DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION
IN CROATIA

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DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN CROATIA

Value Transformation, Education & Media

SABRINA P. RAMET AND DAVORKA MATIĆ

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PREFACE

This book would not have been possible without the generosity of the Norwegian Research Council in providing funding for a conference held in Trondheim on 3–4 September 2004. We wish to acknowledge in particular the support of Professor Ola Listhaug and the work of Beata Eggan, who contributed to the success of the conference. We are also indebted to Florentina Misimi, who worked as conference assistant and helped to facilitate the work of the conference.

We are grateful to Stefano Bianchini, Dragana Dulić, Danica Fink-Hafner, Tvrko Jakovina, Stein Kuhnle, Vanja Monti-Graovac, Kari Osland, Rudi Rizman, Albert Simkus, Đimel Sokolović, and Mark Thompson for offering comments on the chapter drafts presented at the conference. We also wish to thank Ognjen Čaldavorić, Marijan Gubić, and Zachary T. Irwin for providing comments on the penultimate draft of Erik Solen's chapter, and we thank Norman Cigar and the anonymous reader for Texas A&M University Press for comments on the manuscript as a whole. We are also deeply grateful to Christine Hassenstab for significant assistance in the preparation of the index for this book.

Although we use diacritics throughout this book, we have decided, following a well-established tradition, to spell the name of Croatia's first
Discerning religion and values in Croatia, and the influence of religion on dominant values, is an extremely difficult task for at least three important reasons. The shortage of data is the first and most obvious one. Research on this topic during the communist period was rare, and in the following years the situation became even worse, especially with regard to comparative research that would allow comparisons with other countries at different points in time. Even in cases in which such a comparison is possible, a methodological problem arises from the fact of extremely different social circumstances before and after 1990. The change significantly affected religion, which, although it had considerable social impact, was relegated to a marginal position under communism and has enjoyed a completely different situation during the postcommunist period.

Religion, including individual Churches as its institutional and concrete manifestation, is not a unique and unproblematic social reality. The accepted norm in the sociology of religion is to differentiate among at least five dimensions: belief (the ideological dimension), practice (ritual), feelings (experience), knowledge (intellectual), and effects (the consequential dimension). There can be and usually are "inconsistencies" among these dimensions. Analysis of religious institutions further complicates the picture, particularly in the case of very complex institutional bodies, like the Catholic Church—in such a case there is a need not only to identify what messages come from the different institutional parts of the same Church.
but also to assess which message is more influential and, moreover, what kind of power can be attributed to Churches operating within complex socio-cultural circumstances. Scientific analysis that pays attention only to one aspect of influence or to a single side of a rather complex story offers a misleading picture.\footnote{1}

Differentiation of the religious dimension does not solve the problem of religious influence in contemporary, usually secularized societies. Two recent analyses are worth mentioning in this regard. Loeck Halman and Thorleif Petersson found that religion lost its influence over many public issues but maintained its power over private and family issues, even in highly secularized societies. The influence of religion on attitudes toward the parent-child relationship or abortion, for example, can be even stronger in societies where religious involvement is comparatively low than in societies where religious involvement is comparatively high; it tends to be stronger in the Netherlands than in Ireland.\footnote{2} On the other hand, Rodney Stark found that data from the 1990 World Values Survey suggest that the relationship between religion (measured as the importance of God in everyday life) and morality is weakest in Eastern Europe, particularly in the Orthodox countries of Eastern Europe. He explains his findings largely as a consequence of communist repression of religion, which was consequently unable to act in a public space.\footnote{3}

The complexity of the religious situation in Eastern Europe, visible in great differences among countries concerning the position, role, and influence of their religions, I have discussed elsewhere.\footnote{4} The same can be said about the "inconsistency," at least in Croatia and some other countries, between liberal and religious-normative values.\footnote{5} To reduce an enormous task to manageable proportions, this chapter explores only partially the relations between religion and values by focusing on two connected research problems: Church-State relations, and relations between religion and some democratic values. In the first part I analyze the basic development of Church-State relations in Croatia after 1990 according to the new social circumstances, emphasizing the question of religious minorities and the problem of reconciliation between the social significance of a particular religion and the principle of equality of all religions.

The second part, based on data from 1999–2000 European Values Survey, explores attitudes toward different questions concerning democratic development, with a particular focus on the differences between those who are more and those who are less religious. When appropriate, but more systematically in this second part, I compare the Croatian data with Slovenian data. The comparison between Croatia and Slovenia can be interesting because while these two countries had similar pasts (they were the most developed parts of socialist Yugoslavia and republics with a Catholic majority), they have had very different experiences in the transition period; the war that occurred in connection with the Slovenian declaration of independence from socialist Yugoslavia in 1991 lasted only days, and this country has experienced a much easier and more successful transition to democracy. The analysis here, in conjunction with other research mentioned, lays the base for the main thesis of the chapter, which posits that religion—and particularly the Catholic Church in Croatia, which serves a symbolic "sacred canopy" for the Catholic people—had much more social power at the beginning of the 1990s in the context of threatened national identity, while in the late 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century it has become only one among other important social factors affecting the development of democracy and overall modernization of the society.\footnote{6}

**CHURCH AND STATE**

Institutionalization of a new official attitude toward religion was, obviously, the first visible expression of new social circumstances. The new Croatian Constitution, approved in December 1990, guaranteed freedom of conscience and religious beliefs and their public expression.\footnote{7} It stated that all religious communities were equal in law; were separate from the State; enjoyed the freedom to perform their ceremonies and to have and freely run schools, institutions, and charitable associations; and could in all these activities obtain the protection and assistance of the State. However, this ideal description, which is usually but wrongly presented in public as the "Western democratic norm" of Church-State separation, soon came into conflict with social realities, not only in Croatia but in almost all postcommunist countries.\footnote{8} Usually, the dominant Churches have considered it unfair that after so many years of repression, they now find themselves in the same position as many other new religious movements, comparing their own situation negatively with that of new movements financed with Western money that provides more resources to attract potential believers.\footnote{9} The sharpest conflict occurred in Russia and some other post-Soviet countries, while in Central Europe the struggle between the dominant Church and newcomers became part of social disputes but still soluble through democratic mechanisms.\footnote{10} Although a similar pattern emerged in all countries, disputes were shaped by specific social circumstances.

The Croatian case was largely a product of wartime exigencies and the
circumstances in which the dominant Churches represented different nations in conflict. For Croatia, that contributed to the regulation of relations only with the Catholic Church. On the other hand, it was not only the war that favored the regulation of relations with only one Church. The historic and present social role of the Catholic Church is visible from figures. The 1991 census showed that the Croatian population declared itself as 76.5 percent Catholic. This rose to 87.83 percent in the 2001 census.

The government’s decision in 1991 to introduce confessional instruction in public schools, albeit as an optional subject, was the first official step in favor of the Catholic Church under the new Constitution. Moreover, the Church-State Commission that was established was actually a state commission for the regulation of relations only with the Catholic Church. This whole process ended with the signing and ratification in the Croatian Parliament of four agreements between Croatia and the Holy See in 1996–98: on legal questions; on cooperation in the fields of education and culture; on spiritual care in the military and police forces; and on economic issues. As international agreements that have legislative power over national laws, they regulated the position of the Catholic Church for many years into the future.

The position of other religious communities remained unregulated until 2002. Only after the election of the new reform-minded center-left government in 2000 did the need for regulation of the status of other religious communities become official policy. The Law on the Status of Religious Communities was passed in 2002, making it possible for the government to sign agreements with other religious communities, granting them rights already enjoyed by the Catholic Church. So far five agreements have been signed, which cover fourteen religious communities: the Serbian Orthodox Church; Islamic community; Evangelical Church and Reformed Christian Church; Evangelical (Pentecostal) Church, Christian Adventist Church, and Union of Baptist Churches; and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Croatian Old Catholic Church, and Macedonian Orthodox Church. To two of these agreements the following Churches were attached: the Church of God, Union of Christ Pentecostal Churches, the Reformed Movement of Seventh Day Adventists, and the Church of Christ. Negotiations with some other communities are still going on, for example with the Jewish community, but the public is not informed about any details. Other religious communities that do not have any intention of signing an agreement with the State for their own reasons, like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, or that are recorded as new, nontraditional religious communities, such as the Bahai or Hindu communities and the Church of Scientology, can only be registered by the Ministry of Administration. Registration gives them some privileges that derive from the law but not others, which can be regulated only by agreement with the government and which are elaborated upon later in this chapter. Up to now the only available information is that forty religious communities altogether are registered, including those mentioned with signed agreements, and that there are communities on the waiting list for registration; nothing else is known about this process or any possible controversies.

Beside the facts regarding the development of Church-State relations in Croatia, more interesting aspects are connected with the public interest in and public debates about it, which can show sociologically more significant issues, such as what might be the “appropriate” role of Churches in a modern and pluralist society, what kind of public expectations about them exist, how the different interests of different religious communities influence debates on Church-State relations, and so forth.

The first aspect that stands out in this regard is a complete lack of public interest in Church-State issues. Although this statement may seem strange, a closer look at debates about Church-State relations shows that they have focused, in an isolated way, on only three questions: the political involvement of the clergy (particularly during the war), problems connected with confessional instruction in the public schools, and the presence of some new and nontraditional religious communities. But these debates have been shaped mainly by the media or political groups and parties and have served other purposes (media attention and political interests); they have not had the power to sustain any serious discussion. As a result, such questions as the equality of other religious communities, or legal disputes caused by the agreements with the Holy See, were raised only by religious communities themselves or by some scholars. It appears that the greatest influence was attained by leaders of traditional religious communities, who successfully pointed out that they have been treated unfairly owing to the conclusion of agreements with the Holy See.

The second fact concerns the position of different religious communities; that is, the classic dilemma of how to square the constitutional principle of equality with the different social significance of different religious communities. Before signing the agreements with the Holy See, the Catholic Church opted for the regulation of its status, while the positions of other religious communities were at that time mainly conditioned by the wartime circumstances. After the Catholic Church had acquired regulated
whether a particular religious community existed at the time the new law came into force. However, since there are no public data about the process of registration, this is but speculation.

Given this background, how are we to estimate the influence of Church-State relations on democratic development, and what can be expected in the near future? What does a comparison with other countries tell us?

The comparison with Slovenia reveals one basic difference and one clear similarity. 

The position of the Catholic Church in Slovenia is different in that it has not “adopted the powerful rhetoric of being a ‘traditional,’ ‘national’ or ‘state-Constitutional’ Church,” and agreements with the State were concluded with more serious social debates. This resulted mainly from different historical and social circumstances producing a situation in which religion has not been as important a marker of national identity in Slovenia as it has been in Croatia. Therefore, the social position of the Catholic Church is not “taken for granted” as in the Croatian case; this is visible particularly in the difference regarding confessional instruction, which is not allowed in the public schools in Slovenia despite requests from the Catholic Church. Recently, a new nonconfessional subject that teaches about different religions was introduced in the last three grades of a primary school.

On the other hand, this has not contributed so far to an improved position for other religious communities in Slovenia. Analyses done by different researchers, and with different approaches, have come to the same conclusion. The first tier is occupied by both countries by the Catholic Church. In second place are traditional religious communities that have signed agreements with the governments in Croatia and Slovenia—but in Slovenia only three religious communities other than the Catholic Church have signed such agreements: the Lutheran Church in 2000 and the Serbian Orthodox Church and Pentecostal Churches in 2004. Other religious communities occupy third place, and in Slovenia the Islamic community is at the moment among them. Similar patterns, modified in accordance with specific social circumstances, can be found in other Central European countries, at least those that entered the EU in 2004.

The most ironic thing is that in recent years it has become increasingly difficult to find any clear reference point for the evaluation of Church-State relations in postcommunist Europe. The play between freedom and control has become subtle, particularly in Europe. Moreover, and contrary to those who in public debates have presented “West European standards”
as something postcommunist countries should follow, some Western European countries have become leaders in the restriction of religious rights of many of their citizens, particularly those who belong to nontraditional religions. There is still no efficient mechanism to cope with that: official institutions—like the European Court for Human Rights—are reluctant to take any decisions in the matter of religion. There are many identifiable reasons that explain why new religious movements are viewed in some countries with suspicious and fear. But it is not clear why, for example, they are greeted with more hostile attitudes in France than in Italy. However, the number of different religious communities in each country and their public actions are clearly relevant factors. Because of that, the likely Croatian scenario for some years to come will be periodic public debates, but debates that will not jeopardize either the relations with the Catholic Church or the position of other religious communities (at least those currently in existence and registered). This does not mean that debates will not touch upon some problematic issues, such as the financing of the Churches, their political involvement, the position of confessional instruction in public schools, and the social position of some new religious communities that usually provoke negative attitudes.

**RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY**

The relationship between religion and democracy was one of the main issues during the war. No matter what kind of analysis was undertaken, it was obvious that democratic development was hindered by the circumstances of war. Moreover, and irrespective of the fact that it is hard to characterize the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as religious ones, different kinds of religious involvement (including the fact that, along with civilians, churches and mosques were among the main war targets) clearly affected religious influence in the process of building of a new pluralistic society. That is why many researchers in the postwar period focused on the possibilities for a tolerant life among Croats, Serbs, and Muslims. A survey conducted in 2000 as part of the project CROPAX, carried out by Caritas Croatia and the Franciscan Institute for the Culture of Peace, in Split, showed that the ethnic distance between Croats and Serbs has remained great and that forgiveness and reconciliation needed preconditions, including the passage of time and compensation of material goods. The project organizers stressed that a huge effort should be invested: "Any effort for inter-ethnic reconciliation will surely not succeed if effort is not invested—that is huge effort—to stabilize individual national communities to overcome the 'camp,' 'bloc,' and..."

---

**TABLE 6.1**

*Confessional and Religious Structure of Croatia and Slovenia (%)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Croatia</th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Church/nonconformist/evangelical</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None, not available</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious person</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not religious person</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convinced atheist</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None, not available</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
gree. It is interesting to note that Croatia and Slovenia were more similar in 1991 in religious terms than in the late 1990s, but this raises questions that cannot be scrutinized in this chapter. What is also quite clear from the data is that other denominations in Croatia are almost nonexistent. This is not fully accurate, as the 2001 census showed figures for confessional identifications that are slightly but significantly different: 47.42 percent Orthodox (and not 0.1), and 1.28 percent Muslim (and not 0.0). The process of the return of Croatia's Serbs after 2000 obviously increased the number of those who belong to the Serbian Orthodox Church. However, the census also showed a significantly lower percentage of those who are undeclared—5.23 percent, and not 11.1 percent as we found in our research. In both cases (census and research) the ratio of Catholics is almost identical, suggesting that a number of religious minorities opted for the nonconfessional category in the research, possibly because social conditions limited free declaration among the members of nondominant religions.

A similar picture emerges from religious self-declaration. Some 79.4 percent of Croatia's inhabitants say they are religious people, compared with only 64.6 percent in Slovenia. Religiosity figures are lower in comparison to confessional figures, indicating that for some people ties with the Churches are present but weak. The difference is lower in Slovenia than in Croatia, but in comparison with many other European countries, we cannot talk about a big difference between confessional and religious identification.

In the following tables responses to various questions are compared, not only between Croatia and Slovenia but also between those who go to church regularly and those who do not attend services on a regular basis. Four major categories within the research are recoded here in two variables—those who attend church services at least once a month and those who attend it at most a few times a year. With this distinction the impact of religion on different attitudes can be measured as those who attend more regularly being at the same time more religious and usually following to a greater extent the teachings of the Church. Almost all research in the sociology of religion shows that the correlation between religiosity and church attendance is quite high (although that does not mean that there is no difference between these two categories) and that these responses might serve as a good predictor for adherence to some (but not all) of the Church's moral and social statements.

As is suggested by table 6.2 the social distance (measured by the question whom you don't like as neighbors) is moderate but exists for all men-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Croatia</th>
<th></th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church-goers</td>
<td>Non-Church-goers</td>
<td>Church-goers</td>
<td>Non-Church-goers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People of different race</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants/foreign workers</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuals</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gypsies</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 6.2
Social distance—don't like as neighbors (%)
tioned social groups, in both Croatia and Slovenia. The distance toward homosexuals is the highest. The research did not measure the distance toward Serbs or Albanians (as the aforementioned research on youth did), which would be a better indicator of social (national) distance. In all cases, the distance is generally lower in Slovenia than in Croatia. Church attendance in both countries is connected with greater social distance. In all cases the difference between churchgoers and nonattendants is statistically significant in Slovenia. In Croatia, that is the case for people of a different race and for Gypsies. For immigrant workers, homosexuals, and Jews the difference is significant only at the level of c.05, while in the case of Muslims both churchgoers and nonchurchgoers demonstrate the same level of distance.

Social distance can also be measured from different angles. When questioned as to whether it is better for immigrants to maintain their own distinct customs and traditions, 35 percent of Croats and only 30 percent of Slovenes think so. Slovenes are more inclined to adopt the attitude that it is better for immigrants to adapt to the customs of the country. For Slovenes, this may indicate a perception that this is really a better option for immigrants in the long run, but it may also mask fears of an influx of foreign workers and maybe help to explain problems with the situation of the Islamic community and its as yet unrealized wish to build a mosque. In neither country is there a significant difference on this question between those who attend church regularly and those who do not.

The next three tables measure satisfaction with how democracy works in each country. In general, Croats are more critical of their democracy than Slovenes are of theirs, while in Croatia churchgoers are less critical of their government than those who attend Church rarely. This is visible from table 6.3, and among these three questions, this is the only one on which Croats are less critical than Slovenes.

One should note that there were many problems regarding respect for human rights (particularly for non-Croats) in Croatia at the time the research was conducted. Nevertheless, 57 percent of Croats estimated that there was at least some respect for human rights, in comparison to 40 percent of Slovenes. But there is a considerable difference among those who attend church regularly and those who do not. Those not attending church services regularly were more critical of the regime. In Slovenia, the difference is small and not statistically significant: church attendance does not have any effect on estimates of how human rights are respected. Such a response might suggest a kind of politicization of the human rights questions in Croatia. Other research shows that churchgoers in Croatia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How much respect for human rights nowadays (%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Croatia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church-goers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot of respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not much respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No respect at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
X^2=45.63, p=0.000
\]
are politically more right-wing and that during the 1990s, they were clearly more supportive of the right-wing party Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (HDZ, the Croatian Democratic Union), which was in power. It should not be forgotten that the fieldwork for this research was performed in April 1999—the same year in which the political crisis provoked by widespread dissatisfaction with the government reached a peak, and the year in which President Tudjman died (in December), leading to the election of the new left-center government in January 2000. The split in support for the ruling party is also visible from table 6.4, which gives an estimation of how the government generally works—badly or very well. Respondents gave marks from 1 (bad) to 10 (very good).

In table 6.4 the scores are summarized in three groups. In Croatia, respondents are more critical than Slovenes, but again Croats who are churchgoers are significantly less critical than others. Looking at the political system of the past (the data are not shown here but derive from the same research), the results are just the opposite: Croats are in general more critical than are Slovenes of the previous communist regime, but in both countries churchgoers are significantly more critical than others. As table 6.5 shows, Croats are also less satisfied with their democracy, which again has to be interpreted in the context of the political crisis at the end of the 1990s. Slovenes are almost equally split between those who are not satisfied and those who are satisfied.

The data from table 6.6 are somewhat surprising. There are two general attitudes about what is the best way to rule a country. In table 6.6 two opposing attitudes are shown. The first clearly antidemocratic, while the second favors democracy as the best way to rule a country. Croats, to a greater extent than Slovenes, reject a strong leader who would endanger democratic rules.

It is interesting that 24 percent of Slovenes can support a strong leader, in comparison to only 13 percent of Croats. In Croatia (at the level of 0.05) there are some differences concerning church attendance, but they are not very clear: nonchurchgoers are here more heterogeneous in terms of their answers than churchgoers. A democratic political system is also somewhat more acceptable to Croats than to Slovenes. In short, the results in table 6.6 suggest that being more critical of the situation in Croatia (except on the question of human rights) and thereby showing that they had problems with the conduct of democracy, Croats were expressing a more idealistic view of the democratic system than were Slovenes.

The strong wish of Croats to improve democracy is visible also from
TABLE 6.5
Satisfaction with democracy in the country (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Croatia</th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Church-goers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather satisfied</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very satisfied</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all satisfied</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 37.222; p = 0.000$

$\chi^2 = 7.357; p = 0.061$

TABLE 6.6
View on the way to rule a country (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Croatia</th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Church-goers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have a strong leader who does not pay attention to government and elections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly good</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly bad</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very bad</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 8.959; p = 0.030$

$\chi^2 = 6.480; p = 0.090$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Croatia</th>
<th>Slovenia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To have democratic political system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly good</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly bad</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very bad</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 2.495; p = 0.493$

$\chi^2 = 5.684; p = 0.128$
some other questions (not shown in detail here). An alternative question, whether democracy is the best political system, is strongly supported by Croats, among whom some 42 percent thought it is, but not by Slovenes, of whom only 25.5 percent agreed. Only 4.2 percent of Croats oppose democracy (the categories of “disagree” and “strongly disagree”), but 9.8 percent of Slovenes do so. More Slovenes also think democracy causes a poor economy, that democracy is indecisive, and that democracy cannot maintain order. For the last two statements the difference between Croatia and Slovenia is a particularly significant. Some 26 percent of Croats think that democracy is indecisive (categories “agree” and “agree strongly”) in comparison to 69 percent of Slovenes! That democracy cannot maintain order is a view held by 19 percent of Croats and 46 percent of Slovenes. Concerning these last questions, church attendance (except in one case) does not make any difference.

CONCLUSION

The analysis undertaken in this chapter has focused primarily on Church-State relations and relations between religion and democracy. Concerning Church-State relations it revealed many problems and disputes about the proper model of Church-State relations in a postcommunist society. It also suggests that there is no simple answer regarding how to model Church-State relations. Experiences from all European countries show that the architecture of each model is deeply rooted in the country’s history and its social developments. At the same time, two parallel but contradictory trends are observable. The assurance of equality for all religions is contrasted with the restriction of minority rights in many European states, although in slightly different ways, and this process is also visible in postcommunist countries, Croatia and Slovenia included. According to Croatian social circumstances (it should be stressed again that Croatia had to fight a war for its independence), the first half of the 1990s saw focus only on the position of the Catholic Church, and the social needs of many other religious communities were neglected. The development of democracy in later years created a space for the regulation of the social status of other religious communities, as exemplified by the Law on the Legal Status of Religious Communities and by certain agreements signed with the government. For the time being, and bearing in mind the historical and social conditions, the law and agreements have contributed to an acceptable model of Church-State relations, a model that is not a barrier to further democratic development.

As mentioned, this does not preclude different opinions and further social disputes about Church-State relations.

The relationship between religion and democracy is a more difficult problem. The analysis is limited to questions included in the European Values Survey of 1999–2000 and does not address some important aspects of democratic development. The results show that at least at the time the research was conducted, Croats wanted more democracy, although there are also some accompanying inconsistencies. Democracy is closely connected with respect for human rights, but Croats simultaneously thought human rights were being respected and that democracy was not in very good shape in their country. Further, the government largely received bad marks, yet the government is responsible for both democracy and human rights. Church attendance makes a difference in Croatia. Those who are regular churchgoers gave more support to the government and were less critical. This indicates that some basic democratic values were still a matter of political orientation, and not values accepted by a large majority irrespective of their political orientation. However, regular churchgoers are not antidemocratic. They support democratic values and on some general questions about democracy they do not differ from others.

Therefore, the conclusion following from this analysis is that religion, which had and still has a large role in Croatian society, is only one among other dominant factors shaping democratic development. Although there is no research on values from the beginning of the 1990s allowing comparison, it could be said that social circumstances complicating the democratic transformation in those years, in which religion certainly played a key role, may no longer be as relevant. However, the analysis is also restricted by some other general problems of social analyses. The question is where to find the crucial impetus for further social development. Without entering into another debate, it can be said that the EU today has more power in overall social developments, such as in introducing certain social (democratic) rules and standards. Another problem is connected with the power of religion. As noted in the introduction, religion has different dimensions, and some research has shown how religion changes public roles but still holds influence on some private issues. In formerly communist societies the situation may be a little different. Religion clearly served and still serves as a “sacred canopy” for the majority of Croatian people. However, this role should not be overestimated and cannot be regarded as the main factor influencing current and future democratic development. This could also
signify that the interplay between collective, societal, and individual rights in postcommunist countries has become more similar to that found in West European countries.35

NOTES

I am very grateful to Sabrina Ramet, James Sadkovich, and Thomas Bremer for their comments on earlier versions of this chapter.

1. From my point of view some articles and books—such as Ivan Ivecović, "Nationalism and the Political Use and Abuse of Religion: The Politicization of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam in Yugoslav Successor States," Social Compass 49, no. 4 (December 2002): 523–36, or Vjekoslav Perica, Hrvatski Idoli: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)—offer one side of the story and have to be combined with other sources.


8. What the norm of Church-State relations actually is in the Western world is far from clear. Although the Constitution’s norm of Church-State separation prevails, it is differently socially embedded, and there are still countries with a State Church. See Gerhard Robbers (eds.), State and Church in the European Union (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1996); Stephen V. Mosma and J. Christopher Soper, The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997).


13. The Agreements were official published with delay in Narodne novine, no. 196 (December 2003).

14. An official indication about certain problems was an interview given by Slabodan Ljubišić, former assistant minister, who said there were some communities that wanted to be registered but was very uncertain whether they were religious communities at all; see Vjesnik, 1 October 2003. The first public discussion about this process took place in November 2004, when the Association for the Promotion of Religious Liberty organized a roundtable where those religious communities that had signed agreements with the government spoke positively about their experiences, particularly about positive developments in certain social fields after the agreements came into effect, although they did mention some problems.

15. This is certainly a pessimistic conclusion for any scholar who, like the author of this chapter, entered public debates about Church-State relations, but personally I find most influential several interviews of leaders of different religious communities, particularly those from the Islamic community or different Protestant communities, like Muftija Šefko of Omerbašić or Peter Kuzmič. For my own position see, for example, Zrinščak, "Poruka o povezanosti demokracije s vjerskim slobodama šlabo dopirje do hrvatskih ušij," Vjesnik, 27 November 2001.

16. See, for example, an article by Živojin Kustić in Glas koncila, 5 January 1997, or an interview by Nikola Eterović in Glas koncila, 12 December 1999. That view was also expressed by representatives of some religious communities at the roundtable mentioned in the note 14.


18. The first question is how the American or French experiences can be socially relevant for Croatia. It is also interesting to see how completely unfounded
arguments were used many times, such as that the new law is not in accordance with the EU praxis or the Council of Europe requirements, which was simply not true.


20. Ibid., 361.


25. For the dominant views on such issues see Ivan Gišić, "Percepca nekih odnosa crkve i države i uloge crkve i religije u društvu," Sociologija sela 147/178, no. 1–2, Supplement (stjecanj-lipanj 2000): 227–69.


31. For details about the European Values Survey see www.europeanvalues.nl.

32. Much information about religiosity in Slovenia and comparison with ten other postcommunist societies can be found in Niko Toš et al., Podobe v cerkvi in religiji (na Slovenskem v 90-ih) (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družene vede, IDV-CJMMK, 1999).

33. Indeed, the greater social distance between different nationalities can be seen from some other questions, which obviously reflect recent war experiences. On the question "Is the same ethnic background important for a successful marriage?" 39.9 percent of Croats and 58.1 of Slovenes disagree. In both countries the ratio of