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Weak by design? Diaspora engagement and institutional change in Croatia and Serbia

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Abstract

Diaspora engagement has increasingly been adopted as a strategy for leveraging migration's development potential. While a rich literature accounts for the emergence of diaspora engagement institutions, there is less research on how these institutions perform in practice and why they change over time. This article compares change across diaspora ministries in Croatia and Serbia from 1990 to 2015. It was found that institutional change was driven by conflict between parties and within parties rather than by the state's collective economic or geopolitical interests.

Keywords

Croatia, diaspora, institutional change, migration, ministerial politics, political parties, Serbia

Introduction

In early 2016, as party leaders in Croatia bargained over forming a coalition government, the conservative Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) proposed a new ministry for diaspora affairs. This institution would have been Croatia's fourth iteration of a diaspora ministry since 1990. In neighboring Serbia, diaspora engagement was likewise an ephemeral area of governance that was shuffled across three different ministries.[1] As Yugoslavia broke apart, these two countries forged strikingly different relationships with their diasporas: post-communist Croatia is seen as an archetypically strong case of diaspora engagement, while Serbia is regarded as a case of weak engagement (Hockenos, 2003). Nevertheless, they converged on the institutional dimensions of diaspora engagement.

While diaspora engagement is not a new phenomenon, its scope is greater than ever. By 2013, more than 100 states had at least one formal diaspora institution (Gamlen, 2014). A burgeoning literature documents this surge in diaspora engagement policies, but much of this research neglects the critical issues of what diaspora institutions actually do and their durability over time. Indeed, there is an implicit assumption that diaspora institutions remain static. On paper, Croatia and

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Serbia's adoption of diaspora ministries aligns with this global trend in diaspora governance. However, rather than take diaspora institutions at face value, this article focuses on institutional change by comparing diaspora ministries in Croatia and Serbia since 1990. These ministries varied over time in their structures, tasks, and the subset of diaspora that they courted.

What are the sources of change? I argue that diaspora institutional change is driven by shifting power balances between parties and between rival factions within parties. This reflects two sources of political self-interest: the interests of the party organization as a whole; and the power-seeking interests of actors within parties. As the Croatian and Serbian cases show, these inter- and intra-party struggles engendered changes in diaspora ministries and broader diaspora engagement strategies.

The principal contributions of this article are threefold. First, it contributes to the growing literature on institutional change (Streeck and Thelen, 2005), but with a focus on government ministries, which have received less attention than other types of institutions, particularly outside of advanced industrial economies. Second, it unpacks the political competition argument in historical institutionalist research by distinguishing two axes of political competition: competition between power-seeking individuals within a political party and competition between parties to benefit the party organization. Third, this article highlights a perspective that has generally been absent in the diaspora engagement literature – the dynamic nature of sending states' level of diaspora engagement over time and their evolving institutional tools of engagement.

After reviewing research on diaspora engagement, I turn to the case studies of Croatia and Serbia to show how diaspora ministries' ambiguities and weak points were exploited by political actors, resulting in institutional change. I conclude by reflecting on the implications of these findings for diaspora engagement as a development strategy.

Engaging diasporas

In theory, sending state governments use diaspora institutions to deepen economic, scientific, cultural, and political linkages with diaspora populations to benefit the home country. Diaspora institutions take various guises, including legislative committees, reserved parliamentary seats, ministries and ministerial departments for diaspora affairs, and diaspora advisory councils (Agunias and Newland, 2012; Ragazzi, 2014). These institutions make diaspora an area of policy and government.

By 2013, nearly 25 states had a diaspora ministry, while many others had ministries combining diaspora affairs with other policy areas (Gamlen, 2014). Some diaspora ministries play a direct role in designing and implementing policies; others play a coordination or 'mainstreaming' role of ensuring that diaspora interests are considered across the policymaking process. Under authoritarian regimes, diaspora ministries might oversee a process of engagement that is tightly controlled and coercive (Brand, 2006).

I limit my analytical focus to diaspora ministries for several reasons. Not only are diaspora ministries typically the highest-profile diaspora institution, but also their volatility and often short lifespans are a particularly intriguing puzzle for students of political institutions. We might expect them, as fully-fledged government ministries, to be more resistant to change and dismantlement than other diaspora institutions. After all, major ministerial overhaul typically requires legislative or cabinet-level action. Moreover, diaspora ministries garner extensive diaspora media coverage, and any major overhaul or dismantlement is likely to be closely and critically scrutinized.

Accounting for institutional change

What drives diaspora ministry change? The literature on diaspora institutions attributes engagement to diffusion, economic incentives, and domestic politics. I evaluate the explanatory power of these arguments in Croatia and Serbia.

Policy diffusion. Scholars have convincingly argued that the rapid expansion of diaspora institutions is driven in part by transnational policy and norm diffusion (Gamlen, 2014). Since the early 2000s, many international organizations, donor governments, and think tanks have promoted diaspora engagement as a way for sending state governments to attract migrant remittances, aid, and investment, and benefit from emigrants' scientific, economic, and political connections in their host states (de Haas, 2006; Gamlen, 2014). International organizations and other external actors have aided national governments in strategizing diaspora engagement and facilitated exchanges of best practices between sending state governments. As more states build institutions to engage their diasporas, they build a norm that sending states *should* include their diasporas in homeland affairs.

Croatia and Serbia's inaugural diaspora ministries were introduced in 1990, putting them well ahead of the curve in the more recent global expansion of these institutions, yet also portending the trend in that their institutional designers studied policies in 'traditional' sending and diaspora states like Greece, Italy, and Israel (Respondent 1, 2009; Respondent 5, 2010). On the other hand, the diffusion argument predicts convergence on a relatively fixed institutional template, whereas the Croatian and Serbian experiences show that diaspora institutions evolve over time and across space. As such, the diffusion argument does not readily account for change once diaspora institutions are adopted.

Economic motives. Other scholars argue that states adopt diaspora institutions to solicit diaspora aid, remittances, bonds, and investment (de Haas, 2006). In this view, diaspora institutions manage programs to facilitate material transfers. Moreover, the act of engaging diaspora populations reinforces diasporic attachment to the homeland, thus sustaining transfers over time (Leblang, 2017).

However, the economic interest argument is problematic in the context of explaining institutional change. If the argument holds, we would expect diaspora institutions to coevolve with sending states' fluctuating economic health. We would also expect institutions to target remittance-sending workers and relatively wealthy diasporans rather than impoverished or vulnerable groups like transborder kin, who are often an economic burden. There is no clear link, however, between economic interest and diaspora institutional change in Croatia and Serbia. Both countries experienced steep economic decline during the 1990s due to the wars of Yugoslav succession, yet their inaugural diaspora ministries largely centered on resource-draining policies towards transborder kin. Croatia's third diaspora ministry was dismantled when the country was focused on post-war reconstruction and economic development, while Serbia's third ministry was dismantled at a time when the Serbian economy was reeling from the financial crisis and emigration rates had spiked. In short, economic motives did not align to the timing of institutional adoption and change in either country.

Domestic politics. Other scholars argue that party competition shapes diaspora engagement strategies. Parties perceived to be the electoral beneficiaries of diaspora engagement advocate stronger policies and institutions, while those that do not view themselves as the beneficiaries of diaspora engagement scale policies back (Levitt, 2001; Waterbury, 2006). Extending this logic to explain change, we would expect diaspora institutions to strengthen and weaken and target different diaspora subsets depending on the electoral or other political benefits that incumbent parties expect to reap.

My model builds on these insights. I argue that domestic political interests drive diaspora ministerial change. Furthermore, the change process is facilitated by diaspora institutions' built-in weaknesses, including ambiguous rules and mandates, resource constraints, and other sources of endogenous institutional change (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). Actors may leverage this ambiguity to use the institution for different purposes, restructure it, or dismantle it altogether. Institutional change occurs alongside shifts in the balance of power between actors with diverging interests, who then exploit these weaknesses and ambiguities to further their agendas (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). The literature is less clear on the origins of these power struggles, however: are they between

power-seeking actors pursuing personal interests or between actors pursuing party or organizational interests? Below, I show how both types of self interest were sources of institutional change in Croatia and Serbia.

Research design

Between 1990 and 2015, Croatia and Serbia had three diaspora ministries apiece. Comparing within-case observations in Croatia and Serbia allows us to interrogate the effects of intervening processes such as war, democratization, and elections (Mahoney, 2007). Process tracing is also useful for cases where sequencing is important and the outcome of interest unfolds gradually rather than in snapshot moments (Pierson, 2004), as is the case with institutional change. Moreover, the ways in which Croatia's and Serbia's diasporas were initially engaged in the 1990s impacted subsequent institutional development and shaped actors' perceptions of the diaspora as a political actor.

Croatia and Serbia are good cases for studying the evolution of diaspora institutions. As leaders of new states, elites in Croatia and Serbia engaged in statecraft and implemented sweeping economic and legal reforms against the backdrop of war. In both countries the 1990s was a period of dominant-party rule helmed by strongmen who left office along with their parties in stunning elections in 2000. Both countries experienced steep economic decline during the war, modest post-war growth, and more recent downturns and increased emigration flows after the 2007 financial crisis. In short, Croatia and Serbia's experiences with war, state building, economic collapse, and democratization encompass the types of shocks that scholars have posited as triggers of diaspora engagement (de Haas, 2006; Koinova, 2009).

Croatia and Serbia have also had similar experiences with emigration and their status as kin states. At the time of Yugoslavia's 1991 collapse, both Croatia and Serbia's diaspora populations comprised different waves of emigrants and their descendants. Several hundred thousand Croatian and Serbian political émigrés associated with the losing fascist and royalist factions in Yugoslavia's WWII-era civil war emigrated to the Americas and Australasia. In the 1960s, the Yugoslav government signed guest-worker agreements with several Western European states, prompting the emigration of over 1,000,000 Yugoslavs. More recently, hundreds of thousands of Croatians and Serbians emigrated after 1990. Recent emigrants tend to be more urban and educated than their predecessors. Finally, while co-ethnic kin in neighboring states are not seen as 'diaspora', these populations nevertheless became enmeshed in diaspora politics. By 2010, Croatia's estimated emigrant stock was equivalent to 17% of its domestic population, and Serbia's was 22% (IOM, 2011). These figures are conservative, excluding transborder kin and second-generation migrants.

The data come from interviews with elected officials, political appointees, party officials, and prominent return migrants in Zagreb and Belgrade. Interviewees included former ministers or assistant ministers from all six diaspora ministries, officials from other ministries whose work related to the diaspora, and party officials. Domestic and diaspora media coverage and official publications were also used.

Diaspora ministry change in Croatia

Croatia is typically seen as a case of strong, benevolent diaspora engagement, but this was certainly not the case when it was part of socialist Yugoslavia. From the early post-WWII years through the 1980s, extremist emigrant activists and fringe groups sympathetic to Croatia's WWII-era fascist regime periodically carried out terrorist attacks, including attacks on Yugoslav diplomats, jetliner hijackings, and sending guerrilla fighters into Yugoslavia (Hockenos, 2003; Tokić, 2012). The

Yugoslav government used these attacks to malign Croatian emigrants as a group, branding them 'hostile emigrants' in official discourse and the media (Hockenos, 2003). Yugoslav intelligence agents carried out assassinations and other acts of repression against emigrants on foreign soil. This contentious history and the steady stream of anti-emigrant propaganda in Yugoslav media had an undeniably strong effect on homeland Croats' perceptions of Croatian emigrants, including among the homeland elite. The fact that some high-profile diaspora returnees in the 1990s were associated with radical groups or far-right ideologies reinforced this perception. A returnee who served as a diplomat and government advisor noted, 'The idea of [fascist] emigration poisoned the public's perception of returnees – unfairly, of course, because only a very small portion…were affiliated with [Croatia's fascist movement]' (Respondent 1, 2009). However, these returnees had their own biases, dismissing critics of the Croatian diaspora's involvement in homeland affairs as brainwashed dupes of socialism or as opportunists unwilling to compete with returnees for plum party or government positions (Respondent 1, 2009; Respondent 2, 2009).

The nationalist Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) won Croatia's founding election and ruled throughout the 1990s and much of the 2000s. The party is the architect of Croatia's diaspora engagement policies, including diaspora ministries, an ethno-nationally inclusive citizenship law, expatriate voting rights, and permanent diaspora legislative representation. The HDZ's remarkably strong diaspora foothold developed as soon as opposition parties were permitted in socialist Croatia in the late 1980s. Emigrant supporters supplied millions of US dollars to the HDZ's 1990 campaign. By 1991, the party had over 200 branches outside of Yugoslavia and nearly 200 branches in neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Since 1990, Croatia has had three different diaspora ministries. As this section shows, these ministries varied in their structures and policies, as well as the subsets of the diaspora that they targeted (Table 1). At the same time, all three ministries had ambiguous mandates, limited resources, and low prestige. These weaknesses were compounded by the fact that ministerial appointees were typically diaspora returnees who were outsiders to Croatia's political establishment and had limited political capital. Despite their built-in limitations, these ministries were contested spaces. The back-and-forth evolution of diaspora institutions reflects struggles between moderates and hardliners within the HDZ, and later between the HDZ and the party that became its primary competitor, the Social Democratic Party.

Ministry for Emigration, 1990–1992

In 1990, the newly-elected HDZ government appointed a minister without portfolio for emigration. Gojko Šušak, a Bosnian Croat living in Canada since the 1960s, was the first Minister for Emigration. He had helped HDZ founder Franjo Tudjman, who was president of Croatia during the 1990s, build the party in the diaspora and was one of Tudjman's closest allies. Šušak was chief among the numerous diaspora returnees and Bosnian Croats who became influential in the HDZ's leadership (Hudelist, 2004). He was a powerful figure in the HDZ's hardliner faction and the key go-to person between Bosnian Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Croatian government during the war (Gagnon, 2004; Hockenos, 2003; Hudelist, 2004).

The HDZ's hardliner and moderate factions fought over policies towards Croatia's ethnic Serb minorities and policies to annex what hardliners viewed as rightfully Croatian lands in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Gagnon, 2004; Hudelist, 2004). The homeland/diaspora distinction in the HDZ's upper echelons partly grafted onto its moderate/hardliner divide (Hockenos, 2003; Hudelist, 2004). For HDZ moderates, 'diaspora' became shorthand for hardliner views. This perception was reinforced by Šušak, who was diaspora *and* hardliner, and other high-profile returnees who fell into the hardliner camp.

Table 1. Diaspora ministries in Croatia.

Name	Ministry for Emigration *Ministarstvo iseljeništva*	Ministry for Return and Immigration *Ministarstvo povratka i useljeništva*	Ministry for Development, Immigration, and Renewal *Ministarstvo razvitka, useljeništva i obnove*
Years of operation	1990–1992	1996–1999	1999–2000
Minister(s)	1. Gojko Šušak 2. Zdravko Sančević	1. Marijan Petrović	1. Jure Radić
Tasks	Initial mandate was coordinating cultural, educational, social, and economic policies relating to Croatian emigrants; and leveraging emigrants' knowledge and capital As war escalated, tasks evolved to focus on mobilizing diaspora aid and transferring arms and aid to Bosnian Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina. After the first minister was reappointed as Minister of Defense, the ministry returned to its initial focus	Initial mandate was stimulating the return migration of ethnic Croatian emigrants and their descendants and diaspora investment in Croatia by proposing laws and regulations that created a conducive environment for return and investment Tasks later evolved to include intervening on behalf of diaspora returnees and investors in bureaucratic, legal, and logistical matters that hindered their return or investment	Merger of two existing ministries. Tasks were similar to the MPU, but were now carried out by two departments within the newly merged ministry, the Department for Emigration and the Department for supporting immigrants
Example of ministry program	Helped create and manage the Croatian National Fund, into which diaspora Croats deposited hundreds of millions of dollars in aid	Program to build transitional housing near Zagreb for low-income returnees	Continuation of activities of Ministry for Return and Immigration on lesser scale
Diaspora subsets targeted	Initially targeted emigrants, but later expanded to include transborder kin in Bosnia-Herzegovina	Targeted emigrants and their descendants born abroad	The relevant departments within the ministry targeted emigrants and their descendants born abroad

The Ministry for Emigration was designed to be a marginal institution, evidence of which was the fact that it began with a minister without portfolio. Minister Šušak had just one member of staff assisting him and one legal paragraph defining his role. Formally, the Minister was to

> execute tasks related to culture, education, science, and social and economic policy for emigrants of Croatia; work to connect emigrants to the homeland and utilize their knowledge and capital; and work towards the goal of return migration and cooperation with emigrants (Narodne novine, 1990).

According to Josip Manolić, one of the HDZ's founders and a key moderate, the post was created to thank the diaspora for funding the party in 1990: '[President] Tudjman promised [the HDZ's supporters] that he would give them a Ministry' (quoted in Hudelist, 2000a; see also Večernji list, 1990).

A fully-fledged Ministry for Emigration was established in 1991, with Šušak staying on as minister; but it remained weak. The ministers and staff – almost all of them returnees – were outsiders to Croatia's political elite. While Šušak later became an incredibly powerful figure in Croatian politics, his star had only just begun to rise at the time of his appointment (Hudelist, 2000a). The Ministry had the second-lowest budget of all ministries in 1992 and fewer than ten staff. Moreover, its tasks overlapped with other ministries. The Ministry for Information, for instance, was charged with informing emigrants about Croatian affairs, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare was to protect Croatian workers abroad and facilitate their return, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was to protect transborder Croats (Hedjbeli, 2011). The Ministry for Emigration's role was coordination rather than policy initiation, but it was unclear how a ministry with low prestige and just a handful of staff could coordinate policies emanating from far more powerful ministries.

Politicization and change. The Ministry for Emigration was not designed to be powerful but, rather, to be malleable enough to adapt to evolving policy objectives. One area of rule displacement was the redefinition of the Ministry's mandate to include co-ethnic kin, a clear case of defining and engaging diaspora on an ethnonational basis (see Koinova and Tsourapas, this issue). The relevant legislation, which originally referred only to *emigrants*, was revised in late 1990 to include Croatian minorities in neighboring states (Hedjbeli, 2011). A new department for transborder Croatians was also added.

As Croatia's wartime political and territorial aims toward Bosnian Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina expanded, the Ministry increasingly targeted transborder kin. However, the changes also accompanied Šušak's growing clout in the HDZ. As the war escalated, the Ministry's activities concentrated increasingly on soliciting diaspora aid and transferring arms and aid to Bosnian Croats (Borovčak, 2011; Hockenos, 2003; Respondent 9, 2010). Croatian emigrants donated hundreds of millions of US dollars to a Ministry-managed fund that lacked transparency (Globus, 1992; Hudelist, 2004).

Šušak blurred party–government lines within the Ministry, contributing to the politicization of the institution and the long-term politicization of diaspora engagement. For instance, he claimed that the Ministry 'fulfilled the [election] promises of the HDZ, which from its very beginning was more oriented towards emigrants than any other party' (quoted in Večernji list, 1990). Šušak, his successor, and many other returnees employed in the Ministry had been activists in diaspora HDZ chapters, and they often visited diaspora HDZ chapters on official trips abroad (Nova Matica, 1990). Strikingly, in the name of the government and the Ministry, Šušak issued a public statement in Australia's largest Croatian diaspora newspaper to thank local HDZ branches for their material aid to the mother party and to condemn planned opposition party demonstrations in Zagreb (Hrvatski vjesnik, 1990).

In short, the Ministry under Gojko Šušak was increasingly the epicenter of returnee *and* hardliner influence in the party and government. Croatia's first Minister of Defense, a party moderate, recalled, 'I was uncomfortable when…[diasporans offering aid and weapons] would turn first to Šušak in the Ministry of Emigration [before turning to me]' (quoted in Hudelist, 2000a). Stipe Mesić, a powerful HDZ moderate, recalled:

> [Šušak was in] the position to dispose of budget funds from the Croatian diaspora…Suddenly, he became the master of life and death. He decided on everything (quoted in Hudelist, 2000b).

When Šušak was appointed Minister of Defense, in 1991, the Fund moved with him. The Ministry for Emigration quickly reverted to its weak state, remaining without a replacement for months (Globus, 1992). His successor, a returnee from Venezuela, had been abroad since the end of World War II and lacked the political capital to defend the Ministry from dismantlement

(Respondent 9, 2010). The Ministry's direct role in the war was scaled back and reverted to its earlier policy coordination role and focus on emigrants rather than transborder kin (Borovčak, 2011; Sančević, 1992).

Many diaspora Croats were surprised when the Ministry for Emigration was unexpectedly shuttered by the new HDZ government after elections in 1992. According to many accounts, the move to eliminate the Ministry came from HDZ moderates who assumed important positions in government and parliament after the 1992 elections and amid deteriorating moderate–hardliner relations (Babić, 2014; Borovčak, 2011; Respondent 8, 2010; Respondent 9, 2010). Dismantling an institution associated with the diaspora – which in turn was associated with the hardliner agenda and Gojko Šušak – was a power move. Moderates allegedly convinced President Tudjman, who genuinely supported diaspora engagement (Respondent 1, 2009; Respondent 4, 2010; Respondent 8, 2010), that the Ministry for Emigration was damaging Croatia's reputation on the world stage at a time when Croatia desperately needed external support (Borovčak, 2011).

Ministry for Return and Immigration, 1996–1999, and Ministry for Reconstruction, Immigration, and Renewal, 1999–2000

Whereas the first ministry was connected to Croatia's wartime policies, the Ministry for Return and Immigration (MPU) and Ministry for Reconstruction, Immigration, and Renewal emphasized diaspora return and investment and were tied to domestic demographic and reconstruction policies after the war's end. The HDZ had touted mass diaspora repatriation from its inception, but the policy was not feasible until 1995, when the Dayton Accords and Erdut Agreement effectively ended Croatia's part in the war.

Diaspora activists had lobbied since 1992 for the diaspora ministry's reintroduction, arguing that their contributions to the party and war had earned them a policymaking voice. However, according to former MPU assistant minister Antun Babić, HDZ moderates, including moderate prime ministers in the 1992–1993 and 1993–1995 governments, were unwilling to resurrect the diaspora ministry (Babić, 2014). By 1996, after the defection of key moderates from the HDZ to opposition parties, the hardliners were again the stronger faction in the HDZ (Gagnon, 2004; Respondent 8, 2010). Now, the most vocal opposition to diaspora engagement came primarily from opposition parties. A deputy from the People's Party decried the Ministry as a ludicrous attempt to lure back emigrants who had lived abroad for decades. It would be far wiser, he argued, to address the conditions that drove the recent emigration of young, educated Croats; Croatia should welcome returnees, but not 'the extremist emigrants who are too often the central actors in antagonisms in Croatian society' (quoted in Izvješća hrvatskoga sabora, 1996: 9). A Peasant Party delegate worried that avaricious emigrants would take plum positions in government and purchase privatized firms on preferential terms (quoted in Izvješća hrvatskoga sabora, 1996: 9).

A former assistant minister from the MPU contended that diaspora pressure paired with the always-decisive support of President Tudjman allowed for the reintroduction of a diaspora ministry (Respondent 2, 2009). HDZ moderates were reportedly placated by a promise that the Ministry would be marginal (Babić, 2014; Respondent 2, 2009). Former assistant minister Babić maintains that the portfolio was intentionally assigned to a politically weak figure: Marijan Petrović, a newly returned Canadian Croat who lacked political experience. His appointment was 'a conscious effort from the….[HDZ] political elite to inhibit any serious "conquests" of Croatia [by returnees]' (Babić, 2014).

In contrast to the Ministry for Emigration, which targeted emigrants *and* transborder Croats, the MPU's focus was strictly on Croatian emigrants and their kin (Respondent 1, 2009). It was tasked with 'proposing and monitoring the policy of return and immigration of *members of the Croatian*

nation in emigration, their family members, and their descendants to the Republic of Croatia' (Narodne novine, 1996: emphasis added). In other words, the ethno-national bias of the first ministry remained in place, and Croatian Serbian emigrants, for example, were not included in the task structure. Moreover, the tens of thousands of migrants who departed in the 1990s, who tended to be more critical of the HDZ's policies, were also largely ignored (Respondent 1, 2009).

Ministry officials regularly traveled abroad to diaspora communities to give presentations on investment and return opportunities. The Ministry also published a regular bulletin and a guidebook for potential returnees. Working with other ministries, it also focused on revising the taxation, importation, and pension policies that created problems for return migrants.

Like the Ministry for Emigration, the MPU was a weak institution. It had a staff of 40 and among the smallest budgets of all ministries. In addition, the Ministry did not collaborate much with seemingly natural partners. A former ambassador who served in a major overseas destination country at the time of the MPU's existence stated that he had never interacted with the Ministry, while a diplomat then stationed at a consulate in Germany claimed that there was little coordination with the MPU (Respondent 2, 2009; Respondent 7, 2010). The Ministry often faced recalcitrance at various policymaking sites and even in the HDZ (Respondent 1, 2009). For instance, the Ministry worked with the parliamentary Committee on Immigration (chaired by a returnee) to enact a Law on Immigration, but the proposed legislation was stonewalled when it was sent to the HDZ government. The law 'stayed on the table…It was nothing – it's not like we asked something impossible' (Respondent 1, 2009). This inability to push through proposed policies was worsened by the limited political capital and experience of Ministry officials. They often had to call on personal connections in other institutions, typically fellow return migrants they'd known abroad (Respondent 1, 2009).

Politicization and change. The Ministry's tasks informally evolved as the difficulty of stimulating mass return migration became clear. Rather than policy-making or even policy coordination, the bulk of the Ministry's workload comprised intervention on behalf of returnees to gain compliance from government officials and bureaucrats in seemingly mundane tasks such as issuing permits, conducting inspections, enforcing contracts, protecting property rights, and connecting returnees to utility services (Respondent 1, 2009). Minister Petrović complained that most local officials 'would be all too happy if the [MPU] disappeared' (quoted in Bilten MPU, 1997).

AS with the Ministry for Emigration, the MPU's work often had partisan undertones. The MPU's official bulletin described ministry officials' reliance on HDZ diaspora branches to disseminate information about return opportunities, and they met with diaspora HDZ chapters when abroad on state business. This politicization cemented opposition parties' view of the MPU, and diaspora engagement more generally, as a partisan endeavor with clear winners (the HDZ) and losers (the opposition). This view persisted well into the 2000s.

In 1999, as an opposition victory loomed, the Ministry was merged with the Ministry for Reconstruction and Development. This third Ministry continued the MPU's tasks, but on a much more limited scale. After the left–liberal coalition won elections less than a year later, it was dismantled and diaspora policies were reassigned to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Diaspora affairs has since remained within that Ministry. Diaspora actors have complained that the Social Democratic Party, the HDZ's primary competitor, is hostile towards the diaspora due to the latter's history of overwhelmingly supporting the HDZ, and that the HDZ is now indifferent towards it, leading to halfhearted policies and institutions.

Diaspora ministry change in Serbia

In contrast to Croatia, Serbia is regarded as a case of state–diaspora antagonism. Although relations between Serbian emigrants and socialist Yugoslavia were not nearly as contentious as those

Table 2. Diaspora ministries in Serbia.

Name	Ministry for Relations with Serbs Outside of Serbia *Ministarstvo za Srbe izvan Srbije*	Ministry for the Diaspora *Ministarstvo za dijasporu*	Ministry for Religion and Diaspora *Ministarstvo vera i dijaspore*
Years of operation	1991–2000	2004–2011	2011–2012
Minister(s)	1. Stanko Cvijan 2. Radovan Pankov 3. Miroslav Mirčić	1. Vojislav Vukčević 2. Milica Čubrilo 3. Srđan Srećković	1. Srđan Srećković
Tasks	Assist in arming and transferring funds to Serbian paramilitaries in other former Yugoslav republics, as well as recruiting local leaders loyal to Belgrade. After the Dayton Accords, increasingly focused on educational and cultural programming for transborder kin	Restoring the diaspora's trust in the Serbian government, pushing for changes in citizenship legislation and amnesty for men who emigrated to avoid conscription. Cultural and education policies towards diaspora youth. Economic policies to solicit diaspora investment	Merger of two existing ministries. Continuation of work of Ministry for the Diaspora on a smaller scale
Example of ministry program	Program awarding scholarships to Serbs from Romania, Macedonia, and Albania to study at the University of Belgrade	Opened Diaspora Offices in smaller cities and villages to attract local investment from Serbs abroad	Continuation of activities of the Ministry for the Diaspora
Diaspora subsets targeted	Primarily transborder kin	Emigrants and their descendants and transborder kin	Emigrants and their descendants and transborder kin

between Croatian emigrants and Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević, who consolidated power in the late 1980s and ruled until 2000, was wary of Serbs abroad. Electoral and citizenship rights were curtailed, male diaspora visitors in the 1990s risked conscription, and vocal subsets of the fragmented diaspora opposed Milošević throughout his rule (Koinova, 2009).

Like Croatia, Serbia used an evolving array of diaspora institutions to structure state–diaspora relations (Table 2). In the 1990s, diaspora institutions facilitated Serbia's sub rosa actions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia and served as a tool of control and resource extraction (Nedeljne informativne novine, 2000). In the 2000s, new institutions and initiatives were introduced, but their significance was mostly symbolic; the institutions were used to satisfy the political ambitions of domestic actors rather than systematically integrate diaspora interests into policy-making. Like neighboring Croatia, diaspora institutions evolved in terms of their tasks and the diaspora subsets that were targeted, often depending on the political stripes and aims of the Ministry's occupants.

Ministry for Relations with Serbs Outside of Serbia, 1991–2000

In 1991, a Ministry for Relations with Serbs Outside of Serbia was established and led by Stanko Cvijan, a factory director with no emigration background. He described the Ministry's role as fulfilling the Serbian Constitution's promise to look after all Serbs, regardless of where they lived, and

> to convince [governments in Croatia and BiH] that Serbia has no central authority promoting an uprising by Serbs outside Serbia, but that the Republic of Serbia will do everything in its power to defend its compatriots (Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1991).

Like Croatia's first Ministry for Emigration, Serbia's ministry was poorly funded and staffed with fewer than ten employees (Vesti, 2014).

Politicization and change. This Ministry was an institutional echo of Belgrade's approach to the war at that time: aiding and abetting rebels and paramilitary forces in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina while insisting that it was not. Like the Croatian case, war affected the Ministry's tasks and targets. The Ministry helped transfer aid and weapons to Serb paramilitary groups and install loyalists in some transborder kin communities (Hockenos, 2003). The Croatian press reported meetings between Minister Cvijan and paramilitary leader Vojislav Šešelj on Croatian territory. Cvijan made little effort to hide this:

> [Local Serbs] use these monies [from Belgrade] for what they want.…[Socialist Yugoslavia's republican divisions] are administrative borders. They are not based on ethnic or even historic lines (quoted in *New York Times*, 1991).

By contrast, the Ministry's engagement of Serbian emigrants was limited. Cvijan warned emigrants:

> the problems of Serbs in [Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina] are the [Ministry's] top priority right now, [and] Serbs who live around the world will have their turn at a potential visit [from me] much later. It is my opinion, moreover, that the work of this ministry for [transborder] Serbs…is more urgent than those in, say, Australia (quoted in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1991).

A Serbian analyst likened the government's relationship to the diaspora to a wicked stepmother role. Diaspora institutions 'pushed a narrow-minded, short-sighted, and manipulative policy from the early 1990s in which emigrants were just an opportunity for "ethno-business" and donations that ended up in the pockets of the political elite and its clients' (Nedeljne informativne novine, 2000).

After the 1995 Dayton Accords, the Ministry's activities shifted from supporting paramilitary forces to cultural and educational work with transborder Serbs, including scholarships to study at the University of Belgrade and summer language camps (Vesti, 2014). The Ministry's engagement of Serbian emigrants and their progeny remained limited. In fact, during the heightened mobilization of diaspora Serbs during NATO's 1999 bombing of Serbia, it was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that spearheaded attempts to leverage the situation to mobilize diaspora aid (Respondent 6, 2010).

The Ministry, widely seen as an institution that deepened the state–diaspora chasm rather than bridge it, survived less than a year after Milošević lost power in 2000.

Ministry for the Diaspora, 2004–2011, and Ministry for Religion and Diaspora, 2011–2012

In 2004, a new Ministry for the Diaspora was created. In contrast to the Croatian case, where the reintroduction of a diaspora ministry in 1996 provoked fierce debate, there was little opposition to this new ministry in Serbia. This relative elite consensus – or perhaps, more accurately, ambivalence – reflects the less overtly politicized role of the Serbian diaspora in Serbian politics; it had not overwhelmingly backed any individual party during the 1990s. The only partial

exception was the opposition Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), which drew support from older pro-monarchy political émigrés. No party had a strong monopoly over the diaspora in the way that the Croatian HDZ did. Like the Croatian case, a major wave of emigration among urban, educated Serbs during the 1990s changed the diaspora's complexion by the 2000s.

The Ministry's formal mission was to improve relations between diaspora and homeland, keep emigrants informed, and facilitate their inclusion in homeland affairs. The Ministry was a weak, marginal player in Serbian politics. It was the least-coveted ministerial portfolio due to its low prestige and limited resources (Respondent 9, 2010). A former appointee complained that many employees were unqualified and most lacked a diaspora background (Respondent 4, 2010). The Ministry's budget was consistently among the lowest of Serbia's ministries. Its role included coordinating policies emanating from other ministries, but a former high-level appointee complained that phone calls to other ministries often went unanswered or were met with 'empty promises', much like Croatia's diaspora ministries (Respondent 3, 2010; Respondent 9, 2010). This limited clout and prestige made its coordination role nearly impossible.

According to numerous accounts, the Ministry was created for political rather than functional reasons. Interviewees explained that it was the product of coalition negotiations after the 2004 elections, when the victorious Democratic Party did not want to surrender any 'important' ministries to the SPO, its junior partner (Respondent 3, 2010; Respondent 9, 2010). As modest as the SPO's prize of the diaspora ministry was, it became an institution that the party jealously regarded as its own turf, particularly so as the party became increasingly marginal in Serbian politics (Respondent 9, 2010). In a 2011 debate over the Ministry's future, a deputy from the Serbian Radical Party called the Ministry the SPO's island refuge: 'Everyone who used to be someone in [the SPO] and had some government function is now taking shelter in the Ministry for the Diaspora'.[2] And so, like the Croatian case, diaspora engagement became seen as something of a zero-sum game: engagement benefitted some parties and harmed others.

Politicization and change. The Ministry survived several Serbian governments: the SPO held the portfolio until 2007, the Democratic Party for one year, and then the SPO again until the Ministry's closure in 2012. As with Croatia, the ambiguity of the Ministry's mandate facilitated institutional change. Under the first minister (SPO), policies focused on restoring the diaspora's trust in the Serbian government and changing Serbia's restrictive citizenship law. The Ministry also successfully lobbied for a Law on Amnesty for men who emigrated during the 1990s to avoid conscription (Respondent 4, 2010). Under the brief tenure of the Democratic Party, the Ministry focused on leveraging diaspora business and investment to boost regional economic development. The minister also developed policies to improve Serbian language instruction for diaspora youth. Back in the hands of the SPO, one of its main initiatives was creating a diaspora consultative body.

Like its Croatian counterparts, the Ministry targeted different groups as the political stripes of its occupants changed. Under the SPO, the Ministry targeted older political émigrés who belonged to pro-monarchy groups that supported the SPO during the 1990s. The Ministry's cultural policies drew on symbols and imagery that resonated with this group (Respondent 9, 2010). When an advisory diaspora council was created in 2009, the Ministry was criticized for stage-managing the election process to ensure the selection of these older, more nationalist emigrants (Radio-televizija Srbije, 2012). When the more cosmopolitan Democratic Party held the Ministry, the focus shifted to economic policies and language policies (Respondent 9, 2010). The Ministry's publications were stripped of nationalist symbols, and the focus shifted to the generation of migrants who had left after 1990. These emigrants tended to be better educated, younger, and more urban than their predecessors –a core demographic constituency of the Democratic Party in Serbia (*B92*, 2004; Respondent 2, 2009).

In sum, the Ministry was the least coveted ministerial portfolio (Respondent 4, 2010; Respondent 5, 2010). Like the Croatian case, its wings were gradually clipped. In 2011, the ministries for religion and diaspora merged. In July 2012, after parliamentary elections produced a new governing coalition comprised of the conservative Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Ministry was eliminated at the behest of these parties (Vesti, 2012).

Conclusion

I have analyzed changes in the institutional tools of diaspora engagement by comparing diaspora ministries in Croatia and Serbia. Much of the literature rests on an implicit assumption that states pursue diaspora engagement for the reason of the collective geopolitical or economic interests of the state as a whole. This article shows that this logic does not account for institutional change in Croatia or Serbia, two most-likely cases where war, economic collapse, and regime change should have been powerful incentives to engage the Croatian and Serbian diasporas through robust ministries for diaspora affairs. The common thread that runs across all six ministries is their weakness, short lifespan, and political marginalization across periods of war and postwar reconstruction, authoritarianism and democracy, and economic growth and decline. At best these institutions played a modest role in diaspora policymaking; yet diaspora ministries can become surprisingly politicized institutions, even when they are perceived to be weak

I have argued that political competition drives this weakness and change. Similarly to contributions from Burgess and Koinova in this issue, I find that parties play an important role in diaspora engagement. This competition stems from two sources of political self interest: parties pursuing collective benefits for the party as a whole, as is most clearly the case with Serbia's SPO; and individuals pursuing influence within parties, as was the case with hardliner–moderate conflict in Croatia's HDZ.

The lessons from these two cases caution against excessive optimism over diaspora engagement strategies that rely simply on the creation of institutions. Diaspora ministries may be more difficult to uproot than other types of diaspora institutions, but their existence is not necessarily an indicator of the diaspora's policy importance or of bona fide engagement efforts. Governments may create diaspora ministries simply to project the image of state commitment to diaspora engagement. They may use ministries and other diaspora institutions to dictate the terms of engagement and maintain control over diaspora interventions in homeland affairs rather than allow diaspora organizations to take the lead or risk the unsolicited entrance of diaspora competitors for political office and economic privileges (Panossian, 1998). As Kuznetsov and Freinkman (2013) note, national governments seldom bring in diaspora stakeholders to help co-design diaspora institutions. What this suggests is that, while diasporas may present an opportunity to benefit the country of origin, political elites may be wary of competitors for office, economic perks, and influence. Diasporans' foreign experiences, connections, degrees, wealth, and 'outsider' status may make them uniquely alarming potential competitors.

Croatia and Serbia also show the perils of politicizing diaspora engagement. In both cases, diaspora ministries became politicized as parties or party factions came to view the institution and the diaspora as political prizes. In part, this was because of the highly politicized early entry of the diaspora into homeland affairs, funneling money into certain parties and becoming part of the war effort. Yet homeland elites used diaspora institutions as tools to further their agendas, and thus also contributed to this process. This zero-sum view of diaspora engagement meant that those who viewed themselves as the 'losers' of diaspora engagement had little incentive to deepen state-diaspora relations, even if the state as a whole and the diaspora might benefit from engagement. Meanwhile, the 'winners' of diaspora engagement might have little incentive to cultivate

state-diaspora relations beyond protecting and preserving the status quo. In Croatia and Serbia, party actors' perceptions of the diaspora as a political prize, and of engagement as a zero-sum process with clear winners and losers, persisted even after the ministries were dismantled.

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Notes

1. For simplicity, 'Serbia' refers to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1992–2003), the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (2003–2006), and the Republic of Serbia (2006–present).
2. 'Razmatranje odgovora Vlade Republike Srbije…', (24 October 2011), available at http://www.otvoreniparlament.rs/2011/10/24/163517/

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Respondent 4 (2010) Ministry for Diaspora official #3. Author's interview, Belgrade, 30 March.
Respondent 5 (2010) Ministry for Diaspora official #4. Author's interview, Belgrade, 31 March.
Respondent 6 (2010) Yugoslav Ministry for Foreign Affairs official. Author's interview, Belgrade, 5 May.
Respondent 7 (2010) Former Croatian ambassador. Author's interview, Zagreb, 2 June.
Respondent 8 (2010) Former HDZ government minister. Author's interview, Zagreb, 8 June.
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