

## *Institutional Trust and Democracy Satisfaction in Croatia: Partisanship- versus Outcome-Driven Evaluations*

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The functioning of democratic regimes and effective governance depend on the proper functioning of accountability mechanisms, which in turn depend on political institutions and actors being evaluated based on the outcomes they deliver. In societies characterised by a high degree of polarisation and sharply divided political identities, trust in political institutions and evaluation of democracy are likely to depend on partisanship more than on any other factor. The article aims to explain the determinants of trust in political institutions and satisfaction with democracy in Croatia as a highly polarised society, focusing on the role partisanship and representation have in trust in institutions and in satisfaction with democracy. The article establishes that partisanship is an important factor in shaping trust in institutions and evaluations of democracy. This effect is equally present with respect to trust in political institutions, such

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as government and parliament, and non-political institutions, such as public administration and the judiciary.

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## 1. Introduction

The sustainability of all democratic political regimes requires at least tacit consent and passive support for the democratic political institutions of the citizens. More importantly, democratic political regimes require citizen acceptance of basic democratic principles and of the consequences these principles produce in the life of a polity. Acceptance of democratic norms, such as free and fair elections and the use of the majority rule in decision-making, presupposes acceptance of their outcomes, such as the formation of a government composed of parties one did not vote for, or acceptance of the public expression of values and views one profoundly disagrees with. The effective functioning of the democratic political system also requires citizens to trust political institutions and to evaluate governments based on their performance.

However, in highly polarised societies, with deep ideological divisions and strong political identities, where politics is often seen as a zero-sum game, it is likely that trust in institutions and support for the democratic political system is shaped more by citizens' positions on issues defining the lines of polarisation than on the outcomes which democratic institutions deliver. Consequently, it is also likely that in highly polarised societies mechanisms of democratic accountability are not fully effective. If so, the way citizens assess the functioning of national political institutions and democracy will be shaped principally by whether their preferred party is in power and whether the government agenda represents their views (Anderson et al., 2005).

If the role played by partisan identification and political identities in shaping democracy evaluations and trust in institutions hampers the effective functioning of accountability mechanisms, and if the zero-sum game view of politics prevails, it is likely that the efficiency of governance mechanisms will also be affected to some degree. Political systems in which political actors are not held accountable for their performance, and are evaluated predominantly by how well they represent their supporters' ideologies and political identities, may result in suboptimal governance outcomes. Political actors who are not held accountable for the outcomes they deliver are less likely to care about corruption, as their voters are less likely to punish them

at the ballot box if they do engage in corruption (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). They are also more likely to engage in crony practices and are more inclined to direct public resources towards their constituents (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). In extreme cases, when polarisation is very strong, political actors could also subvert independent institutions in order to achieve partisan control of policy or to strengthen their grip on power.

Since the country's first democratic elections, the Croatian political system has been characterised by highly salient ideological divisions based on opposing interpretations of history and questions about the role of tradition, religion, and modernity in contemporary Croatian society. These divisions, in turn, have shaped political identities and determined the political attitudes and behaviour of most Croatian citizens (s. Šiber, 2001; Zakošek, 1998; Zakošek & Čular, 2004; Henjak et al., 2013; Grdešić, 2013). Given the salience and the power of ideological and identity divisions in Croatian politics, it is highly likely that political identities are shaping citizens' evaluations of Croatian democracy and its institutions. Because political identities are represented by parties, and because political parties alternate in power, the impact of political identities on political support is likely to be shaped by the support for the winning or losing parties representing these identities. This study seeks to find an answer to this question by analysing the determinants of democracy satisfaction and of trust in democratic institutions in Croatia. In doing so, it aims to test the proposition that in the Croatian context partisanship and political identity are the dominant factors shaping evaluations of democracy and trust in political institutions.

Thus far, there have been few studies investigating sources of political support in Croatia, and Croatia has often been omitted from comparative studies of political support. In addition, despite the established importance of symbolic and historical divisions in Croatian politics and their link to ideological identification and partisanship, there have been no studies aimed at investigating the impact of partisanship on other dimensions of politics and political support, particularly in the Croatian context. This study aims to fill this gap and to test the impact of partisanship on satisfaction with democracy and trust in political institutions in Croatia.

## 2. Conceptualising Political Support

An analysis of sources of political support necessarily starts with a definition of an object of support (s. Dalton, 1999; Norris, 1999). The principal distinction is between objects of political support, distinguishing between

diffuse and specific support (Easton, 1965; 1975). It distinguishes between support for the principles, values, and norms of a political regime on the one hand, and support for specific policies, outcomes, or political actors on the other (Easton, 1975). This Easton's dichotomy presupposes that support for the founding principles of a political regime need not be affected when citizens are dissatisfied with current policies, government actors, or their results. In democratic systems, this distinction is essential, because it ensures that support for a political regime is not undermined by bad performance of governments, parties, or their policies. Within this framework, Easton distinguishes between three principal objects of support: a political community, a political regime, and the government in office (s. Dalton, 1999; Norris, 1999). Easton goes on to make a distinction between affective and evaluative support, where the former is based on agreements with principles and the latter is based on evaluations of effectiveness. The principal difference in this conceptualisation distinguishes between support for political regimes and that for political actors. This distinction is relevant because in a democracy, if dissatisfaction cannot be directed at political actors and addressed through elections, it is likely to lead to a decrease in support for a political regime and, perhaps, even to a decrease in support for democracy as a principle.<sup>1</sup>

Regime performance in delivering social and economic outcomes is a quantifiable measure whereby the perceptions of individual citizens may differ to a certain degree, depending on their interests and political preferences. However, politics is not only about instrumental outcomes and calculable benefits. Politics, particularly in democratic regimes, is also about expressive outcomes, such as the representation of values and political identities, and even about partisanship or identification with individual candidates

<sup>1</sup> The question is how well citizens can distinguish between objects of support, and whether they can understand the crucial difference between a political regime and its principles on the one hand, and political actors and their performance on the other. There is ample empirical evidence that citizens are indeed capable of making a distinction between support for political regimes and support for political actors in government (Klingemann, 1999; Dalton, 1999). However, more recent studies (Magalhães, 2014; Linde, 2012) find that diffuse and specific support are linked. In fact, Magalhães (2014) and Linde (2012) argue that if a political regime is characterised by low quality of governance, this is not only likely to reduce specific support for political actors and their policies, but also to lead to a decline in diffuse support for the regime principles (Magalhães, 2014). Several recent empirical studies have found support for this argument, as weak economic performance of national economic systems and high levels of inequality have been found to result in lower levels of support for democracy as a political regime (Andersen, 2012; Kriekhaus et al., 2013), and lower satisfaction with democracy performance (Armingeon & Guthmann, 2014).

(Brennan & Lomasky, 1993; Brennan & Hamlin, 2000). Therefore, in the expressive dimension of politics, voters do not derive utility from instrumentally beneficial outcomes, such as economic growth or income. Instead, utility is derived from expressively favourable outcomes, whereby the citizens' views, values, or identities are represented in the political system, and the act of voting is mainly about expressing support for the parties and candidates representing one's values, identities, and views (Brennan & Lomasky, 1993). Thus, given the importance of the expressive dimension of politics, representation and partisanship are likely to play an important role as determinants of satisfaction with democracy and trust in political institutions. In societies like Croatia, with its high polarisation and political divisions based on evaluations of history, symbols, values, and identities, expressive factors are likely to be particularly important.

From the perspective of the expressive dimension of politics, it is immediately obvious that, at the level of support for the government, individual citizens are less likely to support a government if it is composed of parties they did not vote for. Conversely, citizens who did support the governing parties in the elections are more likely to be satisfied and trust the government because it reflects their political identity and values (s. Anderson et al., 2005).

Government composition also affects evaluations of regime performance and regime institutions. A number of empirical studies have established that support for governing parties is likely to increase satisfaction with democracy and trust in political institutions, whereas support for opposition parties is likely to have exactly the opposite effects (Anderson et al., 2005; Anderson & Tverdova, 2001; Singh et al., 2012; Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2012; Dalton, 2005). Furthermore, empirical studies have established that as the distance between individual and government ideological positions increases, satisfaction with democracy declines (Anderson et al., 2005; Dahlberg et al., 2013; Aarts & Thomassen, 2008). Finally, the less close citizens feel to a governing party (Anderson et al., 2005; Dalton, 2005; Anderson & LoTempio, 2002), or if they feel the government is not responsive to their views (Anderson et al., 2005; Cattenberg & Moreno, 2005), the less likely they are to trust political institutions.

That evaluations of democracy and political institutions are found to be conditional on a subjective feeling of representation and the electoral fortunes of preferred parties suggests that politics is often perceived as a zero-sum game. In zero-sum game politics, citizens are more likely to evaluate a political regime and political institutions positively if their side is winning. Furthermore, the overall effect of partisanship and representation on satisfaction with democracy and trust in institutions is likely to be

dependent on the level of polarisation in a society (Tóka, 2003; Anderson et al., 2005). If ideological polarisation is low, political identities are not exclusive, and cleavages generally cross-cut each other, the question of who is electoral winner is less consequential than in the cases where ideological polarisation is high, political identities are exclusive, and cleavages reinforce each other (Tóka, 2003). Consequently, in highly polarised societies, where political identities are based on a fundamental disagreement over interpretations of the history of a political community and its founding values, politics is much more likely to be seen as a zero-sum game. It is, therefore, more likely for citizens in these societies to be less satisfied with democracy and trust political institutions less if these produce governments they do not like (Anderson et al., 2005).

In highly polarised societies, where divisions based on ideology, identity, or partisanship are very strong, the loss of an election implies that the citizens voting for an electoral loser will not be represented on the government's agenda. If this happens, it is likely that the citizens supporting the losing side will be critical not only of the government, but also of the institutions and the democratic regime which have brought about such an outcome (s. Anderson et al., 2005). Similarly, strong polarisation based on ideology or identity is likely to have an impact on the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms (Köröseny, 2013). If evaluations of democracy and political institutions are dependent on partisanship, ideology, or political identity, and politics is seen as a zero-sum game, the political system and its institutions are unlikely to be evaluated based on their performance in delivering social and economic outcomes. Rather, political institutions will most likely be evaluated on how well they represent the ideological, partisan, and identity preferences of their citizens. The consequence of this development is that citizens place greater emphasis on whether their preferred party is in power and less on whether this party is delivering good social and economic outcomes. Consequently, because political actors are evaluated more on the basis of who they are and where they stand ideologically than on how well they govern, the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms working through representation and elections will inevitably be diluted.

### 3. Support for Democracy and Trust in Political Institutions in Croatia

Since the first democratic elections in 1990, ideological divisions based on interpretations of history and views of the role of religion, tradition, and

modernity have been shaping politics in Croatia (Šiber, 2001; Zakošek, 1998; Zakošek & Čular, 2004; Henjak et al., 2013). These ideological divisions emerged through the mobilisation of political identities developing since the introduction of mass politics into Croatia, shaped by historical events such as the formation of Yugoslavia, the Second World War, and the Croatian Spring. Historical events shaped social development, often through violence and conflict, and produced deep divisions between the opposing sides in these conflicts. The Second World War was undoubtedly the most traumatic political event in modern Croatian history. In Croatia, this was a civil war between communists and Ustashe, an ethnic conflict between Croats and Serbs, a fight against occupation, and a social revolution in one. The war largely destroyed pre-war society, its political organisations and identities, and replaced them with new political identities forged in conflict and very hostile to each other. The nature of the conflict engulfed the whole of society and essentially removed the option of non-participation in the conflict. In the end, the communists won, and in an effort to consolidate their power dealt with the losing side through brutal repression, which enabled supporters of the Ustashe regime to claim the mantle of victims despite being responsible for major war crimes. After the war, the communist regime dealt with the past by imposing an interpretation of history designed to build its legitimacy, and suppressed all alternative narratives and political identities. However, the narrative of the losing side in the war and other groups repressed by the communist regime persisted in the private sphere and enabled the creation of a separate political identity in opposition to the regime, and supported by the Catholic church (Šiber, 2001).

Political identities shaped through historical events became fully mobilised when democratic politics was introduced into Croatia in 1990. This process exposed the deep divisions over interpretations of history, the definition of national identity, and the definition of values on which the independent Croatian state and society should be founded. New political parties emerged aligned along these symbolic and identity issues, while issues related to economic interests had very little, if any, relevance (Šiber, 2001; Zakošek, 1998). While these divisions were somewhat subdued during the War of Independence in the 1990s, they never lost relevance and have possibly even increased in importance since the 2000 elections.

Partisan competition in the 1990s was characterised by an asymmetric pattern of competition – produced by an electoral system which produced majority governments by HDZ as the dominant party – a strong presidential system, and an opposition divided into several parties arrayed along a

dominant cleavage dimension but united in a desire to bring about an end to HDZ dominance. After 2000, with the introduction of a proportional electoral system and a parliamentary system of government, political competition consolidated into two clearly separate and ideologically homogeneous blocks, alternating in power in a wholesale manner, while parties attempting to play a role of a pivot between the two blocks rapidly lost electoral support and political relevance.<sup>2</sup>

While political blocks in Croatia represent two poles of a cleavage, it must be noted that these cleavages are fuelled by issues related to history, symbols, and values (Zakošek & Čular, 2004). Thus the cleavages dominating Croatian society are not based on interest divisions that can be accommodated easily. Instead, the cleavages are based on symbols, identities, and interpretations of history where consensus has been elusive and divisions persistent since the creation of democratic politics. These issues have also shaped the ideological identification of Croatian citizens, with interpretations of history and attitudes towards religion and tradition emerging as the most important determinants of the citizens' ideological orientations (Jou, 2010).

In this context, political divisions based on social and economic outcomes are largely irrelevant as determinants of electoral behaviour, partisan identification, and political identities (Zakošek & Čular, 2004; Henjak et al., 2013). Empirical studies thus far have been unable to find the effects of economic issues on political behaviour and partisanship to any significant degree. In fact, the effect is found to be reversed, in that economic positions are influenced by partisanship, with voters supporting the economic policies promoted by their favourite parties and not the other way around (Henjak, 2007). Electoral results in such a context have depended predominantly on the ability of parties in both blocks to mobilise their supporters, and much less on the ability of parties to draw supporters from the other block. Furthermore, parties tend to lose elections primarily when their voters are discouraged to participate in elections because of their dissatisfaction with how parties have performed in government (Henjak, 2011).

Strong polarisation on ideological issues, combined with the bipolar division of parties and voters into two clearly separate and ideologically strongly divided political blocks, combined with a low political salience of

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<sup>2</sup> This development affected HSLS and HSS, two of the strongest opposition parties in the 1992 and 1995 elections, which then switched sides in the 2003 and 2007 elections and entered into a coalition with HDZ.



economic issues, is also likely to affect patterns of political support in Croatia. Given the strong ideological polarisation over identity, values, and symbols in Croatian society, it is to be expected that evaluations of democracy and trust in political institutions are strongly influenced by partisanship and representation, because these variables transfer the impact of political identities to government support. More specifically, it is to be expected that supporters of governing parties are more likely to be satisfied with democracy and to have greater trust in political institutions, because democracy has produced the outcomes they desire, and governments are likely to represent their ideological or partisan preferences. Consequently, partisanship, or to be more precise, support for government or opposition parties, and ideological congruence between voters and government is likely to play a large role in shaping democracy evaluations and trust in political institutions.

The conceptualisation of political trust is a somewhat contested issue. The question arises whether political trust can be conceptualised as a single concept or whether there are multiple dimensions of political trust based on the different relations between citizens and political actors (s. Hooghe 2011; Fisher et al., 2010). However, the relevant question in the context of strong political polarisation and strong identities is how trust in democratic institutions, which are not supposed to be political, is related to trust in government, which is political. It is conceivable that in societies with strong ideological polarisation, such as Croatia, the effect of partisanship on trust is not limited to government institutions, which are in effect political, such as the national government or the national parliament, but extends to institutions which are supposed to be non-political, such as the judiciary or public administration. It would be reasonable to expect that the impact of partisanship and political identities on trust in the judiciary and public administration is weaker than its impact on trust in the government and parliaments. In either case, analysing the two separately provides us with insight into the impact partisanship and representation have on trust in institutions, parliament, and government on the one hand, and the justice system and public administration on the other.

#### 4. Determinants of Political Support

Given the presence of deep political divisions based on ideology and identity in Croatia, it is to be expected that citizens supporting incumbent parties at the time of elections are more likely to be satisfied with

democracy and more trusting of political institutions than citizens who supported losing parties or citizens who did not participate in elections. Furthermore, it is to be expected that citizens who are ideologically closer to governing parties will also be more satisfied with the functioning of democracy and will have more trust in institutions than those who are ideologically more distant from the government position.

Apart from partisanship and representation, a number of other factors are likely to affect satisfaction with democracy and trust in political institutions. These include personal socioeconomic position, evaluations of the economic situation, trust in other members of society, political efficacy, education, political knowledge, and political authoritarianism. These factors will be considered in the analysis in order to assess the relative power of partisanship in comparison with the other variables.

Studies of political support find that socioeconomic position is an important determinant of satisfaction with democracy. Economically better-off citizens are found to be more satisfied with democracy and to have a higher level of trust in institutions (s. Andersen, 2012; Kriekhaus et al., 2013). Similar findings have been recorded with respect to evaluations of economic performance, both personal and societal. Several studies have established that citizens who evaluate their personal and the national economy more positively tend to be more satisfied with democracy and have a higher level of trust in institutions (Kriekhaus et al., 2013; Magalhães, 2014; Armingeon & Gutthmann, 2014; Cattenberg & Moreno, 2005).

Political efficacy, or the citizens' perception of the effectiveness of their participation in politics, is also found to affect satisfaction with democracy and trust in institutions. Citizens with higher levels of political efficacy perceptions are found to have more positive evaluations of political institutions and regime performance (Cattenberg & Moreno, 2005; Kriekhaus et al., 2013). Similarly, trust in other members of society translates into political support and is associated with a higher level of satisfaction with democracy, as well as with a higher level of trust in political institutions (Kriekhaus et al., 2013; Magalhães, 2014; Armingeon & Gutthmann, 2014; Cattenberg & Moreno, 2005; Dowely & Silver, 2002).

Education is associated with positive evaluations of regime performance and a higher level of confidence in political institutions (Kriekhaus et al., 2013; Magalhães, 2014; Armingeon & Gutthmann, 2014). However, the opposite is the case with the impact of political knowledge, which is found to be negatively correlated with democracy satisfaction and trust in political institutions (Dahlberg et al., 2013).

Finally, political authoritarianism is likely to affect satisfaction with democracy and trust in political institutions, because citizens who are more deferential to authority are also likely to be less critical of the way political regime and its institutions perform. Thus, it is to be expected that politically more authoritarian citizens will be more satisfied with democracy and more trusting of political institutions (Devos et al., 2002).

## 5. Data and Analysis

The paper proceeds to test these propositions using survey data collected immediately after the 2011, 2015, and 2016 parliamentary elections. To test the impact of partisanship, the dataset needs to include the time points when parties from both political blocks were in government, or to be more precise, it needs to include the time points when HDZ and its allies held office, as well as when SDP and its partners did so. In the data used in this paper HDZ and its allies controlled the government before the 2011 and 2016 elections, while SDP and its partners controlled the government before the 2015 elections. Unfortunately, it is not possible to extend the timeframe of the analysis to the elections held in 2007 and earlier because the Faculty of Political Science surveys conducted before 2011 did not include all the items needed to consistently measure, over multiple time points, all the independent concepts used in the analysis.

Each survey includes about 1,000 respondents, which gives a total of 3,001 respondents. The first dependent variable, satisfaction with democracy, is measured by an item asking the respondent how satisfied he or she is with how democracy works in Croatia. The second dependent variable measures trust in government, and is composed of two items asking the respondents how much they trust the government and the parliament. This variable measures trust in political institutions dominated by political parties. A separate variable including items measuring trust in public administration and the judiciary measures trust in institutions which are not directly associated with partisan politics. Four individual items composing these two variables are highly correlated with each other and load on the same factor in the factor analysis, with the exception of the 2011 survey, when trust in the judiciary and public administration load on a separate factor. For this reason, and to differentiate conceptually between institutions dominated by parties and institutions which are supposed to be independent of partisan politics, two separate variables measuring trust in institutions are used here.

The independent variables include measures of support for the incumbent party, subjective representation (or ideological congruence with the preferred political party), political authoritarianism, political efficacy, evaluations of the economic situation, level of political knowledge, wealth, education, age, and trust in others.

Support for the incumbent party is measured by a dichotomous variable indicating a vote for the party or coalition which was in power before the elections. Subjective representation is a variable measuring the difference between individual self-placement on a left–right scale and the government position on a left–right scale, calculated as the combined left–right position of all governing parties weighted by their seat share in parliament in order to measure their relative influence on government position. Data on the left–right position of political parties is taken from the Chapel Hill expert survey conducted in 2010 (Bakker et al., 2015).

Political authoritarianism is measured by three items asking the respondents if (1) they agree that the task of the opposition is to support the government as opposed to criticising it, (2) they agree that citizens do not have the right to strike and demonstrate if this endangers public order, and (3) it is justifiable to limit civil liberties if interests of the state and nation are at stake. The variable is computed by taking the mean value of these three items. Higher values indicate a higher level of political authoritarianism.

Political efficacy is measured by two items asking the respondents if they agree with the statement that who people vote for influences events in the country, and if they agree that who is in government matters. This variable is calculated by taking the mean value of these two items. Higher values indicate a greater sense of individual political efficacy.

Economic evaluations are measured as an average of two items asking the respondent if his or her personal economic situation has improved over the last four years and if the economic situation in the country has improved over the last four years. This variable is calculated by taking the mean value of these two items. Higher values indicate more positive economic evaluations.

Trust in others is measured by a single item asking the respondent if other people can be trusted or not. Political knowledge is measured by four variables asking respondents factual questions about politics. These questions attempt to find out if the respondents know, for instance, who the finance minister of Croatia was before the elections, who the current president of the European Commission is, which institution oversees monetary policy

in Croatia, and what the highest judicial body in Croatia is. The variable is calculated by adding up the correct answers. Wealth is measured by a variable composed of four items asking the respondent if he or she owns a house or a flat, commercial or private property which can be rented, stocks, bonds, or savings. The variable is calculated by adding up all the items of wealth respondent owns. The remaining two variables are age and education. Age measures how old the respondent is, while education measures the highest level of education the respondent has attained.

## 6. Results

Because all the dependent variables are continuous, the analysis uses OLS regression with a pooled dataset composed of three electoral surveys. Given that the pooled dataset includes three surveys from three separate elections, the OLS model is estimated using cluster corrected standard error to control for the potential clustering of standard errors within years. Also, to control for potential election-specific effects and year effects, two dummy variables indicating the 2015 and 2016 elections were added, with the 2011 elections being a reference category.

Table 1 presents the results of the regression analysis with three dependent variables. Something that clearly emerges from the analysis is the strength of the impact of support for the governing party on democracy satisfaction and trust in institutions. For all three dependent variables, the impact of support for the governing party is significant and positive. Because all the dependent variables are measured on a five-point scale, the impact of partisanship can be compared directly across all three dependent variables. It is evident that the impact of support for the governing party is the strongest in the case of democracy satisfaction. The effect of partisanship on trust in government and parliament is about one quarter weaker in strength, and the effect on trust in the judiciary and public administration is weaker still. The impact of the subjective feeling of representation is significant only as a determinant of trust in government, but it does not register a significant effect in the case of other dependent variables. This is not unusual given that the government and parliament are institutions tasked with representing the citizens' positions. This might also provide the answer why the impact of representation on the other two variables is not significant.

Table 1. OLS regression results for the three dependent variables measuring satisfaction with democracy and trust in political institutions

	Satisfaction with democracy	Trust in government and parliament	Trust in the judiciary and public administration
Constant	<b>1,369***</b> (0,162)	<b>0,984***</b> (0,123)	<b>1,238***</b> (0,118)
Political authoritarianism	<b>0,141***</b> (0,024)	<b>0,169***</b> (0,018)	<b>0,185***</b> (0,018)
Political efficacy	0,011 (0,020)	<b>0,106***</b> (0,015)	<b>0,078***</b> (0,015)
Trust in others	<b>0,228***</b> (0,057)	<b>0,312***</b> (0,043)	<b>0,149***</b> (0,042)
Support for governing party	<b>0,256***</b> (0,058)	<b>0,180***</b> (0,044)	<b>0,119**</b> (0,042)
Subjective representation	0,003 (0,013)	<b>0,026**</b> (0,010)	0,018 (0,010)
Economic evaluations	<b>0,376***</b> (0,033)	<b>0,270***</b> (0,025)	<b>0,209***</b> (0,024)
Political knowledge	0,015 (0,024)	-0,012 (0,019)	-0,021 (0,018)
Wealth	0,016 (0,030)	0,002 (0,023)	0,036 (0,022)
Education	<b>-0,043*</b> (0,020)	0,012 (0,015)	<b>-0,043**</b> (0,015)
Age	0,002 (0,001)	<b>0,006***</b> (0,001)	0,000 (0,001)
2015	<b>-0,182**</b> (0,070)	<b>-0,656***</b> (0,053)	-0,049 (0,051)
2016	<b>-0,446***</b> (0,069)	<b>-0,850***</b> (0,053)	-0,086 (0,051)
Adjusted R square	0,087	0,200	0,090

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N=3001, \*\*\*p<0,001, \*\*p<0,01, \*p<0,05; Source: Author's calculations

Turning to other variables, political authoritarianism has a significant effect on all three dependent variables. This is not surprising, because the more authoritarian a person is, the more likely they are to trust institutions which represent the authority of the state. The fact that more authoritarian people are also more satisfied with democracy may be explained by their somewhat lower standards for evaluating democracy and the lower expectations they have from democracy. Interestingly, the effect is strongest for trust in the judiciary and public administration (perhaps because these institutions are supposed to enforce state authority), somewhat lower for trust in government and parliament, which are more political and contentious, and lower still for satisfaction with democracy.

With respect to trust in others, the more trusting a respondent is, the more likely he or she is to trust institutions and be satisfied with democracy. This effect may represent the transfer of a general disposition to trust other members of society onto political institutions. Political efficacy has a significant and positive effect on trust in institutions, both government and parliament, as well as the judiciary and public administration. This is not surprising because one is more likely to trust political institutions if one feels he or she can influence politics, and perceives participation as an efficient way to shape political outcomes. However, this effect does not hold for satisfaction with democracy, where political efficacy does not register significant effects. Satisfaction with economic performance has a significant positive effect on all three dependent variables, but the effect is strongest for democracy satisfaction, and weaker for trust in government and trust in the judiciary and public administration. Again, this effect is expected and is confirmed by numerous studies of political regime support, whereby citizens satisfied with economic conditions, personal and national, are more supportive of democracy and have greater trust in political institutions (Magalhães, 2014; Armingeon & Gutthmann, 2014). Of the remaining variables, political knowledge and wealth do not show significant effects, while education does have a significant negative effect on satisfaction with democracy and trust in the judiciary and public administration, but this effect does not significantly affect trust in government. This is not unexpected, because better educated citizens are also likely to be more sophisticated and have a better understanding of the functioning of democracy and its institutions. The fact that we do not see this effect on trust in government is indicative, because trust in government is likely to be more dependent on partisanship. Better educated citizens, on the other hand, because of their greater sophistication, would be more likely to evaluate democracy and non-explicitly political institutions,

such as the judiciary and public administration, independently of partisan factors. This would also explain why the better educated are more critical than the less educated of democracy and democratic institutions. Age is significant only as a factor impacting trust in government, but it does not have an important impact on the two other dependent variables. It shows that older citizens have greater trust in government, while younger citizens are more critical, perhaps also because they feel less connected to parties and politics in general.

Finally, we can see that there are significant effects of the election year on trust in government and satisfaction with democracy. A comparison of coefficients for dummy year variables shows that satisfaction with democracy and trust in government declines significantly between 2011 and 2016, and this effect is particularly pronounced in the case of trust in government and somewhat less pronounced in the case of democracy satisfaction. It may be observed that between the 2011 and 2016 elections satisfaction with democracy declined by half a point on a five-point scale, and trust in government declined by almost a whole point on a five-point scale. On the other hand, trust in the judiciary and public administration did not change significantly, though it did decline slightly.

## 7. Conclusion

The findings support the expectations that partisanship is the principal factor shaping political support in Croatia. This is equally the case with satisfaction with democracy and with trust in political institutions. The effect of partisanship is certainly confounded by the effect of incumbency, which overlaps with partisanship. However, it is impossible to disentangle the effect of incumbency from that of partisanship because of overlap, and the fact that the effect of partisanship changes direction as changes in government composition take place. In any case, the findings of this analysis support the expectations stated before, and a more precise test can only be provided in a comparative setting where it would be possible to control for levels of polarisation across countries.

Of the remaining variables, we see a consistent and important impact of satisfaction with economic performance, trust in others, and political authoritarianism. It is reasonable to argue that satisfaction with economic performance boosts satisfaction with democracy and trust in institutions, because it is the task of political institutions and democratic systems to deliver favourable economic outcomes. However, in the Croatian context



in particular, economic preferences and evaluations of economic conditions are themselves found to be shaped by partisanship. Support for the governing party is found to be associated with positive evaluations of economic conditions, and even preferences for policies, like taxation, are found to be affected by attitudes towards the party advocating these (Henjak, 2007). Therefore, it is possible that in the Croatian context the effect of partisanship is additionally translated through evaluations of economic conditions. Hence positive economic evaluations are relevant not only because satisfaction with the economy leads to satisfaction with democracy and trust in institutions, but also because they partially capture the effect of partisanship. The fact that the effects of education and wealth, the two variables measuring socioeconomic outcomes at an individual level more directly, are either insignificant or negative, supports the proposition that the effect of economic evaluations is not only driven by economic evaluations but that it also partly channels the effect of partisanship. This is the principal difference between Croatia and the findings of other studies analysing political support, where socioeconomic status, income, and employment are found to be significant and important sources of political support.

The remaining three significant independent variables: trust in others, political authoritarianism, and political efficacy are not related to partisanship in any discernible way. Trust in others and political authoritarianism operate through what is, in effect, a transfer mechanism whereby political support is a function of a broader view of society. Political efficacy, in turn, captures the citizens' view of politics. The impact of these variables can be summarised in three sentences. If one trusts his or her fellow citizens, one is more likely to also have greater trust in political institutions. If one holds more authoritarian views, one is also likely to be more trusting of political institutions embodying political authority. If one believes he or she can influence politics, one is more likely to trust political institutions providing a channel for this influence.

In conclusion, these findings have potentially significant implications for the way accountability and governance mechanisms work in Croatia. The dominant role of partisan identification in the evaluations of political institutions does not mean that accountability mechanisms do not work as they should, but it may lead to their reduced effectiveness. Also, if institutions which should not be part of political contestation, such as public administration and the judiciary, are evaluated through partisan lenses (as they seem to be), this might reduce their effectiveness and lead to the perception that they are biased. Further down the line, it might also make

them targets of demands that their perceived bias be addressed through political interference. This is especially because the perceived lack of their own political efficacy among the citizens is likely to lead to lower trust in institutions and might create favourable conditions for calls for political interference in their work. How likely it is that this course of events might take place will depend on the balance between evaluations based on partisanship and evaluations based on outcomes. On balance, the evidence points to the preponderance of the former over the latter.

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INSTITUTIONAL TRUST AND DEMOCRACY SATISFACTION  
IN CROATIA: PARTISANSHIP- VERSUS OUTCOME-DRIVEN  
EVALUATIONS

*Summary*

*The article investigates the determinants of trust in institutions and satisfaction with democracy in Croatia. The article starts with the proposition that effective governance requires efficient accountability mechanisms, whereby political actors and institutions, as well as democracy performance, are evaluated on the basis of the outcomes they deliver to citizens. However, in highly polarised societies, evaluations of political institutions and regime performance are more likely to depend on how well these express the preferences and identities of citizens rather than on the governance outcomes they deliver. Thus, in strongly polarised societies, where politics is seen as a zero-sum game, evaluations of political institutions and democracy performance are likely to be dependent on partisan identification and political identity representation. Evaluations of the democratic regime and trust in institutions in Croatia as a highly polarised society are more likely to be shaped by partisan identification and representation than by the outcomes delivered. The article proceeds to test these propositions with survey data collected for the 2011, 2015, and 2016 elections. The article tests these propositions using multiple regression analysis testing the impact of partisanship in comparison with a range of other factors measuring political attitudes, political efficacy, economic evaluations, social trust, political knowledge, and socioeconomic position. The analysis finds that the impact of partisanship, and variables found to be related to partisanship, is strong and significant, both for political institutions, such as trust in parliament and government, and non-political institutions, such as trust in judiciary and public administration. Similar findings are also established for evaluations of democracy. The analysis also establishes that the impact of partisanship is more consistently significant than the impact of other variables, and that it is strongest for evaluations of democracy, followed by trust in government and parliament, and finally trust in public administration and the judiciary.*

*Keywords: trust in institutions, democracy satisfaction, political support, polarisation*

## VJERA U INSTITUCIJE I ZADOVOLJSTVO DEMOKRACIJOM U HRVATSKOJ: OCJENE NA TEMELJU POLITIČKE PRISTRANOSTI NASUPROT OCJENAMA NA TEMELJU REZULTATA

### Sažetak

U radu se istražuju determinante koje određuju vjeru u institucije i zadovoljstvo demokracijom u Hrvatskoj. Polazi se od pretpostavke da učinkovito upravljanje podrazumijeva učinkovite mehanizme odgovornosti putem kojih se političke aktere i institucije, kao i demokraciju u praksi, ocjenjuje na temelju rezultata koje isporučuju građanima. Ipak, u duboko je podijeljenim društvima veća vjerojatnost da će građani političke institucije i djelovanje političkog poretka ocijeniti ovisno o tome koliko oni uspješno odražavaju preferencije i identitet građana, a ne na temelju rezultata njihova upravljanja. U takvim duboko podijeljenim društvima koja politiku doživljavaju kao igru u kojoj jedna strana mora dobiti a druga izgubiti, vjerojatno je da će ocjene političkih institucija i demokratskog djelovanja ovisiti o poistovjećivanju građana s pojedinim političkim strankama i u kojoj mjeri one predstavljaju njihov politički identitet. Na ocjene demokratskog poretka te vjere u institucije u duboko podijeljenome hrvatskom društvu vjerojatnije će utjecati poistovjećivanje s političkim strankama nego rezultati upravljanja. U radu se provjerava utemeljenost navedenih pretpostavki na osnovi podataka o izborima 2011., 2015. i 2016. godine. Primjenom višestruke regresijske analize nastoji se utvrditi utjecaj političke pristranosti u usporedbi s brojnim drugim čimbenicima kojima se mjere politički stavovi, politička učinkovitost, ocjena ekonomske situacije, povjerenje u društvo, znanje o politici i društveno-ekonomski položaj. Rezultati analize upućuju na to da je utjecaj političke pristranosti, kao i varijabli koje su s njime povezane, snažan i statistički značajan i kada je riječ o povjerenju u političke institucije poput Sabora i Vlade i kada je riječ o povjerenju u institucije koje nisu političke, primjerice pravosudni sustav i javnu upravu. Rezultati su slični pri ocjenjivanju demokracije te se utvrđuje da utjecaj političke pristranosti ima dosljednije statističko značenje od utjecaja drugih varijabli. Također se utvrđuje da je utjecaj političke pristranosti najjači kod ocjenjivanja demokracije, potom kod povjerenja u Vladu i Sabor te konačno kod povjerenja u javnu upravu i pravosuđe.

Ključne riječi: vjera u institucije, zadovoljstvo demokracijom, politička podrška, polarizacija