

CHANGING THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN CROATIA

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Abstract

The Electoral system is one of the most important institutional choices for a country. As such, it is often an object of manipulation for political parties. Croatia is examined as a case on which this thesis shows how a party changed the electoral law for only one purpose – to consolidate its governance in the country. Croatia can be considered as a unique case since it changed its electoral system for four times in only ten years. Moreover, it implemented all of the major electoral system types in the period from 1990 until 2000. In the present thesis, only two electoral cycles are examined – 1992 and 1995 elections. I model electoral system change as a consequence of partisan self-interest. The explanatory model consists of five elements – firstly, instability and organizational under-development of parties show that parties did not have strategies for creating consistent policies which led them to create different strategies for the elections; secondly, opinion polls allowed parties to create the most beneficial proposal for changing the electoral law; thirdly, as a party behaved strategically it started using methods of political engineering; lastly, results of every election were calculated within the potential framework of electoral system which was proposed by the opposition. The hypothesis that the Croatian Democratic Union was an office-seeking party that used a seat-maximization is confirmed with the model.

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List of abbreviations

CEE – Central and Eastern Europe

HDS – Croatian Christian Democratic Party (Hrvatska kršćanska demokratska stranka)

HDZ – Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica)

HKDS – Croatian Christian Democratic Party (Hrvatska kršćanska demokratska stranka)

HNS – Croatian People's Party (Hrvatska narodna stranka)

HSLŠ – Croatian Social Liberal Party (Hrvatska socijalno-liberalna stranka)

HSP – Croatian Party of Rights (Hrvatska stranka prava)

HSS – Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvatska seljačka stranka)

IDS – Istrian Democratic Assembly (Istarski demokratski sabor)

JSDS – Yugoslav Social-democratic Party (Jugoslavenska socijal-demokratska stranka)

KNS – Coalition of People's Accord (Koalicija narodnog sporazuma)

PGS – Alliance of Primorje and Gorski Kotar (Primorsko goranski savez)

PR – Proportional electoral system

RDS – Rijeka Democratic Alliance (Riječki demokratski savez)

SBHS – Slavonia-Baranja Croatian Party (Slavonsko-baranjska hrvatska stranka)

SDH – Social-democrats of Croatia (Socijaldemokrati Hrvatske)

SDP – Social-democratic Party (Socijal-demokratska Partija)

SDS – Serb Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka)

SKH – SDP – League of Communists of Croatia and Social-democratic Party (Savez komunista Hrvatske i Socijal-demokratska partija)

INTRODUCTION

The transitional period from 1989 until 1992 was crucial for many European states. With the fall of communism, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia many new states emerged in Europe. Hence, new institutions needed to be created in newly established states. Fortin (2012) argues that countries in Central and Eastern Europe (hereafter, CEE) had different trajectories to become democracies. While countries that had higher state capacity (state ability to make decisions) managed to transform into democracies quicker and more efficiently, others did not embark on the democratization process but rather resorted to more authoritarian regimes or unconsolidated democracies.

The democratization process that started changing the political environment in Europe was described as a third wave of a democratization by Huntington (1996). He argues that the third wave started with *Carnation revolution* in Portugal in 1974. After that year, repressive political regimes began collapsing one after another. In the same era, CEE states also became more democratic than ever. With the dissolution of Yugoslavia, several new independent states¹ appeared – Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. New political parties were formed and put into focus on the national level, with the aim to create a stable political framework that ~~will~~ would lead allow these newly formed countries to democratize.

One aspect of the efficient democratization process include the reforms of electoral rules. The institutional development is characterized by respecting the rules of the game. In that sense, Schedler (2002) argues that electoral fraud was a norm in countries that were perceived as non-

¹ Serbia and Montenegro were two countries that formed Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992. Both countries became sovereign states in 2006

democratic in late 1980s. One of the country that was also described in that way was Yugoslavia. With the dissolution of the Federation, new countries were forced to alleviate institutions (Birch, 2003:8). This thesis thus examines the case of Croatia, as a former Yugoslav republic, and its process of electoral transformation during the period of its process of democratization, i.e. when the rules of the game were respected by the political actors. In particular, I am interested in explaining the electoral reforms that occurred from 1990 until 1995. Croatia gained its independence in 1991 upon its independence referendum about leaving Yugoslavia. But already before that, the country had held its first multi-party elections, in 1990, when the country had still been part of Yugoslavia. That electoral round started a slow process of institutionalization of political parties and their subsequent development.

The first electoral round under a newly independent authority of the Croatian state occurred in 1992 under the rules of a mixed electoral system. This was followed by the second independent elections held in 1995 when the rules from 1992 had only been changed slightly. The third election round was held in 2000 when the proportional (hereafter, PR) system was introduced. One of the reasons why changes took place can be found in the statement by Schedler (2002) that a leading party under Tudjman used electoral misconduct in order to minimize the parliamentary representation of opposition parties.

Such sequence seems essentially natural, however, after looking in more depth into the underlying actions, one thing becomes especially peculiar. The Croatian Democratic Union (hereafter, HDZ) won the first elections with the absolute majority of seats. They changed the rules of the game for the elections in 1992, in which they won with an almost similar result. For the next elections rules were changed, again – and the result for them was again the same, they won. In 2000 however, the party lost the elections under the new proportional representation (PR) competition.

When we consider the logic behind the electoral competition, i.e. that one usually does not change the electoral system if the party keeps winning through it, the question arises why HDZ did that several times? This essentially represents the key research question of the present thesis, i.e. one which asks: *Why did the HDZ change the electoral system every time they won the elections?* What was the motivation for doing that and what were the interests that should have been satisfied with electoral reforms? The explanation would be the following: the HDZ behaved strategically and opportunistically – they were only interested in gaining more and more seats in the parliament which would allow them to form a solid single-party government in order to pursue their interests. In other words, they were an office-seeking party which led the strategy of seat-maximization. The power-driven HDZ pursued these electoral reforms as the means which would have enabled them to govern with a majority. (see Figure 1 for a visualization of this puzzle).

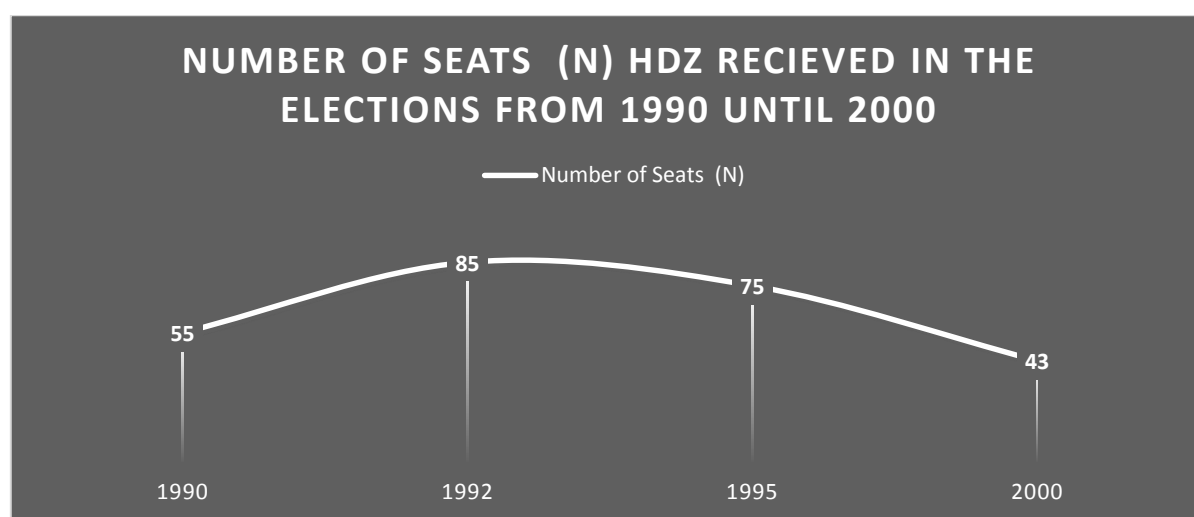


Figure 1 - Number of seats HDZ received in the elections from 1990 until 2000

Source: Data from the State Electoral Commission of the Republic of Croatia, 2016

The paradox of electoral reforms pursued by the HDZ in the studied period becomes clear from Figure 1. Indeed, even scholars recognize this paradox as a largely unreasonable move by the winning party, for instance as Blais (2008) asks – why would a party in power want to change a

system which enables its dominance in the national politics? In the last chapter the hypothesis has been confirmed since the pattern of electoral behavior has been recognized and the HDZ can clearly be classified as an office-seeking party that tried to control the politics in Croatia.

CHAPTER 1

Conceptual framework

This chapter provides an overview of existing theories employed to explain institutional change, including rational choice theory and the theory of historical institutionalism. The second part then elaborates on the importance of electoral reform and explains the process of electoral reform that took place in Croatia during the examined period.

1.2 Changing the institutions – different explanations by different approaches

North (2002:3) argues that ‘‘ the institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. Institutions thus reduce uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life’’. But political regimes, in the dawn of their formation, suffer from uncertainty. That uncertainty gives a number of incentives for political actors to change the environment in which they operate. Hence, institutions tend to stay stable and institutional change only occurs when *ceteris* is no longer *paribus*, meaning that the change occurs when shocks, exogenous to the system of institutions, alter the context in which they exist (Hall, 2010:205). The uncertainty that comes with the creation of new institutions provides actors with multiple solutions in order to secure benefits within the framework. According to that, different theories explain the institutional change in different ways.

Why electoral systems? Lundell (2008) states that the adoption of an electoral system is the most important institutional choice. First, it has important political consequences, and second, it is the most manipulative element of democratic politics (Lijphart, 1995). Party in power, with the absolute majority in the parliament, could lead the politics which is in their own interest, thus, neglecting interests by the opposition, or in the extreme, it could exclude some social groups from the decision-making process.

On the other hand, incumbents can manipulate electoral process since they hold power in several ways. Firstly, gerrymandering (Podolnjak 2013), meaning that they can violate electoral process with restructuring constituencies in a way which will guarantee that they will get the most of the votes out of that district. Secondly, though activities during the campaign (abuse of administrative resources) or dishonest campaign tactics; and lastly, obstruction of voting or through pressuring the polling station staff to engage in or turn a blind eye to fraud (Birch 2007). In continuation, and also in accordance with the theory, this thesis aims to show how HDZ employed such manipulative strategies in order to win the elections.

1.2.1 Rational choice theory

Rational choice theory is one of the most used theories that can explain the institutional change in politics. The concept has two key dimensions – the assumption of rationality and self-interest. As (Hindmoore, 2006:17) states "rational choice theorists employ an instrumental concept of rationality in which actions are judged as being rational to the extent that they constitute the best way of achieving some given goal". The other element of the theory is self-interest which explains that mostly egoism and not altruism leads politicians to achieve objectives (Hindmoore, 2002:4).

Furthermore, Driscoll and Krook (2012) include other elements into the rational choice theoretical explanation of an institutional change. The authors propose that actors have complete information regarding the context in which they order their preferences to achieve goals. Once they have formed their motivations and preferences, actors tend to quantify pay-offs of a possible result. The one that has the best "score" for an actor (meaning gains are bigger than costs) would be its choice. Moreover, the rational choice theory offers more starting points. First, rational choice theorists tend to answer the question why institutions take particular forms and this reasoning should be classified as endogenous. Second, theorists also study institutional effects, taking institutions as fixed and

exogenous. Methodologically, the scholars of this theoretical stream prefer a comparative approach that allows predictions in the behavior and outcomes and it yields comparative static knowledge about how behavior and outcomes, as the underlying conditions, change (Goodin and Klingemann 1998).

Rational choice also offers several models that can be employed for the study of institutional change. The first model is called the setter model (Wittman and Weingast, 2008), which proposes that actors choose between alternatives on the one-dimensional continuum. On this continuum, each individual is represented by its preference which makes its “ideal point” (Wittman and Weingast, 2008). Thus, the actor prefers the alternative that is closer to his ideal point and it is assumed to act strategically in order to maximize his goals. Also, two crucial elements are immanent to the model – the median voter and the setter. The setter is an actor who sets the agenda and has the monopoly over power. If he wants his policy to be accepted he should not neglect the former element – the median voter. Therefore, in order to achieve his goals, the setter has to move towards the median voter who guarantees that policy will be adopted since the highest percentage of voters is placed around the median voter.

The second model is called the separation of powers and it is used to explain the interaction between courts and elected officials (Wittman and Weingast, 2008). There are, also, many other models within the rational choice theory which could explain institutional change.

The explanatory power of rational choice theory is dependent upon context. It assumes a degree of certainty and stability in a system: certainty in the sense of a solid perception of who wins and who loses in the existing system and who would win or lose with the adoption of reform; stability in the sense of a power equilibrium, a system where the exclusive actors are strong and coherent groups who expect to keep, more or less, the same amount of support in forthcoming elections. (Rahat, 2004).

In that sense, rational choice theory has been used more and more in order to explain institutional change in electoral studies (Boix, 1999, Tsebelis, 1990). Several authors, such as Benoit (2004), have also developed models within this theoretical framework which should help in explaining why institutions were shaped one way or another.

1.2.2 Historical institutionalism

The second important theory is historical institutionalism. Capoccia and Ziblatt (2010) provide an outline on how this theory investigates institutional change in the case of democratization. They argue that history should be read “forward” not “backward”. They argue that “rather than looking at the outcomes at a single moment in time and their relationship with their contemporaneous correlates to “explain” how democratization occurred, one should go back to investigate the foundational moments when democratic institutions were actually created and undertake a thorough analysis of the ideologies, resources, and institutional legacies shaping the choices of actors involved in the process of institution building” (Capoccia and Ziblatt, 2010:939). What is important here is that they do not focus on coalitions of actors, their preferences, and strategies, but rather on other factors that had an impact on an institution at a given time.

Concepts such as path dependency and critical junctures have been elaborated in order to explain institutional change. The latter refers to a relatively short period of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agents’ choices will affect the outcome of the interest. Here, actors face a larger range of options and the notion of their choices from among these possibilities is likely to have a substantial impact on the outcome (Giovanni Capoccia and Kelemen 2007). What is striking here is the explanation that actors will have multiple sets of choices that they can choose from, which is accompanied by high levels of uncertainty. When a critical juncture occurs it changes the path dependence of an institution which ends with the new set of an

institutional setting. It could also happen that a critical juncture did not open the space for the change which means that actors have decided not to make decisions in order to change the frame of an institutional framework. In addition, when the institutional change occurs it is immanently an incremental and a slow process.

As stated above, historical institutionalism emphasizes other constitutive elements than the rational choice theory. Steinmo (2008) suggests that historical institutionalism investigates how political culture or public preferences had influenced institutions to take a particular form of development. Capoccia and Kelemen (2007), on the other hand, examine political parties which, in their opinion, had a big impact on democratization with a specific focus on ideologies, social classes and interests, political elites and power dynamics within political parties. The theory thus introduces other explanatory variables in regards to the notion of institutional change (see the difference between the two theories in Table 1 on the following page). The following part takes into account the knowledge brought about by these two theories and alters the focus more on the importance of studying electoral change per se.

Table 1 - The difference between Rational Choice and Historical Institutionalism

	Rational choice institutionalism	Historical institutionalism
Object of explanation	Behavior of rational actors	Structures and practices
Logic of explanation	Calculation	Path-dependency
Definition of institutions	Incentive structures	Macro-historical structures and regularities
Approach to change	Static-continuity through fixed preferences, stable institutions	Static-continuity through path-dependency interrupted by critical junctures
Explanation of change	Exogenous shock	Exogenous shock
Recent innovations to explain change	Endogenous ascriptions of interests shifts through RI political coalitions or HI self-reinforcing or self-undermining processes	Endogenous description of incremental change through layering, drift, conversion

Source: Schmidt, 2010

1.3 Electoral reform

With the formation of new states, there is an importance to build up the institutional setting which would be most beneficial to the country's development. Since many countries had not had prior experience of establishing new institutions, it became common to adjust them if they were not fulfilling their task. That was also the case with electoral systems. It is not unusual, therefore, that a country would change its electoral system quite often. Indeed the period of 1990s represents a peak of institutional reforms in the post-communist countries (see Figure 2 for the illustration of major electoral reforms).



Figure 2 - Major electoral reforms since World War II

Source: Renwick, 2010

Scholars, including Dunleavy and Margetts (1995), however state that electoral reform occurs rarely if at all. It is true that this was the case during the post-war period since countries were inclined to stabilize their political systems. Also, it was the time when major political entities were still stable and when new ones did not started to develop. This changed, as it is shown, with the beginning of last decade in the twentieth century.

Electoral reforms essentially possess two sides of a coin – the winners and the losers (Bowler and Donovan, 2013). Small parties that were competing against parties that were dictating reforms were losers while the most popular ones were the absolute winners. Small parties, which usually backed for the PR system, disappeared from the political scene if the type that they advocated for was not accepted by the party that held a majority in the parliament. For instance, Kasapović (2014) shows that post-communist countries, such as Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania or Ukraine were changing their electoral systems quite often. Not only that political elites in these countries did not preserve the electoral system that was introduced with gaining the independence of each state, but they were also changing them after 2000 (see some of the changes of electoral systems in the post-communist countries in Table 2 below).

Table 2 - Changes of electoral systems in three post-communist countries

Albania	Croatia	Bulgaria	Ukraine
1990 – Plurality	1990 - Plurality	1990 - Mixed	1990 - Plurality
1996 – Mixed	1992 - Mixed	1991 - Proportional	1998 - Mixed
2009 - Proportional	1999 - Proportional	2009 - Mixed	2006 - Proportional

Source: Data from the Election Resources, 2016

The electoral reform has also another consequence. It is not only the change of the type of the electoral system, but also about the reforms that just changed rules within the existing electoral framework. For example, Hungary changed its mixed type system several times – in 1990, 1994, and in 2011 (Kasapović, 2014:70-71). They have not implemented a new type, but rather they changed only some institutional elements within the existing electoral system, including the electoral threshold, district magnitude or a number of list mandates.

Several models have been developed in order to explain the frequent changes of the electoral system in different countries. Ahmed (2013), for instance, explains the choice of electoral system in the United States, United Kingdom, and France. Smith and Remington (2001) focus on the post-communist Russia, Blais (2008) on Canada and New Zealand, Grofman and Lijphart (2002) study Nordic countries, and Brady and Mo (1992) put an emphasis on South Korea and its electoral choice. Renwick (2010), on the other hand, focuses on the choices that were made in Japan, Italy, France and New Zealand. Other scholars tried to explain electoral reforms in post-communist countries in Europe. Birch (2003), for example, explores a general pattern how electoral systems were chosen in post-communist Europe. Benoit and Hayden (2004) examined the electoral choice of Poland. Kasapović (2014) also put an emphasis on countries that had the similar historical path until 1990s – Bulgaria, Albania, Croatia.

What is common for those studies is that every scholar tried to find a general framework on how developments and decisions for changing a system occurred. Cottey (2002) shows the different context under which reform occurs, including, first, *historical factors approach* which explains how history affects institutional change. In that regard authors argue that previous experiences play a huge role in changing the electoral system – key example is the Weimar Republic and its highly fragmented parliament. Second, *foreign influences approach* which shows if foreign experts tried to engineer outcomes in a particular country's elections with various types of electoral systems. Third, *contextual factors approach*, for example, shows that multi-ethnicity requires proportional representation and the main argument for PR implementation could be based on that premise. And lastly, *interest-based calculations of political actors approach* examines strategic decisions over electoral laws and goals of those actors. This types of explanations could be used in investigating the Croatian case in this research.

Renwick (2010; Renwick 2011) explains five modes of electoral change. Firstly, *mass imposition*. Here, citizens impose reform without regard to others' opinions. Secondly, *active mass impetus* where the public is mobilized on the issue of electoral reform and forces politicians to accept the change. Third, *passive mass impetus* where politicians seek public favor by instigating reforms that chime with voter's desire for change. Fourth, *mass constraint* where politicians want to impose reforms but are constrained from doing so by fear of upsetting public opinion. And the last, and most suitable for this research, *elite imposition* where politicians enforce reform without regard to others' opinions. What Renwick (2010) claims here is that the majority of electoral reforms in Europe have been the elite imposition while those where politicians did not dominate the process, such as mass imposition, were quite rare.

Benoit (2004) introduced various approaches that explain how and why electoral reforms occurred in post-communist countries, but the main focus of his work is dedicated to a seat-maximizing model of electoral system change. He argues that "electoral systems result from the collective choice of political parties linking institutional alternatives to electoral self-interest in the form of maximizing seat shares" (Benoit, 2004:373). A change in electoral design will occur only when a political party or coalition of political parties supports an alternative which would bring it more seats than the status quo electoral system. On the other hand, electoral systems would not change when there is no party or coalition of parties with the political power to adopt an alternative electoral system. He explains his model as following:

Electoral systems result from the collective choice of political parties linking institutional alternatives to electoral self-interest in the form of maximizing seat shares. Political parties will rank institutional alternatives in descending order of the expected seat shares they expect the alternative to bring them in an election to take place under those rules. In order to most accurately link institutional alternatives to self-interest, each party will actively seek information that will enable it to estimate the vote share it expects under each alternative electoral rule. This includes both information about its own expected vote share

as well as about the operation of the electoral system alternatives for transforming this vote share into seats (Benoit, 2004:373).

Colomer (2005) takes reversal logic showing that the number of parties can explain the choice of the electoral system. He argues that existing political parties tend to choose the electoral system which will consolidate or reinforce previously existing party configurations. For him, voters and political leaders are motivated to participate in the elections and, thus, win. The second element in his theory is that actors are well-informed about the incentives and effects that different electoral rules can generate. Third, political actors tend to prefer a partial victory if the chances for winning the elections are low – the conclusion is that actors, in the high uncertain environment, will choose the electoral system which will not turn them in absolute losers.

Bol (2016) also argues that mostly one approach is predominantly used for assessing electoral system change. He argues that many scholars prefer to take the approach that studies parties as self-interested actors and thus, as office-seeking political parties. But he develops a model that is diametrically opposite to that approach - policy-seeking model for explaining the electoral change. He focuses on willingness that political parties have in order to achieve social goals. Following that logic, parties are not self-interested actors but rather interested in solving social problems. In that context, they take a riskier approach to the elections, because if they get elected and do not achieve proscribed goals, they usually get punished in the next elections. Parties, in that model, usually introduce social and economic policies that will enable to mobilize masses in order to change institutional framework.

Bowler and Donovan (2013) also argue that partisan interests are important in shaping an electoral system. Moser and Scheiner (2012) try to show that electoral institutions affect electoral outcomes

by producing incentives for a certain type of behavior, and thus changing the way how other contextual factors affect these same outcomes. It could be argued, according to them, that a party that owns an absolute majority in the parliament has more incentives to pursue its own interests in a political arena.

Does Croatia fit in one of the mentioned theories? The answer is yes. We could argue that Renwick (2010) made the right conclusion when he was outlining that the electoral reform in Croatia occurred because of the interest of political elites. Also, Birch (2003) made a clear statement that the changes of electoral system in Croatia should be seen in power relations terms. But something is missing and this thesis will try to fill the gap that has been observed. The problem with these theories is that they did not examine Croatia in detail. Authors made statements only on the basis of perceptions and their assumption when observing party politics in Croatia. With the proposal explained in this thesis, the gap based on non-detailed observations will be filled in. The model that will be developed here should give clear answers if HDZ truly acted as an office-seeking party. Explanation of terms and the model will be exposed in the chapter 2.

1.3.1 Electoral reform in Croatia

Rahat (2004) claims that no party that was in power initiated the change of an electoral system only if there was the expansion of franchise or if the revolution took place. We will see that Rahat is mistaken and that a party can and will change the electoral system if it would reap more benefits from the new setting.

Croatia has firstly introduced the majoritarian electoral system in 1990. After that, in 1992, legislators introduced a new system – mixed electoral system. For the elections that were held in 1995, those rules were changed and the new constituency with diaspora was introduced. After

winning in this election, electoral law was changed one more time – to proportional representation in 1999. In that sense, Croatia should be considered as a specific case because, in less than ten years, it implemented all three types of electoral system. Moreover, this is a unique case since all of the types were introduced in a short period of time (Podolnjak, 2013:164; Kasapović 2001).

In order to explain why changes occurred so frequently, Kasapović (2014) makes an argument with whom she claims that this had happened because HDZ had interests in setting rules that way. Moreover, she claims that the introduction of the mixed system was motivated predominantly because HDZ wanted to stay in power and that this type of an electoral system was the most suitable form of competition for achieving that goal. Change that took place in 1995, she argues, was mainly motivated to secure additional seats from the electoral district where diaspora was represented. It should be noticed that no other party than HDZ had won a seat from that constituency from 1995. What is more important, that with its 12 seats it could affect the result of the elections. That was the case in 2005 presidential elections when the run-off should have taken place because the social-democrat candidate did not manage to win the elections in the first round what would have been the case if the diaspora was not allowed to vote in the special constituency (Kasapovic 2012). After changing the government in 1990, electoral politics went to the exclusive domain of decision of HDZ which used it as a powerful means to exercise their power (Kasapović, 2014:199).

Renwick (2010) claims that the introduction of a mixed electoral system in Croatia could fit in the model of elite majority imposition. This means that his understanding was similar to the one Kasapović has. In explaining the elite majority imposition, he claims that the electoral reform was initiated by the political elites of a ruling party and that the system was enacted for particular party

interests. Also, this model tries to give an explanation that electoral reforms which followed that pattern, were in accordance to the maximization of the power of the leading party.

Zakošek (2002) also argues that the introduction of the mixed electoral system was motivated by particular interests of the leading party. He claims that the HDZ wanted to maximize its chances to win the elections. The strategy was built on the calculations that the majoritarian system would force the opposition on cooperation between parties and that they will introduce joint candidates in single-member constituencies and that their chances would be higher. With the mixed system, the HDZ wanted to achieve lower coordination among oppositional parties which will allow them to win the elections.

Podolnjak (2013) following this line of argumentation, shows that HDZ used manipulative strategies in order to secure its win in the elections in 1990. The fact that it had the largest supportive base in the country was used for the reforms of electoral law. In order to secure its win, it firstly had introduced the mixed system which was more suitable for its aspirations. As Podolnjak claims, this strategy was successful because HDZ won in 90% of constituencies in the country.

But not all scholars think that the electoral law in Croatia was changed predominantly by the party self-interest. Shugart and Wattenberg (2001) claim that the changes of the electoral system in the 1990s were the result of a compromise between the Social-democrats (SDP) and HDZ. They claim that SDP, as a former communist party, had a large bargaining power and that it was able to influence the decision for changing the electoral law. This is conflicting our statement in this thesis and it should be proved as incorrect. The most important changes of the electoral law that took place in Croatia can be seen in Table 3. It is outlined how the electoral system evolved in the ten years period from 1990 until 2000.

Table 3 - Elections and Electoral Laws in Croatia since 1990

Election Date	Electoral Law	Summary
April 27, 1990 – First Round May 6, 1990 – Second Round	<i>(Electoral Law 0)</i> February 16, 1990	Tricameral parliament – 356 seats The Socio-Political Council (80), The The Council of Associated Labor (160) The Council of Municipalities (116) Single-member districts – plurality rule Two-round rule
August 2, 1992	<i>(Electoral Law 1)</i> April 15, 1992	Bicameral parliament – 160 seats Plurality rule (60); PR (60) Electoral threshold – 3% for lists D'Hondt method
October 29, 1995	<i>(Electoral Law 2)</i> February 2, 1994	Bicameral parliament – 127 seats Plurality rule (28); PR (80) PR – two sub-categories – 80 seats in Croatia and 12 seats abroad (Diaspora) Electoral threshold – list for a single party was 5%; coalition of two parties 8%; coalition of three or more parties 11% D'Hondt method
January 3, 2000	<i>(Electoral Law 3)</i> October 29, 1999	Bicameral parliament – 151 seats PR Rule – 151 seats 10 multi-member electoral districts Electoral threshold – 5% D'Hondt method

Source: Kasapović, 1993, 1995, 2001, 2014

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical and methodological framework

The conceptual framework on the importance of the electoral reform through the institutional theories of rational choice and historical institutionalism was presented in the previous chapter. The second chapter focuses on the two theories about political parties – office-seeking and policy-seeking parties. Based on this categorization, the chapter shows how HDZ in the Croatian case, was essentially an office-seeking political party during the period under research. Also, methodology and the model through which the hypothesis will be examined are presented in this chapter.

2.1 What is an office-seeking and a seat-maximizing party?

In the literature about political parties, there are two types of parties that are examined – *office-seeking*² and *policy-seeking parties*. In what way does an office-seeking party differ from its counter-part, a policy seeking one? Budge and Laver (1986) point out one crucial difference. An office-seeking party is driven only by rewards and intrinsic concerns. Such concerns and rewards are described in a very straight-forward way. It could be that parties neglect policies on which they would base their political program, but are rather concerned with gaining more seats in the parliament than they did in the elections that occurred previously.

On the other hand, a policy-seeking party is more consistent in a way that it is interested in pursuing its policy which serves as the basis of their political program (Budge and Laver, 1986:495). In order to achieve their goals, such parties are more prone to give up to be in a coalition which is composed of the parties that are different in positions towards important political questions. If

² Strom (1990) makes a difference between an office-seeking and a vote-seeking party. Vote-seeking party is seeking for gaining more votes which would enable it to control the parliament. An office-seeking party, according to him, tries to maximize its control over political office

parties that vote on the bill share a little in common, we can argue that they would be office-seeking parties since the area of their interest is not overlapping (Benoit, 2004:402).

Clear examples that are relevant for the theory can be found in many European countries. One of the most important with a clear pattern is Polish party system during the transitional period in the 1990s. As McMenamin and Gwiazda (2011) have described, Polish political parties tend to be office-seeking because there is a polarized political space which allows them to act opportunistically. A similar conclusion was made by Benoit (2004) who was also engaged in the research about Polish political parties. He measured several variables which would prove his hypothesis that political parties during this period had been strategically acting in order to gain more seats. Political parties were manipulating electoral institutions in order to preserve their existence, because if they would have been policy-seeking oriented they would get eliminated after the first elections they competed in (Benoit, 2004:424).

The logic for a seat - maximizing party is the same. Parties that compete in the elections and take a seat – maximizing pattern of competition try to get as much as possible of votes in order to send as many as possible candidates into the parliament (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001). What is also important here is the electoral manipulation which had been important for parties that tried to stabilize their governance in the transitional period. That was possible for one reason – since the political environment (institutions) were not consolidated, it was possible for a party with the highest share of seats to manipulate the institutions which would allow them to gain more votes in the next elections.

2.2 Electoral manipulation and political engineering

What goes hand in hand with office-seeking parties, especially under a high degree of institutional uncertainty is electoral manipulation. Usually, electoral manipulation starts playing a role in

elections when a party that is in power tries to level down the degree of high uncertainty that could lead to their defeat (Rozenas, 2016). But here, we will argue that parties that are in power and do not suffer from that threat, also take actions which could be described as manipulative.

Some practices are usually linked to authoritarian regimes and those elections cannot be classified as free and fair – practices such as putting pressure on organizations that measure citizens' opinions, putting pressure on media and oppositional candidates, etc. On the other hand, there is electoral misconduct present in regimes which are not fully described as consolidated democracy but rather take its other form. In those countries, while institutions have not developed properly, the electoral manipulation could easily be made. In that regards, Birch (2007) claims that electoral institutions, in the political environment described as above, could easily be altered and that are one of the most manipulative institutions.

It is important to observe that electoral law could be changed with less effort than the constitution since the electoral law is classified as a bill and could be changed with fewer votes than it is the case with the constitution. Since the party holds an absolute majority, they can initiate its change with the proposal which benefits them the most. Since they have enough MP's to vote for the electoral reform, and the opposition lacks in that component, it is not unusual that parties engaged in reforms quite often.

Parties that are only interested in maximizing their seats are more prone to use manipulative strategies. Podolnjak (2013) shows that in the contemporary electoral engineering there are three common practices:

- 1) The electoral design and its frequent alternations

- 2) Changing the number of representatives which are elected in an electoral district (District magnitude)
- 3) Tailoring the electoral districts in order to be more suitable for a party in power (Gerrymandering)

If a party engages in malpractices this brings that party in the lead comparing it to the opposition. The opposition which is unable to block the adoption of new rules turns out to be a complete loser. Political scientists, such as Birch (2007) agree on one clear pattern – violation of electoral rules is more common in majoritarian electoral systems rather than in proportional ones. Also, this could be linked with mixed electoral system where politicians try to envisage its impact on the electoral outcomes. Thus, they can manipulate with both of its elements in order to maximize its share of seats in the parliament.

All of these patterns are visible and can be confirmed in our case. Croatia meets all of the preconditions mentioned in the theory. During the 1990s, Croatia was a transitional country with weak political parties that did not have developed organizational structure. Secondly, parties were, thus, more office-seeking oriented in order to secure their power; third, the electoral system was changed before every election; fourth, a number of representatives was changed constantly; fifth, gerrymandering was also a method that was used by HDZ.

In the following sub-chapter, we will describe the methodology and the model which will be cornerstones of this research.

2.3 Methodology

In this research, the main focus has been on analyzing secondary data that was already written and published by authors or, in other cases, from the Croatian state services. In the literature review,

we have been focusing on relevant works by other scholars which were writing about electoral reform in a broader sense and about approaches which could make clear explanations of it. On the other hand, for supporting our theory, we included the difference between political parties, the distinction that is relevant for this research. Mainly, the focus is on the question what motivates the political parties to act in the political arena.

Data analysis is qualitative which means that the focus here has been mainly on electoral institutions and political parties. We try to give an answer to two questions - Why political parties engage in changing the electoral institutions and what motivates them. After we have given the answer to those questions, in order to confirm our hypothesis, we will develop the model which will be most suitable for this research.

The case on which the focus is here is Croatia and its electoral system. The reason why we have chosen this case has already been mentioned. Croatia has been the unique state in a sense that it was changing its electoral system every time before the election took place. It is unusual that the electoral system was not changed just slightly but rather, politicians changed the entire structural setting. Uniqueness can also be seen in the period in which those changes took place. In only ten years, the electoral system was implemented in its three forms – firstly majoritarian system was introduced; secondly, mixed electoral system; and lastly, proportional electoral system.

Examined period of time is limited. The research will be focusing on the period from 1990 until 1995. Since we are interested in a party that we assume was acting opportunistically, we have put our focus only on elections they have won. In 2000, the HDZ have had lost the elections and it was decided that it will not be under the scrutiny. But in 1992, and 1995 elections, we can see the clear pattern of their behavior.

This research also contains qualitative research. In order to get the entire answer to the questions proposed, we will, firstly, have to show the results of every election. Also, as we will try to find a pattern if there was gerrymandering present, we will have to calculate the mean of all electoral districts and its population size and then compare the highest disproportions which could have affected the electoral outcomes. Also, we will analyze the opinion polls conducted by scholars before every electoral cycle. Opinion polls will be one of the variables in the model and, thus are important. Surveys were based on around 1,700 examinees on average which, as argued by authors, was the representative sample. After we finish explaining those variables, we will compute the results within a different institutional setting. We will employ the proposition by the opposition and calculate what the results will be like if their proposal got accepted. The share of votes for a specific party, the electoral threshold as proposed by the opposition and D'Hondt method will be used in order to get valid results. This results will also be shown in the graphs.

2.4 The model

The model that will be used here can be called ‘‘Integrated model’’ since the elements for it have been taken from two models which deal with office-seeking (seat-maximizing) parties and electoral manipulation or political engineering. The first author whose model has been the basis for our model is Kenneth Benoit (2004). From his model we will use variables such as ‘‘stability of the party’’, and opinion polls. The second author is Podolnjak (2013) who developed a model for explaining electoral misconduct. His criteria for electoral manipulation will be used as guiding lines and explanatory variables for the research. The addition to the model is the last step which will show that if the elections were held under a different system, that the results will be different and we could not argue that parties were self-interested for several reasons that will be explained later on.

The first variable of the model will be the ‘‘stability of the party’’³. By this we mean on the organizational and programmatic structure of the party and how often, once in power, the ministers and the prime minister were changed. If the party has changed ministers and prime-ministers quite often this would show as that there was no consistency and structural consolidation within the party. If that was not the case we could argue that parties were more policy-oriented since they were focused on implementing one policy which was under command of one minister or the prime-minister.

Second variable will be opinion polls⁴ conducted by political scientist right before every elections. The question they asked the examinees was as following: What party would you vote for in the next elections? The sample of examinees was representative meaning that it contained, in average, more than 1, 700 examinees, depending on the elections. Opinion polls are important for one reason as explained by Benoit (2004). Opinion polls serve as an indicator for political parties in order to form their proposition of the electoral system which would benefit them the most. If a party has the highest percentage of electoral support among examined parties, it will try to get the most out of it. Thus, if the significant number of voters decide to support a particular party, that party would try to create the electoral system which will bring them as most seats as possible. Parties with small electoral support will, according to the literature, advocate for PR system since it offers higher possibilities for them to enter the parliament.

³ Čular (2010) claims that HDZ was a charismatic party which according to the Pedahzur and Brichta (2002) shows divergence between the party’s organizational identity and the leader’s personal political fortune. A charismatic party depends only on charisma of its leader and as such it is prone to changes that were imposed by him

⁴ Opinion polls mostly affect the participation of citizens in elections and election’s outcomes. If the results show that the outcome is uncertain then polls tend to mobilize citizens to vote. Also, they have two-folded influences on the electoral outcomes: firstly, they can encourage hesitant voters to vote for a candidate who has the highest percentage of support (*Bandwagon-effect*); secondly, polls can effect voters to vote for a less favored candidate or a party (*Underdog-effect*) (Kasapović, 2003)

The third variable will be the proposal of the electoral system by a single party. Parties that have high electoral support will usually opt for majoritarian or mixed electoral system since those electoral systems have the advantage of nominating a single candidate which brings electoral advantage for the most popular party. Electoral design, in this case, would be important since this is the option that a party stands for. Here, we will focus on secondary data that was already published by other scholars.

After the all of these requirements are satisfied, an office-seeking party will try to manipulate the electoral process. Here, we based our research on the model proposed by Podolnjak (2013). Firstly, a party in power tends to change the electoral system before the elections. This action is based on the number of information they have (Opinion polls, possible outcomes of every single type of electoral competition).

Within this model, a party has two additional actions in order to secure its predominance. The first option is tailoring the electoral districts in order to maximize its potential to win most of the seats, and secondly to minimize the possibility of opposition to gain a significant number of seats which could potentially lead to obstruction when it comes to forming the government. In order to see if a party was manipulating within this area, we will look the data of every electoral district and then calculate the mean of a number of citizens who were available to vote. After we have the mean, we could see if there are some discrepancies among them which would mean that party was manipulating and calculating the elections. For example, if the electoral district was divided into multiple electoral districts, as it was the case in Zagreb for the 1995 elections, this would mean that the party tried to benefit from those type the most. If the electoral system would have stayed the same, they would be able to get only one MP out of it, but after tailoring it, they got four seats.

The last variable will be the changing the institutional setting in a sense that some additional electoral structures have been added to the elections. As it was the case in Croatia, the special electoral district was added as an additional electoral district. It would not be unusual to structuralize the system in that way, but it was the manipulation since the ruling party was aware of the fact that they have un-contested support abroad. This has guaranteed extra seats to the ruling party which was described as the manipulation of the electoral process (Kasapović, 1995; Podolnjak, 2013). If all of these elements are satisfied, we could see that party was motivated only by its intrinsic interests and seat-maximization.

After we finish explaining those variables, we will compute the results within a different institutional setting. We will employ the proposition by the opposition and calculate what the results will be like if their proposal got accepted. Share of votes for a specific party, electoral threshold as proposed by the opposition and D'Hondt method⁵ will be used in order to get valid results. These results will also be shown graphically.

⁵ Process of converting votes into mandates. It works in the following way: Total number of votes of every party is divided with series of divisors 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ... and the seat goes to the party with the highest quotient (Kasapović, 2003:61). Also, this method tends to favor bigger parties and it does not guarantee perfect proportionality even if it is possible to achieve it (Gallagher, 1992:477)

CHAPTER 3

Discussion and findings

The previous chapter gave a theoretical overview and the methodological framework. In this chapter we will investigate three electoral cycles. Firstly, we will outline elections of 1990 which will only be used as a context for understanding what was happening before crucial changes in the electoral system took place. Secondly, elections of 1992 will be the first examined with the model proposed. The same will be done for the elections of 1995.

3.1 Elections of 1990 and the political environment

The elections of 1990 for the Croatian Parliament – Hrvatski Sabor (Hereafter; Sabor) were held when Croatia was still part of Yugoslavia. The atmosphere among citizens in the end of 1980 was nationalistic in a way that most citizens preferred to form a new sovereign state, independent from the Yugoslavian federation (Kasapović 1993; Grdešić et al. 1991). In this regard, political parties that were still in their dawn of formation, advocated that a new electoral law should be adopted in order to hold the first elections for Croatian parliament. It is unconventional that even the leading party (SKH-SDP) which was communist and inextricably linked to the Yugoslav state was also advocating for an independent state.

This meant that the change of the political system was just a matter of time. Communists, who were the absolute political rulers of the situation in Croatia during Yugoslav governance, had to act and to accept the opinion by the majority of the citizens and, thus, political parties. For communists, this also meant that political costs, if they lost this election, could be enormous. But they accepted the proposition of the opposition for electoral competition.

Grdešić et. al (1991) argue that there are six variables which could help in understanding of the elections in 1990:

- 1) Alterations in international community and implosion of socialist East-European states and political crisis in those regimes
- 2) Internal development of the last years of Yugoslavia; economic, international and political crisis
- 3) Political relations in Croatia, the position of SKH and the development of political opposition parties and other ‘‘alternative’’ organizations
- 4) The same structure of political representation, the executive and republican leadership (tricameral structure of the parliament) and their adjustment to a classical model of parliamentary republic
- 5) Electoral law and the rules of nomination and distribution of parliamentary seats
- 6) Characteristics and dynamics of campaigning and the influence of mass media, stances and perceptions of the citizens

All of these elements had an influence on the overall political situation. The pressure on SKH at that time, from the opposition, was extremely high what was confirmed by the liberalization of the political system by the communists who agreed to hold first multi-party elections. The political decision which confirmed that the elections would be held was made on the eleventh Congress of the League of the Communists in 1989. The electoral law was made by the working group which consisted of six experts (Kasapović 1993). The law specified crucial provisions under which the elections should have been held. It was suggested that the elections should have been held firstly, according to the two-round rule, what was influenced by the French electoral system from 1986; secondly that parliament will have 356 seats; third, parliament would be tricameral – consisting of The Socio-Political Council, The Council of Associated Labor and The Council of Municipalities; fourth, members would be elected from single-member districts.

The motivation behind these specificities was similar as in other post-communist countries. Firstly, since political parties were still in the process of their development it was clear that the adoption of any other system with a proportional element would be inappropriate since the aim was to consolidate the political system. Secondly, the main political actors wanted to hold their positions in order to pursue their own policies without coalitional partners which could be a potential problem for consolidating their governance. Thirdly, with coalitional partners (at that moment parties with no clear political orientation and program), the potential opt-out was seen as something that would lead to a political disarray in the time when unity was important since the state formation was the aim.

How did parties behave in choosing the electoral system? The most popular parties, such as SKH-SDP and HDZ had a clear vision about which electoral system should be introduced. Those parties were prone to adopting plurality elections since they felt that this would lead to their win and to a formation of a single-party government without obstruction by the coalitional partners. Smaller parties in the KNS coalition were more in favor of proportional representation since they would get more chances to win a seat against two most influential parties. Since they had a common interest – the formation of a sovereign state – they also agreed to stand by the two most influential parties and to adhere to the plurality rule. Kasapović (1993) argues that the results confirmed the expectations and interests-based calculations of a most powerful party in the political arena.

3.1.2 Results of the 1990 elections and the opportunistic behavior of political parties

The aim of plurality elections is to form a single-party government with an absolute majority of that party in the parliament. This type of electoral system has a tendency to lead to a two-party system (Duverger, 2002). In the figure 3 and 4 can be seen how dominant the HDZ was at that

time. Their win was firm and all of the oppositional parties did not receive seats or votes which could be even close to the result that HDZ achieved. The results are presented in Figures 3 and 4:

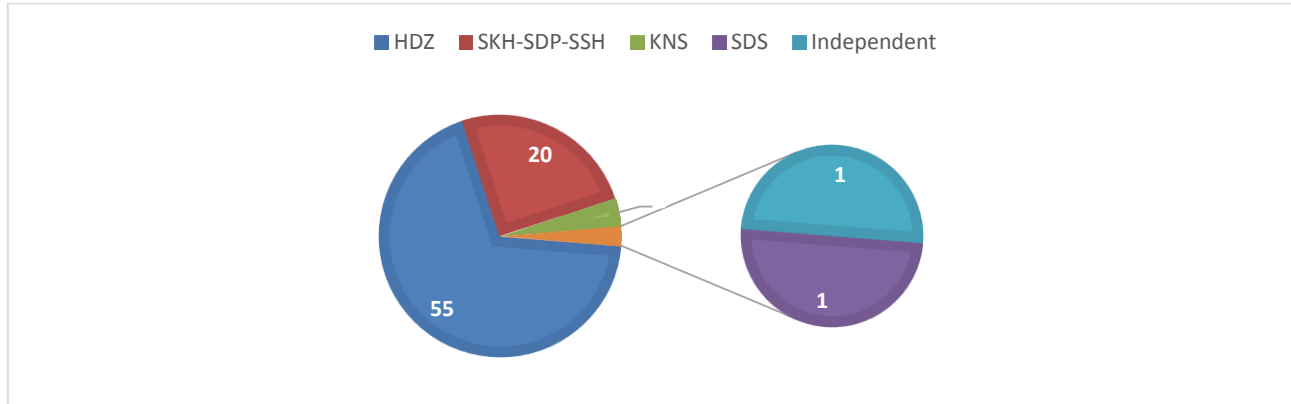


Figure 3 - Number of Mandates for the Socio-Political Council in the 1990 elections

Data from: The State Electoral Commission of the Republic of Croatia, 2016

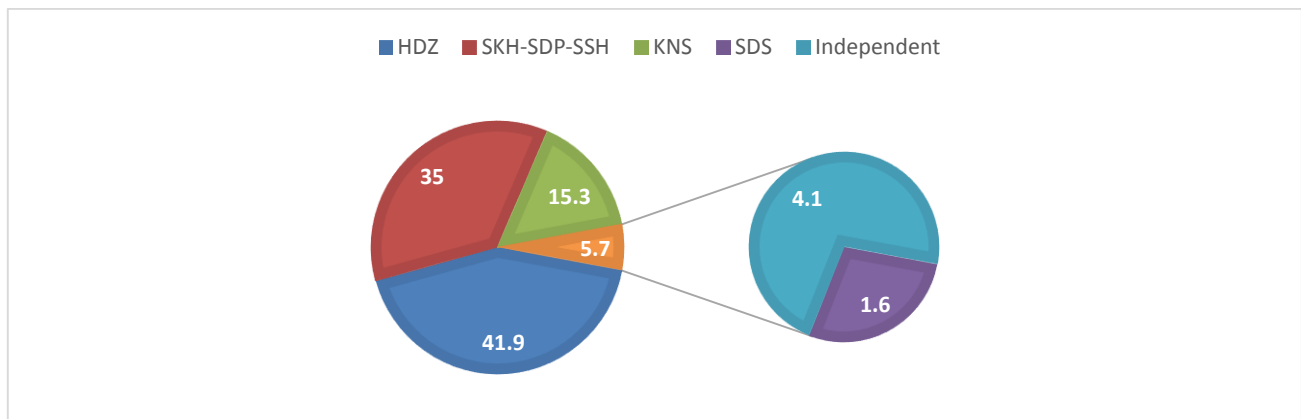


Figure 4 - Proportion of votes for the Socio-Political Council in the 1990 elections

Data from: The State Electoral Commission of the Republic of Croatia, 2016

These results show three points: firstly, HDZ's strategy to compete under plurality rule was well chosen. They got enough seats in the parliament to form a firm single-party government. Secondly, SKH-SDP miscalculated its chances to win under the plurality rule electoral system. They wanted to compete under that system for the same reasons as HDZ – they believed that they have more chances to win under that type since they could have put most recognizable candidates in single-

member districts. Their strategy was proven wrong. Third, the assumption that the majoritarian electoral system leads to ‘unfair’ results was confirmed. The HDZ which got only seven percent more votes got also 35 seats more than the second best-ranked party in the parliament. The proportional system would lead to more proportional results which would allow smaller parties to gain a seat.

If the proportional system was introduced, as we assume, the results would be different in one sense – HDZ would not be able to form a single-party government. Since the single-party government was their only option they behaved strategically in order to achieve that goal. They based their preferences on well-known information which was crucial for their win – the electoral support measured in opinion polls. The SKH-SDP also played a similar game. Since the support for both parties was almost similar, they have chosen to advocate for the same proposal as HDZ did. The opinion poll, on which parties made their propositions as argued before, can be seen below in Table 4.

Table 4 - Who would you vote in the next elections?

Political party	The percentage of citizens who would vote for a party
HDZ	27,9 %
SKH – SDP	26,3 %
KNS	11,5 %
I am not going to vote	8,1 %
Do not know	5,9 %
The Association of Greens	3,5 %
JSDS	3,1 %
Independent candidate	2,8 %
HSS	2,2 %
For some other party	1,9 %

IDS	0,6 %
ADSH	0,4 %
<i>Overall</i>	100, 0 %

Source: Kasapović (2001)

This table shows us that both, HDZ and SKH-SDP legitimately opted for plurality rule since both had the highest popular support for the forthcoming elections. But this is not the only variable which could show us why both political parties acted strategically. The other element which is plausible when it comes to calculations is computing results within rules of the proportional system which was also an option and which would generate a different electoral outcome. We have chosen to show those potential results under the proportional electoral system which used D'Hondt method for converting votes into mandates. This method has been used in Croatian elections since 1992 elections and it is still in use nowadays. Potential results are presented in Figure 5.

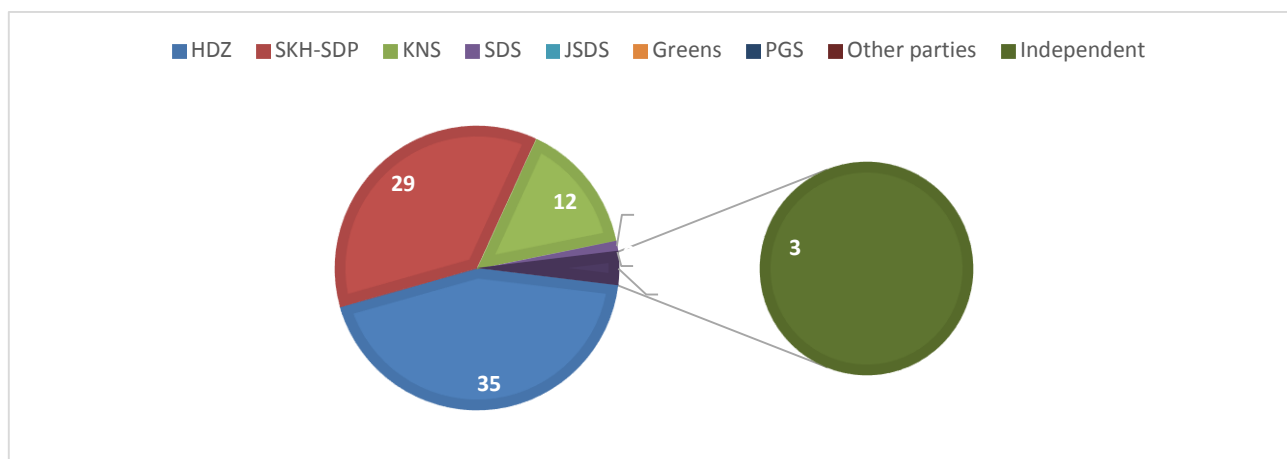


Figure 5 - Electoral outcome of the 1990 elections in proportional electoral system with D'Hondt method

Source: Data from the State Electoral Commission of the Republic of Croatia, 2016

Note: Calculations made with the D'Hondt method calculator; <http://icon.cat/util/elections>

From the Figure 5 presented above we can see that results would indeed be different if proportional, as proposed firstly by smaller parties, had been adopted into practice. The most important detail about this election is one simple fact – neither HDZ nor SKH-SDP (in the case they won) would be able to form a single-party government and would have absolute majority in the parliament. The HDZ (winner in this case) would have had to go into coalition with other parties which they wanted to avoid in the first place. The assumption, as was mentioned, was simple – to stabilize their governance in order to pursue their own policies.

3.1.3 Conclusion of the 1990 elections

There are several points with whom we will conclude our findings:

- 1) Parties unanimously accepted the proposal that a plurality electoral system should be the system under which the elections should have been held. This would not be strange if smaller parties did not accept the same rule which would not guarantee them seats in the parliament
- 2) HDZ and SKH-SDP, the two strongest parties in the political arena, made their strategic calculations according to the opinion poll that were conducted before the electoral law was adopted in the parliament. They both wanted to form single-party governments and that system would guarantee them that one of them would be able to do that. The support was almost similar for both parties which means that they both have chosen a risky strategy in order to achieve that goal. It meant that one will be the absolute winner and that the other will be the absolute loser.
- 3) The strongest parties were aware of the disadvantages which would bring the proportional electoral system, the second most-preferred option among political parties. If the elections were held according to proportional rules, with D'Hondt method, the results would have been different. Both parties would have got a smaller share of seats in the parliament which would

not be enough to form a single-party government. Making a coalition with other political parties was perceived as a disturbance in pursuing their own political agenda.

This electoral cycle was explained only for further purposes. It offers an insight how the development of the electoral system was evolving in Croatia. Since this election was held at the time when no sovereign Croatian state existed, we cannot explain the elections with the proposed model. Also, there was no single party that was ruling the country and thus, we cannot simply put it in the model in order to see if the model's expectations were fulfilled.

3.2 Elections of 1992 and the political environment, the HDZ's organizational instability and electoral proposals by political parties

The single-party government that was formed in 1990, was unstable. This resulted in the early elections of 1992 which were the first elections since the sovereign Croatian state was formed. Kasapović (1993) points out several reasons why the early elections occurred. First of all, political parties that competed in 1990 were not fully structuralized political entities. Those parties did not have specialized policy programs and as such the programs became structuralized as general political programs which were led by an anti-communist agenda. Moreover, political elites on the top of political parties did not manage to build organizational control which meant that parties suffered from a lack of recruitment potential.

Second, the political environment at that time was very complicated. The nation-state and the political system itself were formed under complex conditions. There was an ongoing war between Croats and Serbs which had a huge influence on the formation and support of political parties in the beginning of 1990s. Clear separation between those who supported HDZ on the one side and SKH-SDP on the other existed. Citizens perceived HDZ as a leader among people who supported

the idea of free and democratic Croatian nation-state. Those on the other side supported SKH-SDP, which was mainly perceived as a party that was more prone to the former political encirclement of Yugoslavia. Those perceptions are still visible nowadays but also misinterpreted because SKH-SDP also wanted to form a sovereign nation-state.

Lastly, the constitutional system of government proved itself also as a problem. Since the government was responsible to both - to the parliament and the president of the Republic - it was very unlikely to form a political system which would be spared from political obstructions. The most important component of the system was the influence of the president who was the most important person in the Croatian politics. This resulted with the government which could be called as a ‘presidential government’.

One of the indicators of the HDZ’s instability was also a constant change of ministers and prime-ministers during their three years of governance. In their first government, almost every ministry had changed their ministers for few times. Also, the Prime Minister was changed three times during that period (Kasapović, 1993:54). The trend continued with the following government. Even though it was more stabilized than the previous one, changes also occurred on several occasions. For example, a prime-ministerial position was changed twice until 1995. As in the previous government, ministries were also changing their heads of departments.

As mentioned, organizational instability can be measured by one additional indicator – political program of a party. It is argued in this thesis that a party uses different strategies to win on the elections rather than the strategy based on the quality of a political program. Lamza Posavec (2000) shows that voters did not focus on the quality of the political program of the party but rather on the charisma of its leader. Rihtar (1992), on the other hand, claims that voters that were supporting

leftist parties based their preferences on a political program, while voters that voted for right-wing parties (HDZ can be classified as a right-wing party) based their preferences more on other factors such as charisma. According to this we can conclude that the party did not offer a progressive political program since voters did not base their opinions on it but rather on some other elements.

This instability highlights two issues: first, the party was poorly structuralized which allowed different politicians to influence the policy of the party; second, the facts show the inconsistency in policy management. Often changes in government mean irreconcilable differences among the political elites which advocate one policy while the other side advocates for different ones. The result is obvious – the weaker in the chain falls out of the government. This further opens new opportunities for leading politicians within the party. Since they do not allow for any discrepancies within their policy, they can themselves create a policy that would be pursued by the party. In that sense, the HDZ has focused only on winning the next elections and seat-maximization.

One of the variables explored here are the opinion polls. As it was already mentioned, I claim that opinion polls can help political parties in shaping their proposal of the electoral system. For example, see the poll conducted before the 1992 electoral cycle below in Table 5.

Table 5 Who would you vote for in the next elections?

Political party	% of citizens who would vote for the party
HDZ	26,7 %
HSLs	19,1%
HNS	11,8%
Do not know	10,8%
HSP	10,4%
HKDS	4,1%

SDP	3,6%
DA; IDS; RDS	3% ⁶
HDS	3,1%
HSS	2,6%
SDH	1,3%
Other	4,8%
<i>Overall</i>	100%
<i>N= 2359</i>	

Source: Kasapović (2001)

This table was created from two tables which measured citizen's opinions separately for each majoritarian and proportional sub-type of the electoral system. For each party the mean was calculated and put into the table above.

As can be seen from Table 5, HDZ enjoyed the highest percentage of the electoral support among the voters. The difference between them and the second most popular party HSLS was more than seven per cent, meaning that they could have planned to choose to introduce the new electoral system which would be most beneficial for them. Taking into account that they held the absolute majority in the parliament and that the electoral law could be changed with the qualified majority, there were no obstacles for changing the system.

When mixed electoral system is introduced, Rahat (2004) points out three characteristics which make the electoral reform more likely. First, the mixed electoral system should keep the old and new elements in its structure. The author claims that it is easier to convince politicians to change rules when it is possible to preserve rules that were once in practice. Second, for the opposition, it could be attractive to introduce new rules since the rules that were incorporated in the last electoral

⁶ Those parties competed only regionally, i.e. they did not have noticable support on the national level (here, I computed the mean from the coalition that competed with party-lists in PR system)

system did not give them benefits. This could lead to the new perception of possibilities for smaller and marginalized parties. And lastly, since there are different stances about the electoral system – one side wants the majoritarian and other proportional system – the entire situation could be seen as a compromise since both parties got a smaller percentage of what they wanted. In addition, this mix creates uncertainty which gives incentives to opposition to coordinate in order to defeat the party in power.

In Croatia however, the opposition and the party in power did not share Rahat's perception about the mixed electoral system. Both sides formed firm stances about what is the best for each of them. As parties took their positions on the matter, they advocated for a different proposition. The HDZ, as a leading and most popular party, was more in favor of the mixed electoral system, whilst the opposition that was represented by the SDP and other smaller parties was more prone to the proportional electoral system (Kasapović, 2014:207).

The mixed electoral system, by HDZ, was ultimately advocated for two reasons (Kasapović, 1993:75-76). First of all, the HDZ was led by the motivation that the majoritarian system would result with a high degree of disproportionality which, accompanied with the relative majority of votes, would enable them to gain the majority of the seats in the parliament. Second of all, the electoral threshold of three percent and the D'Hondt method should have been more prone to the bigger political parties rather than to smaller ones. The HDZ was also aware of the outcome that such an electoral system produces and was thus expecting the benefits from a proportional sub-type of the mixed electoral system.

The opposition took a different position in the negotiation process. Since the oppositional parties formed a coalition they also formed a common proposition on the political issue that was important

for the future of the political system. First, the proposition was based on the arguments for adopting the proportional electoral system for both chambers. For the Chamber of Representatives the system would be based as *at-large system*⁷; party lists would be main units for candidate selection; electoral threshold of two percent should have been introduced; and, D'Hondt method for converting votes into mandates should have taken place. This was the first proposition by the opposition. They also modified this proposal since they have seen that the situation for its acceptance is unlikely (Kasapović, 1993:75-76).

Secondly, proposition was based on two different patterns of elections, different for each of the chambers. For the Chamber of Representatives they also proposed already mentioned PR system. The difference was in the element under which representatives of the House of Counties should have been elected. In that sense, opposition proposed plurality elections for the second chamber. This elections would be held in the single-member districts and the candidates with at least ten percent of votes from the electorate who voted in the first round could compete in the second round of the elections (Kasapović, 1993:76-77). Other (smaller) political parties also had their own proposals⁸. But in the end, the HDZ demonstrated its political power at that time. Their choice was adopted as the model under which following elections should have been held. This type also produced expected results with the win of the HDZ.

⁷ *At-large system* – the entire country is one electoral district. In theory, this type results with the highest percentage of proportionality between votes and seats gained by political parties

⁸ IDS advocated for the second proposition by the opposition since they were regionally based party which expected mandates from the majoritarian elections, whilst other parties such as Croatian Reformists advocated for more complex electoral system – single transferable vote (STV) which is being implemented in Irish parliamentary elections (Kasapović, 1993:77)

3.2.2 The HDZ's electoral strategy - electoral manipulation in the 1992 elections

We assume that a party, that had not developed a political program (and the organizational structure) on which it had based its strategy to win on the elections, tries to find another strategies in order to satisfy its goal. Additionally, a party also follows opinion polls in order to see if they have the highest support among voters. Another assumption is that a party holds an absolute majority in the parliament which allows them to change electoral law with a qualified majority. When all of these elements are satisfied, a party which tries to maximize its share of seats in the parliament would possibly use manipulative strategies in order to achieve that goal. As mentioned in the model, there are two sufficient criteria needed to see if a party acts according to the seat-maximizing strategy. Those criteria are, firstly, gerrymandering and, secondly, the institutionalization of one "special" electoral district. In the elections of 1992, the pattern was clearly visible.

With the PR competition within the electoral system, there were no doubts for the parties what the electoral system should look like. Croatia was one electoral system (at-large) which should have produced proportional results. The first problem for the opposition, which was poorly coordinated, was the electoral threshold of three per cent set by the HDZ. The logic behind that institutional obstacle was to minimize the possibility for smaller parties to take away some of the potential mandates from the leading party. The justification for the electoral threshold by the legislator was very simple: if it had not been implemented, this would have resulted with fragmented party system which would lead to the unstable and inconsistent political arena.

On the other hand, within the majoritarian electoral system, Croatia was divided into sixty electoral districts. The first problem that appeared were the objections by the opposition about the uneven number of people who could vote in the electoral district. The average number (mean) of voters in

all of the electoral districts was 58, 814 (State Commission, 2016). For example, the electoral district of Valpovo had 30, 872 registered voters while the most numerous one, the electoral district of Split 2 had more than 109, 000 registered voters (State Commission). This meant that getting a mandate was three times easier in the less populous district.

The discrepancy goes beyond. The second observation is the voter turnout in electoral districts. The lowest one was in the electoral district of Glina, where 15,000 voters voted. In comparison, as many as 81,000 voters participated in the electoral district of Split 2. This shows again, that the possibility of gaining a seat was more than five times easier in Glina than in the district of Split 2. Gerrymandering, as mentioned, is a method used by politicians to tailor the constituencies in order to raise a possibility of gaining a seat. One pattern has been clear in Croatia. Eastern parts of Croatia (Vukovar, Glina, etc.) are more prone to the conservative parties and are usually HDZ supporters. A number of registered voters shows that those electoral districts were tailored that way since it was very easy to win a seat. There is no logic to merge few electoral districts into one and then get a seat when you can divide them into small districts and get as many seats as possible.

The second pattern is visible in tailoring electoral districts in urban areas (cities). As Kasapović (1993) references, the clear pattern of political engineering was grad Osijek which was divided into two separate electoral districts. Since the support among the population was on the side of HDZ, they got both mandates. A similar situation was in other cities, as for example in Zagreb, which was divided into twelve electoral districts, i.e. following the same logic as with other cities – to divide districts and get as many mandates as possible. On the other hand, electoral districts which have historically been more inclined towards the leftist parties were not divided, since it was clear to the HDZ that this would be dangerous for them since the opposition could have won more seats.

3.2.3 The absolute win by the HDZ and possible outcome with the PR system

As was expected, the HDZ won the absolute majority in those elections. This parliament was more fragmented⁹ than the previous one with eight parties that entered into parliament under proportional elections and with four parties that entered under majoritarian electoral system. Results in Figures 6, 7, and 8 show the domination of the HDZ in 1992 elections. It can be seen how prevailing, compared to other parties, the HDZ was. The explanation of results and their meaning is explained below the figures.

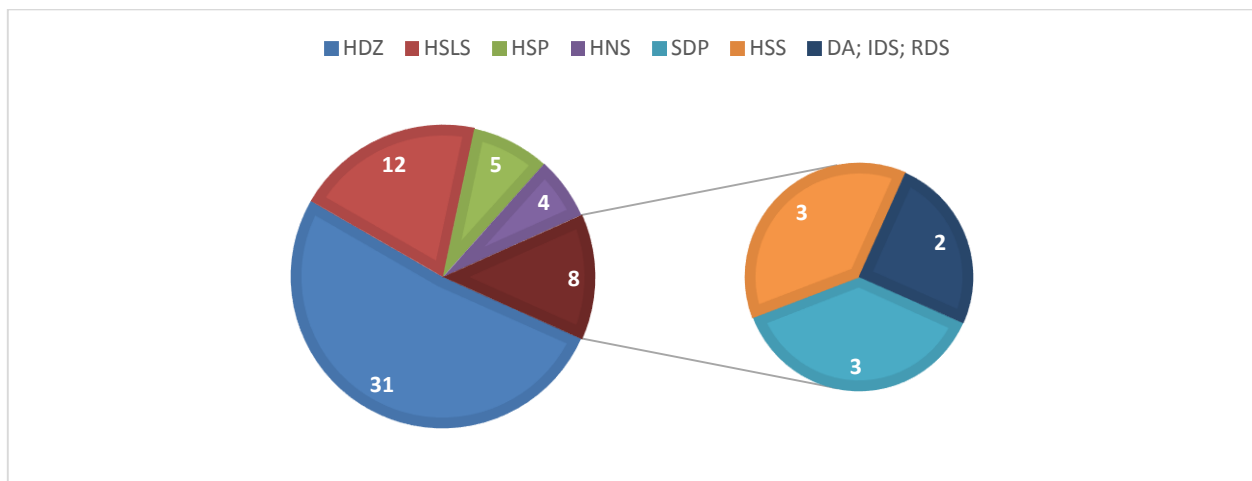


Figure 6 - Number of Mandates for the Chamber of Representatives (Proportional Electoral System)

Source: Data from the State Electoral Commission of the Republic of Croatia, 2016

⁹ Taagapera (2008) shows that the number of parties is one of the central measures in political analysis of party systems. Moreover, fragmentation is also calculated with a formula - more in Janda and Kwak (2011)

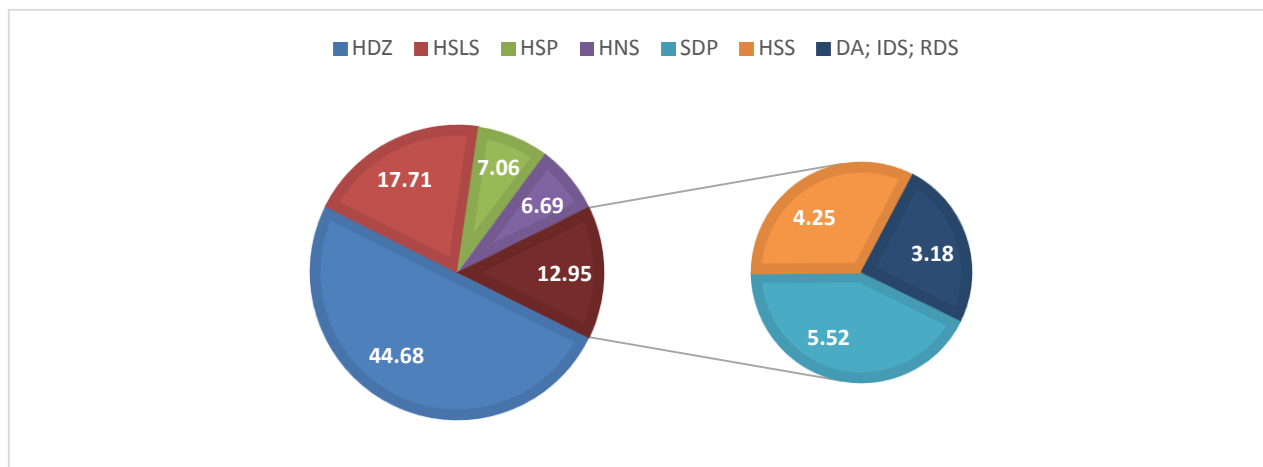


Figure 7 - Share of votes (percentages) for the Chamber of Representatives (Proportional Electoral System)

Source: Data from the State Electoral Commission of the Republic of Croatia, 2016

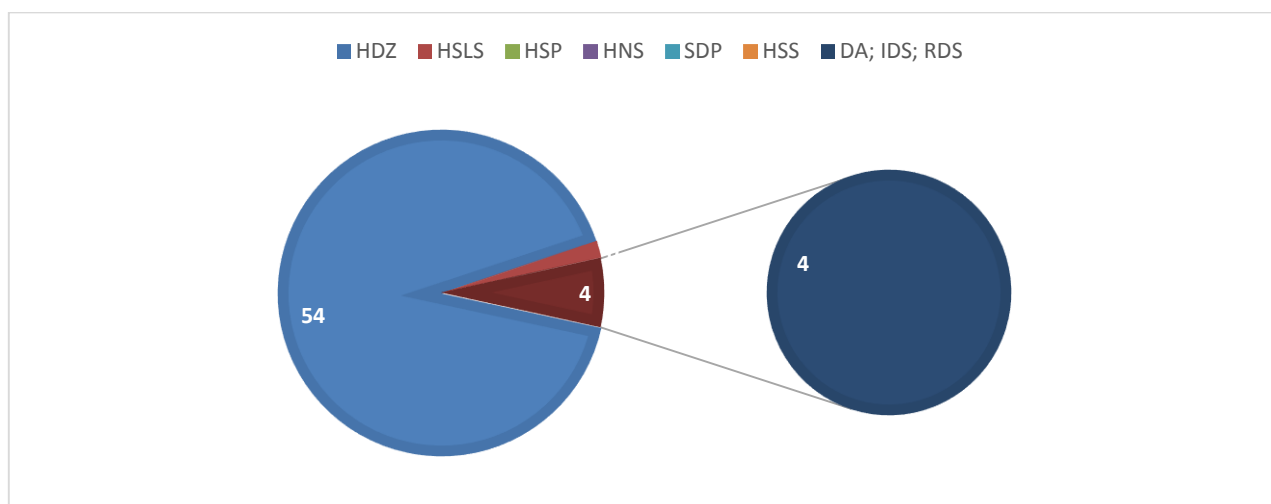


Figure 8 - Number of Mandates for the Chamber of Representatives (Majoritarian Electoral System)

Source: Data from the State Electoral Commission of the Republic of Croatia, 2016

These results show us several things. The main idea of HDZ about the advantages of a mixed electoral system was confirmed. The HDZ won the elections with an absolute majority, which allowed them to form a single party government. Other political actors, who advocated for a different type of electoral system were aware of the strength and popularity that HDZ had at that moment. This is shown by the huge discrepancy between the two sub-types. In the proportional

sub-type, the results are somewhat different. When it comes to the majoritarian elections, results are completely different. The HDZ won 90% of the seats which were put into competition what resulted with 54 mandates for them and only 5 mandates for the entire opposition. Besides the strength of HDZ, this show also one more fact – that the opposition was not unified and that their potential to act as proper opponents to HDZ was an illusion. The opposition was fragmented, not connected and not well organized. But that changed in the next elections, but not in a great manner. Moreover, these results comply with the theory that shows that it is easy for a party that has an absolute majority to manipulate the elections. Especially, this is visible in majoritarian sub-type of electoral system which was introduced with the high numbers of mandates. Since the HDZ was most popular party with most popular politicians they knew that they would get the most of the seats within that sub-type. We can say that the number of mandates within the majoritarian sub-type was their insurance in a case if anything went wrong within the proportional sub-type. Furthermore, this was less-likely to happen since they also manipulated the PR elections in order to maximize their seat count.

Until now, it is clear that the HDZ is an office-seeking party that tried to control political office by controlling the parliament. But here arises one additional question – what would the parliament look like if the proposal by the opposition was adopted? In order to give an answer we have computed the votes within the electoral system that was proposed by the opposition. As shown before, the opposition wanted to implement a proportional electoral system with the electoral threshold of two percent in which the entire state would be the one electoral district. We converted votes into mandates with D'Hondt method. The potential results are shown in Figure 9:

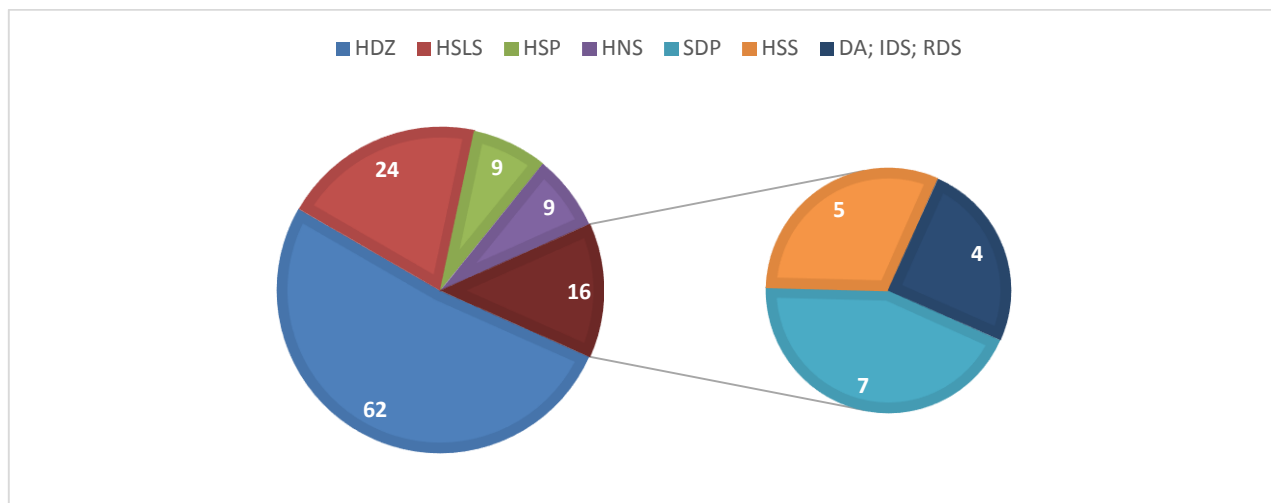


Figure 9 - Electoral outcome in 1992 elections in proportional electoral system using D'Hondt method

Note: Calculations made with the D'Hondt method calculator; <http://icon.cat/util/elections>

The proportional electoral system would produce different results. The HDZ would have won 62 seats which would have been enough to form a single-party government. But taking into considerations that the last government formed by the HDZ was very unstable, competing under the rules of a proportional system for them would have been a risk. The share of seats would also be more proportional and if this type would have been picked, the opposition could easily form a coalition which could be a strong opponent to the leading party. Basically, the HDZ was aware of the potential situation which they could find themselves in if that type would have been adopted. This is also visible in their endeavor to keep the majoritarian element in the elections which has shown the biggest pay-off for them – they won in 90% of single-member districts which resulted in 54 out of the 60 mandates that were available to gain.

So what confirms the hypothesis that the HDZ was an office-seeking and a seat-maximizing party? Firstly, they based their political advantage on charisma of its leader and not on a political program. Secondly, since they held an absolute majority in the parliament and the electoral law could be changed with a qualified majority they were able to change it in the way which was most beneficial

for them. That was enabled by the opinion poll which showed that they have the highest support among voters. Moreover, since they were the strongest party in the parliament they engaged in electoral manipulation. The HDZ tailored electoral districts and manipulated within both sub-types of the electoral system. The strategy they used was proven as winning since they were able to form a single-party government with no obstructions in the parliament. Moreover, if the PR system was introduced, they would have the absolute majority but according to the previous unstable government this could potentially be dangerous for them since they were only three mandates away from losing the absolute majority.

3.3 Elections of 1995, party proposals and the strategic behavior of the HDZ

The elections that took place in 1995 were also early elections. To legitimize its predominance in politics, president Tudjman had announced new elections instead of regular elections which should have been held in 1996. At the moment of the announcement of new elections, the war was over and people, mostly, perceived the HDZ as the element of Croatian victory and unification. Political elites that were part of the party had seen the momentum for new elections since they thought that this euphoria should be capitalized with more seats in the parliament and thus more solid government.

The instability of a party organization was also present in this election as it was in the previous one. Ministers in the last government were changed in the same way they were changed in the first HDZ government. Organizational structure stayed the same since HDZ's electoral support was still determined not on a political program but on the achievements in the war and the charisma of its president Tudjman (Lamza Posavec, 2000). Moreover, decline of party identification started to weaken in 1995 (Čular, 2005).

In the latest opinion polls, conducted before the new electoral law was adopted, the HDZ had raised its predominance compared to other parties. As explained, the population perceived them as a political entity which had led Croatia to victory in the war. The results of opinion polls are shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6 - Who would you vote for in the next elections?

Party	The percentage of citizens who would vote for a party
HDZ	32,7%
Do not know	20,2%
Coalition – HSS, IDS, HNS, HKDU, SBHS	16,1%
HSLs	12,8%
SDP	4,9%
HSP	4,4%
Other	8,9%
Overall	100%

N = 1144

Source: Kasapović (2001:297)

According to the results, parties were able to form their proposals for next elections. This is the only election when the electoral type has not been changed, but rather only its elements. The propositions were as following:

- 1) HDZ was advocating for keeping the mixed electoral system, but modifying it with several institutional changes
- 2) The opposition was firmly against this proposition since it was clear that they cannot compete in single-member districts against the candidates nominated by HDZ. Rather, they were advocating for the proportional electoral system with D'Hondt method included. They were hoping that proportional representation would raise their chances to beat HDZ. Also, in

terms of this logic, opposition formed a coalition of several parties which should have increased their chances for winning the elections.

But the HDZ was neglecting the proposition by the opposition. They did not introduce proportional representation, but rather, they kept a mixed electoral system. There are three major changes which were noticeably different compared to the previous electoral system (Kasapović, 2014):

- 1) The HDZ had changed the basic element of the electoral competition. The ratio between seats that were allocated with the rules of proportional elections was changed to 80 instead of previously 60 mandates. Moreover, the majoritarian element also undergone a huge change. The ratio of mandates was changed to 28 instead of previously 60. As Kasapović argues, there was a logic behind that change – that opposition would not make the same mistake as they did in 1992 as they would now form a coalition in order to defeat HDZ.
- 2) In the proportional element, the electoral threshold also underwent a change. Firstly, party lists, in order to achieve the possibility to gain a seat, should have received at least five percent of votes; secondly, coalitional party lists of two parties should have got at least eight percent of votes; thirdly, coalitional party lists of three or more parties should have got at least eleven percent of votes.
- 3) The proportional element was also a part of a third change. It was divided into two segments. Firstly, in Croatia, 80 seats could have been allocated. The entire state was one electoral district (at-large system). The completely new institutional setting was the institutionalization of a new electoral district – diaspora. Diaspora¹⁰ are Croatian citizens

¹⁰ Diaspora was the result of political persecution of the Croats throughout the history and the arguments for their voting rights are as following: as a moral compensation because of the situation those people found themselves and had to leave the country; and as right which was given for their economic contribution (Kasapović, 2012:781). We should also take into account the diaspora that is living in the Bosnia and Herzegovina

who live abroad and do not have the official place of residence in Croatia. They were entitled to elect twelve members of parliament out of their district.

In sum, the HDZ was more favorable to the oppositional proposition than it was in previous elections. Since the opposition was more favorable to proportional representation, they kept a proportional element and even they increased the number of seats which were available for allocation. There is also a seat-maximizing explanation in that. Since the HDZ was aware that the opposition would jointly nominate a candidate in single-member districts, they assumed that this would have been potentially dangerous for their electoral result. They assumed that it is better to increase seats within the proportional system since they were enjoying the highest electoral support among the citizens and they could tailor electoral districts differently.

3.3.2 Electoral misconduct by the HDZ in 1995 elections

As we already showed, the constant change was the case in Croatia every time before the election. The introduction of the diaspora is disputable before the election since then. One of the fact that bothers every party, except the HDZ, is their potential to determine the outcome of the elections. Indeed, this is the relevant issue since no party other than HDZ from 1995 had won even one seat out of that district. As presented, this was strategically planned as the weapon for an even firmer position of the HDZ in Croatian politics.

The second issue in the 1995 elections was Gerrymandering. The strategy of obtaining more votes in electoral districts which were not so prone to the HDZ was seen in the high degree of disproportion of citizens eligible to vote between different electoral districts. For example, as Cvrtila (2001) pointed out, the differences between electoral districts were as huge as the difference of 30 000 citizens. This meant that the vote of a citizen in one electoral district was more valuable

than of the citizen in a different electoral district. Having all this in mind, the electoral manipulation was obvious – the results were accompanied by the strategy of manipulation.

In these elections, electoral districts were organized according to the number of the population what was different from elections held in 1992 when the criterion for their organization was the number of register voters in particular areas. Also, this was in the focus of public since the last census was conducted five years before and what is more important, demographic migrations of the population that occurred because of war also were affecting the weight of the vote in electoral districts. (Cvrtila, 2001:55).

The problem was the following: the diaspora got their right to elect 12 MP's in a special electoral district which was predominantly supporting HDZ; secondly, for electing an MP in the diaspora, it was enough to get 8, 981 votes, while in Croatia, on average, a party needed to receive 30, 217 votes. This tells us that gaining a seat abroad was almost four times easier than it was in Croatia. Also, discrepancies continue between constituencies in Croatia. In constituency VII, there were 178, 756 registered voters, while in electoral district III there were only 85, 396 registered voters. The difference is almost 100, 000 registered voters which tell us that it was three times easier to obtain a mandate in electoral district III.

The last element of political engineering as noted by Podolnjak (2013) was the election of representatives of the Serbian minority in the Parliament. They were the only minority that could elect at least three MP who would represent them while other minorities were guaranteed two votes – other minorities were able to elect at least five representatives from the special electoral district. Other votes were used on voting for candidates that were nominated on national party lists. The problem is that this minority was degraded for obvious reasons. Since the HDZ was the party that

was perceived as fully “Croatian” it would have been an iniquity to give them more representatives in the parliament.

3.3.3 The firm win by the leading party

The result was similar to the results in previously held elections. The HDZ won with an absolute majority which resulted with 75 seats in the Sabor. The HDZ was successful in both elements – proportional and majoritarian – in which they won more than 50% seats. This allowed them to form a solid government with no coalitional partners included. The strategy was proven as a winning since they also got 100% of seats from the electoral district that was assigned to the diaspora. The domination by the HDZ can be seen in Figures 10 and 11:

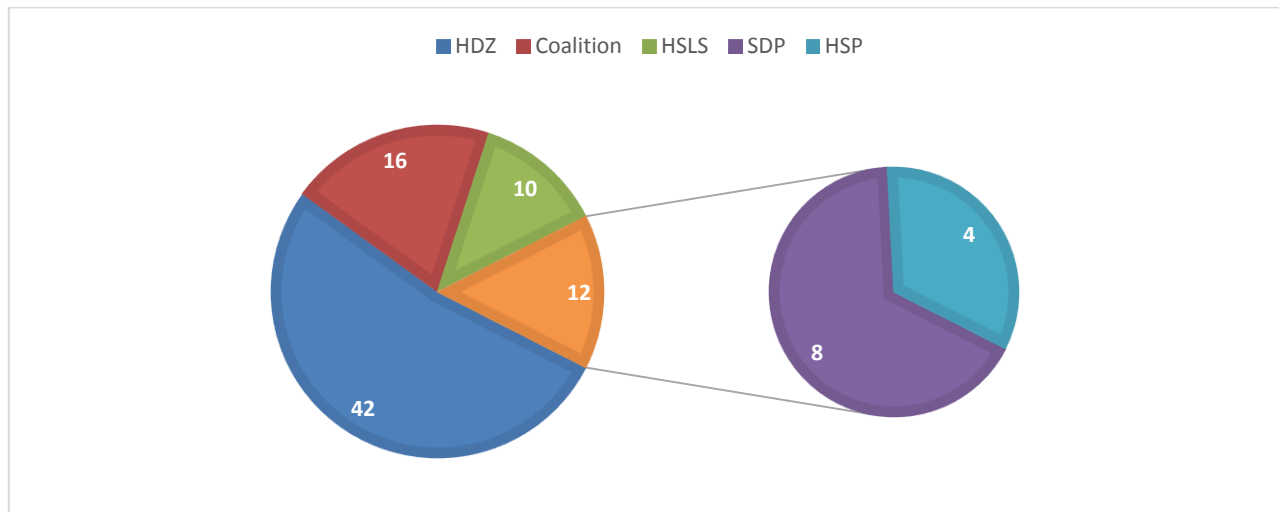


Figure 10 - Number of Mandates for the Chamber of Representatives (Proportional electoral system)

Source: Data from the State Electoral Commission of the Republic of Croatia, 2016

Note: Coalition was formed by several parties: HSS, IDS, HNS, HKDU, SBHS.

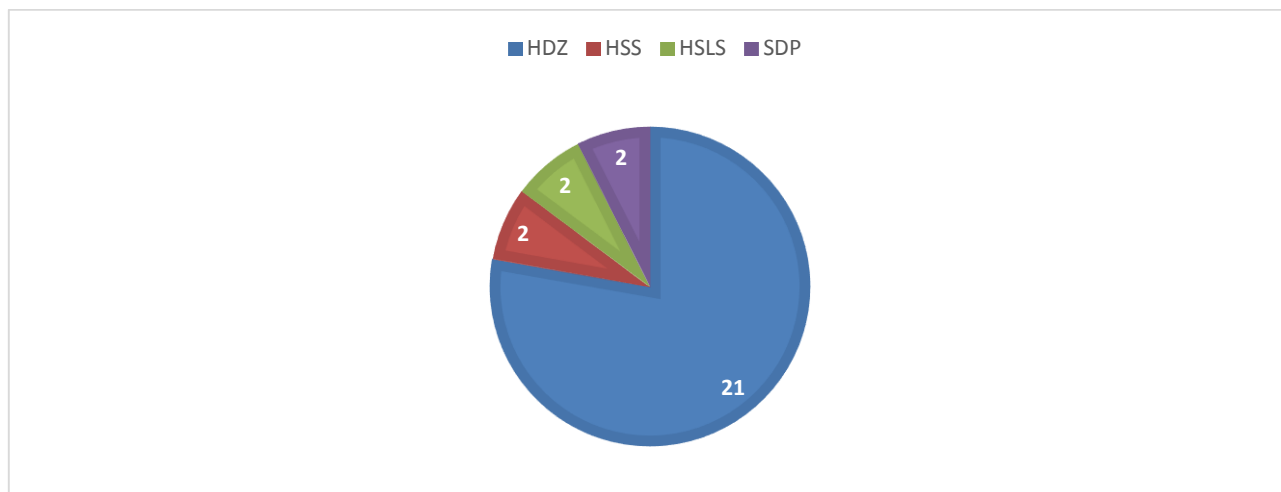


Figure 11 - Number of Mandates for the Chamber of Representatives (Majoritarian electoral system)

Source: Data from the State Electoral Commission of the Republic of Croatia, 2016

The motivation for not adopting the proposition of smaller parties and the opposition was justified in this case as well. The results show us that the HDZ had the biggest influence on the voters and that the momentum of holding the early elections was well calculated. Strategies which were used by the leading party had decided the outcome. The HDZ won the absolute majority in both sub-type competitions which enabled them to form a single party government. What had made their position and legitimacy even stronger are the seats they got from the diaspora.

It is visible that the opposition still did not have strong candidates who would stand a chance against the politicians that were nominated by the HDZ in single-member constituencies. In that competition, they comparatively gained a smaller percentage of seats than they got in the previous elections but, compared to the opposition they won even more dominantly.

As we know the proposal from the opposition, we will compute the results of this election within the proportional electoral system using D'Hondt method and electoral threshold universal for all

coalitional party lists (Results are presented in Figure 12). The diaspora will be excluded from our calculations.

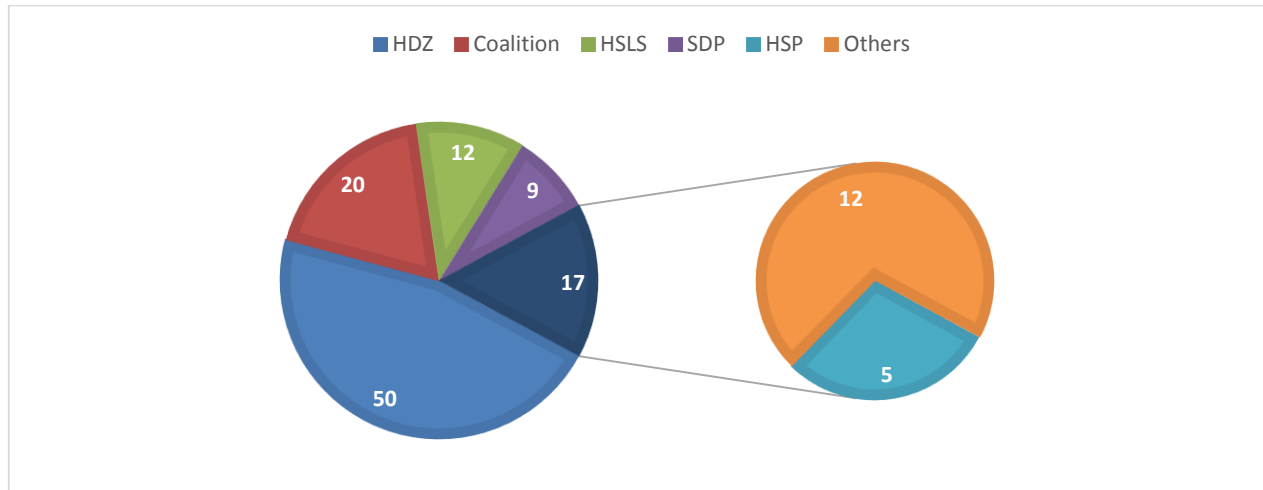


Figure 12 - Electoral outcome in 1995 elections in proportional electoral system using D'Hondt method

Coalition was formed by several parties: HSS, IDS, HNS, HKDU, SBHS

Note: Calculations made with the D'Hondt method calculator; <http://icon.cat/util/elections>

As we can see, the situation if the PR system was adopted, would be completely different. Since the 108 seats would be possible for allocation, the HDZ would not get the absolute majority. According to the system rules proposed by the opposition, they would have got 50 seats which are a relative majority but which is not enough for forming the single-party government which was the aim. The only possibility would be to form a minority government which has never been formed in Croatia before. The first question is if it would have been formed since it would need the majority of votes in the parliament. We would argue that this possibility would be very unlikely to happen since most parties were competing against HDZ. The second question is, even if it would have been formed, how long could this government have been sustained. Our assumption is a very short period of time. There are several reasons: the first single-party government that was formed in 1990 was very unstable. The party itself changed five foreign ministers in only two years; secondly, the

Ministry of defense has changed its minister four times in two years; thirdly, the Ministry of the Interior has changed its minister also four times in two years. Following this analogy, many other ministries have changed its ministers several times during their governance. Also, the prime minister in that period was changed three times. All of these frequent changes show how party itself was not stabilized and how political elites did not know how to collaborate among themselves. Also, after the second elections in 1992, the prime minister was changed two times. This shows us the potential situation which could happen if the governance of the HDZ would not have been legitimized with the absolute majority but rather with dependence on other political parties.

What confirms the hypothesis in the 1995 elections? Firstly, the same pattern as in 1992 elections is visible. Since the organizational structure of the party was unstable and the party was aware that the electoral support started to increase, the HDZ calculated that it would be better if the early elections took place. Moreover, the HDZ held the absolute majority in the parliament which enabled them to change electoral law in their favor. Even though they accepted some propositions by the opposition, they calculated that it would be better if they increase mandates in the PR sub-type of electoral system. Also, introducing the electoral threshold which was different for parties and coalitions was also strategically imposed. This should have eliminated parties to enter the parliament. Tailoring districts in and institutionalization of a special electoral district for the diaspora guaranteed them that they will get additional 12 mandates in the parliament. Reducing mandates in a majoritarian sub-type was also explained. There was a perception that the opposition would be stronger in this elections since they would jointly nominate candidates in single-member districts. All of these points show us that the HDZ cared only about maximizing their seat in the parliament and that they were an office-seeking and seat-maximizing party that changed electoral law in order to win the elections.

Conclusion

With the fall of communism, new states in Europe emerged. That meant that newly-formed countries should develop new and stable institutions. Those countries suffered from political and institutional instability in the dawn of their formation. The instability was also seen in countries' electoral systems which were changed quite often. According to the trend, Croatia was not the exception. Moreover, it was the unique case among post-communist states in Europe since it has used all of the three major types of electoral systems in only ten years. Firstly, it used the majoritarian electoral system, then it introduced mixed electoral system which was changed before 1995 parliamentary elections, and the last change, which occurred in 1999, introduced the proportional electoral system.

Different theories explain the institutional change in different ways. Here, rational choice theory and historical institutionalism have been introduced. Rational choice focuses on actors' self-interest. In this theory, actors act strategically and rank their options in order to achieve their goals. Options are ranked in order of benefits that an actor can gain within the framework in which he operates. Institutional change, thus, is the result of actors' strategic and opportunistic behavior.

Historical institutionalism takes a different position. Here, the focus is on contextual factors which could have had an impact on the institutional reform. Thus, this theory differentiates itself from rational choice theory in the sense that it does not put a focus on actors or coalitions of actors. Institutional change occurs incrementally, which means that the change happens in a slow process.

In order to explain the electoral reform various political scientists take a different approach. In the literature review, I showed that some authors investigate the change supported by rational choice theory, some of them according to the theory of historical institutionalism and some of them even

integrate various theories and create their own models. In this thesis, it is argued that the electoral system in Croatia was predominantly changed due to self-interests that ruling party in the 1990s had. The HDZ was a party that had not been fully institutionalized and consolidated and as such it did not form its policies to win elections but was a rather self-interested actor which only wanted to gain an absolute majority in the parliament in order to form a single-party government.

A party which acts only in order to satisfy its intrinsic needs and its need to win an absolute majority in the parliament – no matter what – is called an office-seeking party which acts according to the seat-maximizing strategy. This party usually does not develop its political program according to political problems that the society faces at that moment but rather uses different strategies and methods in order to win the elections. As shown in this thesis, the HDZ used its predominance in the parliament and the situation in which Croatia found itself (war) to win the elections. Since they were able to change the electoral law – which could have been changed with a qualified majority in the parliament – they were calculating which electoral system would benefit them the most.

To explain this case the period from 1990 until 1995 was chosen. What contradicts the theory in this case is the behavior that HDZ exercised. The theory clearly says that one does not change the electoral system if the party keeps winning using that system. The HDZ changed the electoral system after every election they won.

In order to explain these changes an “integrative” model was developed. It was based on two articles written by Bennoit (2004) and Podolnjak (2013). Firstly, parties in newly-formed countries suffer from an under-developed organizational structure. Since they are not consolidated entities it is common that they face many conflicts within the party line. This usually results in changes which are important on a national level – positions such as ministers and prime-minister. Secondly, parties

put an emphasis on the opinion poll results. If the result gives an advantage to the party, that party starts to calculate to employ different types of the electoral system. The focus is on the most beneficial option which would bring them as many seats as possible. According to their perceptions, parties start to place explanations, arguments and justifications for their options. If parties succeed in implementing this new electoral system into practice, they usually tend to manipulate the electoral system. In theory, a party will try to use gerrymandering or they will try to institutionalize special electoral districts which will, after thorough calculations, bring them ‘ ‘ secure ’ ’ seats in the parliament. Also, if one wants to see if a party is manipulating the electoral system, and thus acts as an office-seeking party, we should look at the changes of the electoral system. If a party has a tendency to change it quite often, then one could argue that this could be one of the indicators that the party tries to act in the described way. As the last step in the theory explained above, the results within a different type of electoral system were shown. Here, if the elections would have been held according to the rules that were advocated by the opposition, the results would have been different. The HDZ would either have won with a small majority, which according to the instabilities within the party, would have ended up, probably with early elections, or they would not be able to form a single-party government what was in the first place their aim. Thus, we can conclude that the HDZ was aware of the possible outcomes if the different electoral system had been introduced.

Briefly, it can be concluded that even though it is hard to confirm the self-interest of a party, in theory, I have shown that the HDZ had been acting really opportunistically in order to win more seats in the parliament in every electoral cycle. This was shown with the explanations of different variables, which show that the HDZ imposed every electoral system and that no consensus was

made with the opposition and that the electoral manipulation was only a means to justify its aim of winning the elections.

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The State Electoral Commission of Republic of Croatia, 2016

Available at:

<http://www.izbori.hr/ws/index.html?documentId=039CA1E2CE93551AC1257C5C004703E9>

Election Calculus Simulator Based on the Modified D'Hondt Method, 2016

Available at:

<http://icon.cat/util/elections>

Election Resources on the Internet, 2016

Available at:

<http://www.electionresources.org/>