

Izvorni znanstveni članak
328.1(497.5):316.34
Primljeno: 18. veljače 2008.

The Social Structure of the Croatian Parliament in Five Mandates*

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Summary

In this paper we analyzed the social attributes and political experience of the members of the Croatian Parliament in five mandates. We established that the multiparty parliament, during the 18 years of its existence, was dominated by men, averagely between 47 and 49 years of age, Croats, Catholics, highly educated, predominantly in the social sciences and humanities, and politicians with significant managerial and political experience acquired primarily during their work in political parties. Furthermore, we found a relatively large fluctuation of parliamentarians, resulting in a lower level of parliamentary experience and a relatively short parliamentary career. Based on these indicators, it can be stated that in Croatia a socially homogenous parliamentary elite was formed, one with a potentially lower level of political competence, and that patterns of political recruitment, coherent in tendency with those in the developed democratic countries, were established.

Key words: Croatian Parliament, parliamentary elite, social structure, political experience and competence, political recruitment, democratic consolidation



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* The results portrayed were obtained through the project *Elections, Parties and the Parliament in Croatia*, which is conducted at the Faculty of Political Science, Zagreb University, with the financial support of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia.

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Introduction

In order to understand the process of transition and consolidation of the so-called new democracies, it is necessary to analyse the functioning of the parliament as a “symbol of the people’s representation in politics” (Olson, 1994: 1). Furthermore, one cannot comprehend the functioning of this highest body of representative power through mere institutional analysis, because parliamentary work greatly depends on the parliament’s human resources (Hague/Harrop/Breslin, 1998). The human resource dimension of the parliament is determined by the parliamentarians’ social and socio-political attributes, which also indicate their potential (in)competence to act as representatives of the people, political decision-makers and principal legislators.

Parliament members are part of the so-called status political elite (Adam, Tomšič, 2002) – which also includes executives and leaders of political parties (primarily, the ones in the parliament) – whose role involves not only policy- and decision-making, but also political socialization and mobilization of citizens. The latter role of the political elite is especially important in countries without a respectable democratic tradition, e.g. the former socialist countries, including Croatia. In scientific discussions about the formation and role of new political elites, the theory of circulation and the theory of reproduction are predominant, and the results of empirical research confirm the value of both (Higley/Pakulski, 1995; Szelenyi/Szelenyi, 1995; Lane, 1997; Adam/Tomšič, 2002). It was established through comparative research that the so-called transitional political elites were partly recruited from the former socialist nomenclature, and partly from the classes and groups such as bureaucrats and professionals with a certain amount of power in the socialist order, opponents of the former regime (ranging from those who remained undercover to dissidents), and members of the “new class” of social dignitaries, managers and owners. Analyses have also determined that the transitional political elites share a number of characteristics in addition to the sources of recruitment, namely inaccessibility and unaccountability towards the citizens, lack of professionalism, a tendency to monopolize politics and establish control over the entire social life, unity in the protection of their “caste” interests and privileges, as well as a predatory competitiveness in the struggle for control over the crucial social resources, often through establishing clientelistic relationships (Lane, 1997; Higley/Pakulski/Weslowski, 1998; Adam/Tomšič, 2002). Thus, it is not unexpected that the comparative research conducted so far indicates that neither the parliaments nor the governments of post-socialist countries have been up to the complex tasks of thorough transformation of society and of the political system. They were “caught in a paradox between possibility and ability, with great possibilities, but small ability to act accordingly” (Olson, 2006: 193). On the one hand, this situation did not favor the necessary training of political elites, but on the other, it presented a real challenge to those of their members who man-

aged to capitalize on the collective incapability for their own personal gain (be it material or status-related).

With regard to the parliament as the highest body of representation constituted on the basis of electoral results – with legislation, control and advising as its key functions – one of its essential tasks, “not prescribed” by legal acts, is to recruit and socialize the political elite (Silk, 1987; Norton, 1990; Olson, 1994; Butler, 1995; Hague/Harrop/Breslin, 1998). Since the executive political positions at the national level are the most powerful, it is precisely the parliaments that provide the political arena in which candidates for those positions originate and where they fight for the support of political selectors and citizens. This applies in particular to so-called debating parliaments, which include, *inter alia*, the Croatian Parliament. Naturally, this is also valid for politicians who do not look upon their parliamentary career as the apex of their overall political career, and the analyses conducted so far indicate that most members of the parliament who have chosen politics as their profession cherish the ambition, surreptitiously or openly, of switching to the executive level (Norton, 1990; Madgwick, 1994; Hague/Harrop/Breslin, 1998).

Irrespective of the previously mentioned critical insights, new democracies also perceive the political elite as the part of society authorized to make binding political decisions, and one that comes to power through electoral success in the process of political competition, whereby political parties assume the role of principal selectors (Higley/Pakulski, 1995). The fact that political parties are the key arbiter in the election process actually means that “the voters decide on the number of mandates some parties will get, and the parties decide on who will receive those mandates” (Kasapović, 2001a: 4). In this context, it is particularly important how the candidate-selection procedures in political parties are conducted, especially in those that are not yet fully profiled and organized. As for Croatia, an analysis of the regulation of the candidate-selection procedure in legal acts and statutes of political parties indicated that a “total party monopoly over the said procedure is legalized”, and that “the Croatian political parties, generally speaking, conduct these procedures in a very centralized, exclusive and non-democratic way”. This means: 1) that party candidates for parliamentary elections are selected exclusively at the national level (with the decisive influence of the party president and the highest bodies), 2) that the manner of deciding on the candidates – characterized by the practice in which party leaderships consisting of representatives and state officials also nominate candidates for electoral lists without carrying out the preliminary party elections as “a more participative form of candidate selection” – institutionalizes the “pattern of self-reproduction and self-promotion of party political elites”, and, 3) that party candidates are “selected and appointed, not elected” (Kasapović, 2001a: 13-16). Consequently, the social structure of the parliament depends

primarily on party personnel policy and the criteria determined by party elites when putting together electoral lists.

The political parties are able not only to determine which candidates will be favored in the electoral process, but also to influence the activity of the selected candidate. To be more specific, since the winning candidate owes his/her election primarily to the party which put forward his/her candidature, he/she is expected to follow the dictate of that party in his/her parliamentary work (Hague/Harrop/Breslin, 1998). So, there is a real danger of parliamentary representatives performing their duty predominantly as representatives of the interests of their party, and disregarding the interests of social groups or electoral units they are actually supposed to represent. At the same time, there is an opposite danger of representatives showing particular respect to the interests of certain social and interest groups or regions, and neglecting the national interests and problems. Aside from the said factors, the work of parliament members can be affected by their personal political or professional ambitions, and by the perception of their own role in the body they were elected in. All the mentioned elements can place parliament members in a conflict of roles, which is why they must construct their own “interpretation of representation and harmonize the demands of the country, party, electorate – and their own conscience” (Hague/Harrop/Breslin, 1998: 191).

Some Characteristics of the Development of Croatian Parliamentarism

The analyses conducted so far indicate that the Croatian parliamentary system was developed in relatively unfavorable and unstable conditions. The reason for this is not only the war (1991-1995), nor the institutional reformism, hyper-electoralism, and the slow consolidation of political parties and the party system, but also the pronounced ideological and symbolic division and fragmentation of interests in the Croatian society, which was also reflected in the activity of political protagonists in the Croatian Parliament (Kasapović, 1996, 2001; Ilišin, 2001; Lalović, 2001; Zakošek, 2002).¹ The subordination of the parliament to the executive power – initially the President of the Republic, and since 2000, the Government of the Republic of Croatia – contributed significantly to its political marginalization. At the

¹ D. Lalović (2001: 21) used the example of the opposition in the fourth legislative mandate of the Parliament (notably, HDZ, which focused on the populist mobilization of different dissatisfied protagonists in Croatian society) to demonstrate that a lack of “opposition capable of control”, which could play its role within the given constitutional and parliamentary rules of the game, blocks the functioning of the highest institution of representative power. Consequently, the Parliament did not even manage to become “the place of formation of the common will of political parties, let alone the general will of Croatian citizens”.

same time, the Croatian Parliament was burdened by an exaggerated symbolic significance, being perceived as “the primary institutional bearer of independent political life” and “a part of the Croatian state and legislative tradition” (Zakošek, 2002: 97).² In addition to the mythologized past of the Parliament, the harsh parliamentary present was also blurred by its functioning in the phase of constitution of a political order. Namely, the Croatian Parliament in its transitional beginnings – similar to the parliaments of other post-socialist states – was rather a “source of introduction and celebration of the change of political system, than a source of implementation of law” (Olson, 2006: 193). In other words, it seems that the Parliament’s existing symbolic charge and the celebration of its importance were not strong enough to override the dominance of the executive power over the legislative power.

The mentioned unstable conditions for the development of the Croatian parliamentary system, and hence for the formation of parliamentary elite, can be illustrated with additional facts and data:

- from 1990 to the end of 2007, six parliamentary elections were held; the second (1992) and third (1995) were temporary (that is, 2 and 1,5 years respectively before the completion of a four-year mandate), while the electoral legislation was amended four times, remaining intact only since the fourth election cycle (2000);
- during the transitional period the number of houses in the Croatian Parliament changed; in the first mandate it consisted of three houses (like it did in the socialist system), in the second and third there were two, and since the fourth mandate there is only one house;
- the number of representatives in the first house increased continually: from 80, through 138 and 127, to 151, 152 and 153 in the fourth to sixth mandate respectively³;
- 34 out of over 100 registered political parties did at some point participate in the Croatian Parliament;

² Even though this tradition relies upon the existence of the Parliament as a form of political decision-making since the 16th century, neither then nor later, when it acquired the institutional form of a parliament, did it function in Croatia as an independent state, nor was it an autonomous political institution until 1990. Besides, the functioning of the Parliament was conditioned by the inclusion of Croatia in other state-political associations, which were not characterized by a democratic system or by democratic practice. This inexistence of political autonomy and democratic tradition indicates that prior to 1990 one can hardly speak of Croatian parliamentarism.

³ The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia stipulates that the Croatian Parliament may consist of no less than 100, and no more than 160 representatives.

- out of a total of 34 parliamentary parties, 13 had only one representative – more precisely, even if they managed to enter the Parliament more than once, they never had more than one representative;
- half of the parliamentary parties (17) were part of the Parliament only once, while the other half consists of parties that appeared in at least two mandates (whether on the basis of electoral success or through non-electoral parliamentarization);
- 18 parties were represented in at least one legislative mandate thanks to non-electoral parliamentarization, and 8 of them lost their electoral parliamentary status in the course of the corresponding mandate;
- out of a total of 18 parties that achieved parliamentary status through non-electoral parliamentarization, 10 achieved that status by forming new parties from fractions of parliamentary parties, and 8 by the crossing over of representatives from parliamentary to non-parliamentary parties;
- out of a total of 18 parties that achieved parliamentary status through non-electoral parliamentarization, 7 managed to confirm that status in the following election cycle;
- from 1990 the same party (HDZ) has permanently been the single strongest parliamentary party: in the first three mandates it held the absolute majority of mandates (68.8%, 61.6% and 59.1%), in the fourth – 30.5%, and in the fifth and sixth mandates it held 43.4% and 43.1% respectively;⁴
- SDP has been the second strongest party in the first (with 25% of the seats), fourth (29.8%), fifth (19.1%) and sixth (36.6%) mandates of the Parliament, while in the second and third mandates that place was held by HSLS (9.4% in each).

The above-mentioned indicators and the existing analyses of political and socio-structural characteristics and dynamics in the Croatian Parliament (Ilišin, 1999, 2001, 2007) point to several tendencies. Firstly, the nominal number of political parties which entered the Croatian Parliament on the basis of election results gradually increased. Secondly, the process of non-electoral parliamentarization was more intense than the process of de-parliamentarization. Consequently, between one and five parties were added to

⁴ Owing to the results of parliamentary elections, a minimal alternation of power is characteristic in Croatia. Specifically, HDZ held a monopoly of power in the first three assemblies, when it was able to form a government autonomously, while in the fifth and sixth assemblies it has been sharing power with coalition partners. The only period which this party spent in opposition was during the fourth legislative mandate, when the first coalition government in Croatia, led by SDP, was established.

the number of parties in the Parliament during each legislative mandate, except the first one. Also, in terms of participation in non-electoral parliamentarization, parties established through the fractioning of parliamentary parties outnumbered those that entered the parliament through party crossovers of representatives (which indicates that extra-parliamentary parties were more attractive to “dissidents” from parliamentary parties than to the electorate). Thirdly, the pronounced party fragmentation of the parliament involved 7-15% of all representatives, which did not significantly influence the power relations based on election results. And finally, due to the fact that most parliamentary parties held a small number of seats, the changes within their ranks did not do anything either to endanger the parliamentary majorities or the government. Thus, it can be concluded that the relatively high party fragmentation in the Croatian Parliament had no effect on its stability, nor did it significantly influence the social profiling of the parliamentary elite. At the same time, however, the unequal strength of parliamentary parties resulted in a social structure of the Parliament which primarily depended on the social attributes of representatives of a small number of parties – in fact, two or three strongest parties.

Hence, in spite of the above-mentioned unfavorable conditions, the Croatian Parliament functioned as a recruiter of the political elite, owing to the competitive elections, which inevitably force political elites to select candidates beforehand. This is in fact a twofold process: first the selection of those aspiring to hold a seat in the parliament, and then the above-mentioned selection and training of parliament members for executive-power-related duties. After 18 years of existence of the multiparty parliament in Croatia, it is logical to assume that the recruitment patterns have been formed and that a socio-politically profiled parliamentary elite has been established, determining the social attributes and political competence of the parliamentary elite for conducting the process of democratic consolidation of the Croatian political system. According to the recent analytical insight, which ranked Croatia alongside the consolidated post-socialist countries (Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania and Slovakia), this task has been largely fulfilled. Still, it is noted that Croatia (similarly to Latvia, Bulgaria and Romania) needs more time for a complete democratic consolidation, and it must use it to overcome “problems such as corruption, organized crime and a weak judiciary” (Merkel, 2007: 18). This relativization of Croatia’s democratic consolidation stems from the insight that the “level of democratic consolidation does not entirely coincide with the quality of democratic regimes, although they strongly overlap” (Merkel, 2007: 16). All new democracies are characterized by a deficient legal state, although in a differentiated scope. To put it briefly, Croatia has covered a great part of the way towards a complete democratic consolidation. The political elite has

also played its part in this, and it is crucial to the continued processes of achieving the rule of law and the establishment of a quality democracy.

The subject of this paper is the Croatian parliamentary elite, and the analysis focuses on the socio-demographic and social attributes of the parliament members and their professional and political experience. These are in fact the personal characteristics of the elected members of the parliament that are used in the analysis of personnel in the representative bodies of power (Silk, 1987; Norton, 1990; Kavanagh, Jones, 1994; Olson, 1994; Butler, 1995; Norris, 1997; Adam/Tomšič, 2002). The established predominant attributes of parliamentarians are then observed as an indicator of the selection criteria used by political parties, while the repetition of dominant characteristics of the chosen candidates in several electoral cycles is interpreted as an established pattern of political recruitment. Thus, the goal of this analysis is to establish whether any recognizable patterns of political recruitment into the Croatian parliamentary elite have been formed, and whether a socio-politically profiled parliamentary elite has been established after 18 years of existence and functioning of the multiparty Parliament. In order to achieve this, we have used a comparative analysis of a selection of social and political attributes of representatives in five parliamentary mandates from 1990 to 2003.

The empirical basis consists of secondary statistical data on the socio-demographic and social attributes of representatives provided in special official publications (*Sabor Republike Hrvatske*, 1992; *Politički vodič*, 1993, 1995, 2000, 2004). To be more specific, only the so-called firm variables, determining the social profile of the representatives, are analyzed: gender, age, nationality and religious denomination, level and type of education, and previous professional and political experience. Previous professional experience is indicated by the type of occupation before the first election into the Parliament, while previous political experience is indicated by official duty in bodies of local and national government (including earlier mandates in the second house of the parliament) and in political parties.⁵ Another indicator

⁵ In addition to a candidate's function in a political party, the length of party service is also relevant for inclusion on the electoral lists, because it has already been demonstrated that long-term and deserving members often obtain high positions in their party, which also gives them more internal influence (Silk, 1987; Michels, 1990; Butler, 1995). This, among other things, guarantees a higher influence on the formation of electoral lists, and a better personal position on them. In the sources used, no data was provided on the length of the representatives' party service, but it would be justified to assume that it is closely related to the performance of party duties. In the case of Croatia, however, it should be noted that this correlation has been oscillating due to the fractioning of most relevant parliamentary parties; party founders and veterans have been seen to leave their parties (most often in order to found new ones), and their positions to be taken by previously unexposed, and even recently co-opted new members. The relatively frequent party fragmentations and the appearance of new parties result in a relatively short party service, which can, even in parties founded at the beginning of transition, come up to a maxi-

of the latter is the number of present parliamentary mandates and years of parliamentary service. The used data relate to those representatives who confirmed their parliamentary status at the moment the observed legislative mandate of the Parliament was constituted. This means that there are certain deviations from the personnel situation as it would have been according to the electoral lists, and from the actual situation at the end of the observed legislative mandate. The first deviation is primarily caused by the fact that parties, as a rule, put their strongest candidates on the electoral lists, many of which do not activate the obtained parliamentary status, but move directly to executive power in case their party won. Such personnel changes occurred in every legislative mandate and an average of 7% of representatives were confirmed substitutes to the elected candidates. The second deviation is a consequence of leaving the Parliament during the mandate in order to perform other official duties, or due to illness or death. On the whole, personnel variations oscillate from 5 to 10% in one legislative mandate, which does not significantly affect the reliability of the established trends.

The Socio-Demographic Attributes of the Croatian Parliamentary Elite

It is a well-known fact that parliaments in developed democracies do not represent the social structure of the society in which they operate, because they are traditionally dominated by middle-aged and highly educated men (Silk, 1987; Norton, 1990; Olson, 1994; Butler, 1995; Norris, 1997; Hague/Harrop/Breslin, 1998). Identical tendencies have been established in Croatia (Ilišin, 1999, 2001, 2007), and the following analysis will portray the exact trends.

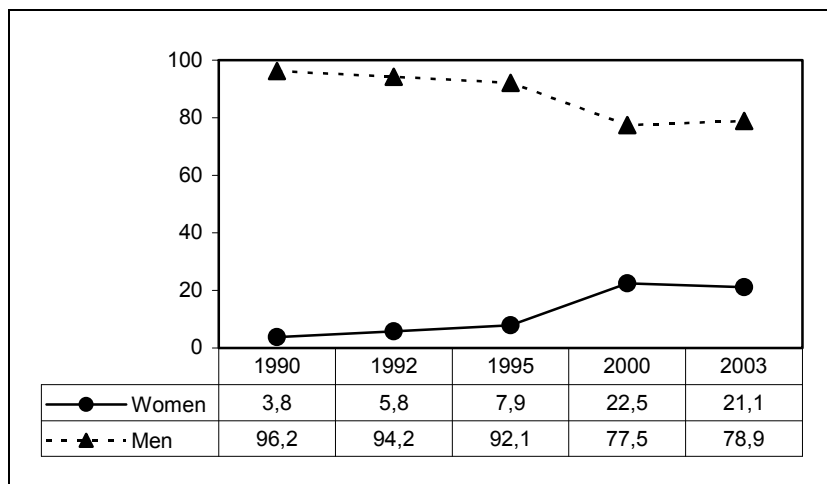
In this section, we analyze representatives according to gender, age, nationality and religious denomination. Graph 1 presents comparative data on the gender structure by party in the fifth mandate of the Parliament and overall indicators for the previous four mandates.

As a point of interest it should be emphasized that out of 34 parties represented in the Croatian Parliament since 1990, only 10 (29.4%) had at least one female representative in one of the mandates. It is important to note an increase in the share of women in the first four legislative mandates. In the fifth mandate it decreased a little, primarily due to the poorer electoral re-

sum of 18 years (except in the case of SDP, if it is treated as a successor of SKH). We can therefore assume that party service is presently a less reliable indicator of the patterns of political recruitment of the Croatian parliamentary elite, than the performing of official duties in a party.

sults of the social democrats,⁶ but it still exceeds 20%. Apparently, the gender equality policy, proclaimed in the early 2000s, has been at least partially realized in the party electoral lists, and visible in other bodies of authority.⁷ Possibly the trend of increased representation of women in the Parliament will continue; on the one hand, this could be a consequence of a gender-sensitive public policy and of what has been achieved so far, while on the other this could be a result of the fact that a stronger generation of young female politicians is active at the local level.⁸

Graph 1: Gender structure of the Croatian Parliament in five mandates (%)



⁶ As a modernist, socially regulative party with regard to the political participation of women (Leinert Novosel, 2001), SDP is the most inclined to promote female candidates. To be more specific, the share of female members equaled approximately one third of the party's parliamentary representatives in all assemblies (except the first one, and including the sixth).

⁷ In 2006, the representation of women in the Government of the Republic of Croatia was 31%, and in the bodies of local authorities it ranged from 8 to 16% (Štimac Radin, 2007: 159). The first insights into the gender structure of the sixth legislative mandate of the Croatian Parliament indicate that the share of women has remained at the level of the previous (fifth) mandate.

⁸ The analysis of the gender structure of local authorities in Croatia (Ilišin, 2006: 26, 30) demonstrated that approximately 17% of all politicians at the local level were women, as opposed to 27% among young politicians. These young women could be an important pool for parties to choose from when composing lists for future parliamentary elections.

Table 1 shows the age structure of the Parliament, and the presented data verify the permanent dominance of middle-aged representatives.

Table 1: Age structure of the Croatian Parliament in five mandates (%)

Age cohorts	Legislative mandate				
	1990	1992	1995	2000	2003
18-29 years of age	–	1.5	1.6	2.0	2.0
30-39 years of age	21.2	26.1	25.2	10.6	9.2
40-49 years of age	41.2	27.5	26.0	50.3	47.4
50-59 years of age	32.5	24.6	28.4	27.8	32.2
60 and more years of age	5.1	20.3	18.8	9.3	9.3
<i>Average age (in years)</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>49</i>

There is a permanent under-representation of parliamentarians under 30: their presence in the electorate is ten times higher than their presence in the parliament.⁹ The summarized data for all mandates of the Parliament, clearly show that the share of the oldest representatives has decreased (they are three times less represented in the last two mandates than in the electorate), and the share of members aged between 30 and 40 fared the same, but to a smaller degree. It is obvious that the share of representatives aged between 40 and 60 increased on account of the above-mentioned decrease of age groups, and there were twice as many of them in the fourth and fifth mandates as there were in the electorate. The said changes stabilized the average age of representatives between 47 and 49.¹⁰ Since the local base of very young officials with some political experience has been multiply narrowed down,¹¹ it is logical to assume that a possible larger penetration of youth into the Parliament will depend on the readiness of political parties to put their recent rhetoric into practice: instead of emphasizing the young as one of the most important resources for social development, they would have to place a

⁹ The age structure of the electorate is as follows: under 29 – 20.6%; between 30 and 39 – 17.6%; 40-49 – 19.2%; 50-59 – 15.2%; 60-69 – 14.8%; over 70 – 12.6% (Ilišin, 2003: 46).

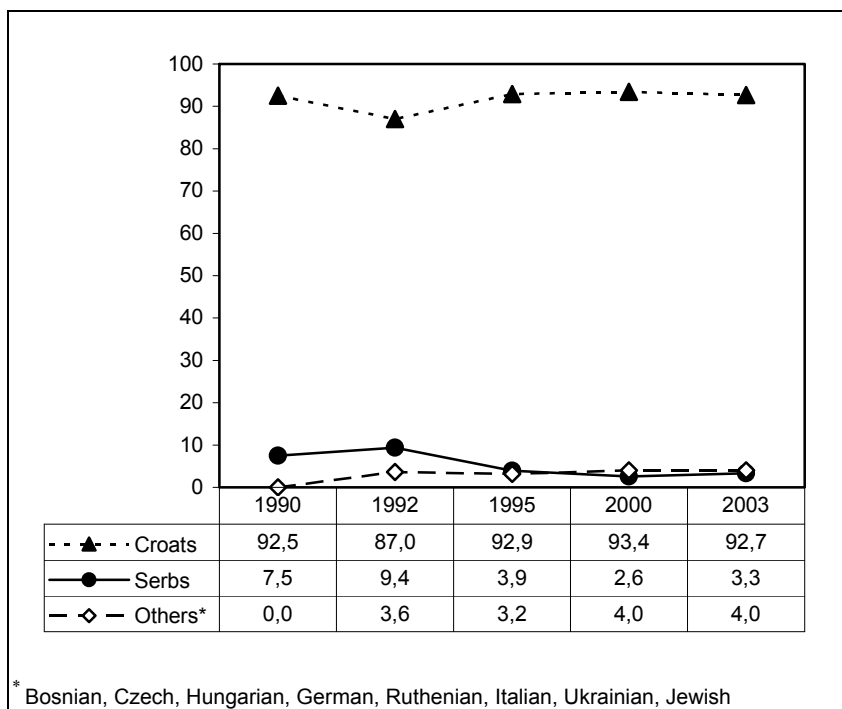
¹⁰ It is noteworthy that the age of representatives elected to the Parliament ranged from 22 to 78. As for the parties, only the two largest had at least one representative under the age of 30: HDZ from the second to the fourth assemblies, and SDP in the second, fourth and fifth assemblies (Ilišin, 1999, 2001, 2007).

¹¹ In the representative and executive bodies of 21 counties and 123 cities in Croatia, about 6% of the members are younger than 30. A comparison between the two strongest political parties indicates that approximately 9% of SDP members are under 30, while in HDZ they take up approximately 6% (Ilišin, 2006: 33).

larger number of young persons on more prospective positions on the party lists.

The insight into the social attributes of the representatives is completed by indicators of nationality (Graph 2) and religious denomination (Table 2).

Graph 2: National structure of the Croatian Parliament in five mandates (%)



It should be emphasized that the pronounced nationality-related homogeneity of the Croatian Parliament is congruent with that of the population. Namely, according to the latest census in Croatia, the share of Croats was approximately 90%, as opposed to 78% in the early 1990s (SLJH, 2002). It is quite obvious that the share of non-Croatian representatives in the Parliament could never reach the actual average of 7-8% if there was no guaranteed political representation of national minorities. It is indicative that, among the more influential parties, only the social democrats had members of other nationalities (primarily, Serbs) in every legislative mandate, while the structure of HDZ representatives was permanently uni-national – that is, Croatian (Ilišin, 1999, 2001, 2007).

Table 2: Religious denomination of Croatian Parliament members in five mandates (%)

Religious denomination	Legislative mandate				
	1990	1992	1995	2000	2003
Catholic	35.0	68.8	80.3	62.3	75.0
Other denominations *	1.2	4.4	4.0	2.1	3.4
Agnostics/Atheists	5.0	16.7	14.2	27.8	15.1
Unknown	58.8	10.1	2.5	7.8	6.5

* Among other denominations prevails the Orthodox, followed by the Muslim, Protestant and Jewish creeds..

Insight into the representatives' religious denomination is much more interesting than the nationality-related data, primarily because in the first mandate of the Parliament almost three fifths of the representatives refrained from specifying their denomination in the official biographic notes. But in the second legislative mandate we find a drastically altered situation, even though a certain number of representatives still believe the information to be private. The second point of interest is the share of atheists and agnostics among the representatives. It is 3-5 times higher than in the general population, while the share of Roman Catholics is correspondingly smaller.¹² This could partially be explained by the higher average level of education of the representatives, for all research into religiosity indicates that the share of religiously undecided or non-religious persons among the highly educated population is above average (Marinović Jerolimov, 2005). However, since we are dealing with the political elite here, their ideological and political convictions and their world-view presumably play a significant role.¹³

Briefly, the presented data indicate that, parallel with the re-traditionalization of Croatian society and its transformation from a moderately hetero-

¹² According to the 2001 census, 88% were Catholics, 7% were of other denominations, and 5% were atheists and agnostics (SYRC, 2002). Such a distribution ranks Croatia among uni-confessional societies, but it is noteworthy that such a high religious homogenization is not accompanied by an equally strong religious practice, not to mention intensity of belief (Marinović Jerolimov, 2002, 2005).

¹³ The data on the religious denomination of the representatives of some political parties in the fifth legislative mandate of the Parliament fully confirm this assertion (Ilišin, 2007: 72): all representatives of right-wing and right-center parties were of the same denomination, while all other parties and groups had members of other denominations in their ranks, as well as agnostics and those that did not declare themselves. Again, the social democrats stood out, because two thirds of them stated that they were agnostics or atheists, which is in line with the classic ideological foundations of left-wing parties.

geneous and secular society into one that is distinctly homogenous with regard to nationality and religious denomination, the same changes occurred in the Croatian Parliament. We may add that the changes were somewhat more pronounced as regards the nationality dimension.

Educational and Professional Competences of the Members of Parliament

Neither the level nor the type of education or occupation are a prescribed precondition for being elected into the parliament or engaging in professional political activity. However, this is not to say that parties will not favor the more educated candidates, or the ones with adequate professional experience.¹⁴ Indeed, experience throughout the world indicates that these elements are very important in the selection of parliamentary candidates (Norton, 1990; Kavanagh, Jones, 1994; Butler, 1995; Norris, 1997; Hague/Harrop/Breslin, 1998).

As shown in Table 3, the educational structure of the Croatian parliament is congruent with that of most parliaments throughout the modern world, because most of its members are highly educated.

Table 3: Level of education of Croatian Parliament members in five mandates (%)

Level of education	Legislative mandate				
	1990	1992	1995	2000	2003
Secondary school or less	3.8	10.1	12.6	12.6	15.8
College education	10.0	5.8	4.7	5.3	5.9
University education	62.5	60.1	56.7	55.6	55.9
Master's degree	12.5	12.3	11.0	10.6	7.2
Ph.D. degree	11.3	11.6	15.0	15.9	15.1

¹⁴ This does not necessarily imply that one's entire professional career was realized in politics, all the more so considering that such politicians are still very rare in Croatia. Indeed, most Croatian politicians acquired their professional experience in occupations outside the political sphere. We should keep in mind, though, that the analysis of professional experience of parliamentary members in established democracies indicated that specific professions and occupations are favored in the candidate-selection procedure (legal, economic, financial, managerial and other). This is demonstrated by the fact that these professionals are much more present among the parliamentarians than in the electorate (Kavanagh, Jones, 1994; Butler, 1995; Norris, 1997).

Still, comparative data points to a very gradual, but constant increase of representatives without a higher education degree – from less than 4% in the first legislative mandate, to 10% at a later point, while today one out of seven representatives has a high school diploma or (very rarely) less. At the same time, about a quarter of the representatives in all mandates have a master's degree or a Ph.D., which makes the Parliament an institution with a distinct above-average share of persons with academic degrees, second only to scientific and higher-education institutions.¹⁵ Thus the Parliament, in spite of a very gradual decrease of highly educated representatives, remains a political institution permanently populated by highly qualified (indeed, over-qualified) members. This is not a sufficient guarantee for professional and competent work of the representatives, but it is without a doubt a prerequisite worthy of respect. We must not fail to mention that previous analyses (Ilišin, 1999, 2001, 2007) indicated that the differences between parties were irrelevant, and only small oscillations were noted in the educational structure of all relevant parties.

Table 4: Type of high education of Croatian Parliament members in five mandates (%)

Type of high education	Legislative mandate				
	1990	1992	1995	2000	2003
Natural and technical sciences	25.5	16.7	18.1	17.2	21.7
Medical sciences	11.3	6.5	6.3	8.0	9.2
Humanities and social sciences	24.2	30.6	29.1	30.5	27.0
Economic sciences	14.5	10.1	15.0	13.9	11.2
Legal sciences	20.8	25.9	18.9	17.2	15.1
No high education	3.8	10.1	12.6	12.6	15.8

¹⁵ The educational structure of the Parliament differs entirely and drastically from the educational structure of the Croatian population. The 2001 census data indicate (Ilišin, Mendeš, Potočnik, 2003: 62) that in the age cohort between 40 and 60 more than 15% are highly educated (including 2% with a master's degree or a Ph.D.), which means that college education is six times more frequent among the members of parliament, and a scientific degree is 12 times more present than among their peers in the electorate. The thesis that higher education significantly increases the chance to enter the electoral lists is verified by data regarding the educational structure of local authorities (Ilišin, 2006: 26). Namely, out of 4.125 local officials, 35.4% do not have more than a high school education, and the number of masters and doctors of science is significantly lower than in the Parliament: approximately 5%. Still, the fact remains that even the education of local politicians is above average when compared to their electorate, which additionally confirms the importance of educational achievement for recruitment into the political elite at all levels.

The data related to the type of the representatives' high education is much more intriguing (Table 4), especially considering the fact that, in Croatia, empirically verifiable insights on this issue have been made available only recently (Budimir, 2007; Ilišin, 2007).

The data indicates a constant decrease in the share of lawyers, even though this is still the predominant individual profession, and the share of economists, as the second most common profession in the Parliament, goes through a similar process. The significant presence of lawyers coincides with the legislative function of the parliament. It is therefore to be expected that political parties try to engage a large number of lawyers in order to ensure adequate expert support for the transfer of their political will into legal regulations. On the other hand, economists are believed to be experts in budgetary policy, which is undoubtedly in direct connection with their relatively more frequent candidature. Even though the share of experts from the fields of natural, technical and medical sciences is slowly increasing, the group of experts from the fields of social sciences and humanities is still prevalent. With the addition of lawyers and economists, the latter group appears to have had permanent majority: from 53% in the fifth mandate to 66% in the second mandate of the Parliament. If we take a look at the example of the fifth mandate, it is obvious that almost two thirds of the highly educated experts belong to the social sciences and humanities group (and even more than that in the previous mandates). We may assume that such a predominance of the said professions testifies to the well-known tendency of intellectuals with a socially-oriented education to be more inclined towards social – including political – engagement,¹⁶ but it also characterizes the parties' personnel policies.¹⁷ Most party leaders in Croatia belong to the group of intellectuals with social science and humanistic education, and it would not be unfounded to assume that they believe a better understanding of social problems and processes might be expected from adequately educated rep-

¹⁶ This statement raises the issue of motivation for political engagement and competition for a position in the government, which is primarily a subject of political psychology. It should also be mentioned that motivation is linked to the doubt whether individuals are stimulated for increased political engagement by the need for (self)actualization (connected with higher levels of self-esteem) or for compensation (connected with lower levels of self-esteem). Some less recent results in America (Carlson, Hyde, 1980) advocate the actualization hypothesis, and it would be interesting to research the phenomenon on a sample of Croatian politicians.

¹⁷ A comparison between parties in the fifth legislative mandate of the Croatian Parliament indicated that "social intelligentsia" is especially protected by social democrats and liberal parties, while "technocrats" can most often be found among the representatives of right-center parties (Ilišin, 2007: 75). This means that Croatian political parties mostly share another common characteristic with similar parties throughout the world – a predominance of intellectuals from a social science/humanities provenance in the left segment of the political spectrum, and a predominance of entrepreneurs and technical experts in the right segment (Norton, 1990; Madgwick, 1994; Butler, 1995; Hague/Harrop/Breslin, 1998).

representatives. This, of course, does not mean that experts in technical, medical and natural sciences – and withal those “social scientists” whose acquired knowledge has nothing or very little to do with competencies necessary for engagement in political affairs – could not make up for potential deficits in the type of required knowledge through devoted work (e.g. through thorough studying of materials and use of services of adequate experts). Still, it is logical to presume that they experience more frequently the lack of elementary knowledge necessary for competent participation in discussions and for a convincing articulation of arguments aimed at the promotion of their own other initiatives and proposals, or at challenging those put forward by others.

There is no doubt that information on the representatives’ occupation prior to their first election to the Parliament can advance considerably the detection of their potential competence. The data provided in Table 5 indicate that no significant changes took place during the five legislative mandates.

Table 5: Occupation of Parliament members before their first election to the Croatian Parliament in five mandates (%)

Previous occupation	Legislative mandate				
	1990	1992	1995	2000	2003
Professional political or administrative position	8.7	32.6	30.8	39.7	40.2
Educational, cultural and media-related professions	18.8	22.4	26.7	23.1	20.3
Managers, entrepreneurs and craftsmen	26.1	27.5	30.7	22.5	27.7
Agricultural workers	1.2	3.6	4.0	4.6	3.3
Retired persons	–	5.1	3.9	2.0	5.3
Unknown and other	45.0	8.7	3.9	8.7	3.3

A constant (though very gradual) increase is visible in the share of representatives who performed an executive or political function as professionals, while the indicators for other occupations vary, although not significantly.¹⁸ Most representatives had been professional politicians, managers and entrepreneurs, next in line are educational, cultural and similar professions, while

¹⁸ The data for the first legislative mandate is unreliable simply because it is incomplete. It was the same as with religious self-identification – no information about occupation was provided in the official publication.

manual workers, farmers and retired persons are the least present. It is therefore obvious that previous executive experience acquired in politics or economy is important, because it increased from three fifths in the second mandate to two thirds in the fifth legislative mandate. If we compare this to the previously interpreted indicators of change in the number of highly educated representatives and the specific types of high education, it would seem that executive experience compensates for a certain deficit in particular expert knowledge.

Overall and Parliamentary Political Experience of the Members of Parliament

Political experience prior to the first election into the Parliament (which could be both professional and volunteer) contributes to a parliamentary candidate's qualifications even more than previous professional experience. Since the establishment of patterns of recruitment into the political elite in a multiparty system has started no sooner than in 1990,¹⁹ the significant changes which took place during the five legislative mandates were absolutely expected (Table 6).

A general change is visible in the consistent decrease of the number of representatives entering the Parliament without any political experience, which implies that the Parliament is becoming inaccessible to so-called political amateurs. At the same time, the greatest changes are connected with the constant increase of the number of representatives with previous experience in performing political duties in local governments, especially in political parties. Indeed, it is obvious that party engagement is the most important channel for political advancement to the national level. This is not surprising

¹⁹ There is no systematized official information about a possible political experience acquired in the socialist system, and the public is familiar only with the biographies of the most distinguished active politicians. The gathering of this data is obstructed by the tendency of numerous Croatian politicians to "embellish" their past and omit potentially compromising facts. Even if they publicly admit their previous membership in the Communist Party, this is most often motivated by their efforts to portray themselves as victims of the former regime. More often than not, they resort to the justification that they did not become dissidents with the sole purpose of striving to "undermine the hated regime from the inside". Still, the data made available by an empirical research into the social structure of the Croatian society conducted in 1996 indicate that 51% of the politicians surveyed (at the national and local levels) were members of the Communist Party (Hodžić, 2002.), and it is very likely that the percentage is higher. Information about performing an official duty in the bodies of government in socialist Croatia or Yugoslavia is even more inaccessible, and we are only safe in stating that such cases were fewer, because membership in the Communist Party was far more comprehensive than participation in government. In any case, it is certain that the share of politicians with a communist past, i.e. with experience acquired in the totalitarian system, will decrease in keeping with the tempo and scope of the generational shift in politics.

if we keep in mind, as mentioned in the introduction, that parties (more precisely, party elites) are the principal selectors. When drawing up electoral lists, the list-makers estimate the ability of potential candidates to act in accordance with party interests and to respect the leader's authority, as well as the candidate's party merits and intra-party position (i.e., power). Subsequently, they probably take into consideration other qualities as well, such as previous administrative experience, and the level and type of education or professional achievement.²⁰ Political experience acquired through work in the Government and its bodies or in the second house of the Parliament (abolished in 2001) appears to be less relevant simply because there are much more local authority units, and accordingly the opportunities for a person to acquire political experience there are much higher. Previous political experience is therefore an important component of the representatives' political competence,²¹ but in addition to that, it is a criterion for selection in the parliamentary elite recruitment process. It should be added that, as a rule, the leaders of parliamentary parties (with the exception of the electoral winners, who usually move on to executive power) also become Parliament members, which turns this institution into a sort of pool for party elites.

An important prerequisite for the formation of parliamentary elite is the stability of the institution and of the representatives' mandates. This has to do with the assumption that early election (which objectively shorten the duration of the mandate) and a constant influx of new members noticeably hinder and slow down the formation of a sufficiently large group of career parliamentarians. The above assumption relies on the thesis that only a high rate of reelection of representatives, i.e. a low fluctuation rate, ensures the formation of a professional parliamentary elite. The Croatian Parliament still

²⁰ In the five assemblies observed, not one representative from an independent list was elected to the Parliament, while some representatives of national minorities (from the second legislative mandate on) were elected as independent candidates. When parties decide to put on their electoral lists a non-party candidate, they are sure to be guided by his/her professional reputation. In the fourth and fifth assemblies, a total of seven independent representatives managed to enter the Parliament through four party lists (one representative achieved it twice, on lists of different parties). Some of these representatives became completely independent in the parliament, having left the party clubs whose lists they were elected from, some joined the party that gave them the opportunity, while the smallest number of them preserved their independent status.

²¹ We have already mentioned that the parliamentary representatives are also trained for executive duties. This occurs in Croatia as well: 52% of Government members in 2000, and 47% in 2003 had 4-9 years of previous parliamentary service. The other members of these governments had previous political experience as county heads, mayors and members of representative and executive bodies at the local level or in different bodies of the Government.

does not guarantee the fulfillment of these preconditions,²² as indicated by the data in Table 7.

Table 6: Political duties of Parliament members before their first election to the Croatian Parliament in five mandates (%)*

Previous political duty	Legislative mandate				
	1990	1992	1995	2000	2003
Local government	1.3	15.2	21.3	27.8	38.8
Political party	25.0	56.5	63.0	70.9	75.0
Government and governmental bodies	–	11.6	9.4	9.9	5.9
Second house of the Parliament	1.3	20.3	10.2	11.9	7.9
Without previous political duty	75.0	24.6	22.8	23.2	15.1

* The sum of duties normally exceeds 100% because the representatives could simultaneously perform several political duties (in parties and governmental bodies).

Table 7: Parliamentary experience of Croatian Parliament members in five mandates (%)

Mandate	Legislative mandate				
	1990	1992	1995	2000	2003
First	100.0	66.7	50.4	66.2	59.9
Second	–	33.3	33.9	18.5	25.0
Third	–	–	15.7	11.3	9.2
Fourth	–	–	–	4.0	4.6
Fifth	–	–	–	–	1.3
<i>Average number of mandates</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>1.6</i>
<i>Average parliamentary service (in years)</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>3.6</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>5.5</i>	<i>6.1</i>

²² In developed democracies the percentage of reelected parliament members ranges from 60% to 85%, and the average duration of parliamentary service is 6-20 years (Hague/Harrop/Breslin, 1998: 197).

The percentage of reelected representatives was greatest in the third legislative mandate of the Parliament (49.6%), and in other mandates (not counting, of course, the first one) it ranged from 33 to 40%.²³ As a result of the relatively high fluctuation of representatives, at the end of the fifth legislative mandate the average duration of parliamentary service was a little over six years. Due to the continuous increase of the number of parliamentary members, and to the early elections held in 1992 and 1995, the average duration of a parliamentary career increased very gradually, while the increase in the average number of mandates accelerated to some extent. If we take into consideration the Croatian Parliament in general from the first to the end of the fifth legislative mandate, the average number of mandates is 1.4²⁴ and the average duration of parliamentary service is five years.²⁵ Consequently, less than 20% of representatives in the fifth legislative mandate of the Parliament could be referred to as parliamentary veterans (being in their third, fourth or fifth legislative mandate), which means that the so-called steady core of experienced parliamentarians in the Croatian Parliament is too small to have a noticeable influence on the institution's style of work (Ilišin, 2007).

²³ In the current, sixth mandate of the Croatian Parliament, 42.5% of reelected representatives confirmed their mandate at the constitutive sitting (in early January 2008), which means that the predominance of new-coming representatives continues. The share of 57.5% of representatives elected for the first time would assuredly be much smaller if not for the considerable changes in personnel with regard to the electoral lists. Namely, approximately 20% of the elected candidates did not activate their representative mandate, and substitute candidates entered the Parliament instead, among which almost no one has previous parliamentary experience.

²⁴ The average number of mandates was obtained by dividing 648 representative seats with 477 representatives, which is their total number. It should also be said that the large fluctuation is connected with the failure to reenter the parliament after a skipped election cycle. This is attested to by the fact that only two representatives in the fifth mandate managed to return to the Parliament after they interrupted their parliamentary career (we left out of consideration those who did not activate their mandates, e.g. due to their direct transfer to the executive branch). Indeed, an interruption of the parliamentary career is most often caused by a representative's personal decision to withdraw from politics or by the electoral-list-makers' decision not to put him/her in a (potentially winning) position on the list, rather than by a party's electoral defeat (except in such cases where there was a great change in the will of the electorate compared to the previous election cycle). The average duration of parliamentary service was calculated at the end of an observed legislative mandate.

²⁵ For the rare representatives who were not Parliament members before 2001, but were members of another house of the Parliament (Municipality Council, Associated Work Council, County House), those mandates were not calculated into the total number of mandates and the duration of parliamentary service, because this analysis is based on data regarding the first house of the Parliament (before the Parliament became unicameral in 2001).

Concluding Overview

Even though Croatia has reached the upper part of the scale of success in democratic consolidation for post-socialist countries, it is indisputable that this process has been uneven due to certain specific socio-historic, social and political circumstances. The same is true of the development of parliamentarism: the democratic deficits from the first decade of the newly-established democratic order influence the inadequate functioning of the Parliament and the decelerated formation of parliamentary elite.

In the critical and constitutive period of the early 1990s, the Parliament enjoyed a relatively high reputation in the collective consciousness of the citizens and was expected to play a major role in the political life of the country – partly due to its symbolic meaning throughout history – but relatively quickly it was degraded into a marginalized institution. The executive power dominated the system: until the end of 1999, in the person of the authoritarian president of the state, and after his death and the abolishment of the semi-presidential system, through the government. The parliamentary representatives themselves contributed to the decrease in the institution's reputation, with their limited competence, their subordination to party leaders and leaderships, their insufficient respect for internal democratic procedures, and their frequent concern with political disagreements instead of key social problems... In this situation, the reputation of the parliamentary elite was and still is on permanent probation in the eyes of the public.

Aside from the above-mentioned subjective deficiencies, the frequent fractioning of parliamentary parties, and the incessant renewal of the process of non-electoral parliamentarization, the Croatian Parliament was also vulnerable to external influence. The frequent alterations of electoral regulations and models, the great electoral dynamic, and the changes of the political will of the electorate all contributed to its instability, which is reflected in the high fluctuation of representatives. Still, after three peaceful changes of power and after the establishment of a moderately pluralistic party system, it can be said that the destabilizing influence of external factors on further parliamentary development has been partly annulled through the process of democratic consolidation, which means that all preconditions are met for the formation of a more stable parliamentary elite.

We have indicated the socio-political profile of the Croatian parliamentary elite by analyzing the predominant attributes of representatives in five mandates of the Croatian Parliament. We have established that the 18 years of a multiparty system resulted in the formation of a parliamentary elite with a recognizable socio-political profile, consisting predominantly of men (even though the representation of women tends to increase), averagely between 47 to 49 years of age, Croats, Catholics, highly educated, primarily in the field of social sciences and humanities, with significant previous executive

and political experience (acquired mostly in political parties) and with five years of parliamentary service. Based on these indicators, we can also claim that, in Croatia, the patterns of political recruitment into the parliamentary elite are congruent with those existing in established democratic systems.

The predominant characteristics of the social structure of the Croatian Parliament did not change significantly with time. With regard to most of the observed attributes, we find a relatively weak differentiation of representatives who entered the Parliament in different electoral cycles and from different party electoral lists, which points to a significant homogenization of the parliamentary elite. We can therefore conclude that the personnel policies of various political parties as principal selectors are largely similar, which is especially pointed out by the stable predominance of highly educated representatives, and by the great, and increasing, significance of political experience acquired in one of the leading positions in the parties themselves.

In spite of the observed weaknesses, the Croatian Parliament was for the most part successful in performing its recruitment and socialization role during the entire transitional period. Firstly, the number of local politicians entering the Parliament gradually increased, and they managed to arise as the most important recruitment resource, thus receiving an opportunity for affirmation at the national level. Secondly, the executive power personnel was recruited from the lines of parliamentary representatives: parliamentarians were appointed prime ministers and ministers, they filled the available seats in governmental bodies, in public companies and embassies, and even became judges of the Constitutional Court. Thirdly, an initial core of experienced parliamentarians was formed, which was expected to competently discuss and decide upon all the important issues of national policy, and at least attempt to resist the immoderate expansion of the reach of executive power. Fourthly, the Parliament has probably been least efficient in regard to the mobilization and socialization of citizens, which could be improved through an increase in the number of experienced or politically more competent, tolerant and articulated representatives.

There is one more circumstance, however, which obstructs the representatives' efforts to operate responsibly, namely, a pronounced partitocracy in the situation when most Croatian political parties suffer from a lack of intra-party democracy. Since parties are not only key protagonists in the political arena, but also primary selectors of parliamentary candidates, their power could be partially limited by none other than those of their members who have already attained a high reputation in the Parliament and the wider public. This also means that only the truly competent and politically credible representatives can speak at the parliamentary rostrum as protagonists of

democratic discussion and decision-making, and not simply as exponents of their parties and narrow party interests.

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