



Croatia



Last update:	23 January 2008
Author:	
Population:	Population: 4,495,904 (July 2005)
Prime minister:	Jadranka Kosor (HDZ)
President:	Stjepan Mesic
Governemental type:	Presidential/Parliamentary democracy
Ruling coalition:	Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), the Peasant Party (HSS), the Social Liberal Party (HSL) and the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS)
Last election:	Parliamentary November 2007
Next election:	Presidential 27 December 2009 (first round)
Sister parties:	Social Democratic Party (SDP)

In February 2006, Croatia started the long-awaited negotiations for accession in the European Union. This happened soon after the extradition of general Ante Gotovina to the UN Tribunal for former Yugoslavia in the Hague on 7 December 2005. The negotiations were planned to start in March 2005, however the EU postponed them awaiting full cooperation with the Hague-based court. The surrender to the Hague costed the governing party electoral support, since Gotovina, accused of war crimes during the war, is regarded as a national hero by many in Croatia. The conservative government concentrates now on the EU path it has chosen, for which there is a major cross-party consensus.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL SITUATION

Electoral system

Croatia is a parliamentary democratic republic, headed by president Stipe Mesic who was elected in 2000 and re-elected in 2005. The Sabor, the Croatian parliament, consists of 140 members who are elected through proportional representation conducted in 10 geographical constituencies. In each constituency 14 parliamentarians are elected. Croatia's national minorities for a separate constituency and have the right to elect 8 members through majoritarian elections for candidates from their groups. Of those 8 seats, 3 are reserved for representatives of the Serb minority, and the remainder for the 5 clusters comprising the other 21 constitutionally recognized minorities. Additional seats in the Sabor are created by voters permanently reside outside Croatia. Depending on voters' turnout of those living abroad, a maximum of 12 seats are divided amongst the parties that receive their votes.

Parliamentary elections 2007

On 27 November 2007, parliamentary elections took place in Croatia. They were called by Croatian president Stipe Mesic on 15 October, following the expiration of the 4-year mandates of the representatives elected in November 2003. The approved lists of candidates for each constituency were announced on 2 November 2007. Altogether, 250 candidate lists were submitted, of which 237 for constituencies 1-10 within Croatia, and 13 for constituency 11 designated for the Croatian diaspora. 72 candidates appeared on the separate ballots for each of the 6 national minority groupings. As they are elected by a majoritarian system, minority candidates are listed individually.

The official campaign for the 2007 elections started on 3 November and, according to the OSCE/ODIHR Election



Observation Mission “took place in a generally calm environment” and, over the course of time “became increasingly competitive, dominated by the main governing and opposition parties”. It was observed that the 2 biggest parties in Croatia, the governing HDZ and the main opposition party SDP, absorbed most attention during the campaign period. Furthermore, the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission noted with regret that “the main economic and social questions facing Croatia, have not been evidently visible”, and “in the closing stages, the campaign focused on the personality of some of the main party leaders, rather than on specific policy platforms”. This lack of discussion about political content was also noticeable in the media, with “the news coverage (...) focussing mainly on the campaign forms, the administrative aspects of the elections, and the involvement in the campaign of both the Catholic Church and the President.” Moreover, the controversial, but rather technical, issue of diaspora voting figured prominently during the campaign. The HDZ campaigned vigorously in Bosnia and Herzegovina, leading to concerns among opposition parties that the number of mandates secured by HDZ among the diaspora voters could be influential in forming the next government. These fears were stimulated by the relatively high number of 4 seats that the HDZ managed to obtain via the diaspora vote in the 2003 elections. The SDP therefore argued that the party or coalition which gains the most votes in Croatia should form the government, regardless of the diaspora vote. This view was supported by some other opposition parties. The HDZ opposed this stance.

Results of the 25 November 2007 parliamentary elections:

Party	% votes
Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)	36.6
Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP)	31.2
Croatian Peasant Party (HSS)	6.5
Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSL)	1.3
Croatian People's Party – Liberal Democrats (HNS)	6.8
Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS)	1.5
Croatian Democratic Assembly of Slavonija (SBHS)	1.8
Croatian Party of Pensioners (HSU)	4.1
Croatian Party of Rights (HSP)	3.5
National minority lists:	
Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS)	
Party of Democratic Action of Croatia (SDAH)	
Other national minority representatives	
Total	

Government

As neither of the parties had been able to secure the absolute majority of 77 out of 153 seats in the elections, negotiations had to be held over possible coalitions. Although the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), which had come in first with 66 seats, immediately announced its intention to form the government, the main opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP) announced similar intentions just a few minutes later, arguing that the formation of a centre-left coalition would still be possible. President Stepan Mesic then choose not to give a mandate to form a government to either of the parties, as he explained that it was his constitutional obligation to give such a mandate only to a person who “presents him with convincing proof that they have support of a majority of the newly elected parliament.” This was assessed critically by many, who alleged that the president was complicating the political



situation and leading Croatia into a political crisis.

Both HDZ and SDP enjoyed clear coalition partners, but came short of a majority. Therefore, the HSS–HSLs coalition which has 8 seats was instrumental in forming a government. Leaders of this coalition had announced before the elections that they would first speak with the party that would win most seats. Coalition negotiations between HDZ and HSS–HSLs therefore began on 3 December. However, it remained unclear until the 12th of December, when it was announced that coalition talks between the HDZ and the HSS–HSLs were close to completion, whether the HSS–HSLs would not similarly start negotiations with the SDP. On 15 December, this led Mesic to conclude that the HDZ had been able to secure a majority of the Croatian parliament and give party leader and Croatia's prime minister for four years Ivo Sanader a mandate to form the government.

The final government that was presented to the parliament on 12 January 2008, 7 weeks after the elections had taken place, is formed by a coalition of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), the Peasant Party (HSS), the Social Liberal Party (HSLs) and the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS). Together these parties have a total of 77 seats in the parliament. The new cabinet consists of 15 ministers, two more than the previous one. The HDZ holds 13 ministries, including 2 deputy prime ministers. The HSS has 2 ministers in the new cabinet. Both the HSLs and the SDSS have a deputy prime minister in the cabinet. This is the first time that a Croatian Serb, Slobodan Uzelac (SDSS) has been appointed deputy prime minister. Ivo Sanader has remained in his position as prime minister of Croatia.

Domestic election observers

In the 2007 elections, 8 domestic organisations organized a countrywide observation campaign with approximately 1.700 election observers. Over 1.500 of observers were from GONG, the main Croatian non-governmental organization dealing with election issues.

The domestic election observation teams undertook parallel vote tabulation and a civic education program with help-lines for voters prior and during election day.

The strong presence of domestic election observers at the Voting Committee level was one of the factors for the OSCE to not send short-term observers to Croatia. The SEC accredited the observers and political parties respected their presence. Moreover, the domestic election observers' expertise and presence shows a lasting positive development in Croatia's political system. During the previous parliamentary elections of 2003, GONG also organised a countrywide observation campaign which then employed 3000 observers.

Minority Participation and Out-of-Country Voting

8 mandates in the Croatian parliament are reserved for national minorities, which are chosen from national minority lists in a separate constituency. Three representatives are to be elected by the Serb minority in Croatia. The SEC provided minority voters with information on their ability to choose either a constituency or minority ballot.

In the previous elections, the number and distribution of polling stations available to refugees from Croatia, was disproportionate to their number and status (as refugees). For the 2007 elections, there was a significant increase in the number of polling stations being established in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from 30 used in the 2003 elections to 124 used in 2007. The number of polling stations in Serbia was also increased from 3 to 15. However, efforts to facilitate easier access to polling stations for out-of-country voters did not lead to a significant increase in the number of registered voters.

Participation of women

In the 2007 parliamentary elections, 30 percent of the candidates were women. Currently, there are 29 women in the Croatian parliament, which is 19 percent of the total number of parliamentarians. Although the number of female candidates did increase considerably since the 2003 elections (25%), the number of elected female parliamentarians declined (from 33). In the present cabinet, 3 out of 15 ministers are women. Croatia scores relatively better than other former Yugoslavian countries like Slovenia, Bosnia and Serbia, but worse than Macedonia.



Presidential elections 2005

On 2 and 16 January 2005 presidential elections were held in Croatia. President Stipe Mesic was re-elected president. Mesic was the last president of the former Yugoslavia until the country broke apart in 1991. He is considered a non-communist and a moderate. At his current position, his main aims are to reduce the power of the president in favour of the parliament, to lead Croatia into the EU and to normalise relations with neighbouring Bosnia Herzegovina.

Presidential elections* results 2 and 16 January 2005

Stjepan Mesi? Croatian People's Party and others	48.9	65.9
Jadranka Kosor Croatian Democratic Community	20.3	34.1
Boris Miksi? Durda Adlesi? Croatian Social Liberal Party	17.8	
Slaven Letica Croatian Party of Right	2.7	
	2.6	

Source: [Adam Carr's Elections Archive](#)

Local elections May 2005

First official results of the local elections in Croatia show the governing conservative party has lost in key areas. The results of 15 May ballot are very good for the (oppositional) Social Democratic Party, which won in the capital city Zagreb, in Split, and in Rijeka. Zagreb is home to a quarter of the country's 4.5 million people. The ruling Croatian Democratic Union, known as HDZ, also was defeated in Croatia's second largest city, Split.

Election observers have linked the poor showing of the HDZ in several areas to the government's decision to increase cooperation with the United Nations War Crimes Tribunal, which is a key EU condition for Croatia's membership in the organization. Prime Minister Sanader has said he intends to intensify the search for one of the tribunals main Croatian suspects, General Ante Gotovina, who is accused by the tribunal of atrocities against ethnic Serbs during the Balkan wars. The EU recently postponed membership talks with Croatia because of its failure to extradite the general. But many Croats consider General Gotovina as a hero.

IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUES

Croatia's European Union membership

At a summit of the heads of states and governments of the 25 European Union member countries on 17 and 18 June 2004, it was decided that talks for Croatia's accession to the EU should start at the beginning of 2005.

The review procedure, aimed at assessing candidate countries' progress toward membership started to be applied to Croatia as of 2005. The Commission started issuing Regular Reports on Croatia as of autumn of 2005. The first report recognized that Croatia has a functioning market economy and that it meets the political criteria for membership. Zagreb was warned, however, that full co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) must continue and that the last remaining inductee, retired Croat General Ante Gotovina, "must be located, arrested and transferred to The Hague".

Exactly over the case of Govovina the negotiations did not start as planned, in March 2005, but a year later, two months after the extradition of Gotovina to the Hague. In February 2006, when the talks started, governmental representatives expressed hope to finish the negotiations within 3 years, so that EU entry in 2010 is possible.



European Parliament chairman Hans-Gert Poettering said on 8 March 2007 that Croatia was making progress in reforming the country and that therefore Croatia could possibly become a member in 2009. However, the end-statement of the summit of Berlin (end of March 2007), during the German Presidency of the Council of Europe, did not mention specific enlargement goals for the EU. So, it was not mentioned which countries would enter the EU first and on what date. Prime-Minister Sanader declared after the publication of the statement that there was no reason for Croatia to be concerned about the possibilities for Croatia's accession to the EU. Sanader expressed earlier that, according to him, Croatia should enter the EU in 2008.

In 2006 Croatia received up to 245 million euros in funds under three programs, PHARE for institution building, Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (ISPA) for environment and transport and Special Accession Program for Agriculture and Rural development (SAPARD).

In addition, the Commission considers that an enhanced political dialogue with Croatia should continue in order to tackle Croatia's relation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, minority rights, return of refugees, judiciary reform, regional co-operation and the fight against corruption. Particular attention will be given to Croatia's commitment to regional co-operation within the framework of the stabilisation and Association Process for the Western Balkans. The Commission will closely monitor these developments, hold regular meetings with Croatian authorities and inform the Council. For 2007, the European Commission has urged Croatia to accelerate the pace of the reform, especially reforms concerning the judiciary, fighting corruption and the reform of the public administration.

An additional clause has been added to the accession guideline that was released by the Commission in October 2004. A suspension clause allows negotiations to be broken off if a candidate country breaches the principles of democracy, minority rights and the rule of law.

In Croatia, public support for EU accession has been decreasing. A poll carried out in September 2003 showed that 78 percent was in favour of Croatia's accession to the EU. In March 2006 only 53.2 percent of those polled supported the accession. According to the same survey, 38 percent oppose EU membership. Of all polled, 30% said they expected the country to develop economically after joining the EU, 20% said they were afraid of economic dependency and 19% were afraid of the loss of national identity.

Croatian farmers (20% of the population) are afraid EU entry and especially integrating into the internal market will have bad consequences for them. Some rightist opposition parties fuel their fears and campaign anti-EU.

Corruption

Croatia has seen an increasing level of corruption, the last six years. In 2001, Croatia scored 3,9 (on a scale of 1-10, with 1 as highly corrupt and 10 as not at all corrupt) on the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International. By 2006 the score had worsened to 3.4. Even though the level of corruption is still significantly lower than the other countries in the former Yugoslavia (except for Slovenia), the increasing level of corruption is a problem. For this reason, the government has established an anti-corruption council in 2006, that represent members of parliament, ngo's, media, employers, trade unions and the academic community. It is not surprising that Croatia takes measures to ban corruption from the country. Corruption is namely by analysts seen as the biggest obstacle for Croatia to enter the European Union.

NATO

Besides candidate member of the European Union, Croatia is also candidate member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, NATO. At the Washington summit of 1999, NATO has approved the Membership Action Plan (MAP) as mechanism for integration of new member states. The MAP focuses on reform of the following policy fields: politics



and economy, defence and military, resources, security, and legal issues.

Since 2002, Croatia, Albania and Macedonia have joined MAP. Officially, all countries are therefore candidate countries. Anno 2007, Croatia had started the 5th MAP cycle and it is expected that during the 2008 NATO–summit Croatia, Albania and Macedonia receive an invitation to join NATO in 2008 or 2009. The President of the United States of America, George W. Bush has already said that it is most likely that the above countries will receive their invitation by next year.

Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY)

In April 2004 six high ranking officials of the Herceg Bosna wartime statelet voluntarily surrendered to the ICTY. All pleaded not guilty and left to The Hague to prove their innocence. According to the indictment, the aim of the accused was to politically and militarily subjugate, permanently remove and ethnically cleanse areas and to annex them to Croatia. Carla Del Ponte, chief prosecutor at the tribunal, hailed the steps Croatia had taken in transferring the accused and welcomed the government's efforts to cooperate with the ICTY.

Simultaneously, Prime Minister Sanader stated that he had objections to the indictments of the six officials in which they are accused of wanting to annex parts of Bosnia to Croatia. He added that the government would use all legal means to prove that the allegations about Croatia's role in the Bosnian war were false. The government would provide legal and logistical support to the inductees.

Further reactions came from the Croatian Party of Right (HSP). Its leader, Ante Djapic, proposed calling a referendum on "the defense of the honour of the Homeland War." Djapic commented that the indictment insulted the Croatian people. Miroslav Tudjman, son of the late president and leader of the Croatian True Revival (HIP) also called on a referendum in which the people would state if they accept the allegations from the ICTY to cleanse and annex parts of Bosnia.

The examples above illustrate Croatia's stand with respect to the ICTY. The Chief Prosecutor of the ICTY, Carla Del Ponte, stated in April 2004, immediately prior to the release of the European Commission's Opinion on Croatia's European Union membership bid, that Croatia was now co-operating fully with the ICTY. The Chief Prosecutor reiterated that Croatia still had to locate and transfer fugitive General Ante Gotovina to The Hague. Her view was that the Croatian authorities had enhanced their efforts to locate Gotovina and she hoped that this would continue and result in his transfer to the ICTY in the near future. However, the ICTY President noted that there are still doubts that credible war-crime trials can take place in Croatia. Croatian government is eager to fulfill its obligations towards becoming a EU member state, but does not necessarily agree with the indictments and the (local) authorities still protect, or have been protecting, a number of those accused by the ICTY.

Recent illustration of protection of indicted suspects is the appointment of Ivan Jurcic as the head of the Varazdin office of the Counterintelligence Agency (POA) in late May. Apparently, Jurcic was a member of the self-proclaimed special military police unit in Gospic in 1991, at the time when the killing of Serb civilians took place. The national head of the POA, Josko Podbevsek, has said that he did not receive the information about Jurcic's purported wartime activities until several days after he appointed Jurcic to the post. A second example is the case of Vlado Cosic. According to the Hague tribunal, Cosic's battalion committed numerous war crimes in 1993 during the conflict in that country between Croats and Bosnian Muslims. Cosic, prior to his recent arrest had lived as an ordinary citizen in the city of Zadar under the alias Ivan Vuleta. He had all the necessary identification documents, issued by the Zadar police. Cosic was arrested in 2000, after accusation of war crimes, but managed to escape from the Zadar police custody and continued to live in the city without further arrests.

According to several media reports, the protection of Cosic and others was part of an operation code, named Magla (Fog), organised in 1997 by a group of secret service agents on orders from top government officials. Its presumed aim was to protect Croatian army officers accused or suspected of war crimes committed mainly in the territory of Bosnia–Herzegovina.

Yet another recent episode has led some to conclude that certain individuals still enjoy the protection of some



Croatian institutions. Mihajlo Hrastov, a member of a special police unit stationed in Karlovac during the war has been charged with murdering 13 unarmed war prisoners. Hrastov is still employed by the Karlovac police force, working as a technician in crime-scene investigations and carrying a gun on duty.

The response of the government to these events has been either conciliatory or silent. The investigation into operation "Fog" has been suspended. Jurcic has not been removed as head of the Varazdin POA, nor has Hrastov been suspended from his job with the Karlovac police force.

Reopening the "Lora" case, in which eight Croatians were acquitted of crimes involving the death of Serb prisoners, has provoked positive reactions from the international community. Voluntarily surrender of several indicted of war crimes has been welcomed by the ICTY.

Case "General Ante Gotovina"

EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn has welcomed the news of the 7 December 2005 arrest of Croatian war crimes suspect Ante Gotovina in the Canary Islands. General Ante Gotovina has been accused by the ICTY of planning the killing of some 150 Serbs and the expulsion of thousands of others during the 1991-1995 war between Croatia and Yugoslavia. Gotovina is the Hague court's third most wanted suspect. The announcement of Gotovina's arrest in the Spanish Canary Islands on the night of 7 December was made by chief UN war crimes prosecutor Carla del Ponte.

Approximately 70,000 people rallied in Split on 11 December in support of Gotovina. The rally was organised by the Croatian Disabled Homeland Defence War Veterans Association, which called on the government in Zagreb to get Gotovina's case transferred from The Hague and to Croatian jurisdiction.

Gotovina pleaded not guilty on 12 December to all seven counts of his indictment at the International Criminal Tribunal. Croatia's EU membership bid suffered extended delay due to the failure to arrest Gotovina, who is still considered a hero by many in the country.

The case has been singled out as the crucial test the Croatian authorities must pass before starting the negotiations for accession to the EU. The Croatian authorities claim that they have been offering full cooperation and now claim that Gotovina, a former Legionnaire who holds the French citizenship, has left the country.

Undefined borders with Slovenia

Towards the end of September 2004, the Croatian police force arrested 12 Slovenes in a disputed border area between the two countries, the Bay of Piran. The twelve arrested persons refused to identify themselves saying they were on Slovene grounds. There were 2 members of parliament among them. After this incident, Slovenia claimed it would withdraw its support for Croatia's accession to the European Union. The Croatian government condemned the incident and stated that the Slovenes provoked it. The EU's foreign-policy chief, Javier Solana, advised to resolve the dispute through dialogue. The border problem goes back to Yugoslav time. A number of sea border areas have not been demarcated and some land border areas are in the land registers of both countries or neither. In 2001 both then Prime Ministers Janez Drnovsek and the late Ivica Racan signed an agreement on the issue. However, the agreement never made it through the Croatian parliament. The present parliament refuses to recognise the agreement. Croatia's Prime Minister Ivo Sanader wants to propose a bilateral agreement and if this fails to satisfy both countries, a binding arbitration will be necessary. By March 2007, the border dispute has not yet been solved.



Refugees

To calm the international community about the HDZ's national baggage, Sanader invited all Serbian refugees who fled the country between 1992 and 1995, to return to Croatia. Moreover, he negotiated an agreement of support for the HDZ from three representatives from the Serbian minority. Sanader secured the support of Serb members of parliament in return for assurances that disputed properties of Serb refugees would be restored by the end of 2004. The Prime Minister confirmed in October 2004 that the Croatian government will solve the problems concerning refugees' return. He acknowledged that there are problems with implementation of the law but assured that refugees will get their property back or financial compensation in return. The new law on the property of refugees from Croatia obliges the Croatian government to provide housing care for those who return to Croatia. Options are to rent a house, to get a donation of materials to repair the houses that have been destroyed during war or to request materials and a place to build a house.

Request for property return had to be handed in by the end of 2004. Apartments that belong to the Croatian state can be rent or bought. According to the law there will be no return of tenancy rights. Refugee cooperation's from Croatia claim that without return of tenancy rights, the Croatian state obstructs the return of refugees. Recent reports show that approximately 137.000 Serb refugees have returned to their pre-war homes in Croatia. Currently, the percentage of Serbs in Croatia accounts less than 5 percent of the entire population. In 1995 their number amounted to 12 percent. Security, housing, jobs and financial assistance are crucial factors for refugees to return. In July 2004, Peter Semneby, head of the OSCE mission in Croatia, said that Sanader's government has made significant progress on remaining post-conflict issues. According to polls taken in September 2004, only 4 percent of Serb refugees have decided to return to Croatia. Bad living circumstances are the main reason for not returning to Croatia. 63 Percent of Croats who live in areas where Serb refugees should return are rather negative about their return, 42 percent think that the Croatian government should not help the refugees to return and 57 percent think the government should not secure housing for Serbian refugees.

Regional Cooperation

Croatia became a full member of SEECP (South East European Cooperation Process, founded in 1996) by signing a protocol on regional cooperation in Budapest in October 2004. Sanader expressed his satisfaction because regional stability and prosperities in the region are of great importance. Moreover, membership of the SEECP is an important requirement for states that are reaching for EU membership. Main goals of SEECP membership are intensifying political and economic cooperation in the Balkan region, Greece, Turkey and Moldova. From May 2006 till May 2007 Croatia is chair of the SEECP.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES

Social Democratic Party of Croatia

(Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatska, SDP) – electoral coalition: 43 seats (SDP/LIBRA/LS/IDS)

The Social Democratic Party of Croatia was the strongest leftist opposition party in Croatia until the January 2000 elections and is so again after the November 2003 elections. It came about as a result of an amalgamation of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDSH), chaired by Antun Vujic, and the Social Democratic Party of Croatia – Party of Democratic Reforms (SPH–SDP), a post-communist party chaired by Ivica Racan until early 2007, when Racan retired due to health issues. Deputy leader Zeljka Antunovic replaced him ever since. On 29 April 2007, Ivica Racan died of cancer. On 4 June 2007, Zoran Milanovic was elected as the new leader of the SDP.

The SDP advocates a policy of non-interference in internal affairs of neighbouring countries and the establishment of relations with neighbouring countries on the principle of mutual recognition of territorial integrity, sovereignty and respect for internationally recognized borders. The SDP has always been a multi-ethnic party with both Serb and Muslim members and it claims to believe in a multi-ethnic Croatia. It strives for integration in the West through



the EU and NATO.

The SDP had been growing steadily since the elections in 1992 (5.4%) and 1995 (8.9%). After the 2000 election, it became the largest government party. Former party leader Racan was prime minister. In May 2004, SDP changed its statute and leadership, resulting in a higher percentage of young people and women actively involved in the party. The party claims to have approximately 25,000 members. The SDP is a full member of the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists (PES).
Party leader: Zoran Milanovic

Social Democratic Action of Croatia
(Akcija Socijaldemokrata Hrvatske, ASH) – no seats

The Social Democratic Action of Croatia was established under the chairpersonship of Silvije Degen, in 1994, as a coalition of the Socialist Party of Croatia; the Social Democratic Party of Croatia chaired by Ivan Siber; the Social Democratic Union under Dragutin Palasek, and the Croatian People's Party chaired by Miko Tripalo. The party was unable to pass the 5% barrier in the 1995 elections, but won one seat in the elections of January 2000. The overriding goal of the party is the idea of a multi-ethnic society and the integration of Croatia in the EU. In fact the party is a very marginal player in Croatian politics.
Party leader: Zlatko Klaric

Social Democratic Union of Croatia
(Socijalnodemokratska Unija, SDU) – no seats

The Social Democratic Union of Croatia is a small party, without parliamentary representation. It emerged from the Federation of Reform Forces. The SDU has many Serb and leftist intellectuals among its members. The SDU was the only social democratic party that opposed the 'military' solution in the Serb populated Krajina in Croatia.
Party leader: Branko Horvath

OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES

Croatian Democratic Union
(Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica, HDZ) – governing party 66 seats

The Croatian Democratic Union was founded in 1989 as a movement rather than a party – not unlike similar movements that were formed in other former communist countries after 1989. Subsequently, the party was transformed into a nationalist movement by Franjo Tudjman, the founder of the party. The HDZ won the 1992 general elections and was able to more or less consolidate its dominant position in parliament in the 1995 elections, and again in 1997. The HDZ's tight grip over the media proved effective in that respect. The party is made of, on the one hand, nationalist hard-liners focusing on Croatia's external – i.e. Bosnian–Herzegovinian – interests, and on the other hand slightly more moderate, market reform politicians who want to focus on Croatia's internal (economic) development. This results in a strange mixture of former communist nomenclature, ardent Catholics, convinced nationalists, Ustasha veterans seeking political shelter and market reform liberals.

Tudjman died on 10 December 1999, leaving the HDZ in shambles. Power struggles erupted not only between the



moderate faction of the HDZ and the right wing hardliners, but also within the right wing faction. Several prominent members left the party, including the popular former Minister of Foreign Affairs Mate Granic. The victor of this party struggle was Ivo Sanader, who was re-elected party leader in 2002. His re-election can be seen as a victory for the more moderate faction within the party. His rival Ivic Pasalic was excluded from HDZ for saying that the party leadership was illegally elected, after he failed to win this election. The ultra-nationalist wing, however, is still very strong. HDZ has an observer status with the European People's Party.

Party leader: Ivo Sanader

Democratic Center

(Demokratski Centar – DC) – coalition: 3 seats (HSL/DC)

After the January 2000 elections moderate HDZ politicians broke away and founded the DC. It currently has three parliamentary seats. The party belongs to the political centre, and is led by the present minister of justice, Vesna Skare-Ozbolt.

Party leader: Vesna Skare-Ozbolt

Croatian Block

(Hrvatski Blok – HB) – no seats

The Croatian Block is an extreme right-wing offshoot of the HDZ, formed in September 2002. It is led by Ivic Pasalic, a former senior adviser to the late President Dr. Franjo Tudjman. The party remains largely critical of the modernisation and democratisation efforts that began to take place within the HDZ in 2002. In a number of cities and towns HDZ elected officials have switched over to the HB and as a consequence occupy some key positions in local government, particularly in the southern and coastal parts of Croatia such as the Zadar and Split areas.

Party leader: Ivic Pasalic

Croatian Social Liberal Party

(Hrvatska Socialno-Liberalna Stranka – HSL) – coalition: 3 seats(HSL/DC)

The Croatian Social Liberal Party is a moderate centre-right party, advocating a mix of social and liberal policies with regard to the economy, the rights of the individual citizen and the state's role in society. The HSL was founded in 1989. At that time it mixed liberal, democratic and nationalistic elements in its political programme, but over the years the nationalistic elements were dropped.

Between 1992 and 1995 HSL was the strongest opposition party. From 2000 to 2002 it was SDP's main coalition partner. Over the years the party has faced a number of internal struggles. In 1997 the HSL split, giving rise to the more left-leaning Liberal Party (LS). In 2001 party leader Drazen Budisa stepped down to protest the government's decision to extradite two Croatian generals to the war tribunal in The Hague. He retook his position in 2002 after winning support of the HSL convention. In July 2002 the party left the governing coalition over a conflict about the Krsko nuclear power plant. Budisa and the party declined to support ratification of an agreement with Slovenia on the use and funding of the power plant, after which a number of HSL ministers were forced to resign. HSL ministers and legislators who supported the government, split off and formed LIBRA.

For the parliamentary elections of 2007, the HSL has signed a pre-elections agreement with the Democratic Party



of Zagorje (ZDS). The two leaders of the parties state that their cooperation has always been good.

The HSLS is a member party of the Liberal International.
Party leader: Djurdja Adlesic

Party of Liberal Democrats
Stranka Liberalni Demokrata – LIBRA – coalition: 43 seats (SDP/LIBRA/LS/IDS)

Formed in 2002 after splitting off from the Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLS), LIBRA is led by Jozo Rados, the former Minister of Defense, and was a coalition partner. Former deputy Prime Minister Dr. Goran Granic is a LIBRA co-founder.

Croatian Peasant Party
(Hrvatska Seljacka Stranka – HSS) – 10 seats

The Croatian Peasant Party is successor to Croatia's largest pre-war party, which was founded in 1904. The HSS can best be described as a moderate conservative party, in the sense that it advocates traditionalist values – family life being the cornerstone of society – and social and economic stability as prime objectives. On the administrative level the party proposes democratisation and acts against the tendency to centralise state interference in society. The HSS is fervently anti-Communist. Most of the electoral support for the HSS comes from the most traditional sectors of the Croatian body politic, the peasantry and active Catholics, which pushes the party closer to the right-wing HDZ. The party claims to have around 50.000 members.
Party leader: Zlatko Tomcic

Istrian Democratic Assembly
(Istarski Demokratski Sabor – IDS) – coalition: 43 seats (SDP/LIBRA/LS/IDS)

The Istrian Democratic Assembly is a regionally organised party for the defence of Istrian interests, Istria always having been one of the richer regions of Croatia. The party advocates the federalisation of Croatia and holds liberal views. It has an overwhelming majority of seats in Istria's regional parliament. The party left the former government coalition (in 2001) when it decided to demand a greater autonomy for Istria.
Party leader: Ivan Jakovcic

Croatian Party of Rights
(Hrvatska Stranka Prava – HSP) – coalition: 8 seats (HSP/ZDS)

The Croatian Right's Party was founded in 1990. It has been seen as an extreme right wing nationalist party led by Anto Djapic. Presently, they are seen as a conservative party of the centre right. The party has a tendency to fragment. Although its role is marginal at the national level, it is regarded as an active parliamentary actor and debater and does hold some key council positions in the war-affected areas.
Party leader: Anto Djapic



Liberal Party

(Liberalna Stranka – LS) – coalition: 43 seats (SDP/LIBRA/LS/IDS)

This party split from the HSL in 1997 and is led by Dr. Ivo Banac. In July 2003, Dr. Banac was appointed Minister for the Environment and Urban Planning. The party's stronghold is in Eastern Slavonia. The party is a member of the Liberal International.

Party leader: Zlatko Benasic

Croatian People's Party

(Hrvatska Narodna Stranka – HNS) – coalition: 11 seats (HNS/PGS/SBHS)

The Croatian People's Party is a centrist party with a liberal orientation. The HNS used to be of marginal importance, and only operated in election coalitions, being too small to gain any seats of its own. However, its support increased after party president Mesic was elected president in February 2000. At the moment, a unification of HNS, LIBRA and LS is expected.

Party leader: Vesna Pusic

Littoral and Highland Regional Alliance

(Primorsko Goranski Savez – PGS) – coalition: 11 seats (HNS/PGS/SBHS)

The Littoral and Highland Regional Alliance was established in Rijeka on 11 March 1990 and was first named the Democratic Alliance of Rijeka (Riječki demokratski savez – Alleanza Democratica Fiumana). At the party Convention of 28 September 1996, the name was changed because of the widening scope of regional activities, transgressing the City of Rijeka. The PGS is a political party active in the entire area of the Republic of Croatia with a focus on the Rijeka region.

Party leader: Nikola Ivanis

Slavonian-Baranian Croatian Party

(Slavonsko-baranjska hrvatska stranka – SBHS) – coalition: 11 seats (HNS/PGS/SBHS)

The Slavonian-Baranian Croatian Party was founded in 1992. It has been active in the Counties of Osijek-Baranja, Vukovar-Srijem, Virovitica-Podravina, Požega-Slavonia, and Brod-Posavina.

The S-BHS is a regional party promoting through its activities the overall development of the regions of Slavonia and Baranja.

Party leader: Damir Juric



Independent Democratic Serbian Party
(Samostalna Demokratska Srpska Stranka – SDSS) – 3 seats

The Independent Serbian Party (SSS) was founded in Zagreb on 6 October 1995.

The Independent Democratic Serbian Party (SDSS) was formed as a result of the association of all progressive Serbian forces and political options which were active in the region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Sirmium from 1991 to 1997 and their joining with the Zagreb-based Independent Serbian Party (SSS).

The SDSS is a political party shaping and integrating the political will and activity of the largest part of the Serb community of the Republic of Croatia. The SDSS is not only a Serbian national party, but also a democratic party with a liberal and social democratic platform.

Party's leader: Vojislav Stanimirovic

Party of Democratic Action of Croatia
(Stranka Demokratske Akcije Hrvatske – SDA HR) – 1 seat.

The Party of Democratic Action of Croatia (SDAH) was established on June 20, 1990, under the name of Party of Democratic Action – Croatian Branch, its most important goal being the affirmation and preservation of the identity of the Bosniac people and the preservation of Bosnia and Herzegovina within the framework of the state existing at that time. Since February, 1992, the party has been active under its present name.

The SDA HR is a political organization which supports the achievement of political, social, economic, cultural, and national rights of the Bosniac people in Croatia.

Party's leader: Semso Tankovic

Croatian Party of Pensioners
(Hrvatska Stranka Umirovljenika– HSU) 3 seats

The Croatian Pensioners' Party (HSU) was established on April 29, 1996.

The basic programme principle and goal of the political activities of the party are directed toward the betterment of the social and economic position of the retired as one of the most numerous and the most impoverished groups of citizens, within the framework of creating a wealthier Croatian state.

Party's leader: Vladimir Jordan

Croatian Democratic Peasant Party
(Hrvatska demokratska Seljacka stranka – HDSS) – 1 seat

The founding assembly of the Croatian Democratic Peasant Party (HDSS) was held in Zagreb on September 18, 1994, and the party was officially registered on July 24, 1996.

The HDSS programme reflects its right-centre orientation based on the nation-building ideas of Dr Ante Starčević and socio-economic teachings of Dr Stjepan Radić, adapted to the current situation in Croatia, as well as the party's openness and commitment to all Croatian citizens.

HDSS supports the concept of an integral, independent and democratic Croatian state. It is primarily concerned with the issues of economy.

Party's leader: Ivan Martan



SOURCES

Elections: OSCE mission in Croatia: www.osce.org
Election world : www.electionworld.org
Government site on elections in Croatia: www.izbori.hr

Main political issues:

Amnesty International : www.amnesty.org
Transitions on Line: www.tol.cz
Radio Free Europe/ radio liberty: www.rferl.org
European Academy: www.eurac.edu
Croatia's government: www.vlada.hr
Transparency International: www.transparency.org

Main political parties:

Croatian Information Documentation Referral Agency – HIDRA: www.hidra.hr
Croatia's parliament: www.sabor.hr



European Forum
for Democracy and Solidarity

