“Vukovar will never be BYKOBAP”: Serbia-Croatia relations and minority language rights

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Outline

• National minorities, homeland politics, and bilateral relations
• Serbia-Croatia relations: a triadic nexus
• Capturing Cyrillic in foreign policy rhetoric
National minorities, homeland politics, and bilateral relations

• National minorities understood through Brubaker’s ‘triadic nexus’ (1996)

• The threat of homeland politics
  (Davis and Moore, 1997; Saideman, 2001)

• Good bilateral relations as mitigating
  (Venice Commission, 2001; Waterbury, 2010; Nagle, 2013)

• RQ: How do kin-state politics manifest through diplomatic relations with a national minority’s kin-state?

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Brubaker’s triadic nexus (1996)

- National Minority
- Nationalising (host-) state
- External National Homeland (kin-state)
Serbia-Croatia relations: a triadic nexus

Serbs in Croatia (national minority)

Croatia (host-state) ↔ Serbia (kin-state)
Capturing Cyrillic in foreign policy rhetoric

- Post-conflict, fragile Croatia-Serbia relations
- Struggle to implement bilingual signs in Vukovar, 2013
- Qualitative content analysis: inductive coding of 86 ministry of foreign affairs statements

Credit: Beta/Hina
Ivica Dačić: “It is very important that various incidents do not cast a shadow on the publically pronounced desire for improving our relations”
(MFA Serbia, 4 March 2015)
Dealing with the Past

Ivica Dačić: “they can be compared only to the measures taken in the past, at the time of [the] fascist Independent State of Croatia”
(MFA Serbia, 24 September 2015)
Vesna Pusić: “it [bilingual signs in Vukovar] is Croatia’s internal issue, but we expect support from Serbian authorities as well since it concerns minority rights”

(MFEA Croatia, 26 November 2013)
Bosa Prodanović: “Serbia wishes to develop good relations with Croatia, and expects it, as a neighbouring country and EU member, to prevent any further escalation of the anti-Serb campaign”
(MFA Serbia, 15 November 2013)
Conclusions

- Responsible homeland politics?
- Quadratic nexus?
- Good neighbourly relations prioritised over ethnic ties
- Limited capture of foreign policy by national minority