
The Croatian Princes: Power, Politics and Vision (1990-2011)

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Summary

The paper utilizes Machiavelli's insight into the nature of core political goals – winning state power, maintaining state power and achieving political vision – by applying it in the context of Croatian politics from independence to 2011. The scope of the research covers four periods: the Tuđman era (1990-2000), Račan's governments (2000-2003), Sanader's governments (2003-2009) and Kosor's government (2009-2011). In each of these cases we ask how the ruling elite got into power, how they maintained and lost power, and what political vision they achieved. The goal of the study is to understand the interplay between ideological, economic, institutional and tactical aspects of political power and its transformation within the Croatian context.

Keywords: Machiavelli, Power, Politics, Vision, Croatian Governments 1990-2011

1. Introduction: Power and Glory

In *The Prince*, Niccolò Machiavelli assumes that politics is driven by three main goals: a) establishing the state, b) maintaining the state and c) achieving great things, i.e. *gloria*.¹ Translated in the vocabulary of contemporary political science this would be: a) winning state power, b) maintaining state power and c) achieving one's political vision.² The first two goals – winning and maintaining state power –

¹ This article started as a paper presented at the conference *Europeanization and Contemporary Democracies* held at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb on 8-9th November 2013 as an integral part of the Faculty's 50th anniversary. We thank the participants for their comments and suggestions.

² On this point we rely on Mansfield's interpretation of Machiavelli's term *lo stato* as a ruler's status of power over certain territory and subjects, rather than the modern concept of the state as an impersonal system of rule (see: Mansfield, 1983). Skinner warns that we can find several

are used by Machiavelli from the very beginning of his book as criteria for assessing why different rulers in the ancient world and in his own time were successful while others were not. The third goal of political action – achieving one’s political vision or project – first comes into play when Machiavelli discusses the Syracuse tyrant Agathocles who came to power and maintained that power through crime. What Agathocles did was to acquire power, “but not the glory” (*imperio ma non gloria*) (Machiavelli, 1985: 35). This point is made even more clearly in the final chapter of *The Prince* when it becomes obvious that all the advice Machiavelli was giving to Medici is directed towards one vision: uniting Italy and freeing her from “barbarians” (French, Spaniards, Swiss and Germans). The insight that Machiavelli offers us is both simple and profound. To be able to achieve great political goals – classless society, social justice, national independence, security and peace, etc. – one has to be in the position of power.³ But craving power without any vision on how to use it (apart from maintaining oneself in the seat of power) results in a shallow and impoverished reign that, to use Machiavelli’s terms, shows neither virtue nor greatness.

We want to use this insight of the great Florentine thinker to analyse the transformation of political power in Croatia from its independence up to 2011. The scope of our research thus covers 20 years of Croatian statehood divided into four periods: 1) Tuđman era (1990-2000); 2) Račan’s coalition (2000-2003), 3) Sanader’s reign (2003-2009) and, finally, 4) Kosor era (2009-2011). Following Machiavelli, we want to analyse these four cases by using the following three main variables: a) how they got into power, b) how they maintained their power (or failed to do so) and c) what political vision or project did they try to achieve while in power. We will first discuss some methodological issues and clarify intermediary concepts used in our study to make sense of the empirical material. In the main part of the article we will apply aforementioned Machiavellian framework to the Croatian context. In the conclusion, we summarize our findings and compare the different approaches of the four Croatian princes in achieving their political goals.

different meanings of *lo stato* in *Il Principe*: as a form or rule (republic or principality); as a territory over which the ruler has control; as an apparatus of government. However, Skinner acknowledges that Mansfield is right as far as acquiring and maintaining the state (*mantenere lo stato*) goes: it refers to acquiring and maintaining the status of power (Skinner, 1997).

³ Great political goals or vision, of course, can have a very negative or even criminal character (such as imperial domination or creating a racially ‘pure’ society). Machiavelli himself saw the greatness of a ruler’s vision, as his examples of both Cesare Borgia and Ferdinand II show, foremost in ensuring the safety of one’s subjects and military expansion of one’s realm.

2. Methodological Framework:

From Machiavelli's *Prince* to Contemporary Croatia

What is left for us from *The Prince*? Even the name of this early 16th century treatise which we fore-fronted in our title is apocryphal. Originally, *The Prince* was published as *De principatibus*, which roughly translates as *On Monarchies*. Not surprisingly, it primarily refers to the context of post-mediaeval monarchies. It speaks of force, war, armies, fortifications and military technologies. It is, in other words, a short lecture on political murders and historical power-grabbing, criticized by such different political thinkers and authors as Bertrand Russell, Aldous Huxley and Karl Popper. Moreover, all the forces that shape contemporary politics – political economy, ideology, different public policies, or more cynically, power apparatuses that take hold of the political subjects – make things more complex than holding one's principality due to the prince's character, be it that of a political lion or a political fox. Is then – to initially reply to possible objections to our analytical “Machiavellianism” – our use of Machiavelli superficial or metaphorical?

Given the context of this study is contemporary politics in Croatia, there are certain limitations in utilizing Machiavelli's framework. However, one must bear in mind that some of Machiavelli's fundamental remarks remain very useful today, making him nothing less than a “greater Columbus” of modern political science, as Leo Strauss flatteringly christened him. According to Strauss, Machiavelli was an explorer “who had discovered the continent” of modern politics “on which Hobbes could erect his structure” (Strauss, 1953: 177). The idea that moves away from moralizing the elites or the masses in the political process, bringing in a somewhat pessimistic anthropology, power-seeking and selfish interests, remains analytically useful and not completely cynical because it still keeps political vision in perspective. What Machiavelli offers us is an insightful narrative on ‘what is’ in politics, in contrast to the normatively loaded jargon of much of the contemporary political theory, more interested in different aspects of ‘what should be’. Consequently, when we put aside the contextual historical baggage of war-making and partially suspend the complex context of contemporary policy-making and governing structures that permeate state and society alike, we reach the picture of politics that still works very well as a framework for political analysis of elite behaviour and institutions. As our goal is to offer an analysis of the transformation of political power wielded by heads of the state or government in a specific period of Croatian politics, we find the categories Machiavelli uses to be valuable analytical tools, rather than just mere metaphors. Machiavelli captured something important about politics that is still relevant when discussing the quest for power.

Apart from utilizing Machiavelli in examining three aforementioned political goals – coming into power, maintaining state power and achieving political vision –

we rely on *The Prince*'s general methodological framework by restricting our analysis to the abilities of Croatian princes (one president and three prime ministers) to attain these goals. Our purpose, following Machiavelli's cue, is to draw certain conclusions on the nature and transformation of state power within the Croatian context by looking at the way this power was wielded by those at the head of the government. While relying on Machiavelli for our basic framework of analysis, we also want to utilize two core concepts from Machiavelli's political thought: *virtù* and *fortuna*. In using the concept of *virtù* we are referring to use of political skill to gain state power, maintain it and use it to achieve political vision. By *fortuna* we mean those contingent elements that help or hinder one's political success. There is a direct connection between the two concepts because *virtù* that certain prince possesses is, in large part, assessed through the way he responds to the challenges of *fortuna*.

Of course, given the focus of our study, some adjustments will have to be made to Machiavelli's theoretical framework. First, *The Prince* primarily deals with "new principalities" (Machiavelli, 1985: 7-8), i.e. newly established states or newly acquired territories and, therefore, it seems that its insights could be consistently applied only in the case of the first Croatian president, Franjo Tuđman. The fact that we extend our analysis to three "hereditary princes" – prime ministers as *de facto* heads of the government after Tuđman – might appear counterintuitive. However, as these "hereditary princes" had been – through the democratic process – involved in winning and maintaining political power, it is valid to apply Machiavelli's framework in their case.⁴ Second, in *The Prince* the issue of democratic legitimacy of the prince's rule never arises, while in the context of the last two and a half decades of Croatian politics, this is one of the central issues. More importantly, the context of contemporary constitutional democracy that serves as the backdrop of our analysis is, as noted before, more complex than the power struggles in the ancient and renaissance world depicted by Machiavelli.

To account for this, when discussing the princes' ability to maintain power we will introduce four categories that go beyond Machiavelli's analysis: *institutions*, *political economy*, *tactics* and *ideology*. By *institutions* we mean the way princes use political power to set up and transform the institutional framework for the benefit of retaining their rule (constitutional and electoral engineering, questions of citizenship and voting rights, system of checks and balances, etc.). When discussing *political economy* we refer to the use of political power to distribute, manage and

⁴ The exception is Jadranka Kosor who was a true "hereditary prince" that was appointed to a position of prime minister by her predecessor and confirmed in parliament without winning the elections and building on any sort of grassroots democratic legitimacy.

control economic resources (through privatization, use of foreign debt, employment policies in state and public sector, clientelistic and rent-seeking politics, etc.). Under *tactics* we discuss those manoeuvres that serve to gain or keep political power, but fall outside of mandated institutional solutions or policies (coalition bargaining, electoral campaigns, post-election deals, neutralizing opposition, etc.). Finally, we use *ideology* to address the use of political power to invoke and impose values and concepts that give legitimacy and support to one's political position and vision and through which political action is justified or masked (nationalism, democratization, Europeanization, etc.).

After we have introduced the topic and clarified the methodological framework, the following part of the paper deals with utilizing Machiavelli's concepts in analyzing the use of political power by Croatian leaders.

3. The Tuđman Era (1990-1999):

How the State Was Born and Glory Tainted

Machiavelli's concepts of *virtù* and *fortuna* are useful tools to help us understand how Franjo Tuđman, the first president of the Republic of Croatia, and his party HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) came into power. The collapse of the Soviet Union and Communism in its Eastern European allies opened the window for the political transformation of Yugoslavia. Additionally, a political and economic crisis that arose in Yugoslavia itself soon after Tito's death made obvious the conflicting views that existed between the political elites in different republics on both the causes of the crisis and on how to resolve it. By the end of the decade, fuelled in large part by Slobodan Milošević's autocratic and nationalistic strategy, the questions of centralization, economic reform and political liberalization were pushed into the background as serious concerns about the legitimacy of the political system and possible dissolution of the federation itself emerged.

When Milošević's aggressive politics intensified, the reform-oriented wing of the League of Communists of Croatia (SKH) pushed for multi-party elections in the hope of ensuring their legitimacy. "As conflict escalated", notes political scientist Nenad Zakošek, "the dominant political divide between Communism and anti-Communism lost its strength" (Zakošek, 2002: 12) and gave way to the question of secession from the Federation and state-independence. Tuđman showed *virtù* by realizing this and he set the agenda of independence⁵ and presented his party as the guardian of the ideal of an independent Croatian state. Additionally, election-wise, *fortuna* favoured Tuđman and his party. The plan of SKH backfired: hoping they would win the most votes, they set up the electoral system in such a way that it

⁵ Initially, Slovenia and Croatia proposed a confederal solution to the crisis (see: Jović, 2008).

disproportionally favoured the strongest party.⁶ At the first general election Tuđman's HDZ won 41.9% of the votes, but as they were the party that got the most votes, this was translated into 58.8% of seats in the legislative assembly.⁷ Such an overwhelming electoral victory, given the context of escalating conflict with Milošević and the Serb minority in Croatia, gave Tuđman an opportunity to turn his party into a political and social movement for independence. As the conflict quickly spiralled into full-out war, Tuđman assembled all the major political options under the banner of the Government of Democratic Unity (1991-1992), politically neutralizing the opposition and ensuring that both he as the president and his party were perceived as defenders of Croatia's independence and territorial integrity. This perception was instrumental in keeping Tuđman in the seat of power for the next 10 years.

To understand the relationship between institutions and political power in the first decade of Croatian independence, we have to look at two things: electoral engineering and the semi-presidential system. The elections during Tuđman's era had a special political weight because they were perceived – both by political elites and the majority of voters – as the primary source of political legitimacy. This kind of minimalist account of democratic legitimacy where elections are given priority over other standards of liberal democracy – human rights, social justice, institutional transparency, citizen participation, independent media or fiscal responsibility – did not stop Tuđman and his party from tampering with the electoral process. This tampering was mainly done through electoral engineering rather than through direct electoral fraud. As documented by a group of political science researchers from Zagreb University (Šiber, 1997; Kasapović, 1993; 2001; Zakošek, 2002), HDZ as the ruling party used every trick in the book of electoral engineering to ensure they maintain their power.

First, as frequent changes in electoral rules for parliamentary elections suggest, electoral systems were designed to benefit the ruling party.⁸ For example, the

⁶ They chose the runoff election plurality vote with single-member districts and the second round in case when no candidate wins over 50 percent of given votes in the first round. All those winning at least 7 percent of the votes in the first round enter the second and the winner of relative majority takes the seat.

⁷ At the time, the legislative body had three councils: Social-political Council, Council of Municipalities and Council of Associated Labour.

⁸ As political scientist Mirjana Kasapović noted: "In ten years, all the central models of the electoral system for the first chamber of the Parliament have been remoulded: the absolute majority system (1990), the segmented system with the equal ratio of direct and closed list seats (1992), the segmented system with the preponderant share of the closed list seats (1995), and the proportional representation (2000). Comparatively, there has been no new democracy in Central and Eastern Europe with such frequent and radical changes of electoral systems in a mere decade" (Kasapović, 2000: 5).

change from balanced ratio of the direct votes in single-member districts and closed lists in the proportional part of the segmented system in the 1992 elections to the system that favors proportional part with closed list sets in the 1995 elections was specifically designed to avoid “the risk of a head-on political confrontation with the united opposition in single-member districts” (Kasapović, 2000: 9). Also, the electoral threshold was raised to 8% for coalitions of two and to 11% for coalitions of more than two parties to try and discourage opposition parties from joining collations with each other.

Second, Tudman and his party used the timing of the elections as a way to influence electoral results to their advantage. The obvious example here are the 1995 elections for the House of Representatives that were conducted much earlier than their due date as a strategic move on the part of HDZ to benefit from “national euphoria after military victory over Serb rebels” (Zakošek, 2002: 27-28).

Third, throughout the 90’s the ruling party was administering electoral districts either by a) setting up the size of districts in a way that would give more weight to the votes of citizens in those districts where HDZ had majority support (resulting in unequal value of votes between districts up to the ratio of 3.6 : 1) or by b) gerrymandering the districts by cutting up opposition strongholds (mainly by combining urban centers with more rural surroundings where the ruling party had a stronger support) (see: Cvrtila, 2001; Zakošek, 2002: 27-28).

Fourth and, probably, the most controversial was the “diaspora” vote for both presidential and parliamentary elections. The 1990 constitution guaranteed voting rights of all Croatian citizens, including those permanently living outside the country’s borders. For the 1995 elections it was decided that 12 seats in the House of Representatives would be reserved for representatives of expatriates with citizenship status elected on separate electoral lists and in separate electoral units. The number of seats – 10% of total seats in the lower chamber of parliament – corresponds to the percentage of Croatian citizens living abroad. In reality, only 27% of “diaspora” votes were cast, in large part by Croatian citizens living in Bosnia and Herzegovina (76% of cast ballots). This resulted not only in devaluing the votes of Croatian citizens living in Croatia in comparison to those living abroad (in the ratio of 3.36 : 1), but also in all 12 seats going to HDZ as a result of their clientelistic relationship with Croats from Herzegovina and the fact that their party almost had a political monopoly on organizing Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁹ The fact that the first Croatian prince and his party opted for electoral engineering rather

⁹ Kasapović, 2000: 6; 2010; Zakošek, 2002: 48. The electoral reform of 1999 abandoned the fixed number of seats for “diaspora” representatives and used non-fixed standard quota where the number of seats is determined by the number of voters participating in the elections, in practice reducing their number to six seats in the 2000 elections.

than direct tampering with election results can be explained by the need to maintain democratic legitimacy, but also by the overwhelming support they enjoyed among Croatian voters, at least in the first half of the decade. However, as HDZ's public support started melting in the second part of the 90's, Tuđman was not beyond using his presidential power to directly influence the outcome of the electoral process, as the notorious case of electing Zagreb's mayor testifies.¹⁰

As far as the institutions go, apart from electoral engineering, the constitutional decision to opt for the semi-presidential system played an important part in ensuring that political power would be centralized in the hands of the first Croatian prince. Semi-presidentialism that was in place in the first decade of the modern Croatian state gave Tuđman extensive executive powers, one example being the presidential right to appoint on his own accord five representatives to the parliament's second chamber, House of Counties. On top of that, Tuđman's real power went beyond institutional limits of semi-presidentialism. Both the executive and legislative branches of the government were under Tuđman's control. As far as legislature goes, "most important decisions were made by coordination or advisory bodies of the President of the Republic or by the president himself, without HDZ's club of representatives in the parliament having any say in those decisions", as Zakošek points out, which led to "political marginalization" of the parliament (Zakošek, 2002: 106). This marginalization became especially obvious in the 1995-1999 period when more than 54.5% of laws were enacted through expedient procedure, with parliamentary representatives only conforming the executive government's proposals.

The political power in the hands of the first Croatian prince was best reflected in the control he personally had over different state institutions, which went beyond what formal semi-presidential framework allowed. Even the judicial branch, argues legal scholar Alan Uzelac, was to a large extent under the control of the first Croatian president and his party, especially during the war years. This control manifested itself in two ways. First, Tuđman used his presidential power to pass decrees through which he circumvented the legislative and judiciary branches. Second, pressure was put on a large number of independent (and often most experienced) judges to leave the judiciary, and they were replaced by politically appointed new judges that were "incompetent, morally questionable and/or inexperienced", but loyal to Tuđman's regime. "Parallel to political appointments", concludes Uzelac, "political centers of power were creating a fortress in the judiciary to ensure their political positions and acquired privileges. This resulted in corporate structures that were beyond democratic control" (Uzelac, 2001: 40).

¹⁰ For a detailed account of this case, see: Kasapović, 1998.

During Tuđman's rule, institutions were modeled and transformed to provide as much political control as possible to Tuđman and his party within the institutional framework of constitutional democracy. This resulted in lowered democratic standards: the first Croatian prince ensured control over all political institutions, but a price of this control was loss of democratic legitimacy and, eventually, of public support. More dramatically, it also resulted in loss of faith in democracy by a large number of citizens. After only a decade of national independence and transition from socialist to liberal-democratic system, a survey conducted in 1999 showed that Croatian citizens expressed a deep dissatisfaction with democracy with 58.4% of them voicing they were unsatisfied and 24.6% saying they were completely unsatisfied (Rimac and Štulhofer, 2004: 316).

There are two processes in the economic realm that proved to be crucial for Tuđman in maintaining his power: privatization and, as it was called by political economists Ivo Bičanić and Vojmir Franičević, crony capitalism (Bičanić and Franičević, 2000; 2003). Privatization, cronyism and clientelism that accompanied them allowed Tuđman and HDZ to have tight control over economic resources while giving pretense of endorsing market economy values such as sanctity of private property, free entrepreneurship and market competition. The process of privatization happened in several phases, but the two essential steps were appropriation of collective property by the state and the distribution of that property according to the logic of political expediency (rent-seeking, clientelism and rewarding political loyalty). Unlike the countries that were the part of the Soviet Bloc, where the vast majority of economic resources was owned by the state, Yugoslav republics had a system of collective social ownership where the managerial rights of firms, companies and factories were in the hands of the workers employed in these businesses. However, with Croatia's transformation from command to market economy, new political elites appropriated all collective social property as state property to be distributed as the holders of political power saw fit. The distribution scheme included three categories: a) workers offered to buy stocks from companies where they are employed, b) private investors bidding for the ownership of companies, and c) the state. Only a very small part of the ownership of these companies ended up in the hands of the workers, with a much larger part ending up in the hands of private investors with political connection to the ruling party. The largest part, though, remained in the hands of the state, i.e. under the control of the political elite in power.

The paradox of Tuđman's crony capitalism is that, on the one hand, it resulted in an increase of political and economic power for him and his party, but on the other hand, it had dire consequences for long-term economic growth and, therefore, resulted in a decrease of Tuđman's and HDZ's popularity and political legitimacy.

There were several reasons why such tight control over management and distribution of economic resources could not be translated into a successful economic model. First, many lucrative and profitable firms, after being privatized, were run to the ground by bad management or deliberate mismanagement as a way of attaining and selling off their assets. The underlying logic of managing these firms was rewarding political loyalists and achieving personal profit rather than long-term economic sustainability.¹¹ Second, as jobs in state and public sector, as well as state-owned firms were often given to party members and sympathizers, this led to an unnecessary growth in public administration, resulting not only in the inefficiency of state-run services, but also in a dramatic increase in public spending. In 1994 public spending was 35.35 billion Kuna¹², but by 1999 it increased to 70.34 billion Kuna, an increase of 98.9%. As political scientist Zdravko Petak noted: “unrestrained political power” translated to “unrestrained public spending” (Petak, 2001: 151). Third, privatization and crony capitalism brought about a new set of economic winners and losers – those who have benefited from HDZ’s economic agenda and the majority who found themselves on the losing side. Although the disparity between the rich and the poor in Croatia stayed within the European average and might have been even smaller than in some other transitional countries in the 90’s,¹³ the fact that rising economic inequalities were, in no small part, result of political patronage, corruption and abuse of state power lead to mounting resentment and division within Croatian society. This was reflected in the decrease in public support for both Tuđman and the ruling party and their prospect of maintaining themselves in power (Zakošek, 2002).

The economic consequences of Tuđman’s rule, especially after the war ended, became obvious: massive increase in unemployment, fall in GDP, unsustainable growth in public spending and rising foreign debt. The autocratic control over the economy that Tuđman and his party practiced was not only bad for the national economy, but, in the long run, for Tuđman and his cronies too, who were more and more exposed to public financial scandals, resulting in public outcry and loss of democratic support.

¹¹ The economist Vladimir Lasić describes this process in the following way: “The Croatian model of privatization was damaging because the ownership was taken away from those who created the capital and given to those who have no business culture and no stake in survival of the company. Most of them aimed to turn formerly collectively-owned property into money as soon as possible... going as far as dismantling the machines from factory floors, selling them and putting money on their private accounts” (Lasić, 2000: 110).

¹² Relatively stable Croatian currency introduced in 1994. Today one Euro is worth approximately 7.5 Kuna.

¹³ The Gini coefficient in the aftermath of Tuđman’s rule, for the period 2001-2004, was 0.29, which is close to the European average. See: Matković, Šućur and Zrinščak, 2007.

It would be hard if not impossible to explain Tuđman's ability to win public support in the light of clientelistic political economy, rampant corruption, growing inequality, electoral engineering and disregard for the democratic standards if we didn't take into account the ideological framework that he relied on to both direct and justify his rule. Tuđman's nationalistic ideology came in three guises: independence, exclusionary ethnic nationalism and territorial expansion. The claim to national independence played a crucial part in legitimizing Tuđman's rule and the rule of his party. Personally, he depicted himself as "the father of the nation": a person responsible for both Croatia winning its independence from Yugoslavia and maintaining that independence. Therefore it is not surprising, given the overwhelming public support that existed for the idea of Croatian national independence, that this part of Tuđman's political agenda proved to be the most successful part of his nationalist ideology. The public's support for this agenda translated into support for Tuđman himself, allowing him and his party to justify the control of political, economic, judicial and public institutions beyond the democratic mandate that was given to them.

However, it also led to a fetishism of the state where the form (achieving national sovereignty) overwrote the content (development of democratic institutions and practices). One of the slogans often used by Tuđman – *Imamo Hrvatsku!* (We have Croatia!) – embodied this kind of ideology: having an independent nation state takes priority over achieving political and economic standards expected in the constitutional democracy. This explains why, after Croatia won the war and ensured its territorial integrity, the legitimizing strength of the independence narrative started to wither away.

The second element of Tuđman's ideology was a strong emphasis on the nation as ethnic community which led to inclusion of all ethnic Croats, irrespective of whether they lived within the borders of the state or not, to be counted as potential citizens. This model of ethnic inclusion translated into citizenship also had a pragmatic logic behind it, because a large part of the *diaspora* (ethnic Croats living outside of Croatia with a right to vote in national elections) was voting for Tuđman and his party. Apart from this inclusionary element, the other side of the coin was its exclusionary element which manifested itself through a number of discriminatory policies and practices towards ethnic minorities – especially the Serb minority. Tuđman was convinced that long-term political stability depends on the high level of ethnic homogeneity. This kind of discriminatory practices directed against Serbs in Croatia were not accepted by more liberal-minded voters and represented one of the main points of contention between pro-HDZ and anti-HDZ voters in this period.

The same ethnic element of Tuđman's ideological platform fueled the most controversial aspect of his politics to this day: territorial expansion. As the war in

Bosnia escalated, Tuđman embraced the idea of the most right-wing members of his party that Croatia should dissolve its alliance with Bosnian Muslims, provoke conflict with them and, eventually, annex the part of Herzegovina where the majority of Croats lived. This policy had a limited support not only among voters in Croatia, but even among Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina and among members of Tuđman's own party (Goldstein, 2011).¹⁴ Not surprisingly, it proved the most unsuccessful part of Tuđman's ideological agenda, costing him both the international support gained at the beginning of the war for independence and support at home.

Historian Ivo Goldstein argued that Tuđman "did not have a clear vision what the [Croatian] state should be like" apart from his "clear urge for authoritarian rule" (*ibid.*: 98). We disagree with this assessment and want to argue that Tuđman's political vision, although incompatible with modern democratic standards and values proclaimed in the Croatian constitution, was comprehensive. It is fair to point out Tuđman's "clear urge for authoritarian rule", but it doesn't follow the first Croatian prince was devoid of any true political vision apart from keeping himself and his party in power. The fact that Tuđman used (and abused) power to enrich his family and foster a culture of nepotism, clientelism and corruption doesn't mean that the ideological agenda we discussed in the previous section was nothing more than a mask designed to hide the authoritarian impulse for power for power's sake.

The central part of Tuđman's political vision was the independence of the Croatian state. Almost unified support for this idea among citizens,¹⁵ especially after the war broke out, gave his rule wide democratic support. However, Tuđman also had a vision of how the Croatian state should develop once independence was achieved. This part of his vision was deeply illiberal and largely undemocratic: oligarchic economic system fed by political cronyism, political control of the media and promotion of journalists loyal to his regime, state-sponsored revival of traditional culture that bordered on kitsch, political dominance over the judiciary, educational system, media, culture and all other aspects of social life. Unsurprisingly, this vision of Croatian society was rejected by the large part of citizens who wanted Croatia to become a democratic state where constitution is respected in practice, which led to strong division within the society between pro-HDZ and anti-HDZ voters.

¹⁴ One of the influential party members, Stjepan Mesić, who would later become the second Croatian president, left the party because of his disagreement with this expansionist policy.

¹⁵ In 1990 50.7% of citizens favored that Croatia remains part of Yugoslavia under the confederate model, while only 10.5% preferred secession from Yugoslavia and independence of Croatia, the same percentage as those who favored unified and centralized Yugoslavia without republics (see: Kasapović, 2001: 257). By May 1991, when the referendum on Croatian independence was held, 93.24% of voters (out of 83.56% of citizens who voted) decided that Croatia should become an independent state.

Somewhat paradoxically, Tuđman was convinced that long-term stability could be ensured if political divisions among Croatian citizens dating from WWII were overcome by wide support for his political vision. To achieve this, he introduced the project of *pomirba* (reconciliation), a project that failed as the autocratic character of his rule became more and more apparent, deepening rather than reducing political divisions within the society.

In conclusion, Tuđman was a Machiavellian. He had a clear political vision and *virtù* to achieve it. Unfortunately, a large part of his vision was in conflict with democratic values, as were the means he used to keep himself in power. Also, in achieving Croatian independence, he did not concern himself with the choice of appropriate means: it seems that he thought that the means would be considered legitimate once the state's independence was achieved. In that sense, he seemed to follow Machiavelli's precept: "let a prince win and maintain his state: the means will always be judged honorable, and will be praised by everyone" (Machiavelli, 1985: 71). However, the loss of public support that Tuđman faced by the end of the decade showed that his success in realizing Croatia's independence was not enough to excuse the abuse of power and gross failures of political economy.

4. The Račan Era:

Croatia on the Bumpy Road to the European Union

The constitutional changes of 2000 restricted presidential powers and, although future presidents would have more political weight than just being a formal figure symbolically presenting the polity, this meant that there was an important power shift from the institution of president to that of the prime minister. Therefore, the Machiavellian personalistic framework still makes sense: one of the "two princes", the prime minister, is the pivotal figure of high politics as the president was in the 1990s. The first in this lineage was Ivica Račan, the last president of SKH who, during Tuđman's reign, led the marginal opposition that grew in power as the 2000s approached.

In Ivica Račan's rise to power, *fortuna* played an important role. Tuđman died on 10th December 1999. The widespread national euphoria resulting from the 3rd place that the national football team won in the 1998 World Cup had worn out, uncovering a bleak social reality and relative political isolation of the country. In these circumstances, the coalition of six oppositional parties of the centre-left, led by now powerful Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Račan as future prime minister, had a political *kairos* to successfully mobilize the voters and overthrow decapitated HDZ from power.

The Coalition perhaps did not have a precise policy-package, but the general idea to revise the institutional framework of semi-presidentialism that worked as an

institutional lever of HDZ's regime was clear enough. The transfer of power from President to parliamentary-elected government was likely and a revision of the status of the upper house of the parliament was possible. In the field of political economy, the political cards of the Coalition were also obvious. It is not an overstatement to say that HDZ left the economy in ruins: many firms were destroyed, workers lost their jobs, and the unemployment rate in 2000 was as high as 16% (IMF, 2011). In its electoral messages, the Coalition was committed to resolve transitional injustices by the means of political economy. Infrastructural works and foreign investments, as they promised, would open job opportunities, and special focus was put on revision of the privatization. The promise was to trace down criminal activities and corruption that have marked the privatization process in the 1990s.

On the level of tactics, the opposition learned much from HDZ's electoral institutional design and the divide-and-conquer tactics from the 1990s. A pre-electoral agreement of six parties was reached. It was based on three principles: coordinated action, mutual non-aggression and forming of government according to relative electoral success (Kasapović, 2005). The ideological platform of the Coalition could simply be termed anti-Tuđmanism: the vague idea was to replace corruption, clientelism, cult of personality and ethnic nationalism with civilized and consensual steering of the country with reference to European values. The simple shouts of identity, exclaiming "We're not the Balkans", were to be replaced by real commitment to the EU accession. The project of European integration was to be paralleled with more genuine commitment to pluralist democracy. The Coalition sent strong signals that the friend-foe political discourse designating the enemies of the Croatian state was to be abandoned in the 2000s and replaced with the political idea of legitimacy of multiple parties, various interests and identities. As the popular documentary, tracking the Coalition leaders in their campaign activities before the January 2000 elections, put it: "new times" (*novo vrijeme*) were coming.

Once in power, after the January 2000 elections, the Coalition led by Račan as the new prime minister enacted constitutional changes. It partially abolished the semi-presidential system, reducing presidential powers, introducing the institutional controls for different constitutional prerogatives of the president, and erasing the traces of constitutional responsibility of the prime minister to the president. However, popular elections were preserved as the method to choose the president, still infusing the office with direct democratic legitimacy, and presidential prerogatives in the case of war and state of exception. Also, presidential powers in some policy areas remained, probably defining the Croatian polity as a unique model of "quarter-presidentialism". The Coalition also abolished the upper house of the parliament, further rationalizing the political system. Legislation on public television was enacted, making it more of a pluralistic and open public service than a propaganda

machine of the ruling party (often referred to as *katedrala hrvatskog duha* (“The Cathedral of Croatian Spirit”), as it was called by Antun Vrdoljak, its director in the 1990s). However, some of the expected institutional reforms were only partial: although parties as key institutions were further regulated and the clause providing for regulation of their finances became a constitutional item, the precise legislation on party finances had to wait until 2011 and the final phases of the EU accession process, when meticulous regulation on political finances and financing of the campaigns was finally enacted, providing for detailed provisions on supervision and sanctions in case of financial fraud.

In the field of political economy, the Coalition launched hefty infrastructural works in the Keynesian style of public spending stimulating the economy. Social apartments were built as well as roads and a modern highway connecting the North and South of the country. GDP grew, indicators of living standard became better and unemployment was somewhat reduced, from 16 percent in 2000 to 14.2 percent in 2003 (IMF, 2011). However, although the Law on the Revision of Privatization was enacted in 2001, no significant revision of the privatization came about – a constant for all future princes in contrast to their nominal commitments against this original sin of Croatian political economy, as well as pledging to reduce public debt while further borrowing money and increasing public debt.¹⁶ Foreign debt grew to almost 80 million Kuna in 2003, and general government expenditure grew significantly: from 70 billion Kuna in 1999 to 94 million Kuna in 2002, equalling 45 percent of GDP (*ibid.*). During the coalitional government, the privatization of large companies in public ownership became a strong trend that continued to the present day. One of the short-term motivations was, predictably, the consolidation of national budget, while ideological rationalization was found in the idea of privatization paired with the claim that private companies, be they of “strategic” importance or not, would operate more efficiently and to the public benefit. But, on the other hand, an ideological burden was created for the government: due to their perceived strategic national importance, the privatization of the public companies such as telecommunications, large banks and different utilities was often termed *prodaja obiteljskog srebra* (“the sale of family silverware”) that transferred economic power and profit into foreign hands.

Contrary to the tactical discipline in the process of gaining power, the mandate in power brought serious problems for the Coalition and exposed its deficits in the field of political tactics. Constant coalitional bickering and the Coalition’s

¹⁶ In the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis and in the context of the economic stagnation in Croatia, there were some more serious commitments to fiscal discipline, wages were slightly reduced in the public sector during the Milanović government (2011-2015), but that falls outside of the scope of this article.

lack of political determination put forward the question whether Račan had virtue in the Machiavellian sense? On the one hand, it seemed that the first experiences of coalitional governing demanded diplomatic skills, caution and prudence. However, these characteristics that were reasonably ascribed to Račan were, on the other hand, perceived as the lack of will to make a decision when necessary. The political nickname *mudri Račan* (“Račan the wise”) was more often than not pronounced sarcastically by those unsatisfied by his reluctance in making decisions. Furthermore, the agreement reached in Račan’s negotiations with Slovenian prime minister Drnovšek in 2001, which ceded the corridor to the international waters to Slovenia, was severely criticized by the legal experts and widely politically perceived as a move contrary to the national interest, complicating a legal dispute between the two states that lingers to the present day, and creating further problems in solving uneasy border questions with Slovenia. In a way, the Račan-Drnovšek agreement turned to be a litmus test of Račan’s political anti-talent in the Machiavellian sense.

The practices and the rhetoric of the Coalition led by Račan were faithful to anti-Tuđmanism as an ideological non-programme that launched them to power. The European accession process started seriously: instead of boasting with Croatian historical European identity, the Ministry of European Affairs was quickly formed, a top-level meeting of European leaders was organized in Zagreb in 2000, and the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU signed. Party politics became more pluralist, the rights of minorities were respected, and the model of citizenship became generally more inclusive (see: Štiks and Ragazzi, 2009; Štiks, 2010; Koska, 2012). In other words, European integration and its ideological baggage became the chief political goal and policy-orienting tool, as well as the NATO accession which was, however, not so much forefronted. However, problems and cracks in the Coalition appeared in the ideological field that destabilized Račan’s government. The ideological divide between SDP and its main coalitional partner, the Croatian Social-Liberal Party (HSLs), was caused by the legacy of the Homeland War in the 1990s: the Hague Tribunal extraditions of Croatian military officers caused high legitimacy costs for the new government. The government was, among a large part of the population represented by the parties on the right, labelled as “anti-Croatian” and smeared as “the Communist enemies of the Croatian state”. HSLs, leaning more to the right in that sense than SDP – personified in party leader Dražen Budiša, a student leader from the 1970s with an aura of national martyr imprisoned by the Communist regime, a personal and political contrast to more pragmatically oriented Račan – left the coalition in July 2002. The party split and Račan had to form the second coalitional government with Libra – the dissident fraction from HSLs, consisting of 10 MPs. The Coalition’s pro-European orientation encouraged the development of a rightist counterculture which was counter-system oriented. Its

cultural manifestations were concerts of Marko Perković Thompson, a nationalist singer flirting with the legacy of Croatian Second World War fascist regime, while the pulpits of the Catholic Church in Croatia echoed with nationalist sermons of the more ardent preachers. The culmination was the big rally in Split in February 2001 in support of general Mirko Norac, then arrested and later convicted for war crimes. The controversy relating to the “dignity of the Homeland War” continued with the issue of arrest warrants for Croatian generals such as Ante Gotovina and Janko Bobetko. While general Gotovina ran away in 2001, general Bobetko, who refused to be extradited to the Hague Tribunal, died in his house in 2003. Račan was caught in an ideological and tactical stalemate of political pressures and tactical impasses which proved too much for him. HDZ used the situation to discredit the Coalition and regain power.

In assessing the elements of Račan’s vision, three things have to be highlighted. First, the dismantling of semi-authoritarianism was successful. Democratization in the sense of pluralist party politics, more open public sphere, inclusive citizenship and minority rights was achieved on a level incomparable to the situation in the 1990s. The road to the European Union was opened and the process of Europeanization started, although with the obstacles associated with the ICTY indictments (see: Jović, 2006). Second, the economy was only partially revitalized and some dubious trends of public debt and public sector growth were strengthened during Račan’s governments, following the path dependency established already in the 1990s. The country was further deindustrialised, unemployment was not reduced as much as promised, and privatization was not successfully revised. Perhaps the only political moment when something could have actually been done on the question of the revision of privatization was lost. Instead, the narrative of criminal politically-sponsored destruction of the privatized companies personified in the 1990s’ “tycoons” armed with high political connections, continued to haunt Croatian politics as a purely symbolic commitment that finally settled in a farcical constitutional provision from the 2010 amendments stating that “the crime in privatization has no statute of limitation” (which to this day never produced any practical effect). The model of the self-destructive political economy took definite shape, as a weak spot of all future Croatian governments in the time span of our analysis.

The third element to be noted in the calculus of political glory of the Račan era was the ideological transformation of the Left. As SDP, the biggest Coalition party led by Račan grew even stronger, almost transforming the Croatian party system into a two-party system; it also turned more to the ideological centre, at least in economic issues and workers’ rights when measured on the level of concrete policies. The party thus ideologically transformed itself somewhat similarly to the British New Labour, following the “third way” suggested by Blair’s ideological guru

Anthony Giddens. It became a catch-all party, renounced by the political marginalized traditional Left and the trade unions as neo-liberal. The Unions neither forgot nor forgave the Labour Law enacted by Račan, which reduced workers' rights and paved the way for their further reduction.¹⁷ Whether this ideological transformation was the consequence of political choice or the outcome of structural determination, the fact remains that the political-economic divide between the large parties in Croatia was not decisive (Petković, 2009). The operative ideological divide between the Left and the Right in Croatian politics still mostly works in terms of national history and conservative versus liberal values concerning various minority rights.

5. The Sanader Era:

How European Glory Gave Way to the Infamy of Corruption

Ivo Sanader led two coalitional governments in two mandates in the period from 2003 to 2009. His story is truly Machiavellian, both in his rise to glory and his fall to infamy. It is a story of an astute political tactician, more of a fox than a lion, unlike his presidential predecessor from the 1990s. Reformed HDZ, together with the Democratic Centre (DC), a small centre-right party formed by former HDZ members, as coalition partner, fitted the ideological sentiments of the mainstream electorate fuelled by incessant rise of money-lending and relative economic optimism of the era preceding the great crisis of 2008. The peaceful rise to power of the reformed HDZ served as a formal test for the consolidation of democracy in Croatia. How did Sanader gain power, analyzed through the framework of our categories?

On the institutional level, there were no major revision plans. After the big changes at the beginning of Račan's mandate, political institutions, with the exception of constitutional adjustments in 2010 discussed below, remained stable in the researched period. The winning party or coalition did not change the rules of the electoral game or institutional framework fundamentally, which was a novelty in comparison to the 1990s. In its regaining of power, HDZ did not play much on the economy card either. The idea was simply to highlight the failures of the Coalition in achieving the inflated promises they gave when still in opposition.

The main innovations Sanader introduced can be observed in the field of political tactics. Sanader won the control over the party in 2000, winning polarized intraparty elections over Ivić Pašalić, ideologically radical Tuđman's operative from the 1990s who led the conservative fraction of the party. After the inflaming nationalist speeches before the crowd assembled at the mentioned Split rally, Sanader

¹⁷ Within the discourse of the reform these changes are usually called liberalization and flexibilization of the labour market. On the labour-market reforms in Croatia and Račan's Labour Law, see: Račić, Babić and Podrug, 2005.

performed an ideological volte-face and launched a more European rhetoric, ideologically redefining the party as a European conservative party, similar to German Christian Democratic Union. It thus seemed that he was not interested in ideology in the sense of genuine belief. Instead we can assert that Sanader, being more pragmatically oriented, was simply interested in power. Sanader's Machiavellian pragmatism may well be illustrated by intraparty alliances he made on his way to the top: he won presidency of the party with the help of Branimir Glavaš, wartime general, later convicted for war crimes.¹⁸ As a logical consequence of his European orientation, Sanader, after consolidating his power, withdrew his support for Branimir Glavaš. As a consequence of these tactical operations, the party sidelined ideological radicals and staunch Tudmanists. Part of Sanader's tactics was also to launch image politics as an integral part of political struggles in Croatian mainstream political arena, which was at the time largely deprived of former ideological polarizations. For the successful campaign, Sanader hired P. J. Mara, an Irish spin doctor who moderated the image of HDZ and created new Sanader's image in a similar vein of re-designing and moderating Fianna Fáil, thus setting the trend of hiring foreign experts for political marketing in Croatian politics. The role of main Sanader's spin doctor and controller of media information was taken by Ratko Maček, a local media entrepreneur that successfully led HDZ's victorious campaign and became one of the essential links of Sanader's reign. Sanader's tactical operations reshuffled the ideological picture of the party. The nationalist rhetoric from the 1990s was in that period largely toned down and Europeanized as HDZ suddenly became a party with the aura of European Christian Democracy. However, one must not forget that, while in opposition, Sanader expressed his pride in Croatian generals and called Mirko Norac a "Croatian knight". The nationalist rhetoric was still tactically employed when necessary.

During Sanader's mandate institutions remained mostly stable. National electoral rules remained as they were and the institutional framework was not changed. On the level of local politics, direct elections of mayors and other local executives were introduced, which had a significant impact on local politics and policies but was not important in our Machiavellian perspective on national politics. In the field of political economy, the situation seemed to be idyllic at first glance. Before the global recession hit Croatia, unemployment fell from 14.2% in 2003 to 8.2% in 2008 or around 200 000 people in absolute numbers (IMF, 2011). Stock markets were optimistic and the Croatian middle class in large numbers experienced the benefits of stock ownership, trading and revenues. However, this was once again paralleled with continuous growth of public debt, expansion of the public sector

¹⁸ In 2016, the Constitutional Court repealed this conviction on procedural grounds and demanded a retrial.

employment and clientelism, as well as the parallel continuation of privatization of public companies. The number of employees in the public sector grew (Institut za javne financije, 2010) and, paradoxically, from 2005 to 2009, the number of registered war veterans rose by 10 000, from 489 407 to 499 315, more than a decade after the war, while at the same time the number of war-disabled grew from 42 000 to 50 000.¹⁹ Most importantly, the growth of government expenditure and foreign debt became massive: the expenditure of general government rose from 101 billion Kuna in 2003 to 141 billion Kuna in 2010 or to 42% of GDP, while foreign debt, that was 91.3 billion Kuna in 2004, reached 135 billion Kuna or 40.5% of GDP in 2010 (IMF, 2011). Privatization of public companies continued with INA, the national gas company, as the most notable and controversial case. Privatization was also used as a tactical element in the 2007 election: capital income tax that was advocated by SDP's non-charismatic prime minister candidate Ljubo Jurčić, was in the campaign used as a scarecrow that would, in Sanader's words, "castrate" the profits enjoyed by middle-class stock holders.

However, the hidden political economy ultimately led to Sanader's demise. As later criminal investigations and judicial processes have suggested, ministries and public companies were used as piggy banks of the party and for the private benefit of individual HDZ members. It was not only that further borrowing of money and political appeasement of various clienteles did take place beneath the apparent economic growth: the widespread network of politically sponsored white collar crime and corruption was headed by Sanader himself. Consequently, Sanader's regime was understood as cleptocracy, and it is perhaps justified to use the term sustainable corruption: corruption thrived in the positive economic climate since the GDP and employment had the space to expand through the growth of foreign debt. The system was cut down only in the context of a strong *fortuna* element of the global financial crisis that developed into a crippling recession that hit Croatia.

The tactics of Sanader's maintenance of power were also intriguing. As easily as he extradited Croatian generals to The Hague, in line with Vladimir Šeks's memorable "locate, identify, arrest and transfer" phrasing, Sanader overcame the historical division with the Croatian Serbs and launched a previously unimaginable coalition of HDZ and Croatian Serbs, politically represented by Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS) led by Vojislav Stanimirović. Sanader provided budgetary means and launched policies that served the economic and political interests of Croatian Serbs, and he used similar strategies in ensuring the support of other coali-

¹⁹ The Ministry for Family, War Veterans and Intergenerational Solidarity official data cited in "Broj branitelja porastao za 10 tisuća u četiri godine", *24sata*, 17 August 2009; <http://www.24sata.hr/news/broj-branitelja-porastao-za-10-tisuca-u-cetiri-godine-130939#> (accessed 22 March 2015).

tional partners in his governments. The support of now already small and regional HSLS and Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) (historically two of the most important political parties that continuously declined after the 1990s) was ensured by the coalitional agreements that provided ministerial positions and offices for party functionaries as well as budgetary provisions that secured money for agricultural subsidies.

Sanader's tactical manoeuvrings are perhaps best illustrated by the case of the Protected Fishing and Ecology Belt, so-called ZERP. It was in fact a partial economic belt which a country has the right to proclaim according to the international maritime law, but in the Croatian case this was contrary to the interests of the member states of the European Union such as Italy and (as of 2004) Slovenia, which also share the economic interest in exploiting the Adriatic. As a fundamental national interest, ZERP was proclaimed in 2003 to come into force in 2004, but was then revoked in its essential content: its application was suspended in the case of countries to which it only makes sense to apply, i.e. the EU members in the immediate Croatian neighbourhood. ZERP was then fully proclaimed in 2006, before the elections, but scheduled to come into force only in 2008, and then it was once more "temporarily suspended". In a mind-boggling slalom of blatant Machiavellianism, Sanader used it both as a symbol of protection of national interests in the domestic political arena and as a lever in the EU accession negotiations where one's retreat enables an easier concession somewhere else.

Ideologically, the European orientation was paired with episodes of electoral nationalism. Considering that the party had the historical political capital of the establishing of the sovereign state and the connection between the party and its supporters was, among other things, based on strong symbolic and emotional identification, Sanader, unlike Račan, had manoeuvring space to extradite generals to ICTY and perform the radical change of ideological discourse from Split 2001 anti-regime speech to Vladimir Šeks's mantra of cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. Generally speaking, it might be said that the party successfully played on the card of mainstream ideological sentiments of the majority of the Croatian population that was passively Catholic and actively patriotic when it comes to the question of the legacy of the Homeland War. Christian democracy thus made much sense in the context of Croatian politics. Moderate conservatism of European orientation also had its version of the cult of the leader as part of the ideology, with the pivotal doctoral title as the constant highlighted in the presentation: instead of dr. Franjo Tuđman, the historical statesman who founded the state, dr. Ivo Sanader, the errorless and educated European favoured among his European peers, was a true leader for the new era. The key operational difference was that, in contrast to the relative technocratic competence of the ministers who managed the economy and other public policies in the shadow of the 1990s sovereign, the new cult of the leader gene-

rally brought incompetent ministers whose role was often only not to threaten the popularity of the leader. Ministerial incompetence was part of the cult.

How to assess Sanader's political glory? Anachronistically nationalistic HDZ was profiled as a European party. Coalitional logics and tactical manoeuvres worked in favour of political pluralism. The economy functioned, but above all on skyrocketing foreign debt, and crashed in the crisis together with Sanader as the octopus of corruption emerged. Radical ideological changes and a wide arsenal of tactical moves suggested he was a politician without vision, a tactician who overdid it, and took too big a part of the economic cake that was largely artificially produced during his era. The lack of economical fortune exposed his lack of true political virtue. Sanader resigned in 2009, implausibly stating the Slovenian obstruction of Croatia's EU negotiations as the reason, while more plausible interpretations of his stepping down suggested widespread political corruption and financial fraud concerning the HYPO Bank affair.²⁰ About two years later, Sanader was extradited to Croatia (from Austria where he escaped to). He was sentenced to 10 years of prison in the end of 2012, which was in 2015 overturned by the Constitutional Court, and Sanader's legal trials are still pending. The insatiable corruption put an end to his reign. While the party confusedly acclaimed Sanader's choice to resign, the self-ousted prince named Jadranka Kosor as his heir, who would lead the party until the expected defeat on regular elections in 2011.

6. The Kosor Era:

How the Political Oedipus Discovered His Own Corruption

Although a relatively short interregnum, Kosor's era is politically intriguing when observed through Machiavellian lenses. She was brought to power and maintained it through the work of *fortuna*. She was designated by the fallen prince. The weakness of the intraparty opposition and absence of a single member with strong enough leadership potential ensured her position as the party leader. On the other hand, the political and social environment was hostile, but it did not threaten her seriously. Student protests, farmers obstructing roads and demonstrations organized by trade unions did not productively cumulate into a single enduring front of strong enough extra-institutional pressure that could force Kosor to resign, while SDP, who entered Kukuriku²¹ coalition with Croatian People's Party (HNS) as the

²⁰ See: "Nein Danke, Deutschland: Hoće li se Merkel ispričati zbog Sanadera?" *Index*, 23 August 2011; <http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/nein-danke-deutschland-hoce-li-se-merkel-ispricati-zbog-sanadera/567857.aspx> (accessed 2 December 2015).

²¹ The onomatopoeia for rooster's call in the name of the coalition was derived from the name of a restaurant in Istria where the oppositional leaders forged their alliance.

main coalitional partner, was not especially eager to rush in before the regular term of parliamentary election.

During Kosor's rise to power there were no institutional changes. The times were those of economic crisis, which opened some space for political incompetence to be presented as inability to change the mysterious forces of the economy. Tactics was absent in Kosor's rise to power: she was for the time being a loyal follower of the failed tactics of the fallen prince Sanader. Finally, if we have to pinpoint Kosor's ideological image, it was that of a conservative, caring political mother who was in charge of the socially deprived, veteran widows and war-disabled. But how did it altogether transpose into her politics aimed at maintaining power?

Concerning institutions, Kosor was a passive princess letting them do their work. Perhaps the main of these institutions was the state public prosecutor's office that did its work with less of the usual political pressures and combinations. The EU accession demanded some constitutional changes, and some – such as lowering the referendum threshold in decisions to enter supranational integrations from the absolute majority of all registered voters to the relative majority of those who voted – were enacted because the political class in general did not want to risk any surprises over the EU accession. Kosor also reached a compromise with the opposition concerning electoral rules that was in their mutual interest: regarding the voting of the diaspora, the quota system applied in the 2000, 2003 and 2007 parliamentary elections, where the number of the diaspora seats depended on the number of votes per seat in the country, was replaced with three fixed seats for the Croatian citizens outside of Croatia. The opposition was thus safe from a higher number of HDZ seats coming from their mobilized electorate among Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina, while HDZ ensured at least three votes and gained support for constitutional changes practically necessary for the EU accession demanding the two thirds parliamentary majority.

On the level of ideology, the content of the policies and numerous bills passed was defined by the EU as is the case with the other countries in the accession process. However, on the level of political rhetoric, Kosor tried to present corruption processes orchestrated by the public prosecution and paired with spectacular police actions, as a sincere commitment of the government. HDZ was presented as the shining beacon of anticorruption that was not afraid to purge its own ranks, unlike the other parties. Tactically speaking, Kosor managed to prevent Sanader's attempt to return to power in 2010, owing much to the *fortuna* of intraparty forces and interests. She then abandoned her unconditional loyalty to Sanader, epitomized in her famous saying *Kud Ivo, tud i ja* ("Where Ivo goes, I follow"), and Sanader was then expelled from the party. In that way Kosor managed to keep power until the regular election, although her mandate was probably perceived as somewhat deficient from

the perspective of political legitimacy by the majority of the population. The departure of HDZ's coalitional partner HSLs in 2010 did not rock the princess's boat: the second HSLs's departure from their partners in power, now on the different side of the ideological gamut, that was first presented as a tragedy, now repeated itself as a farce. Finally, political economy brought about the same rate of unemployment: over 12%, while foreign debt rose dramatically, reaching 164 billion Kuna in 2012 (IMF, 2011). Not surprisingly, Kosor did not solve the country's chronic economic problems.

In assessing Kosor's vision we should, first, note the simple continuation of the old visions subsumed under the motto "enter Europe". In trying to deal with the corruptive legacy of Sanader's regime, she also promoted struggle against corruption as part of her political vision. However, she ended somewhat like the king Oedipus from Sophocles' tragedy. She found out that she herself was the "murderer" or, translated into terms of Croatian politics, that the involvement of HDZ's high membership in the widespread framework of corruption and slush funds management ultimately made struggle against corruption a politically self-destructing vision. But to be fair and to end on an arguable upbeat note for the only princess in the time span of our analysis: in the context of Croatian foreign policy and EU accession as its then paramount political goal, during Kosor's mandate the issue of the Slovenian blockade was resolved and the treaty of accession to the EU was signed in 2011.

7. Conclusion

The goal of the article was to offer some new insights in the nature of political power in Croatia from its independence to 2011 by utilizing Machiavelli's categories of winning and maintaining power, achieving one's political vision, and the concepts of *virtù* and *fortuna*. To account for the complexities of political processes within a constitutional democracy, we have added additional variables – institutions, economy, tactics and ideology. This allowed us to explain the role that institutional engineering, control of economic resources, extra-institutional strategies and ideological framework played in the achieving or failing to achieve the three essential political goals that Machiavelli talked about, applied to the cases of Croatian princes.

In the section discussing the first Croatian prince, Franjo Tuđman, we have noted a paradox: his desire to maintain himself and his party in power by controlling all major political and social institutions – the parliament, the judiciary, public companies, the central bank, the media and even sports clubs – lead to corrosion of public support and, after his death, to the loss of power by his party HDZ. How can we explain this paradox? Once again it is worth turning to Machiavelli for his insight. In the 25th chapter of *The Prince*, he is discussing the inability of princes

to adjust their *virtù* to a changing political context: “one sees a given prince prosper today and come to ruin tomorrow without having seen him change his nature or any quality... he is prosperous who adapts his mode of proceeding to the qualities of the times, and similarly, he is unprosperous whose procedure is in disaccord with the times” (Machiavelli, 1985: 99). Tuđman’s vision of national independence and nationalist ideological platform, combined with his autocratic *virtù* found fertile ground in the context of dissolution of Yugoslavia, founding of the Croatian state and securing its survival through military victory. However, once the war ended and the goal of independence was achieved, shameless institutional engineering, crony capitalism, cult of the personality and fetishism of the nation-state became hindrances, leading to divided society, loss of wide public support and, consequently, corrosion of his political power.

Second, Račan’s governments steered the country towards the European integrations. As the country opened up to Europe, foreign investments and domestic employment came in, although political economy, as we have shown, was not good enough, and the credit balloon started to inflate. From a Machiavellian perspective, the chief deficiency was in tactics and ideology, the elements that helped preserve power of the previous, HDZ’s nomenclature. The European vision was partly realized, but coalitional quarrels and incertitude how to treat the nationalist reaction led to the Coalition’s demise and the return of ideologically “upgraded” HDZ.

Third, we depicted Sanader as a keen tactician. He seemed pragmatic and without ideology in the sense of displaying a consistent political belief. Sanader used ideology as a handy tool in political struggles. In the lack of vision, he maintained the former vision of European Union and NATO accession while the foreign borrowing skyrocketed to appease the electorate. Political economy of cleptocracy proved to be Sanader’s Achilles heel. It brought him down in a spectacular way, unprecedented not only in Croatian politics. His European vision was partly realized. Tactics and ideology brought him to power, while tactics without political vision apart from personal aggrandizement, together with the *fortuna* of the economic crisis, brought him down and, finally, to prison.

Finally, Kosor, Sanader’s appointee and political inheritor, had a self-destructing vision. To put it in terms of simple Machiavellianese: *fortuna* was too much for her limited *virtù*. Her reign turned out to be an interregnum before the fall of the delegitimized regime, together with the bad luck of the economic crisis. The tactics of the former prince ushered her to the seat of prime minister, while the weak tactics and the self-destructing ideology of the struggle against corruption – together with the inertia of political economy – brought her down.

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