Veterans between the Regime and the State

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Introduction

The case of Croatia fundamentally departs from the general storyline of the third wave of democratization in Eastern Europe as a top-down, elite-driven "transition" to multiparty electoral democracy and capitalism (Merkel 2011, Dolenec 2016). This is a country which underwent democratization through war (Dolenec (2013), which meant that the new state was born out of large-scale nationalist mobilization. Starting from this insight, this paper first explores the features of social mobilization during the 1991 – 1995 war, understanding it as a specific manifestation of state-mobilized contention. After that, it outlines the transformation of state-mobilized contention into lasting features of political dynamics in Croatia through the development of welfare state policies for veterans in the 1990s. The institutional architecture of veterans' rights was designed and implemented under the auspices of HDZ governments, creating a long-lasting relationship between this political party and the veteran population.

Taking this on board, this paper employs new data from the Croatian Comparative Policy Agenda project (Širinić et al 2016) to analyse the relationship between the political mobilization of veterans and the electoral fortunes of HDZ, and to explore the links between

party dynamics and episodes of contention led by veteran organizations. Our main argument is that in the two periods when HDZ was not in power - 2000-2003, and 2011-2015 - veterans mobilized with the objective of restoring HDZ rule. We theorize this dynamic with the help of Fishman's (1990) distinction between state and regime, arguing that Croatia is a case of regime-mobilized contention where veteran organizations mount contentious actions in order to re-institute the regime they consider legitimate and beneficial to their material interests.

A Soldiers' State

> 'The scope of the state's presence in the lives of veterans has led the German historian Michael Geyer to observe that the social identity of the disabled veteran has been above all else a product of interactions with the state' (Gerber 2003: 900).

The scholarship that explores links between war, state-building and the development of the welfare state is not very prolific. According to one recent summary (Maddaloni 2014), the key relationships stems from the fact that after the war has ended, soldiers and other participants in the war effort become a potential risk for the state, given the "democratization of violence facilities" that war entails. The state historically managed this risk of political unrest by stimulating nationalism and, subsequently also political citizenship (Bendix 1964, Gellner & Breuilly 1983). In Germany during Bismarck, nationalist fervour was also accompanied with the expansion of social entitlements (Ritter, Gaeta & Viscomi 1996, Wolin 1987). Similarly, in the US Skocpol (1995) traces the origin of the welfare state to the Civil War. One of the main factors that drove the US to legislate social protection was the need to solve the political problem caused by veterans and the disabled from the Civil War. In response, the government established a benefit programme for veterans that eventually accounted for 18 per cent of all federal expenditure (Gal and Bar 2000).

The relationship between the state and veterans is premised on a 'moral asymmetry' whereby veterans suffer the absolute sacrifice, which the state only relatively compensates via material benefits (Begić, Sanader and Žunec 2008). Historically states provide veterans, and especially disabled veterans, with generous pensions and a vast array of medical, rehabilitation and reintegration services (Gerber 2003). These benefits are conceived as rights, not 'welfare', as used pejoratively to reference public assistance provided to those considered the unworthy poor (Gal and Bar 2000). In that sense, the standard conception of welfare as a means for the state to exercise power over its citizens (Pateman 1988, Wolin 1987) seems less applicable. While Wolin's (1987) image of the 'virtueless citizen' fits well with the literature that discusses 'worthiness' as basis for social entitlements (e.g. Williamson, Skocpol and Coggin 2012), and is certainly relevant for understanding the dynamic between the state and disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed– this is not so in the case of veterans, a social group with high social standing.

In their struggle for state recognition and state benefits through veteran organizations, veterans evolve from unorganized cohort to formal group, and take on a unique social identity. Importantly for our argument, which aims to link welfare state programmes to cycles of veteran mobilization and contention, once social protection mechanisms for veterans are instituted, their organizations and interest groups organize to defend them (Lindbom, 1998; Rothstein, 1998, Gal and Bar 2000, Brooks and Manza 2007, Maddaloni 2014), creating an ongoing dynamic of negotiation and confrontation with the state. If the veteran group is large enough, like was the case in the late 19th century US, and in Croatia in the 1990s, veteran organizations can become pivotal political players, forging alliances with political parties and influencing election outcomes.

In the case of the US, Skocpol (1995) argues that the Republican Party fostered rapid growth of the veteran organization Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). This organization achieved

many legislative successes regarding pensions and other benefits, and, according to Skocpol (1995), became organizationally and ideologically central to the politics of late 19th ct. America. Similarly, Ainsworth (1995) argues that the GAR was a formidable electoral player, influencing the soldiers' vote to affect outcomes of presidential and congressional races. Ainsworth (1995) finds that the GAR, successfully lobbied legislators to support both the Arrears Act of 1879 and the Disability Pension Act of 1890. The case of Croatia, as this paper shows, exhibits some important parallels to this dynamic.

In order to analyse ways in which the constitution of veterans as an interest group became a lasting feature of politics in Croatia, we use Fishman's (1990) distinction between regime and state. According to him, the concept of regime pertains to the formal and informal organization of the centre of political power and its relation to society. It determines who has access to political power as well as how those who are in power deal with those who are not. Regimes are enacted by political parties, advisers and other members of the political elite, only some of which are in state institutions. The state on the other hand primarily refers to the civil service, the army and security agencies, as well as the judiciary. On a time continuum, regimes are more permanent than governments, but less permanent than states. How does this distinction help make make sense of the dynamic of political mobilization of veterans in Croatia from 1990 until today?

During the first decade of independence the state and the regime were merged, with HDZ controlling all levers of political power. This was also a period in which the overall makeup of welfare state programmes for veterans was put in place. After the 2000 election, which marked the first full turnover in power since the introduction of multi-party elections in Croatia (Dolenec 2013), the distinction between state and regime becomes useful for understanding the political activism of veterans. Starting in 2000, the Social Democratic government began re-shaping the regime: launching the EU integration process, accepting

cooperation with ICTY, as well as regulating welfare programmes for veterans. In response, veterans become the source of serious social contention, remaining in their view loyal to the state, but disloyal to the "illegitimate" regime of the Social Democrats. A similar dynamic of contention again occurred during the second SDP-led government, in the period 2011-2015. Therefore, we propose to treat this as a case of regime-mobilized contention, in which the veterans as a large and influential interest group mobilize with the objective of returning HDZ back to power.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the first part of the paper we focus on the period 1990-1999, a decade of HDZ rule in which the welfare state programmes were designed and enacted. In this part we outline the extent of social mobilization during the war in Croatia, describe ways in which war participation became the baseline for legislating veterans' and their families' rights and entitlements, and provide data and estimates of the comparative breadth and comprehensiveness of welfare state programmes for veterans. The first part of the paper ends with a portrait of the largest veteran organizations in Croatia, discussing their relevance as a civil society actor. Putting together the story of mass participation in the war, the creation of welfare state programmes and the establishment of veteran organizations, the second part of the paper focuses on the period 2000 – 2015. Twice in this period the state and regime were disjoined, during SDP-led governments in 2000-2003, and 2011-2015. Here we employ evidence from the Croatian Policy Agenda's Project (Širinić et al. 2016) and other sources to establish electoral relationship between HDZ and the veteran population, and to argue that in the two periods when SDP was in power, veterans' organizations mobilized to return HDZ and, in their view, the legitimate regime, to power.

Part 1: 1990-1999

State-mobilized contention: Statehood through War

Croatia emerged as an independent state through the process of violent break-up of Yugoslavia, between the years 1990 and 1991. Still within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), in May 1990 the first multi-party election was held in Croatia, in which the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) party won 42% of the vote and 58% of seats. A year later, in May 1991, citizens of Croatia overwhelmingly voted in the referendum in favour of a confederative reform of Yugoslavia, while in October 1991 the Croatian Parliament voted to dissolve legal state relations with SFRY. With this decision, on October 8, 1991, Croatia became an independent state, winning international recognition in 1992.

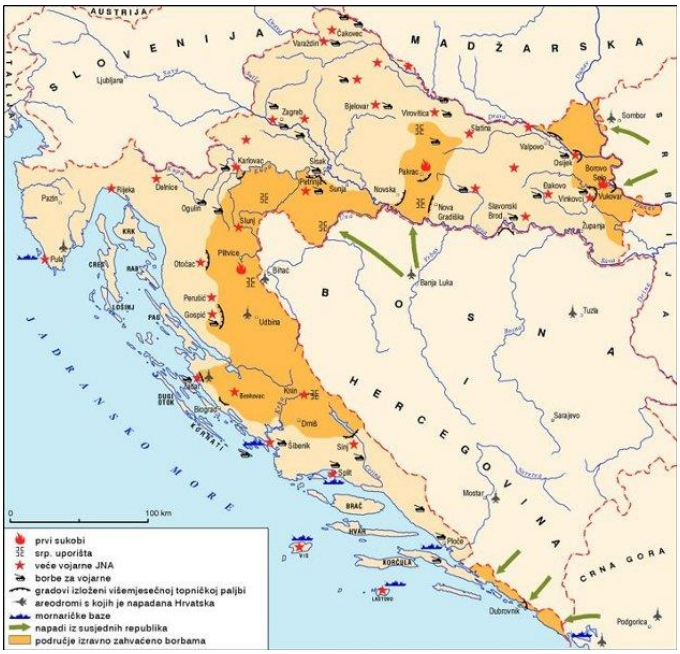
In parallel to this sequence of legal steps to independence, a sequence of belligerent steps took place which escalated into war. Soon after the outcome of the first multiparty election was known, in May 1990, the Yugoslav National Army (YNA) confiscated all weapons from the Croatian Territorial Defence, amounting to armaments for around 200,000 people (ref). In August of the same year, a referendum was held in areas where Serbs were in the majority, voting almost unanimously for the establishment of an autonomous region within Croatia. After that referendum, the first skirmishes between armed Serbian forces and Croatian police took place, escalating to an armed traffic blockade on August 17 1990. The Croatian government dispatched special police units, but had to stand down because YNA threatened with air force.

The Croatian Government responded by starting to organize its armed forces. Given that Croatia was still within SFRY, it was not able to rely on existing defence institutions. Instead, it started building up a new personnel infrastructure within the existing police force, which was under the authority of the Ministry of Interior. While in mid-1990 the police numbered

6,800 personnel, by April 1991 the police had around 39,000 reserve officers (Marijan 2008). This is when the *Croatian National Guard* (CNG) was founded, with the explicit task of defending the constitutional order and the territorial sovereignty of Croatia. It was initially a crossover between police and army, with a planned 38,726 reserve personnel (ibid). At the time, the armed forces were short of people, so many people joined, without needing to fulfil practically any requirements (Mahečić 2003).

In September 1991, CNG was transformed into the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia (AFRC). At that time, the armed insurrection of Serb-populated areas of Croatia escalated into full-blown war. Dark yellow areas in Figure 1 show areas where direct fighting took place. In 1991, a quarter of Croatia's territory was occupied by insurgent forces (Šterc and Pokos 1993, Živić 2005).

Figure 1: Occupied territories in Croatia during Homeland War



Source: *Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography*

Full numbers for AFRC are difficult to ascertain. According to Marijan (2008), at the end of 1991 and beginning of 1992, the AFRC had 200,000 people under arms. Apart from official

armed forces, political parties armed and funded paramilitary units, the most infamous being the one organized by the extreme right-wing Croatian Party of Rights. Most paramilitary units were integrated into AFRC in the second half of 1991 (Begić, Sanader and Žunec 2008). Other sources quote the figure of around 300,000 people in total under arms in Croatia during 1991-1992[1]. During 1993 the AFRC was reduced to 52,000 people, while in 1995 it was again expanded to 200,000 (Žunec 1998, Bagić, Sanader and Žunec 2008).

Though counting the number of people who took part in the armed resistance will prove to be contentious and politicized, an official register does exist, and it estimates the number of veterans at 503.112. Table 1 shows this total number, broken down by the first year when somebody joined the AFRC.

Table 1: Number of veterans 1990-1996, by year they joined

year	number	percentage
1990	26.016	5,17
1991	245.333	48,77
1992	88.312	17,55
1993	49.175	9,77
1994	29.328	5,83
1995	60.368	12,00
1996	4.580	0,91
total	*503.112*	*100,00*

Source: Government of Croatia, 2013

[1] On the Croatian side 12,131 people died in the Homeland War, 33,043 were wounded, and 2,251 people went missing (*Prolexis* Online Encyclopedia, Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, http://proleksis.lzmk.hr/18243/)

The figures from Table 1 are from the Official Registry of Veterans[2], which became public only in 2012. According to Table 1, 12% of the population of Croatia[3] are veterans of the Homeland War. By way of comparison, in the US there are 9.3 m veterans[4], amounting to around 2.9% of the population.

Even though open conflict started in mid-1991 and the last military operation took place in August 1995, subsequent legislation which regulated veteran status generously extended the period considered as "armed resistance" between August 1990 and June 1996 (Begić, Sanader and Žunec 2008). Hence, one of the larger intakes of new personnel happened in 1996, a year after military operations had ended (Mahečić 2003).

In order to assess the magnitude of social mobilization and upheaval caused by the war, apart from the number of people directly involved in conflicts, it is also important to include refugees and displaced persons. At the height of the conflict, in March 1992, there were 356,627 displaced persons, while in 1994 the number went down to around 195,000. The number of refugees who temporarily fled Croatia in 1991 is estimated at[5]. In addition to that, another refugee crisis hit Croatia in 1992 when people started coming to Croatia fleeing the war in neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina. Data for 1995 record 384,676 refugees registered and taken care of in Croatia[6].

[2] For reasons of clarity we use the term veteran, but in Croatia this population self-identifies with the name 'defenders'. This term was encoded in relevant legislation during the 1990s and is now the exclusive name for this population, used by themselves and the general public.

[3] Croatian Bureau of Statistics quotes 4,280.600 inhabitants in 2011,

[4] https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/QuickFacts/Reportsslideshow2016.PDF

[5] *Prolexis* Online Encyclopedia, Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, http://proleksis.lzmk.hr/18243/

[6] Ibid.

Overall it seems safe to say that Croatian society underwent dramatic social upheaval and mobilization. For a society of less than 5 million people[7], having around 2-300,000 people involved in fighting the war, another 350,000 displaced within its territory, and hosting several hundred thousand refugees from B&H meant that nearly everyone was affected. As a result, according to Smerić (2009), the armed forces of the Republic of Croatia, formed during the Homeland War through mass participation, represent one of the fundamental formative institutions of contemporary Croatian state, impacting not only state-administrative structures, but the entire institutional configuration of Croatian society.

What happened to this massive mobilization once the war ended? The next section focuses on welfare state programmes designed to address veterans as the largest group of citizens directly involved in the war 1991-1995.

De-mobilizing Society: Welfare Programmes for Veterans

Welfare state programmes for veterans are one of the least researched fields of social security (Gal and Bar 2000). This is probably due in part to the fact that most Western European welfare states have not been involved in major military conflicts since World War Two. In addition, veteran benefits tend to be administered by separate bureaucracies, often in the purview of military establishment, which makes them less accessible. In the case of Croatia, we can also add that the exceptionally politicised standing of this group has tabooed empirical investigation. As a result, many dimensions of this phenomenon are notoriously under-researched, and the following paragraphs put together an incomplete mosaic that merits further investigation.

[7] At the 1991 census, Croatia had 4,784,265 inhabitants. Croatian Bureau of Statistics

Croatia had experience with welfare programmes for veterans even before the Homeland War. Partisans who fought in the Second World War in Croatia were awarded the status of veterans during SFRY, and many received state-insured pensions[8]. Regarding the Homeland War, the rights of veterans were legislated from 1994 onwards[9]. The state kept the registry of veterans secret for almost 20 years; it was only made public in 2012, under the SDP-led government. In 2013, the SPD government reported the number of veterans at 503,112. If we compare this number to the one reported for 2008 (Begić, Sanader and Žunec 2008), it seems that 13,700 people were added to the official registry in the span of five years. Similarly, the report of the Parliamentary Committee of Veterans from October 2014[10] states that the number of veterans in the official registry keeps growing, despite the ban on new registrations instituted in 2009. In other words, since getting listed in the official registry is the prime instance for claiming a host of welfare entitlements, this status became a much sought good.

HDZ governments started legislating veteran rights in 1994, with important changes to the legislation in 1996, 2001 and 2004 (Begić, Sanader and Žunec 2008). By 2004, the law gave 37 different material entitlements to this population, most importantly including pensions, disability compensation, paid heath and care services, priority in securing housing, child allowance, unemployment benefits, financial help in securing employment, tax cuts, scholarships, guaranteed university entry, and many others (ibid.). A comparative study of eleven countries, including the US, Israel and Germany, found Croatia at the very top regarding the extent and quality of privileges accorded to veterans (Ferenčak, Kardov and

[8] In 2009, there were 64,000 participants in the Second World War (both partisans and NDH soldiers) were reciving state-subsidised pensions (fun fact – that same year the number of Homeland Veteran pensions was also 64,500 – Bađun 2009).

[9] In 1992 and 1994 the Croatian government added soldiers who fought on the side of the puppet Nazi regime in Croatia 1941-45 to the status of veterans (Begić, Sanader and Žunec 2008).

[10] http://www.sabor.hr/izvjesce-odbora-za-ratne-veterane-o-provedbi-z0001

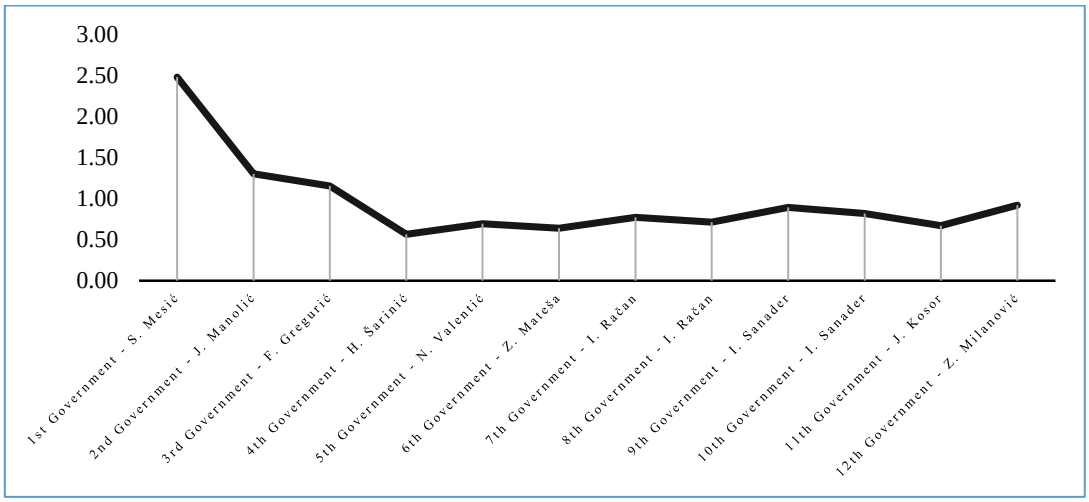
Rodik 2003; see also Žunec 2006, Dobrotić 2008). The Act from 2004 was further amended in 2005, twice in 2007, twice in 2009, in 2010, 2011, 2012, and three times in 2013[11]. This echoes Gal and Bar (2000), who found that in the case of Israel the original legislation stipulating veteran benefits went through numerous amendments in subsequent decades. Once in place social entitlements become 'sticky', but, as Wolin (1987) argues, they are also variable, which creates an ongoing dynamic of negotiation and confrontation between the state and veteran organizations.

In other words, after the HDZ government put in place the institutional framework of welfare state entitlements for veterans in the mid-1990, it looks like all subsequent governments were compelled to deal with these welfare arrangements. A new way of assessing this claim became possible only now, with the longitudinal data collected by the Croatian Policy Agendas Project that covers the entire period from 1990 to the end of 2015 (Širinić 2016). The government agenda dataset coded agendas of all cabinet weekly meetings from 1990 to 2015, amounting to 46,536 agenda items. All items were coded following the methodology of the Comparative Agendas Project (Bevan 2015), where each unit of analysis was coded into 21 major policy topics and 214 subtopics.

Figure 2 shows the share of government attention to the policy subtopic "manpower, military personnel and dependents", as a percentage of total government agenda, for all Croatian governments between 1990 and 2015. Appendix A lists the governments with time periods.

[11] http://www.braniteljski-portal.hr/Prava-branitelja#sthash.BPuUGers.dpuf

Figure 2: Government Attention to Manpower, military personnel and dependents 1990-2015



Source: Croatian Policy Agendas Project (Širinić et al. 2016)

The dynamic of government attention in Figure 2 indeed supports the story told so far, showing that recruitment for AFRC had a greater share of overall government agenda during the first three governments, which were in office between May 1990 and August 1992. After that, between mid-1992 and 2015 there is remarkable stability in the share of government attention accorded to the policy issue of veterans and their dependents. The key question of course, is whether veteran benefits get extended or reduced under HDZ and SDP governments respectively. We return to that question later.

According to a report published by the Croatian Government in 2013, the total annual material compensation to veterans was 5,9 bn Kuna, which amounted to 5% of the state budget (VRH 2014) and around 1,8% of Croatia's GDP (HNB 2014). Veteran pensions represent the largest share, with over 5 bn Kuna in 2013[12]. This is followed by 'permanent material compensation' amounting to 696,6 million Kuna. This category is administered by the *Ministry of Veterans*, and it mostly pertains to disability compensation, but includes many other forms of social compensation, distributed via a complex web of regulations.

[12] According to the Parliamentary Committee on Veterans, for 2016 the planned budget for veteran pensions was 4,1 bn Kuna. http://www.sabor.hr/izvjesce-odbora-za-ratne-veterane-o-prijedlogu0010

Of the total number of veterans, in September 2016 72,001 were recipients of state pensions, 57,173 (cc 80%) of which receive disability pensions (Croatian Pension Fund 3/2016). This amounts to 1.3 per cent of the population compared to 0.85 per cent of the overall population of Israel and 0.9 per cent of the overall population of the US (Gal and Bar 2000). In addition to its wide reach, the pension programme for disabled veterans in Croatia is generous. Veteran pensions are 2.7 to 3.1 times higher than standard pensions, while veteran disability pensions are around 3 times higher than general disability pensions (Bađun 2009). Similarly, in the category of family pensions, veteran family pensions are 4 times higher than general family pensions. With reference to income levels, the average pension in Croatia is around 40% of average net salary, while average veteran pensions are higher than the average net salary (ibid.). In comparison, in Israel, a welfare state with comprehensive provisions for veterans, fully disabled veterans receive benefits at the level of 66% of the average wage (Gal and Bar 2000).

Two important changes regarding pensions occurred in election years when HDZ was the incumbent. The first was an amendment to the *Act on Pension Insurance* in 1999, when a category of work disabled, which was until then receiving social transfers, were transferred to disability pensions. This created 37,112 new recipients of disability pensions (Bađun 2011). The number of disabled veterans registered in the pension system grew 3 times between 2003 and 2010, years of the first and second Sanader government (ibid.). The largest increase was in election year 2007, with 5,500 new insurances issued for disability veterans (ibid.).

Though these figures create the impression of a highly-privileged population, analysts note that compensatory government programmes have in fact created a passive, state-dependent population (Dobrotić 2008). Given that during the war these were generally young people,

most often with only secondary education qualifications, with little or no job experience prior to going to war, the compensatory approach has contributed to their social isolation (ibid.). In the 1990s, veterans were overrepresented in lower socioeconomic groups such as the unemployed, welfare recipients and the poor (Žunec 2006). Studies showed that only 37% had returned to their jobs from before the war (Đilas i Vukušić 1996.; Grizelj i Vukušić 1996., in Žunec 2006). According to a survey done by veteran associations, around 50% of former soldiers were unemployed, a third of them claimed they were unsatisfied with their socioeconomic position, and 50% thought they were disadvantaged compared to the population that did not fight in the war (ibid.). This contradictory social position of being perceived as privileged but feeling marginalized at the same time contributed to the emergence of a politically explosive social group.

Veterans as a Civil Society Actor

Though HSZ governments in the early 1990s were willing to provide material compensation to the veteran population, arguably much of the generous package would not have happened without veterans organizing and putting pressure on the state. In the spring of 1992 the first veteran NGO was founded, and in 1993 they held a federative assembly of over 15 chapters. The assembly meeting was attended by the President of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman, and General Martin Špegelj, the first Chief of Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces, was elected president of the association.

The *Association of Patriotic War Volunteers and Veterans of the Republic of Croatia* (UDVDR), as the federation is called, today has 21 member organizations at county level, over 200 chapters on the local level, and around 80 social clubs. Its website boasts a membership of 220,000, “representing the population of around 350,000 Croatian veterans,

who together with their families come close to one million citizens of Croatia"[13]. The *Association of Disabled Veterans of the Homeland War* (HVIDR-a) is similarly federated across Croatia, with member organizations on county level[14]. According to Mihalec, Pavlin and Relja (2012), HVIDRa has a membership of 35,000, with 20 regional and 105 local chapters. Its president served as HDZ's Member of Parliament and he headed the parliamentary Board for Veterans. During 2010, veteran NGOs participated in 13 advisory and consultative bodies of the government, spanning issues from employment policies to regional development (ibid). Finally, the *Association of Volunteer Veterans*, the third largest federation of veteran NGOs, has member organizations in 8 of the 21 counties, with chapters and clubs like UDVDR[15].

In addition to large associations of NGOs, currently there are 795 active NGOs that list veteran issues as their primary objective[16]. Figure 3 shows their density across Croatia. Density is calculated as the number of NGOs divided by the number of inhabitants in the given county, with darker shades of blue representing higher density.

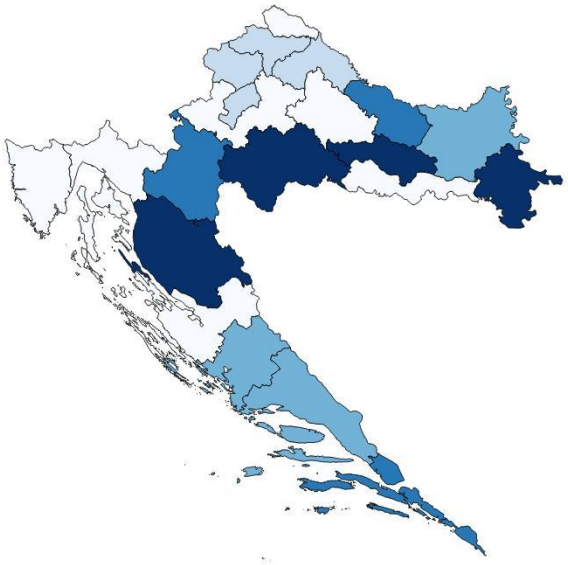
[13] Quoted from the website of the organization, accesible in Croatian at http://www.udvdr.hr/povjesnica-2/

[14] The website of HVIDR-a is much less informative about its size and composition; http://www.hvidra.hr/

[15] See http://www.uhbddr.hr/pdf/ustrojbeni%20oblici%20udruge.pdf

[16] Information from Ministry of Administration, Official Registry of NGOs

Figure 3: Density of Veteran NGOs in Croatia, 2016



Source: Ministry of Administration Registry of NGOs, map ©Sven Marcelić

Two findings stand out. Firstly, while nearly 800 active veteran NGOs cover practically the entire country, the highest density is in the parts of Croatian territory that was occupied during the war (see Figure 1). However, when we disregard population size and only look at number of NGOs per county, the highest number of NGOs is in Zagreb, 105, followed by Split County with 103 and Osijek County with 76 NGOs. This suggests that many NGOs register in the largest cities, a finding supported by other recent research on NGO density in Croatia (Marcelić 2016). In the case of veteran NGOs, the motivation for setting up organizations in large cities is probably in order to focus on advocacy initiatives.

The UDVDR was the first veteran organization to exert political pressure on the government, starting in 1993 when it adopted its first *Declaration on Veterans in the Homeland War*, and 1994 when it adopted the *Resolution on Rights of Croatian Veterans of the Homeland War*. Both of these documents were advocacy initiatives for regulating social rights of veterans and their families. In October 1996 UDVRD organized a high-profile event in the Zagreb Concert

Hall, in the presence of high ranking government officials, at which the NGO president presented '15 Fundamental Demands', together with a petition signed by 90,000 veterans to support the introduction of these demands into the *Act on Rights of Croatian Veterans*[17]. Though the initial reaction of President Tuđman to these demands was unfriendly, two months later, in December, the government legislated a new *Act on the Rights of Croatian Veterans from the Homeland War and their Families* (NN 108/96, 23.XII.1996). Following that, in 1997 the government set up a separate *Ministry for Croatian Veterans of the Homeland War*, fulfilling another request by veteran organizations.

Overall, between 1993 and 1996, partly of its own volition, and party in response to pressures from veteran organizations, HDZ governments created a comprehensive institutional architecture of rights and entitlements for veterans and their families. This in turn created a strong bond between HDZ and the veteran population (Kasapović 1996), which has been described as a powerful client-patron axis charged both with symbolic meaning and material benefits (Čular 2000). Given that HDZ ruled the country during the entire first decade (1990-1999), it has had a disproportionate influence on state formation, and it governed over the institution of veterans as the most important recipient group of the welfare state.

Stable government attention to veteran issues (Figure 2), as well as the fact that since 1996 there were more than ten changes to the main legislation regulating veteran rights, supports Wolin's (1987) argument that the variability of welfare programmes creates an ongoing power dynamic between the state and its client groups. In the context of Croatia, the expected dynamic is that SDP-led governments attempted to regulate and cut down welfare

[17] Information based on the report on UDVRD website, http://www.udvdr.hr/kategorija/aktivnosti-od-1992-1999/ .

programmes for veterans, while HDZ governments extended both availability and reach of existing programmes in an effort to secure votes among their core constituency (Glaurdić and Vuković 2016). Under the first SDP-led government 2001-2003, state pensions, disability support and other benefits were reduced and discontinued (Begić, Sanader and Žunec 2008). Conversely, the largest increases in the number of disability pension entitlements occurred in 1999 and 2007, election years when HDZ was in power (Stubbs and Zrinščak 2011). In the second part of the paper, we explore how this was reflected in the arena of electoral competition, and in cycles of regime-mobilized contention by veteran organizations.

Part 2: 2000 – 2015

Electoral Politics: HDZ and Veterans

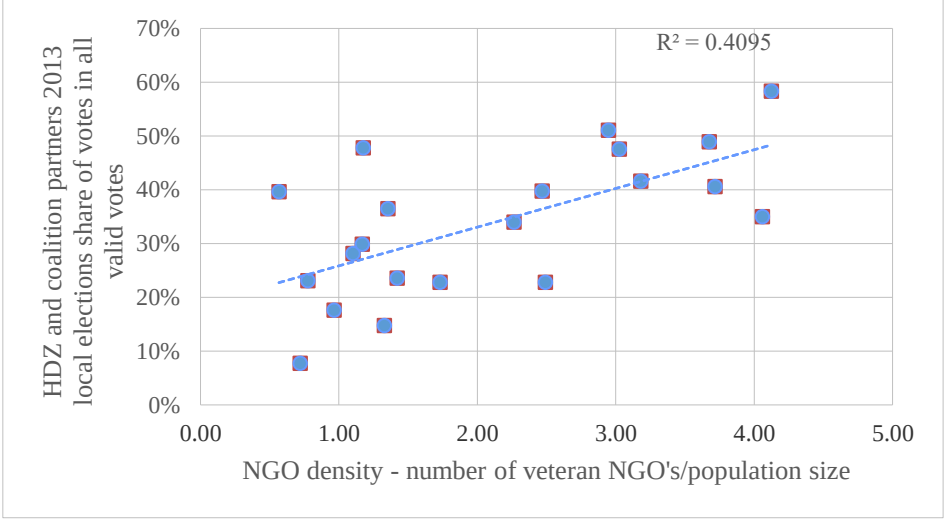
Taken together, the evidence presented so far suggests several important conclusions. Firstly, the social mobilization for the war in Croatia was very high, spanning above and beyond the need of a nation to quickly build an army and defend its territory. After the war ended, HDZ governments in the 1990s built a comprehensive institutional framework of welfare entitlements for veterans, partly in response to the pressure from veteran organizations. If indeed a strong bond was formed between the interests of veterans and their families on the one hand, and HDZ on the other, it should be reflected in the alignment of their vote support for HDZ.

A recent study by Glaurdić and Vuković (2016) provides strong empirical support to the argument that veterans represent HDZ's voter base. Their analysis departs from existing studies of voting patterns in Croatia since it is not based on survey data, but rather on aggregate data, collected and analysed at the level of municipalities. In addition to analysing

standard sociodemographic variables to account for voting patterns, Glaurdić and Vuković (2016) included the variable 'war disabled per 1000 inhabitants' as a proxy for the effects of war violence on individual municipalities. Since it turned out that this variable closely mirrors the path of war impact, being highest in the frontline areas of direct combat, they argue it is a reasonably reliable proxy for the impact of war on local communities. Analysing vote choice for the five rounds of parliamentary elections between 2000 and 2015, they found that their variable *war disabled* had a consistently positive, statistically significant relationship with the vote for the HDZ and a negative relationship with the vote for SDP-led coalitions. In their model, this variable has the most consistently sizeable effect on the vote for the HDZ, topping all other variables in four out of five electoral cycles.

The data we collected allows for a similar test. Figure 4 shows a scatterplot of the density of veteran NGOs crossed with HDZ vote share on county level, for the 2013 local election.

Figure 4: Density of Veteran NGOs and HDZ vote share 2013



Source: Croatian Policy Agendas Project (Širinić et al. 2016)

Both Glaurdić and Vuković's (2016), and our data suggest a strong spatial concentration of war disability, and of veteran NGOs in areas of Croatia that were more directly affected by the war. Glaurdić and Vuković (2016) found that spatial density of war disability is a good predictor of votes for HDZ, and Figure 4 re-enforces their finding by using another type of evidence. As the scatterplot shows, there is a relatively strong (0.4 correlation) relationship between the density of veteran NGOs and vote share for HDZ.

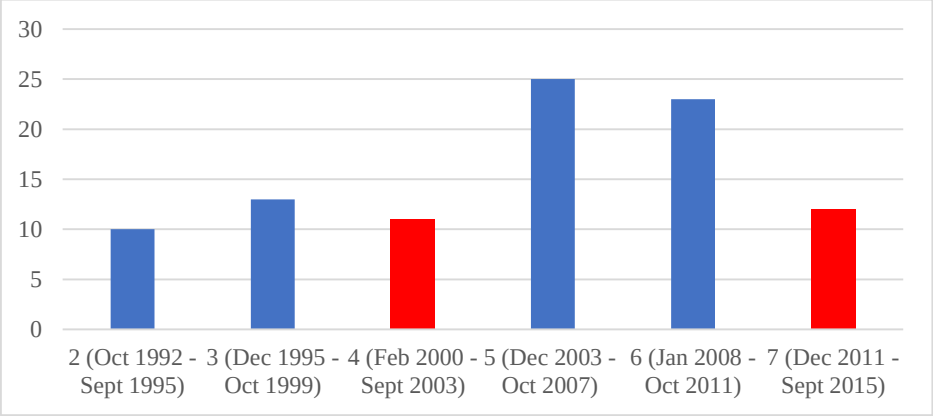
Given the alignment of veteran vote support for HDZ, the periods when HDZ is not in government should set in motion a particular dynamic. Since SDP governments aimed to downsize and regulate veteran entitlements, they were construed as adverse to veteran interests, leading to strong episodes of contention by veteran groups aimed primarily at restoring HDZ to power, and that way restoring the regime they consider as legitimate. The last section of this paper aims to empirically support this argument. In order to do this, we draw on evidence from CAP media agenda and parliamentary agenda datasets.

Veterans and Cycles of Contention

The 2000 election was hailed as a democratic turning point by relevant international and domestic assessments (Schimmelfennig 2005, Čular 2005). The SPD-led government initiated constitutional reform to strengthen parliamentarism and reduce the powers of the president (Kasapović 2008). During this government Croatia became a member of the WTO, signed the CEFTA, joined NATO's Partnership for Peace, signed the SAA and became a candidate country for the EU (Dolenec 2013). Hence, from this year onwards it is possible to capture the dynamic of contention that links veterans to the electoral competition. We asses this claim by looking at the parliamentary and media agendas for the entire 1990-2015 period, with a particular focus on two periods that SDP was incumbent.

First we look at the share of veteran issues in the parliamentary agenda, which is measured via questions posed by MPs. The dataset includes all MP questions for parliamentary terms between 1992 and 2015. Out of 4,949 MP questions, 94 were devoted to veteran issues (subtopic code 1608). Figure 5 shows the number of MP questions on veteran related issues for each parliamentary term, with parliamentary terms when SDP was leading the government marked in red.

Figure 5: Number of MP questions on veteran related issues, per parliamentary term



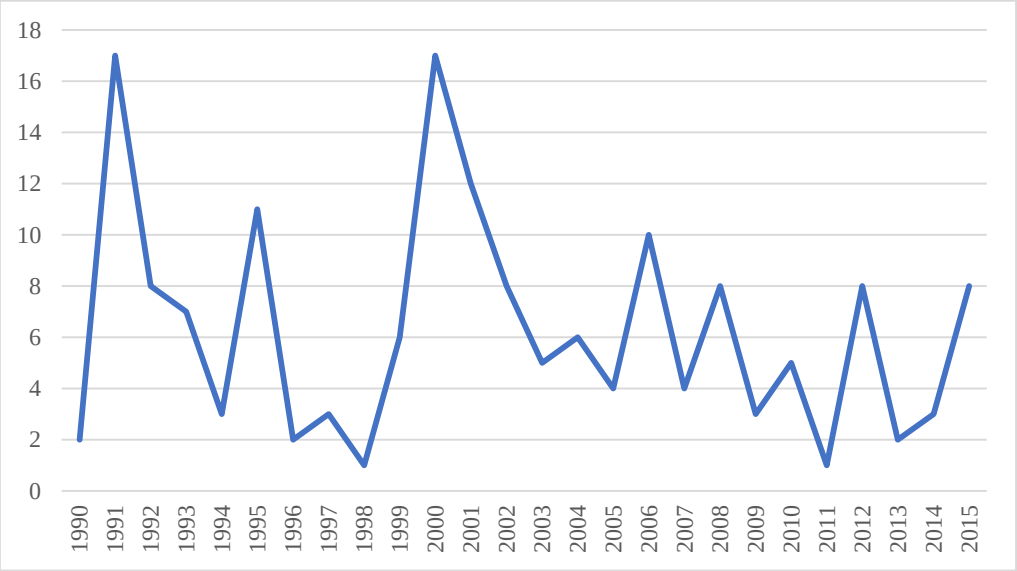
Source: Croatian Policy Agendas Project (Širinić 2016)

The most important finding in Figure 5 is that the number of MP questions pertaining to veteran issues does not fall with time; to the contrary, after the SDP 2000-2003 government it grew substantially, only to fall again when SDP came to power in 2011. This can be taken as evidence of the permanently high political salience of the status of veterans. However, when questions are sorted by the political party the MP belongs to, it turns out that more than three quarters of questions are posed by HDZ MPs. We read this as suggesting that HDZ has a firm grip on veterans as a policy issue of relevance.

Next, we look at the share of veteran issues on the media agenda. The media agenda dataset was constructed by collecting front pages of the daily newspaper *Večernji list*, from 30

December 1989 until 31 October 2015 (Širinić et al. 2016). *Večernji list* was chosen for the fact that it has been published continually throughout the observed period. The dataset includes a monthly structured week sample of the front pages, covering 18,230 items. Figure 6 shows the share of veteran issues on the media agenda between 1990 and 2015.

Figure 6: Veterans on Title Page of Daily Newspaper *Večernji List* 1990-2015



Source: Croatian Policy Agendas Project (Širinić et al. 2016)

Figure 6 shows that veteran issues made it to the title page of the daily paper *Večernji list* with the greatest frequency during the war and after the turnover of power to SDP-led government in 2000. At the same time we can say that topics related to veterans make headlines throughout the observed period. This echoes Mlačić and Mišetić's (2009), content analysis of print media coverage of defence-related issues. They found that in the period 1991-1996 the topic of veterans made up 13,2 per cent of the daily media agenda, while in the period 1997-2006, the share grew to 22,5 per cent. Putting together the governmental, parliamentary and media agendas, we can say that issues related to veterans represent a long-standing political priority in Croatia.

A closer look at the content of these news reveals however a stark difference between the 1990s and the period starting with 2000. In the period 1991-1995, title pages were filled with reports from the battlefield. Around 1996, most title page news on veterans was about providing information about the regulation and ways to claim their rights. In contrast to that, in 2000 title news items introduce topics like 'fake veterans', 'veteran protest', 'veterans booed high state officials'. One news item from 2002 is entitled 'Pančić (Minister of Veterans): I am receiving death threats' (Aug, 28). Minister Pančić had started a review of veteran pensions and entitlements to housing. In addition, at the time the SPD government substantially downsized the AFRC. From 35,651 total personnel in 2001, the number was cut to 23,634 in 2004. The number has been reducing gradually every year since; in October 2016 AFRC numbered 15,997[18].

The most contentious issue between the veteran population and the SDP government was the requirement of cooperation with The Hague Tribunal, a stipulation of the European Community for advancing Croatia's accession negotiations. Račan's government made EU integration a top priority, creating strong pressure from the EU towards improving Croatia's cooperation with the ICTY and the prosecution of war crimes (Dolenec 2013). This was not welcomed by veterans – or the general population for that matter. Now in opposition, the HDZ worked to capitalise on the public outrage these policies provoked, attempting to delegitimise the government and mobilise its crucial voter base. The most serious crisis occurred on February 12, 2001, when warrants for the arrest of several people suspected of involvement in a wartime murder were issued, including Mirko Norac who had in the meantime become a General in the AFRC (Dolenec 2013). In response, the HDZ harnessed the revolt within the veterans' population to stage a large public protest in Split on February 12, ostensibly in the honour of Mirko Norac. This was a militant gathering where both the

[18] Data from OSRH website: http://www.osrh.hr/#rub211

President and Prime Minister were publicly insulted and accused of treason. Picture 1 below shows an inlet of the title page of *Večernji List* on the day of the protest.

Večernji List reported that 150,000 people attended the protest in Split, as well as that support protests for Norac were held across Croatia. Protest organizers were demanding abolition for Croatian soldiers, the freezing of cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, and early parliamentary elections. Under the motto 'We are all Mirko Norac', the *Headquarter for Defending the Dignity of the Homeland War*, which organized the protest, demanded that the 'government stop persecuting the creators of the Croatian state'[19]. The protest was attended by retired generals and high ranking officials from AFRC, and by the newly-elected President of HDZ, Ivo Sanader. The language used towards the SDP government was insulting and inflammatory. According to some analysts, at that moment the HDZ had hoped to topple the SDP-led coalition (Babić 2003).

After the protest, the *Headquarter for Defending the Dignity of the Homeland War* submitted a citizens' petition to parliament in April 2001, demanding that a referendum be held to forbid Croatia's cooperation with The Hague Tribunal (Smerdel 2010). Though they collected the required number of signatures (over 400,000[20]), the referendum never took place since at the time the relevant legislation on referenda had not been in conformity with constitutional changes (Smerdel 2010). Since the following HDZ government under Sanader, which came to power in 2003, continued the policy of cooperation with The Hague tribunal (Dolenec 2013), veteran organizations set out to collect another petition to stop this in 2007. This time however, when they were acting out of sync with HDZ, they were not able to collect the

[19] Slobodna Dalmacija, http://arhiv.slobodnadalmacija.hr/20010212/novosti.htm

[20] The legislation requires signatures of 10% of registered voters, collected in 15 days.

required number of signatures. Notwithstanding that, the respectable number of 296,000 signatures testifies to the serious rift that the party's stance towards the Hague Tribunal had caused in its voter base. After that, the veteran population de-mobilized for a longer period.

Veteran organizations mobilized again after an SDP-government came into office. In March 2013, the *Headquarter for the Defence of Croatian Vukovar* campaigned in the local election against the incumbent Social Democratic mayor, supporting the HDZ candidate in exchange for his endorsement of their demand to exempt the city of Vukovar from the introduction of Cyrillic signs on public buildings. Their candidate did not win the local election, and the government pursued the implementation of the said policy. This was met with acts of civil disobedience, including the repeated tearing down of Cyrillic placards and several arrests between September and November 2013. The standoff between veteran organizations and the SDP-led government culminated during Remembrance Day on November 18, when the procession through the streets of Vukovar with the Prime Minister, the President and other government officials was cordoned off into a different route from the one led by veterans' organizations. Building on a month-long crisis in which veterans were tearing down placards in Cyrillic letters from public buildings in Vukovar, the situation was very close to violence.

This time veterans again made recourse to the citizens' petition for referendum as instrument of mobilization. In November 2013, the *Headquarter for the Defence of Croatian Vukovar* started the collection of signatures for a referendum in which they proposed to restrict the use of Cyrillic alphabet to locations where Serb population was the majority, invalidating their language right as a constitutionally recognised minority. Undertaking a public campaign for which they had HDZ's tacit support, they collected 632,165 signatures, which was more than

enough for initiating a referendum. The referendum did not take place however, since the Constitutional Court ruled the referendum question unconstitutional.

Soon after, in October 2014, the confrontation between veterans and the government was reinstated. Veteran organizations occupied the public square in front of the Ministry of Veterans in Savska Street, demanding the resignation of the Minister and his key aids. Through this action they initiated a public protest that lasted 555 days, ending after HDZ returned to power. The placard that the veteran organizations displayed at their tent read '1991: they both fell, 2015: they will both fall'. The phrase 'they both fell' is common knowledge in Croatia, referring to the excited exclamation of a soldier recorded on tape after the successful knocking down of two YNA aircraft flying over Zadar in 1991. 'They will both fall' in 2015 was an obvious allusion to the presidential and parliamentary elections, for posts at that time held by Social Democrats. The start of the veteran protest was aligned with the electoral campaign for presidential elections, which the incumbent Social Democratic president Ivo Josipović lost to HDZ candidate, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović. The first place she visited on election night, and again upon assuming office, was the veterans' tent on Savska Street. Though the 2015 election was close (33,4 % of the vote in comparison with the coalition led by the Social Democrats, which won 33,2% of the vote), HDZ won the November 2015 parliamentary election too. The new Minister of Veterans became Tomo Medved, HDZ member who was an active participant in the veteran protest on Savska Street[21]. At the press conference that announced the end of the protest, one of the protest leaders, Đuro Glogoški, stated that the protest served to unite veterans, and that it had

[21] http://www.vecernji.hr/hrvatska/tomo-medved-je-novi-ministar-branitelja-1070056

'become an institution'[22]. In response to a journalist's question about one of their stated demands, the upgrading of the *Act on Veterans* to constitutional status, he said that 'Now that we no longer have those who hate Croatian veterans in our Parliament, I believe that we will get the constitutional law'[23]. He also thanked the Catholic Church and announced that the tent from Savska Street will be relocated to the Museum of the Homeland War in Vukovar[24]. An appropriate way to end a protest mobilised by the regime and funded by state.

Concluding Remarks (…)

This paper explores the features of social mobilization during the 1991 – 1995 war, understanding it as a specific manifestation of state-mobilized contention. It started from the premise that this state-mobilized contention was transformed into a lasting feature of political dynamics in Croatia through the development of welfare state policies for veterans. We have shown data and analysis to show that the institutional architecture of veterans' rights was designed and implemented in the 1990s under the auspices of HDZ governments, creating a long-lasting relationship between this political party and veteran interest groups.

Taking this on board, this paper employed previously unpublished data from the Comparative Policy Agenda project for Croatia (Širinić 2016) to analyse the relationship between the political mobilization of veterans and the electoral fortunes of HDZ, and to explore the links between party dynamics and episodes of contention led by veteran organizations. Our main

[22] http://www.nacional.hr/zavrsen-prosvjed-u-savskoj-glogoski-odluka-je-bila-jednoglasna-a-sator-seli-u-muzej-domovinskog-rata/

[23] Ibid.

[24] http://www.nacional.hr/zavrsen-prosvjed-u-savskoj-glogoski-odluka-je-bila-jednoglasna-a-sator-seli-u-muzej-domovinskog-rata/

argument was that in the two periods when HDZ was not in power - 2000-2003 and 2011-2015 - veterans mobilized with the objective of restoring HDZ rule. We theorized this dynamic with the help of Fishman's (1990) distinction between state and regime, arguing that Croatia was a case of regime-mobilized contention in which veteran organizations mount contentious actions in order to re-institute the regime they consider legitimate and beneficial to their material interests.

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Appendix A

Government	President of the Government	Period
1	Stjepan Mesić	30. 5. 1990. - 24. 8. 1990.
2	Josip Manolić	24. 8. 1990. - 17. 7 1991.
3	Franjo Gregurić	17. 7. 1991. - 12. 8. 1992.
4	Hrvoje Šarinić	12. 8. 1992. - 3. 4. 1993.
5	Nikica Valentić	3. 4. 1993. - 7. 11. 1995.
6	Zlatko Mateša	7. 11. 1995. - 27. 1. 2000.
7	Ivica Račan	27. 1 2000. - 30. 7. 2002.
8	Ivica Račan	30. 7. 2002. - 23. 12. 2003.
9	Ivo Sanader	23. 12. 2003. - 12. 1. 2008.
10	Ivo Sanader	12. 1. 2008. - 6. 7. 2009.
11	Jadranka Kosor	6. 7. 2009. - 22. 12. 2011.
12	Zoran Milanović	22. 12. 2011. - 22. 1. 2016.