opinion are excluded. Finally, party identification is measured in the traditional manner, i.e. for each party

we produced a dummy variable coded as 1 for voting for the party in question and 0 as not voting for that party.

However, with regard to parties, it is important to identify the categorization that is used in the analysis. The categorization was necessary because there are a number of different parties in Montenegro. First, for the ruling DPS, we included all the respondents claiming to vote for this party, or for the coalition led by the DPS<sup>6</sup>. Serbian parties are the common name for Democratic Front (DF), DEMOS, Socialist People's Party (SNP), New Serbian Democracy (NOVA), People's Party (NS), DEMOCRATS, and some small (but explicitly Serbian) parties. Albanian parties are the Albanian Alternative (AA), Democratic Alliance of Montenegro (DSCG), Democratic Union of Albanians (DUA), and FORCA. The Bosnian Party<sup>7</sup> (BS) is the only Bosnian/Muslim party. Finally, we named a final group of parties as Montenegrin civic parties. These parties have a clear civic agenda – often openly opposing Serbian identification and nationalism in general – while supporting Montenegrin independence and Western identification. In this group we included the Social Democratic Party (SDP), United Reform Action (URA), Liberal Party of Montenegro (LPCG), Movement for Change<sup>8</sup> (PZP), Positive Montenegro (PCG), Social-Democrats (SD), Montenegrin Democratic Union (CDU), and Croatian Citizenship Initiative<sup>9</sup> (HGI).

Finally, we note that we did not have the whole set of variables from each research. Namely, since each research had different objectives, each had different variable settings.

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<sup>6</sup> In some researches the elections were close, and the respondents were asked for which party/coalition they would vote in accordance to the list that was formed for the elections.

<sup>7</sup> Additionally, five more cases are added for this category, and they come from one small Muslim coalition that has participated only once in the elections.

<sup>8</sup> PZP since it is founded was explicitly civic party with civic agenda. However, in 2012 this party became a part of the Democratic Front (DF), which has a clear Serbian agenda. Therefore, until 2012—when PZP was participating in elections autonomously—we treat PZP as the Montenegrin Civic Party. After this party joined DF, it is treated as part of DF, i.e. Serbian party.

<sup>9</sup> Although HGI has a national prefix, it is clearly a civic party with a civic agenda.

Therefore, we have a different number of clusters (researches) and different number of respondents in each regression model. However, two main methodological remarks are important. First, each research contained a question about NATO support. Second, each question in the questionnaire, whenever asked, followed the same wording. Consequently, we had to adjust to this fact in the regression analysis. Since we have nested data structure, we used logistic regression clustered for standard error, with the exception of the variable ‘independency of Montenegro’ because this question was asked only in two researches. Therefore, in this case, as noted in the referent tables, we used standard logistic regression analysis.

### **Statistical analysis and hypothesis testing**

If we go back to the main aspects of the division indicated by NATO integration, we can empirically test and confirm that it can be observed on all three levels of social cleavage: structural, ideological and organizational. We claim that at the structural level, the cleavage is about ethnicity and income (economic factor). At ideological level, we identify the attitude toward independence of Montenegro, as well as estimating the reliance on the West vs. Russia in foreign policy. As organizational level, we identify party identification, as well as estimating that country is moving in right/wrong direction.

In order to support our hypothesis, we provide two main tables. In Table II, simple percentage distribution is provided for each variable of interest. Additionally, we obtain logistic regression results from the entire sample and present seven models for the hypothesis testing in Table III. There are two reasons for the number of models. First, it was needed due to the co-linearity issue, which is expected by the logic of variable/cleavage overlapping. Second, we did not have all the predicting variables in each research. Instead, we had different variable settings

in different researches, and this can be seen in Table III by observing the number of cases in each model, as well as the number of clusters. In all models, entries are logit coefficients, with standard errors in parenthesis. The analysis includes correction for standard errors followed by complex samples procedure (Khan & Shaw, 2011). The correction was necessary because the residual error might be correlated between observations which are grouped in each cross-sectional research project that we treat as a cluster. In Model 3, logit coefficients of standard logistic procedure are reported, due to the fact that we have the data for the ‘attitudes toward independency’ only for two clusters.

First, as a part of the structural level of the cleavage, we observe socio-demographic variables, without ethnicity<sup>10</sup> (Model 1). As we argued, the long-standing government ruled by the DPS influenced the distribution of wealth since socialism collapsed (Hankiss, 1990; Staniszkis, 1990). In other words, there is a synergy between the ruling political elite and the new entrepreneurial class. Therefore, it is to be expected that income, above all, should be a significant aspect of the cleavage covering economic aspects as important ones. We expect that higher-income individuals are more supportive of NATO. The most important data in this model shows that those with higher income are 48% more likely to support NATO compared to those with low income (reference category). Also, those with medium income are 14.5% more likely to support NATO compared to those with lower income. Thus, it seems that the line of the cleavage goes along class distribution, which results from the transition of wealth into the hands of political winners of the process of post-socialist transformation.

Structural (socio-demographic) basis of the cleavage can be found in ethnic identification, as well. However, it is questionable if ethnicity should be taken as a demographic or political variable. Namely, it seems that ethnic identification – as far as we speak about the

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<sup>10</sup> As we argue later, it is disputable should we consider ethnicity as a demographic or political variable.

Montenegrin/Serb division – is more a political than a demographic variable, i.e. that national identity comes as the outcome of political standpoints. First and simple empirical data of this kind is the analysis of the TREND based on census data<sup>11</sup>. In the 1991 census – the last before the former Yugoslavia collapsed – the population was 61.9% Montenegrins and 9.3% Serbs. The next census was conducted in 2003. During the intervening period Yugoslavia collapsed, and the ethnic/ political conflict in Montenegro emerged as we described. In the 2003 census, 43.2% of the population was identified as Montenegrins and 32% as Serbs. To put it simply, in this last period, almost 20% of Montenegrins changed their ethnic identification from Montenegrin to Serb. There was no ‘demographic natural disaster’ in Montenegro, or any kind of migration that could explain such extensive change in numbers of Serbs and Montenegrins. This change in ethnic demographics can be explained by ethnicity as political identification in the new social and political circumstances. The number/ratio of Serbs increased because it became a tool for expressing political and cultural attitudes and belonging after 1997, and division between Serbian and Montenegrin leadership.

In Model 2 we present the support of NATO for each ethnic group in Montenegro. Ethnicity as a variable is controlled for other demographic variables. We observed the odds of NATO support for each ethnic category if the reference category is ‘Serb’ nationality because this is the only group which is strongly against NATO (more than 90% of Serbs in average are against NATO). Consequently, data showed that Montenegrins are 8.4 times more supportive of NATO compared to Serbs. It also should be noted, however, that the most support for NATO based on ethnic criterion comes from ethnic minorities. Bosnians are 28 times more supportive of NATO, compared to Serbs, while Albanians are 25.7 times more supportive. Therefore, the NATO issue is clearly in line with the ethnic divisions in Montenegro: Serbs, as political

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<sup>11</sup> [www.monstat.org](http://www.monstat.org)

identity, are on one side, and the other ethnic groups are on the other. It is to be noted, though, that the main division in this regard is between Serbs and ethnic minorities.

A much stronger variable that proves the political argument that we already stressed is the explicit attitude toward the independence of Montenegro. Therefore, supporting the independence of Montenegro is the very core of the overall division of society. It is particularly significant since the breakup of DPS in 1997, and this breakup happened specifically over this issue. Furthermore, there is a strong historical background for the division in question (Stevenson, 1912; Rastoder, 2003). The results of the logistic regression analysis are presented in Model 3. The data clearly shows that, after controlling for demographic variables, the independence of Montenegro is the most important issue influencing the attitude toward NATO. According to log odds, it could be said that those who support independence of Montenegro are almost 12 times more supportive for NATO compared to opponents of Montenegrin independence.

Additionally, this division overlaps with political power: the promoters of Montenegrin independence hold the power; independence opponents are in the political opposition. Those who define themselves as Serbian, pro-Russian, opposed to the independence of Montenegro and against NATO membership, therefore, generally view country as moving in the ‘wrong direction’. This variable is a proxy for the attitude toward DPS authority and its legacy. It has held political power since the beginning of transition, and the DPS leads country toward NATO. Opposition to the DPS represents opposition both to the party’s political power and the direction in which the country is going. It also reflects the opposition to NATO membership. In Model 4, we provide the expected probability for supporting NATO by the variable ‘Montenegro is moving in right direction’, as opposed to claiming that country is going in ‘wrong direction’. As

in previous cases, the effect of this variable is controlled for demographics. The results of the regression analysis show that, controlling for socio-demographics, those who say Montenegro is moving in right direction are 13.1 times more likely to support NATO integration as opposed to those who say the country is moving in wrong direction.

One of the main issues regarding the basic cleavage in Montenegro is considering the country's identity as Western-European vs. Eastern-Russian. This issue in particular is very strongly reflected in the question of NATO integration because Russia openly and politically opposes NATO itself and Montenegro's integration into the military alliance. In Models 5 and 6, we present the likelihood for supporting NATO integration predicted by the attitude toward favoring reliance on the EU or Russia in foreign policy, controlling for demographics. It is highly unlikely (2.8 times) that someone will support NATO integration if s/he believes that Montenegro should rely on Russia in foreign policy. On the other hand, those who believe that in foreign policy Montenegro should rely on the EU are 5.8 times more likely to support NATO integration. It appears to be that foreign policy positioning Montenegro in the West vs. Russia is one of the main reflections of the cleavage in Montenegrin society, as well as one of the strongest indicators of the attitude toward Montenegro's integration into NATO.

Party identification is the third level of the political cleavage that we identified (organizational level). Ruling since 1997, the DPS firmly backs Montenegrin independence and integration with the EU and NATO; even more, the DPS wants to detach Montenegrins from Serbian ethnic identity. In Model 7, we present logit coefficients for NATO support based on voting for the main parties. The model is controlled for demographics, but it excludes ethnicity due to the strong correlation between national and party identification<sup>12</sup>. In this analysis, the reference category is those who abstain to vote in the elections. We found that those who vote for

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<sup>12</sup> All the parties have strong ethnic backgrounds.

the DPS are 7.2 times more likely to support NATO, while those who vote for Serbian parties are 6 times more likely to be against NATO. This discrepancy clearly demonstrates the cleavage we are stressing in this analysis. Additionally, supporters of the minority parties strongly support NATO. Among those who vote for Bosnian parties, the log odds for NATO support increases 5.2 times, while the exp B for the Albanian parties is 6.8 times. Finally, according to log odds, voters backing Montenegrin civic parties are 2.6 times more likely to support NATO.

In our final analysis presented in Table IV, we realized a series of bivariate regression analyses in order to identify the way and the level of overlap among the variables<sup>13</sup>. This way, we can identify the pattern of cleavage. The analysis is introduced to measure, as accurately as possible, the interconnectedness of the cleavage variables, and the way they are producing the pattern. From the ethnic point of view, it is clear that Montenegrins, Bosnians and Albanians are positively associated with support of Montenegro independence, relying on the EU rather than Russia in foreign policy, estimating that the country is moving in the right direction, voting for DPS and, of course, supporting NATO. This positive relation is found among all of these variables mutually. Hence, these aspects/variables can be considered as crucial for the cleavage that has been identified. On the other side, with all these variables we have precisely the opposite association with Serbian ethnicity: Serbian ethic identification negatively relates to Montenegro independence; they prefer relying on Russia rather than the EU in foreign policy; they vote against DPS and for Serbian parties; they consider the country to be moving in wrong direction; and Serbian ethnic identification is clearly negatively-associated with NATO.

Two variables are on the ‘edge’ of the cleavage: ‘income’ and support for the ‘Montenegrin civic parties’. In the case of those who support the Montenegrin civic parties,

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<sup>13</sup> The reason for this analysis is the fact that each variable is dummy, so we did not produce classical bivariate correlation matrix. Also, it was not convenient to realize discriminant cluster analysis since we do not have all the variables in each research.

estimating the direction of the country is the only significant deviation from the pattern that we identified. Those who vote for the Montenegrin civic parties are on the same side of the society division as DPS and ethnic minority party voters, and clearly they oppose the Serbian parties in this regard. But civic party voters are somehow simply critical of the ruling DPS and its politics, and therefore the coefficient that represents relationship between these two variables is not significant. Apart from attitudes toward the ruling DPS, civic party voting correlates positively with NATO and other supporting variables. On the issue of income, Montenegrins have higher income compared to other ethnic groups, while Bosnians have significantly lower income; but also Serbs and Albanians have lower income as well. This relation is consistent with the findings that there is a positive correlation between income and support for the ruling DPS, and a negative correlation between Bosnian, Albanian and Serbian parties and income. However, besides this relationship between ethnicity and referent party identification, income is consistently positively associated with all the issue variables of the cleavage, i.e. those who have significantly higher income, compared to those on the other side of the division, support the independence of Montenegro, estimate that the country is headed in the right direction, think that the country should rely on the EU, and support NATO.

## **Discussion**

In this paper we have tried to explain the issue of Montenegro NATO membership from the perspective of social cleavage theory. By using empirical tests of an extensive longitudinal data file, we provided empirical evidence that portrays the complex picture of the cleavage structure and hierarchy in current Montenegrin society.

We used the three-element cleavage model (Barotlini & Mair, 1990; Degan Krause, 2007) that is based on structural, attitudinal and organizational elements. From this perspective, NATO membership is a part of the attitudinal level of the cleavage and its most salient issue. At the foundation of this attitudinal level is the attitude toward the independence of Montenegro, which has been the main issue since the state regained its independence in 2006 following the referendum. Furthermore, both sides – for and against Montenegro independence – are essentially different regarding many other issues. Besides the NATO issue, this main cleavage includes attitudes about the direction in which the country is moving, as well as the relationship with the EU vs. Russia identification (with regard to international affairs).

These attitudinal divisions are supported by the organizational level. The ruling DPS along with minority parties and the Montenegrin civic parties are on the one side (supporting independence, NATO and EU identification), while the Serbian parties are on the other side of the cleavage (arguing against independence, NATO membership and for stronger ties with Russia).

At the structural level, there is a strong collective political ground for the division, and it is formed on the basis of ethnic identity, i.e. Serbian ethnicity on one side, and all the other ethnicities on the other side of the division. Also, as part of the structural level, we found significant differences between income distributions: having significantly higher income correlates positively with the ruling DPS, Montenegrins, supporting independence, NATO, western identification and claiming that Montenegro is moving in the right direction; those with lower income fall on the other side. Based on this argumentation, we once again present the full cleavage in Scheme 1.

The Montenegro case can be a unique example for the cleavage theory because of the alternative interpretation of the ethnic/nation issue. Namely, in the classic social cleavage concept, structural element is based on some ascriptive characteristic, which usually is used as an independent variable. In the case of Montenegro, the national issue is more a question of political identity than something of an ascriptive nature (i.e. something a person can decide upon), which could mean that this cleavage should be interpreted as an issue divide (Deegan Krause, 2007), a division without clear structural foundation. However, since the current developments show a certain stability of ethnic identities and a strong process of nation- and state-building in Montenegro, we determined that the full cleavage model is more appropriate here.

Therefore, our main argument is that the NATO issue in Montenegro is not about security or any other military issue; it is about wider societal division regarding the question of its main identity and belonging. From the perspective of the current political winners in the post-communist transition of Montenegro, the ruling DPS and minority parties perceive NATO as the pillar that can additionally support the independence of Montenegro, as a state with a Western identity. From this perspective, NATO became the additional tool for strengthening the political and foreign policy route that Montenegro took after gaining independence.

Furthermore, the importance of the Montenegro NATO membership issue is based on the fact that support for NATO is not as strong as support for EU membership and the independence of the state. This is because there are some weak points in the structure of NATO support, stemming from the ethnic issue. Ethnicity is the main collective political carrier of the social division, but the main ethnic group in Montenegro is divided into two sides: Serbs and Montenegrins. At the basic level, the data showed that Montenegrins are supportive of NATO, independence and a western orientation of the country, while Serbs are on the opposite side of

these issues; however, the line between the two ethnic groups is not clear and definite. Also, as stressed above, according to analysis of the ethnic trends based on census data, it is not unusual to shift ethnic identification from Montenegrin to Serb and *vice versa*.

Based on our analysis, the stability of Montenegro as well as the legitimacy of NATO membership could be questioned in the future. It is clear that there is no firm political and social consensus about NATO membership. On the contrary, NATO membership is a part of a long-lasting cleavage, and a significant portion of the population expresses strong opposition to it. This opposition is not caused by some current situational factor, but is result of established and lasting, strong divisions that will not disappear simply because Montenegro enters the NATO alliance. Even more, among the mentioned layers of political cleavage, NATO membership has the lowest support rate. Therefore, not only could membership become an issue again in the future, but it also could affect the position of Montenegro within the alliance and the performance of NATO to certain extent.

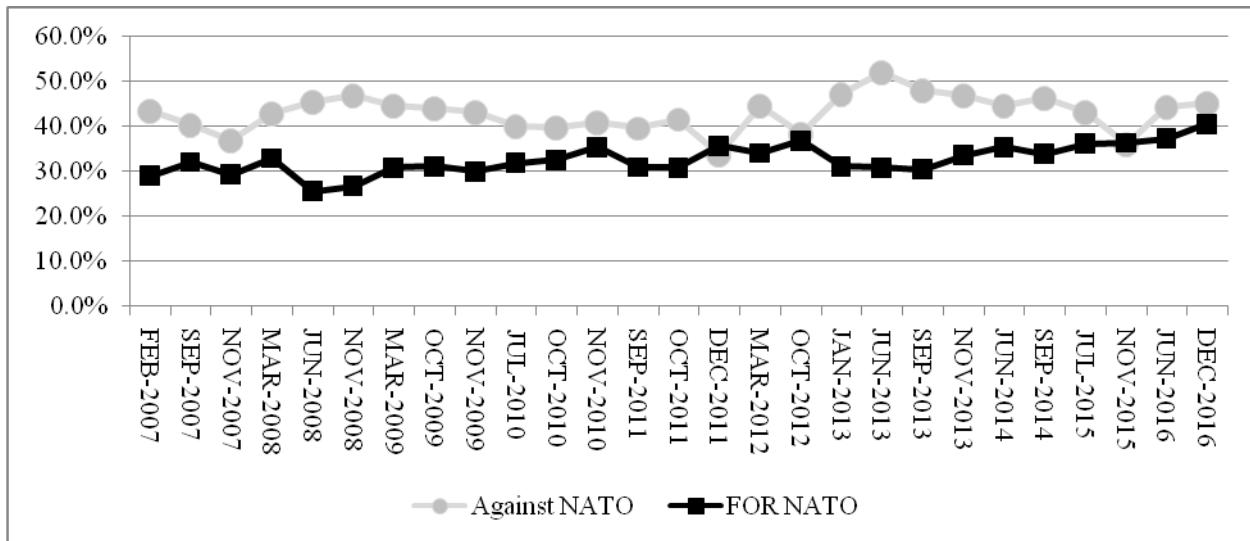
### Tables, graphs and figures

Table I. Number of respondents and referent period of the research

| PERIOD   | N     |
|----------|-------|
| FEB-2007 | 981   |
| SEP-2007 | 981   |
| NOV-2007 | 1228  |
| MAR-2008 | 1302  |
| JUN-2008 | 1029  |
| NOV-2008 | 1013  |
| MAR-2009 | 1207  |
| OCT-2009 | 968   |
| NOV-2009 | 1015  |
| JUL-2010 | 1026  |
| OCT-2010 | 1003  |
| NOV-2010 | 1033  |
| SEP-2011 | 975   |
| OCT-2011 | 962   |
| DEC-2011 | 1041  |
| MAR-2012 | 1503  |
| OCT-2012 | 1022  |
| JAN-2013 | 1007  |
| JUN-2013 | 1022  |
| SEP-2013 | 1013  |
| NOV-2013 | 1800  |
| JUN-2014 | 1050  |
| SEP-2014 | 1024  |
| JUL-2015 | 1009  |
| NOV-2015 | 1032  |
| JUN-2016 | 997   |
| DEC-2016 | 1030  |
| Total    | 29272 |

SOURCES: CEDEM

### Graph 1 NATO support – TREND



SOURCES: CEDEM

**Table II. Percentage of NATO support by categories/variables**

| Category                   | Variables                  | N       | %       |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------|---------|
|                            |                            | Support | Support |
|                            |                            | NATO    | NATO    |
| Gender                     | Male                       | 5331    | 45.0%   |
|                            | Female                     | 4224    | 41.1%   |
| Age                        | 18-34                      | 3199    | 44.1%   |
|                            | 35 - 54                    | 3544    | 44.3%   |
| Education                  | 55+                        | 2824    | 40.8%   |
|                            | No education or elementary | 991     | 39.4%   |
| Income                     | III and IV degree          | 5604    | 41.8%   |
|                            | Higher education           | 1225    | 46.4%   |
| Ethnicity                  | Faculty and more           | 1683    | 48.8%   |
|                            | Low income                 | 2819    | 38.1%   |
| Independency of Montenegro | Medium income              | 3742    | 43.3%   |
|                            | High income                | 2611    | 50.0%   |
| Country is moving in       | Montenegrin                | 5517    | 56.0%   |
|                            | Serb                       | 685     | 8.9%    |
|                            | Bosnian                    | 2047    | 77.5%   |
|                            | Albanian                   | 938     | 78.0%   |
|                            | Referendum (YES)           | 635     | 74.6%   |
|                            | Referendum (NO)            | 75      | 10.8%   |
|                            | Right direction            | 4218    | 75.9%   |

|                           |                           |      |       |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|------|-------|
| right/wrong direction     | Wrong direction           | 528  | 11.5% |
| Relying in Foreign policy | Relying on Russia         | 402  | 21.9% |
|                           | Relying on EU             | 1774 | 69.1% |
|                           | DPS                       | 5201 | 75.8% |
|                           | Serbian Parties           | 346  | 6.7%  |
| Voing for                 | Albanan parties           | 220  | 75.9% |
|                           | Bosnian parties           | 209  | 71.1% |
|                           | Montenegrin civic parties | 1304 | 51.5% |

SOURCES: CEDEM. For this purpose, those who have no opinion on NATO are excluded. The percentages are based on the number of respondents in each category who support NATO compared to those who are against. The remaining percentage up to 100% for each category is those opposing NATO when the ones who have no opinion are excluded.

**Table III. Logit coefficients: Predicting NATO Support**

| Predictors                            | Model 1                  | Model 2                   | Model 3                   | Model 4                   | Model 5            | Model 6            | Model 7            |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Intercept                             | -.177**<br>(.083)        | -<br>(.131)               | -<br>(.403)               | -<br>(.189)               | -<br>(.233)        | -<br>(.155)        | -.769***<br>(.151) |
| Gender (Female)                       | -.171***<br>(.038)       | -.199***<br>(.040)        | -.431***<br>(.144)        | -.204***<br>(.061)        | -.339**<br>(.095)  | -.131<br>(.103)    | -.304***<br>(.052) |
| Age                                   | -.001<br>(.001)          | .006***<br>(.001)         | -.001<br>(.005)           | .006***<br>(.002)         | .007**<br>(.002)   | .008***<br>(.002)  | .001<br>(.001)     |
| School medium<br>III and IV<br>degree | -.118*<br>(.060)         | .153**<br>(.073)          | -.284<br>(.250)           | .406***<br>(.091)         | -.005<br>(.092)    | .162*<br>(.083)    | -.057<br>(.069)    |
| School higher                         | -.016<br>(.081)          | .320**<br>(.115)          | -.460<br>(.310)           | .680***<br>(.132)         | -.100<br>(.125)    | -.090<br>(.197)    | .116<br>(.106)     |
| School Faculty<br>and more            | .035<br>(.076)           | .346***<br>(.086)         | -.245<br>(.304)           | .614***<br>(.137)         | .330**<br>(.098)   | .325**<br>(.115)   | .046<br>(.076)     |
| Income<br>medium                      | <b>.183***</b><br>(.045) | .228***<br>(.048)         | .140<br>(.173)            | .055<br>(.108)            | .149<br>(.109)     | .130<br>(.111)     | .056<br>(.050)     |
| Income<br>high                        | <b>.393***</b><br>(.073) | .538***<br>(.090)         | .452**<br>(.204)          | .382**<br>(.149)          | .298<br>(.163)     | .234<br>(.186)     | .235**<br>(.089)   |
| Montenegrin                           |                          | <b>2.125***</b><br>(.093) | 1.310***<br>(.198)        | 1.370***<br>(.102)        | 2.200***<br>(.180) | 2.004***<br>(.207) |                    |
| Bosnian                               |                          | <b>3.332***</b><br>(.141) | 2.255***<br>(.256)        | 2.453***<br>(.193)        | 3.612***<br>(.333) | 3.160***<br>(.312) |                    |
| Albanian                              |                          | <b>3.246***</b><br>(.175) | 2.399***<br>(.364)        | 2.407***<br>(.266)        | 3.514***<br>(.329) | 3.312***<br>(.386) |                    |
| Referendum                            |                          |                           | <b>2.447***</b><br>(.169) |                           |                    |                    |                    |
| Right direction                       |                          |                           |                           | <b>2.574***</b><br>(.152) |                    |                    |                    |

|                              |        |        |      |       |       |       |                 |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|
| Relying on<br>Russia on FP   |        |        |      |       |       |       | <b>1.020***</b> |
|                              |        |        |      |       |       |       | (.179)          |
| Relying on EU in<br>FP       |        |        |      |       |       |       | <b>1.761***</b> |
|                              |        |        |      |       |       |       | (.153)          |
| DPS                          |        |        |      |       |       |       | <b>1.969***</b> |
|                              |        |        |      |       |       |       | (.126)          |
| Serbian parties              |        |        |      |       |       |       | -               |
|                              |        |        |      |       |       |       | <b>1.789***</b> |
| Albanian parties             |        |        |      |       |       |       | (.135)          |
|                              |        |        |      |       |       |       | <b>1.909***</b> |
| Bosnian parties              |        |        |      |       |       |       | (.192)          |
|                              |        |        |      |       |       |       | <b>1.640***</b> |
| Montenegrin<br>civic parties |        |        |      |       |       |       | (.201)          |
|                              |        |        |      |       |       |       | <b>.944***</b>  |
| Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>    | .012   | .334   | .550 | .555  | .445  | .493  | .393            |
| N                            | 20 919 | 20 919 | 1499 | 9 908 | 3 648 | 3 897 | 19 483          |
| Clusters                     | 26     | 26     | 2    | 17    | 7     | 7     | 25              |

\*\*\*  $p < .01$       \*\*\*  $p < .05$       \*\*\*  $p < .1$   
**SOURCES: CEDEM.** Model 3 is based on standard logistic regression; all the other models present logit regression coefficients corrected for cluster standard error. Standard error of coefficients reported in parentheses.

Table IV. Bivariate logit coefficients: Mapping the pattern of cleavage

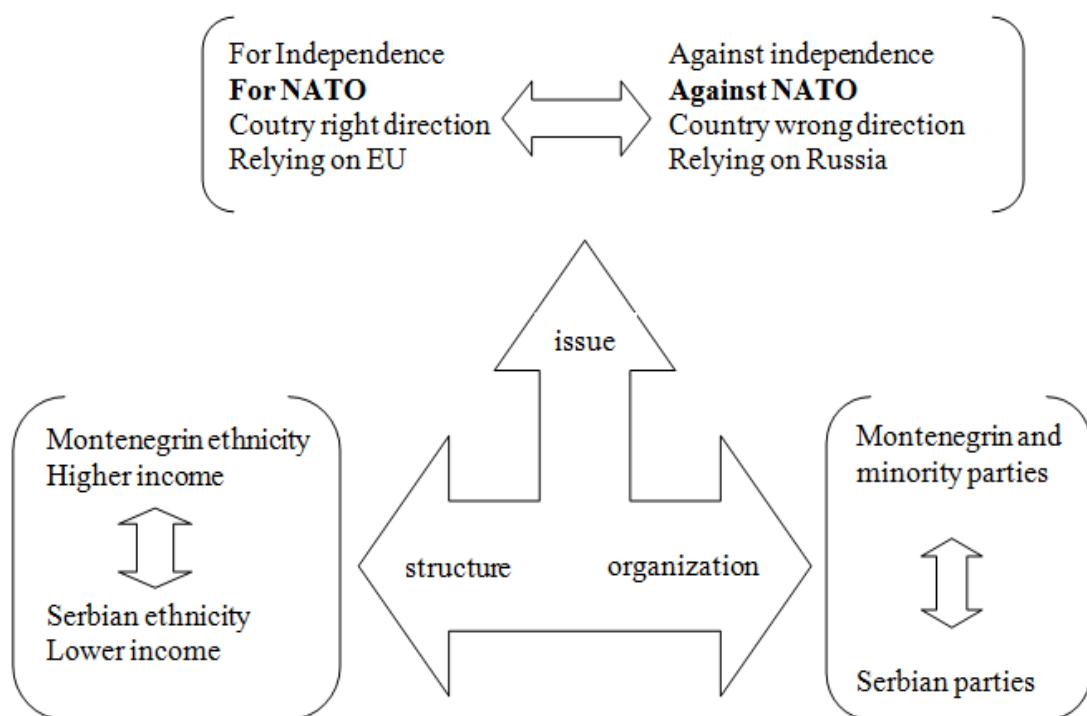
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | NATO                      |       |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|------|---------------------------|-------|
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | High Income               |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Montenegrin civic parties |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Bosnian parties           |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Albanian parties          |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Serbian parties           |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | DPS                       |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Relying on EU in FP       |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Relying on Russia in FP   |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Right direction           |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Referendum                |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Albanian                  |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Bosnian                   |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Serbian                   |       |
|                         |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |       |      | Montenegrin               |       |
| Montenegrin             | 1 | - | - | - | 1.49  | 1.23  | -.68  | .66   | 1.10  | -1.77  | -2.41 | -2.91 | .35  | .71                       | .79   |
| Serbian                 |   | 1 | - | - | -3.31 | -2.79 | 1.71  | -1.92 | -2.83 | 2.97   | -2.33 | -4.59 | -.79 | -.30                      | -2.78 |
| Bosnian                 |   |   | 1 | - | 1.77  | 1.43  | -1.51 | 1.70  | .75   | -2.86  | -.68  | 4.33  | .26  | -1.23                     | 1.66  |
| Albanian                |   |   |   | 1 | 1.56  | 1.29  | -1.11 | 1.07  | .45   | -2.56  | 4.42  | -2.07 | -.51 | -.25                      | 1.54  |
| Referendum              |   |   |   |   | 1     | 3.37  | -2.01 | 2.78  | 3.15  | -.2.87 | .97   | 1.03  | .65  | .33                       | 3.19  |
| Right direction         |   |   |   |   |       | 1     | -1.59 | 2.32  | 3.53  | -2.88  | .76   | .56   | -.00 | .47                       | 3.15  |
| Relying on Russia in FP |   |   |   |   |       |       | 1     | -.60  | -1.06 | 1.57   | -.93  | -1.85 | -.43 | -.21                      | -1.60 |
| Relying on EU in FP     |   |   |   |   |       |       |       | 1     | 1.60  | -1.99  | .69   | 1.30  | .59  | .29                       | 2.31  |
| DPS                     |   |   |   |   |       |       |       |       | 1     | -      | -     | -     | -    | .17                       | 2.08  |

|                              |   |   |   |   |             |              |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|-------------|--------------|
| Serbian<br>parties           | 1 | - | - | - | -.39<br>*** | -2.83<br>*** |
| Albanian<br>parties          |   | 1 | - | - | -.26<br>*   | 1.29<br>***  |
| Bosnian<br>parties           |   |   | 1 | - | -.97<br>*** | 1.02<br>***  |
| Montenegrin<br>civic parties |   |   |   | 1 | .20<br>***  | .35<br>***   |
| High income                  |   |   |   |   | 1           | .33<br>***   |
| NATO                         |   |   |   |   |             | 1            |

\*\*\* p < .01      \*\*\* p < .05      \*\*\* p < .1      NS – not significant

SOURCES: CEDEM. When the coefficients include the referendum (independence) variable, they are based on standard logistic regression procedure. In all other cases logit regression coefficients are corrected for cluster standard error. The reason is because we had only two research projects that included the referendum variable.

### Scheme 1 Full cleavage in Montenegro



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