

# Ethnicity and Electoral Politics: The Role of Contextual Factors in Voting and Citizen-Party Linkage

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# Declaration

I, the undersigned Nemanja Batrićević candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Central European University Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy, and International Relations, declare herewith that the present thesis, apart from Chapter 3, is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. Chapter 3 is co-authored with Olivera Komar, associate professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Montenegro. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of work of others, and no part the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

August 31, 2021

*Nemanja Batrićević*

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Signature

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# Abstract

The question of whether (and how) ethnic divisions affect electoral competition has occupied the attention of comparative politics for decades. The main question addressed in this dissertation is under what conditions the supposed negative effects of ethnicity on electoral outcomes occur, and when they can be mitigated. In ontological terms, this dissertation diverges from the primordial theories that dominate the study of ethnicity in electoral politics. Instead, it assumes that democratic competition is not necessarily juxtaposed to ethnopolitics, as socially constructed ethnic identities are capable of producing dynamic electoral contestation. While variation in the outcomes of ethnopolitics stems from several sources, this dissertation focuses on the role of contextual factors. It sets out from the supposition that the ethnic effect varies across features that are multilevel in nature: individual membership, group's size, spatial distribution, internal structure, as well as overall ethnic composition of a polity.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the thesis. Since the dissertation is developed as a paper-based thesis, composed of four entirely separate papers, each with their unique theoretical chapters, methodology and data, the purpose of this introduction is to emphasize the overarching theme and joint contribution. I also use the introduction for conceptualization and situating my research in the wider research agenda.

The empirical chapters start with Chapter 2, in which the effect of a country's ethnic composition on the strength of the programmatic linkage is investigated. The hypothesized effect of ethnic diversity on proximity voting is identified against a number of potentially confounding

demographic, political and socio-economic factors. The evidence suggests the presumed negative effect of ethnic diversity is overstated, since the programmatic linkage is hurt by diversity only under peculiar set of conditions, such as high intergroup discrimination and economic inequality.

Chapter 3 studies the most frequently observed alternative to the programmatic linkage – clientelistic exchange. More precisely, the study leverages a quasi-experimental design to show how the demographic composition of local settlements affects the targeting of ethnic minorities. The data reveals strategic targeting of minorities in settlements where they are demographically dominated by other ethnic groups, and thus less likely to weigh the material benefits against group norms in favor of the latter.

In Chapters 4 and Chapter 5, the thesis moves from the citizen-party linkage to studying the effect of ethnicity on party choice. Chapter 4 tackles one of the most critical issues in contemporary politics – the rise of anti-immigrant radical right-wing parties. More precisely, its studies the previously disregarded role of the spatial distribution of Muslim immigrants on electoral support for radical right-wing parties in Western Europe. The results show that an increase in the size of the Muslim immigrant population boosts support for the RRW only under condition of geographic segregation.

Chapter 5 studies the role of the internal divisions of ethnic groups on their political and electoral preferences. Specifically, the study examines the role of tribal identity in voting for the nation-building elites in post-communist Montenegro. The evidence suggests the significant role of tribal affiliations both in voting and categorization of political candidates.

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