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THE IDEOLOGICAL INCONGRUENCE OF NEW POLITICAL PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS: CASE STUDY "MOVEMENT OF FREE CITIZENS" AND "DO NOT LET BELGRADE D(R)OWN"

Abstract

The main subjects of this article are new political parties and organizations and their ideological incongruence as setbacks for root in society and institutionalization. The party system in Serbia has changed in aspects of stability and relevance of political parties. New instability was produced by tendencies of the predominance of one party (Serbian Progressive Party) and losing position of old political parties through splitting, losing of resources and capacities, intraparty instability, etc. Challenges for old political parties are coming from new political parties and organizations based on new and alternative politics. New political parties have many problems with institutionalization in the party system. Some of the problems are in the impossibility to construct distinctive ideological frames which would be recognized by citizens and voters. The problem of the ideological incongruence of new parties is identified also in the relationship between leadership and membership of parties. In this paper, we deal with "Movement of Free Citizens" (MFC) and "Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own" (DLBD) as new political actors. The main goal of the research is to identify and explain ideological incongruence in the above-mentioned political organizations.

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POLITICAL CONTEXT

Since the introduction of the multiparty system in 1990, the political and party system of Serbia is characterized by distinctive instability and fragility. The party system of Serbia has shifted from a dominant-party system (1990-2000) to polarized pluralism (2000-2008), again to moderate pluralism for a short period (2008-2012), only to go back to the framework of the dominant-party system in the last ten years (2012-2022) (Kovačević 2020a, 361). In a broader context, the political system of Serbia has undergone constant changes, the disintegration of the SFRY created the FRY, only for it to be called Serbia and Montenegro in one phase, until the final status of the Republic of Serbia. Political relations were influenced by the changes in the framework of the state (with the states of the former SFRY), changes within Serbia (unresolved status of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, issues with the autonomy of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina), relations with the international community (cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, the negotiation process with the European Union, political relations with the Russian Federation, etc.), war conflicts (NATO bombing in 1999, conflicts in Kosovo and Metohija, Bosnia, etc.) and democratic changes that took place on October 5, 2000. There are several other socio-economic factors, but the parties were constantly divided along different lines of social cleavages that range from complete to partial. Over the years, Serbia has been facing a decline in the value of democracy, especially in the areas of rule of law and freedom of the media (Bieber 2018; Vladisavljević 2019). As in other similar cases, in Serbia, there is a strong personalization of politics with modern trends of party presidentialisation (Orlović 2017), growth of populism (Spasojević 2018; Kovačević 2020b), and a crisis of several relevant parties (primarily ones in the opposition).

Still, the fourth decade of political pluralism didn't bring a significantly enhanced institutionalization of political parties any more than the first decade did. The only party that managed to leave a trace in the first and the second decade of political pluralism, when talking about functionality and respectability of political power, is the Socialist Party of Serbia. All the other parties, from the Serbian Renewal Movement and the Serbian Radical Party, to the Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia, have lost their stronghold containing the citizens' support. With that said, the third decade of political pluralism is defined by the

dominant-party system, that of the Serbian Progressive Party. In addition to this party, the Socialist Party of Serbia was the only remaining party that was able to uphold its political power. This kind of system was strongly present in the 2022 April elections.

Besides the dominant-party system, the third and the beginning of the fourth decade of political pluralism can also be characterized by a rising number of political movements with no institutional organization resembling the traditional parties. These movements arose as a reaction to the weakening of the traditionally organized political parties of the opposition, which have repeatedly failed to counter the Serbian Progressive Party during every election in the past 10 years. It was this space that new movements and new political parties were filling out. In that period in time the People's Party, the Party of Freedom and Justice, the Serbian movement Dveri, the Serbian Party Oathkeepers, and the Movement for the Restoration of the Kingdom of Serbia were all created. Moreover, two other movements that are the subject of our analysis were created as well: the Movement of Free Citizens and Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own.

These two movements have a divergent genesis. The Movement of Free Citizens was constructed after the presidential elections in 2017, when the Ombudsman at the time, Saša Janković won 16,2% of the votes as a presidential candidate. The Movement has until this day had three presidents. Saša Janković was replaced by Sergej Trifunović in 2018. Under his presidency, the Movement of Free Citizens took part in the 2020 parliamentary elections and failed to cross the electoral threshold of a minimum of 3% of votes, excluding them from being represented in the parliament. After this failure, Pavle Grbović assumes the presidency the same year. The Movement of Free Citizens, according to its program and ideological documents, is defined as a liberal, democratic, and civil party with a focus on the protection of civil liberties.

Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own movement came to life in 2015 as a protest grass-roots initiative of the citizens of Belgrade, with its focus on criticism of the city authorities in the country's capital. The primary actions of the Movement were focused on urban and infrastructure policies, but have spread to cultural, social, and environmental policies through the years. During the 2017 presidential elections, they supported Saša Janković while winning 3,44% of the votes in the 2018 Belgrade elections, making them ineligible to enter the city parliament. Nevertheless, in three central municipalities (Stari grad, Savski venac, and Vračar) the Movement managed to cross the electoral threshold and achieve a great result in merely three years since it was formed. In

the ideological sense, Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own is a movement that represents the ideas of the Left, with social and environmental policies at their center of focus. As a result, the Movement has gained support from renowned regional and worldwide leftists, gathered around the group DiEM 25, such as Yanis Varoufakis and Srećko Horvat.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Political parties and political organizations assume the role of the medium between the citizens and the institutions. Political parties play a central role in the processes of democratization and institutional design (Van Biezen 2003, 2; Agh 1998, 18). The political game functions on the principal competition among different parties, where the support of citizens comes as a prize. The party system is a product of the relationship dynamics and (in)stability of parties and organizations. A vital role in their mutual differentiation during that game is played by ideology. Ideological positioning represents a complex action because we're at a time where ideology and clear ideological polarization of the political chances are questionable, whereas ideological profiles of the parties and organizations are intertwined.

Due to the influence of various contextual factors, the relevant political parties in several countries have weakened and disintegrated. As a substitute for this, there is a phenomenon of new political parties and organizations entering the political arena with notable results. "Attractiveness of the new" (Krašovec and Haughton 2014) is a phenomenon in which new parties and movements affirm themselves with significant results (often with victories too) in the elections, only to lose much of the support in the inter-election period until the next elections. A paradigmatic example of this is Slovenia, where new parties in power are changing with great instability of the party system (Haughton & Deegan-Krause 2021, Kovačević 2020c), and similar tendencies of destabilization have been noticed in Serbia. As the cause of the incapability of the new parties and organizations to maintain their support and stabilize (institutionalize) themselves, we find their insufficient connection with the citizens and insufficient ideological profiling and incongruence. One of the key assumptions of the institutionalization of parties and party systems is in the value infusion (Selznick 1957; Levitsky 1998, 79; Randall & Svasand 2002, 3), in their roots in society as well as in the internal cohesion and coherence (Basedau & Stroh 2008; Mainwaring 1998). Both of these dimensions are related to the ideological foundation of the party and the organization both on a public (according to voters)

and a private (according to membership) scale.

Ideological incongruence is the phenomenon of ideological differences in the programs of parties and organizations, attitudes of leadership versus ideological attitudes of membership (internally), and attitudes of voters (externally). In this paper, we deal with the internal ideological incongruence between the leadership and the membership of parties and organizations. Ideological incongruence in internal relations in parties and organizations is the subject of analysis in the comparative literature (Kukec 2019; Kölln & Polk 2016; Scarrow & Gezgor 2010; Van Haute & Carty 2012; Widfeldt 1999). The great challenge the new political parties and organizations face lies in the tendency of voters to have ideological congruence at the systemic level. Research has shown that voters in countries where ideological incongruence enhances systematically, voters support new parties to reduce this gap (Van de Wardt & Otjes 2021, 15), thus creating an open space in the system for new political parties and organizations. The appearance of new actors also means that after the first election's success and the support of voters, they are taking up a new challenge to create a sustainable organization that will last and reduce ideological incongruence at the domestic level.

In an attempt to position the Movement of Free Citizens and the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own movement through basic party program choices, we will be using the Kitschelt model (Kitschelt 2004) which fills in for the traditional scheme and is based on the split between traditional positions (liberalism, social-democracy, conservativism) and new ones (liberal left, new right) (Spasojević & Stojiljković 2020). The Kitschelt model is based on the following axes: political allocation vs. market allocation, liberal-cosmopolitan politics vs. authoritarian-particularistic politics. The previous-mentioned model was updated by other models which precisely identify and question the party positions (Kriesi et al. 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2017).

To gain more voters, parties and organizations start to resemble one another, moving closer to the ideological center and creating ideological compromises of different positions. However, through the analysis of the ideological positions of political parties and organizations, it can be seen that most belong to one of the above-mentioned models, only now relatively closer to the center than ever before. In the party systems, traditional positions have been kept, but new ones have been created as well. The ideological space is antagonized no more, which enables the disregard of the positions. This is a trend specifically carried out in Serbia.

The rise of the new social movement has not led to fundamental changes, but it has left a mark on the already-existing ones (socioeconomic

and cultural axis). The division on the socio-economic axis redefines the division of pro-state and pro-market positions. The first one relates more to state-led protectionism, while the pro-market position is aimed at promoting national economic competitiveness in the world market. On the other hand, the cultural dimension is based on the topics such as traditionalism and the protection of state and national character as a response to cultural liberalism, but also to oppose euro-integrations and migrations (Kriesi et al. 2006). Positioning on this scale is based on a set of questions that helps us assess the ideology of parties and organizations.

This model offers an overview of the ideological positions of the political parties and organizations, however, for this research, it is also important to determine the positions along the lines of partial social cleavages. Although there is a high number of authors that research these questions, when focusing on dominant social cleavages to map these two movements, we use an additional set of questions that refer to the important topics of political life in Serbia. Some of these are attitude towards Slobodan Milošević's regime, attitude towards the October 5th democratic changes, attitude towards the EU, attitude towards the USA, attitude towards the Russian Federation, attitude towards Kosovo and Metohija, attitude towards the migration crisis, attitude towards democracy and human rights, attitude towards state enterprises, attitude towards private entrepreneurship.

Using the before-mentioned models we will illustrate the ideological orientation of the two movements. With those findings, we will focus on the differences and similarities in the idea of ideological positions of the leadership and membership. Through differences between management and leadership regarding questions concerning the ideological orientation of these movements, we will note the ideological incongruence as a challenge to sustainability and the institutionalization of the above-mentioned movements. Also, in explaining the ideological gap between leadership and membership, we rely on the explanatory mechanism of path dependence. Path dependency is a mechanism that shows that the history of a social subject really matters; what has occurred in the past in terms of how social entities were founded, affects how they function today. "The notion of dependence in relation to the path taken highlights the historical dynamic that dictates that once a path is chosen, it is difficult to change it because the processes become institutionalized and are reinforced over time" (Trouvé et al. 2010, 4).

RESEARCH DESIGN
Research problem and research question

The dominant-party system and backsliding of democracy have led to grave issues for new political parties and movements in the matter of institutionalization in the Serbian party system. A lot of internal and external "problems" have influenced the genesis of both the Movement of Free Citizens and the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own movement. However, our research focus in this article is precisely their impossibility to construct distinctive ideological frames which would be recognized by citizens and voters. Their impossibility of reaching such positions leads to the issue of the ideological incongruence in the previous-mentioned political organizations, especially when it comes to the relationship between leadership and membership of parties. The main goal of our research is to identify and explain ideological incongruence in the above-mentioned political organizations. When it comes to the Movement of Free People, ever since its beginnings, its ideological outline was in the shadow of leadership, first by Saša Janković, and then Sergej Trifunović. On the other hand, the voters' identification with the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own movement has developed stronger through oppositional and protest activism of the movement regarding very specific issues (e.g., illegal demolition of buildings on Hercegovačka Street), than through the movement's ideology itself. Considering the issues these two movements have faced, our research question is: What is the state of the ideological incongruence between party leadership and party membership? Also, we are searching for the answer to explaining why this is the case and how this possible difference in the perception of ideological attitudes can be explained. By providing an answer to the research question in this paper we will try to identify the overlapping and the distinctive aspects of the ideological positions of these movements (leadership) and their members.

Methodology

Our general hypothesis is that new political movements and parties have inherent problems in establishing ideological congruence between party leadership and membership. Empirical validation of our hypotheses is based on data that have been acquired using various methods, both quantitative and qualitative. To make a connection between program stances and practical policies, including membership, it was necessary to research the views of the party leadership of these two movements, as well as their membership. For this purpose, the following qualitative

methods have been used: (a) interviews with the political leadership of the movements (four interviews); (b) focus groups with members of the party and organizations (2 focus groups).

With global indexes as role models, to ensure the expert assessment of certain areas, as a corrective measure for the subjective assessments by the party and organization leadership and membership, the following quantitative method has been used expert questionnaire. The expert questionnaire consisted of 65 questions, which referred to the assessment of the ideological positioning of these two movements. Most of the questions were in the form of scales, of the Likert type. A special battery of questions addressed the problem of ideological congruence between leadership and membership. The questionnaire was completed by 6 experts with many years of experience in dealing with political parties, social cleavages, and analysis of political processes.

To analyze the data from interviews and focus groups we conducted ideological discourse analysis, while the quantitative data from expert scores were processed using statistical analysis.

KEY FINDINGS
Movement of Free Citizens

Based on the data obtained from the research, we can say that the MFC shows significant ideological incongruence on the socio-economic identification map when it comes to economic issues, while the differences between membership and party leadership are less significant when it comes to socio-political issues. Based on expert scores, we see that the MFC has been assessed by experts as both more market and more democratic about the ideological positions to which the leadership and membership of the movement hold. When it comes to the economy, MFC membership is positioned moderately to the left of the center, while the leadership of the movement is positioned moderately to the right of the center. The MFC economic platform is based on several important stances: (1) a negative attitude toward the existing subsidy policy of foreign companies; (2) investing in education as a precondition for a developing country's economic activity; (3) the role of the state should be limited to fiscal and monetary policy with no involvement in the production process and distribution of wealth; (4) the state should be involved in protecting resources that are of vital national interest; (5) MFC very much favors private initiative because state-owned companies are a permanent source of corruption.

On the other hand, MFC membership has a somewhat different economic worldview, which is primarily focused on issues of economic

and social justice and inequality. For MFC members, the main problems in the economic sphere are the consequences of a poor transition to capitalism and the consequent disappearance of the middle class. They see MFC as one that upholds the values of social democracy. They favor the introduction of progressive taxation. They see state-owned companies as better frameworks for workers seeing as these companies offer several benefits and privileges such as sick leave, paid holidays, working hours, etc. They often take the Nordic countries as an example of an ideologically close economic arrangement. On the socio-economic axis, experts see MFC as a movement that favors market-based allocation of resources, with a reduction in political resource allocation. Experts' opinion differs greatly from those of MFC members and is more in tune with the opinion of the leadership.

Graph 1: Socio-economic axis – Movement of Free Citizens

Source: the author's analysis

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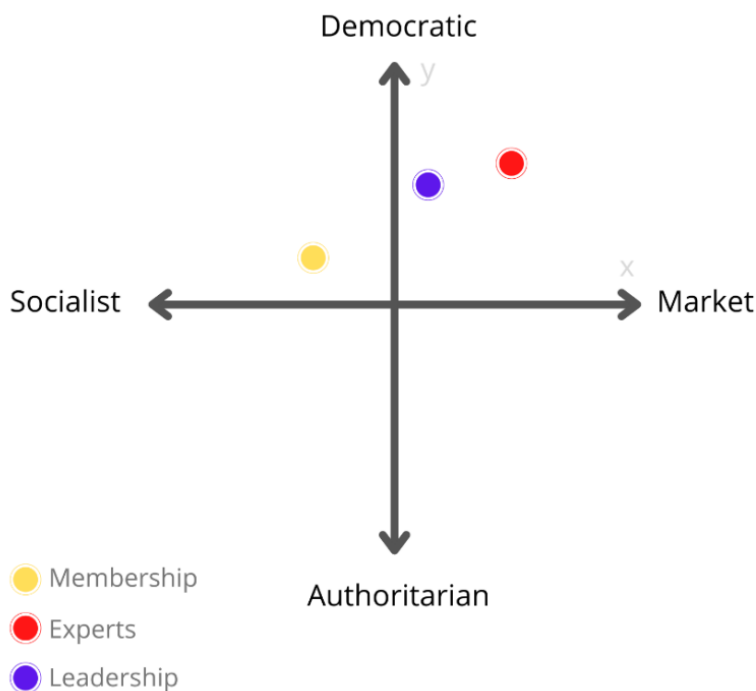
When it comes to the socio-political positioning, the MFC leadership, as well as the membership, favors democracy, but the MFC leadership significantly believes that their attitudes regarding the political system are closest to the models adopted by countries with liberal economies and in the political sense they favor elements of social democracy. The advantage of democracy lies in its participatory element which encourages freedom of citizens and their active participation and inclusive impact on various groups. Among other things, the name of the movement itself is based on principles of free citizenhood. MFC leadership points out the insufficient level of decentralization in matters of achieving a higher level of political rights for minorities. They favor affirmative actions, especially the inclusion of women in politics. They believe that these measures may not yield short-term results but that they encourage participation and provide long-term effects. When asked about sexual minorities, MFC pointed out a high level of discrimination towards members of this community and that the state needs to be more involved in resolving the existing issues, and that the guaranteed rights of these minorities are not protected in practice. MFC supports the idea of same-sex partnerships.

MFC membership stresses that Serbia has good legislation, procedures, and parliamentary system in place, but that they have been usurped by the president, therefore the regime we see today is not democratic. They point out that the current situation calls for a limitation of presidential powers and that it is the institutions, such as the government and the parliament, which should be the real repositories of power. The majority of MFC members associate democracy with equality, followed by the rule of law. The female section of the focus group pointed out that the participation of women is essential in achieving a truly democratic society, and their comments regarding the position of women in Serbia (in the government and parliament) were largely negative. The entire system of representative democracy in Serbia was described as non-democratic and it challenged the legitimacy of the members of the current parliament. Members of MFC do not believe that the rights of sexual minorities are either important or a priority seeing as fundamental human rights are currently under threat in Serbia and that the government is promoting special rights to create a false impression.

The cultural-political axis shows that both the leadership and the membership are in the same quadrant, supporting the civic and cosmopolitism worldviews, with a slightly distinctive belief in civic and cosmopolitism values among the MFC leadership. These findings are being overestimated significantly by the evaluations from the expert

questionnaires. MFC leadership has adopted an affirmative attitude towards minorities, and they believe minorities are not sufficiently involved in the political processes, especially so on the local level. On the other hand, they maintain that matters of cultural importance are at a satisfactory level - language, education, media, etc. MFC leadership believes that it is only natural to offer support to any group within a society that does not enjoy equal status. The revisionist attitude regarding the democratic changes of 5th October is perceived as an idea of the government vs. democracy. Even though they believe that there was a missed opportunity after the political change, they nevertheless believe that the first three years after the ousting of Milošević represent an important democratic change in Serbia. They underline that the state of play in Serbia during the 1990s is similar to that of today, except that they attribute the improvement in certain areas to civilizational change.

MFC membership opinions toward national minorities and migrants are fairly varied. They range from those based on empathy and understanding of the situation to ideas that they have nothing against migrants in principle but that their long-term stay or settlement in Serbia would become a problem due to cultural differences. MFC members have registered several issues in Serbia's recent political history. They point out that an opportunity was missed after the changes of 5th October, and that the main problem was the failure to purge elements of the old regime, especially that of SPS. They maintain that nothing has really changed and that the old system is still in place. To a large extent, members of MFC remain mistrustful of the majority of opposition parties and their leaders who believe they can change the current system which they describe as criminal and oligarchic.

Graph 2: Cultural-political axis – Movement of Free citizens
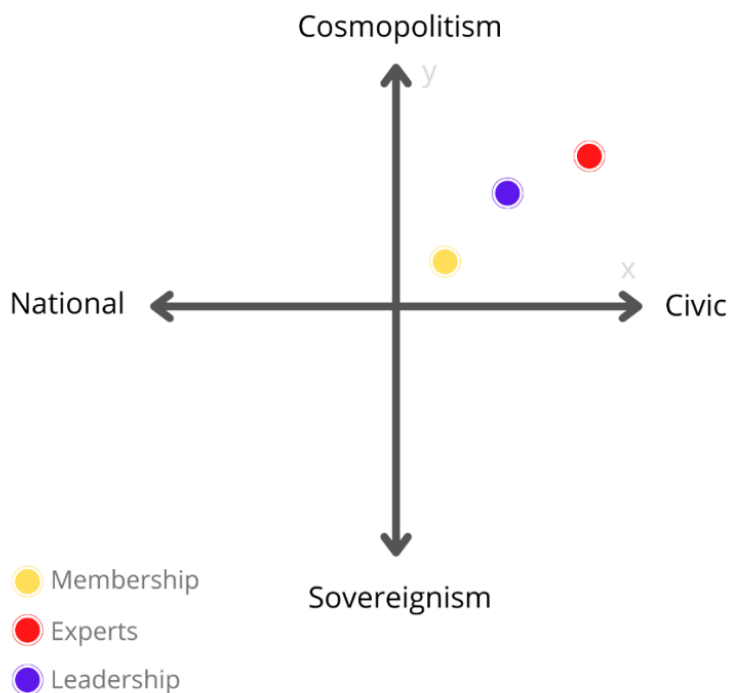
Source: the author's analysis

Findings from the above-shown ideological matrix flow over to issues of international integrations of Serbia, above all the stances on Serbia's entry into the European Union. In matters of political relations and security, MFC leadership believes European integration to be an inevitable process and points out that in matters of the economy the Serbian market has to remain open to everyone. They perceive several problems in the structure of the European Union, primarily the "administrative hypocrisy" reflected in the tolerance of non-democratic events both within and outside the EU. MFC underlines the importance of good relations in the region and in the case of relations with superpowers they do not make any relevant distinction between Russia and the USA.

MFC membership sees the European integration process and EU

membership as the only way forward for Serbia, with a possibility of holding back on the idea due to the changes occurring within the EU. MFC members are not in favor or are openly against cooperation with the Russian Federation due to the bad influence and non-democratic values promoted in the Balkans. MFC members have registered several issues in Serbia's recent political history. They point out that an opportunity was missed after the changes of 5th October, and that the main problem was the failure to purge elements of the old regime, especially that of SPS. They hold that nothing has changed, that the old system is still in place, and that this slows down Serbia's accession to the EU.

Graph 3: EU axis (Euroscepticism / Euro-optimism) – Movement of Free citizens

Euroscepticism   Euro-optimism

🟡 Membership

🔴 Experts

🔵 Leadership
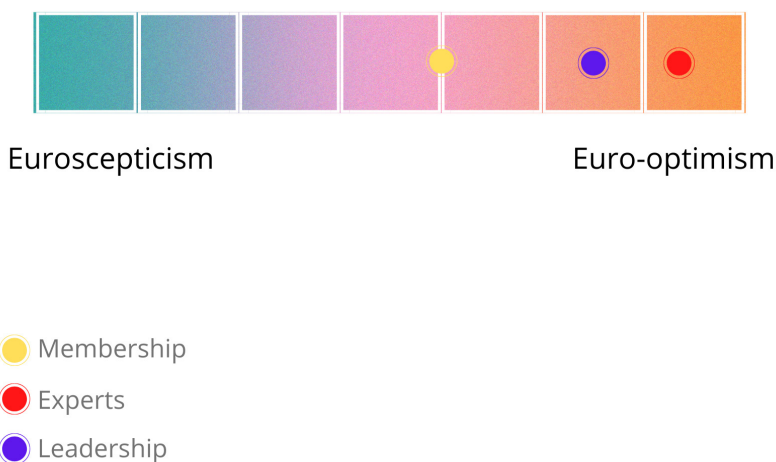
Source: the author's analysis

Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own

The insights from the research show that on the socio-economic identification map of DLBD there is no significant ideological incongruence when it comes to economic issues, while the differences between membership and party leadership are somewhat more expressive regarding socio-political issues. In this sense, the membership of the DLBD is positioned around the center, while the leadership of the movement is positioned strongly according to democratic ideological principles. Expert scores somewhat "overestimate" the democratic

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principles of the leadership movement. The leadership of DLBD sees the economic system of Serbia as a clientelist one that relies on state resources. The role of the market has been neglected to the detriment of the state as the main producer and supplier. They consider clientelism a systemic problem that is also a product of the position in the system of world capitalism. DLBD leadership believes that most basic living services and systems should be state-owned and that ownership and management issues should be separated. DLBD leadership emphasizes that they are committed to models of more democratic governance that include citizens, organizations, and consumers. They are ideologically closer to systems that do not create market/state dichotomies than looking for a third way in public services, following the example of Latin American countries.

DLBD membership generally agrees with the leadership in their way of thinking when it comes to the economy. The main difference, which can be noticed, is that the membership of DLBD is showing a significantly greater preference for the role of the state in the economy. The state must have its factories and companies, whilst environmental standards must be in front of profit and efficiency. On the socialist-market axis, experts assessed DLBD as a movement that advocates the political allocation of resources, with an important role of the state in the economy. The assessment of experts is largely in line with the opinion of the leadership and the membership. It can be concluded that, as far as economic issues are concerned, DLBD acts as an ideologically coherent organization, but it should be noted that neither the leadership nor the membership has a position on a large number of issues that this local initiative should support.

Graph 4: Socio-economic axis – Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own

Democratic

Socialist ← → Market

Authoritarian

● Membership
● Experts
● Leadership
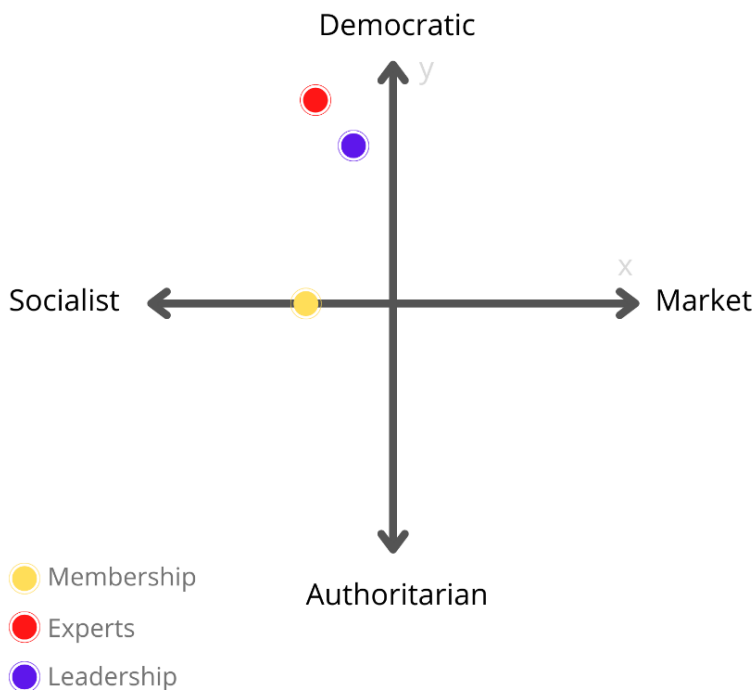
Source: the author's analysis

Regarding the political organization of the state, the leadership of DLBD stands for democracy, believing that citizens have a desire to participate and articulate their interests, but that the political elite often abuses democratic mechanisms, which distances citizens from the essence of democracy. DLBD leadership points out the status of women in society as an important social problem, primarily regarding employment, type of work, working hours, and then about participation in political life. The measures with quotas for women's participation are considered positive, but also as a space to cover up real gender inequality, especially at the local level. DLBD is committed to full respect for human and minority rights by supporting all incentives.

The membership of DLBD believes that due to the government's

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attitude towards the citizens, Serbia is currently a hybrid regime. They mostly point out that they prefer the structure of the northern European countries (Denmark, Finland, and Sweden) because they have organized systems of education, health, and important social measures, but also that Serbia and its citizens do not have enough awareness and political culture to build such systems. The views of the DLBD membership regarding democracy and internal organization can be described as opposed, but about the leadership, they are much less inclined toward democracy. In the focus group of the DLBD membership, views were expressed on the need for an honest "strong hand", a strongman, an individual who will determine the rules by himself, but that such a relationship suits the people in Serbia. Part of the membership emphasized that they do not support democracy at the level of principles, and especially not in Serbia because the people are not ready to talk and reach such an agreement. Although these are individual opinions, it is symptomatic that other members of the focus group largely agreed with the need for a strong leader, especially in times of crisis. Certainly, it is important to point out that some members emphasized their full belief in democratic procedures and institutions, regardless of whether the situation in the country is regular or extraordinary. DLBD membership support measures for the inclusion of women in political processes but points out that there is great discrimination against them in Serbia.

The cultural-political axis shows that, as in the MFC case, leadership and membership are in the same quadrant, supporting civic and cosmopolitanism worldviews. Yet, it is clear that the leadership of the movement is significantly more prone to civic and cosmopolitanism values than the membership. Expert polls are in fair agreement with DLBD leadership positions. When it comes to current and very sensitive topics such as the migrant issue, DLBD leadership sees the best description of the attitude towards migrants in the solidarity and help that emerged with the crisis. They see the phenomena that came after as the idea of the top of the government to spread irrational fears about occupation, taking over the jobs and the country. In addition, DLBD finds the assurance and guarantee of equal rights to minorities as strongly important. They do not see any positive phenomenon in authoritarian regimes, as they describe the regime of Slobodan Milošević. They see the biggest problem in the violation of human rights and economic stagnation, but in the context of Serbia in the last decade of the 20th century, they consider Milošević the main, but not the only culprit. They see the democratic changes of the 5th of October as a necessity, but in the post-5th of October period, they notice the slow development of democracy, the guilt for which they

attribute primarily to the elites, but also to the citizens. They point out that the sovereignty is left to the ruling parties, which have returned it to the citizens with large-scale corruption.

When it comes to the DLBD membership they also support other incentive measures for minorities. They do not see migrants as a problem, but they believe that the authorities in Serbia are comfortable with this situation with migrants so that they would be the dominant topic in public. They are very tolerant and empathetic towards migrants. They see the regime of Slobodan Milošević as a time of catastrophic rule and a great crisis, whilst they see the 5th of October as an inevitability that happened but did not bring the necessary reforms in the later period.

Graph 5: Cultural-political axis – Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own
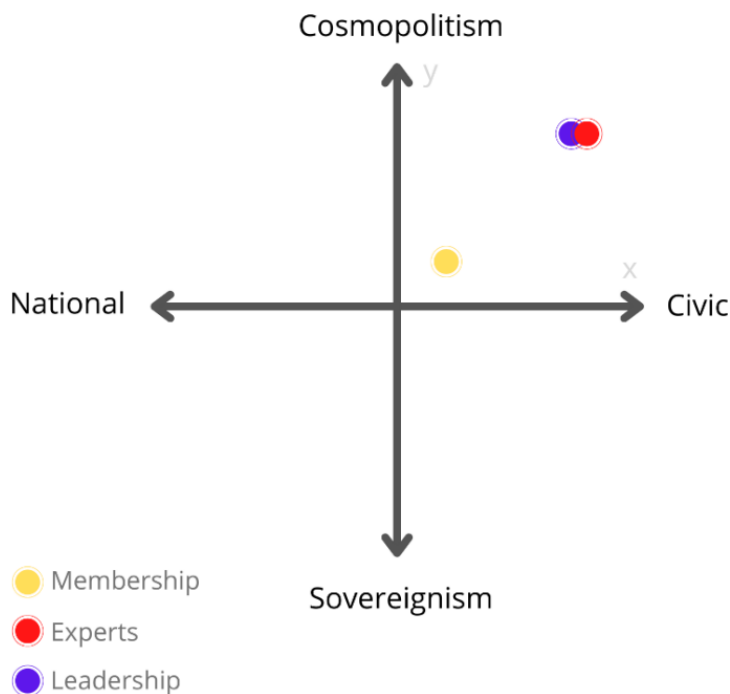
Source: the author's analysis

The leadership of DLBD considers the European integration of Serbia necessary, but the current government in Serbia, led by the SNS, does not have the true political will to turn the state to the West and the EU. They see the support given by the EU to the authorities in Serbia as a product of weakness and unclear attitude of opposition movements and parties. The Serbian authorities, through cooperation with Russia and China, are trying to substitute slow reforms and a stalemate in European integration. In DLBD, they point out that such foreign policy movements are a big failure. They think that the cooperation of the top states with Serbia is a joint project whose goal, among other things, is to stifle the opposition and the free media.

The membership of the DLBD believes that Serbia's European integration is a very slow process, and that the perspective of the European path has been called into question. Opinions on the EU are realistic. Attitudes are emphasized that Serbia should strive for the EU, but that it is not of crucial importance. They find reasons in the internal crisis of the EU, but also in the support it provides to the regime in Serbia. They do not have clear enough views on international actors and great powers, but individuals emphasize their affinities towards the Russian Federation and Vladimir Putin. Attitudes on these issues are not based on information about political relations, but feelings and emotions towards Eastern peoples.

Graph 6: EU axis (Euroscepticism / Euro-optimism) – Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own

Euroscepticism   Euro-optimism

🟡 Membership
🔴 Experts
🔵 Leadership
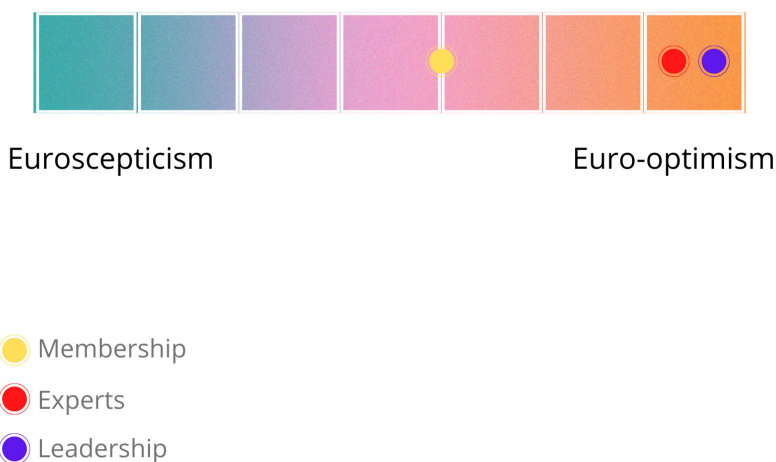
Source: the author's analysis

CONCLUSION

Both the Movement of Free Citizens and Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own, as new political actors, have faced the challenge of ideological positioning and value identification with their target electorate. The challenges of the MFC were a consequence of the specific genesis of the movement, primarily as a leadership one, unlike DLBD, which emerged as an expression of rebellion and protest that reflected a certain active ideological position, quickly recognized by potential supporters of the movement. In this sense, the genesis of both movements significantly represents the "path-dependence" of their ideological and value identifications.

In the case of the MFC, we see that members of the movement are more in favor of socialist ideas in the economy, while leadership is more in favor of the market economy. It is also evident that the party's leadership is more pro-democratic than membership, and that it is more in favor of the idea of EU integration of Serbia. However, both leadership and membership share the same ideological principles when it comes to cosmopolitanism and civic values. In the case of the DLBD, we see that the leadership of the movement and the membership are quite synchronized when it comes to socialist economic ideas, while the leadership of the DLBD is significantly more democratic than the membership. Also, the leadership of the movement holds more cosmopolitan and civic worldviews, and they are significantly more euro-optimistic when it comes to the relationship between Serbia and the EU than membership.

This all tells us that these movements are facing an important path of ideological profiling, especially taking into account the new circumstances. With the departure of Sergej Trifunović from the position of president, the MFC lost its leadership character, and after the coalitional "drowning" of the MFC into the United Opposition for the elections in April 2022, the movement additionally lost its political identity. On the other hand, DLBD managed to "get out" of the local framework of Belgrade politics, in which it was much easier to profile oneself and find ideologically like-minded people. Becoming a parliamentary force after the elections in April 2022, the DLBD faces many challenges that are identity-ideological, which primarily relate to the need for a name change and adjustments in the way of communication that is no longer local-urban, but national-general.

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