



# **EUI Working Papers**

**MWP 2008/24**

Satisfaction with Democracy in Post-Communist  
Multi-Ethnic Countries. The Effect of Political  
Institutions.

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*The Effect of Political Institutions.*  
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ISSN 1830-7728

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Printed in Italy  
European University Institute  
Badia Fiesolana  
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)  
Italy

<http://www.eui.eu/>  
<http://cadmus.eui.eu/>

## **Abstract**

Why are some ethnic minorities more satisfied with democracy than others in post-communist countries? This paper explores this question by looking at the impact of political institutions on satisfaction with democracy. Using survey data collected between 1997 and 2000 in seven post-communist countries, I test two different hypotheses for which I find empirical support. First, I examine the relationship between the type of political system and the capacity of the ethnic minority to participate in the decision-making process. Concretely, I show that when a country adopts a parliamentary system and the ethnic minorities have a voice in the legislature, then higher levels of satisfaction with democracy are expected than if the country adopts a presidential system and the minorities do not have a seat. Second, I test the effect of electoral systems in the following sense: more proportional representation electoral systems will generate higher levels of satisfaction since they will increase the expectations of existing ethnic political parties in the decision-making process. Both hypotheses highlight the idea that more inclusive political institutions generate higher levels of satisfaction with democracy.

## **Keywords:**

Ethnic minorities; Central and Eastern Europe; Satisfaction with democracy; Political Institutions

# Satisfaction with democracy in post-communist multi-ethnic countries. The effect of political institutions.\*

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## Introduction

Since 1989, most countries that were under the influence of the Soviet Union have become democracies. Many of these countries have mixed ethnic compositions and given the combination of democracy and ethnic heterogeneity, a question emerges: are ethnic minorities more satisfied with the way democracy works in some countries than in others? And if so, why? In the following pages, I will respond to these questions by arguing that the type of political institutions is relevant to understanding this issue.

Studies on public opinion have explained satisfaction with democracy (SWD) from different points of views. Some studies have observed that variations in SWD can actually be best explained by looking at policy outcomes generated by governments. In this sense, a sociotropic vision of the economy, i.e, the perception an individual has about the overall state of the economy, has mainly been used to explain these variations across countries (Mishler and Rose 1996). Socio-economic variables like income or age has also been used to explain the differences in satisfaction with democracy in emerging democracies (Toka 1995).

More recent studies have emphasized the capacity of democracies to generate winners and losers (Anderson, Blais, Bowler, and Listhaug 2005). These studies argue that winners, or citizens who voted for a winning political party, tend to be more satisfied with democracy than losers. The logic is simple: people voting for parties that later become government may think that such a government will be more responsive to their needs, given that both voter and government share the same vision about how to confront the challenges ahead (Anderson and Tverdova 2001; Blais and Gélinau 2007).

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\*I am deeply grateful to those friends that have enriched this paper enormously with their continuous comments and suggestions. They include Ferran Martínez i Coma, Sonia Alonso, Umut Aydın and Stephanie Mudge. I also appreciate the comments from Peter Mair. Naturally, the responsibility for this article is exclusively mine.

The originality of this winners/losers approach is that it has also incorporated a discussion of the role of political institutions in order to understand the variations of SWD. Some studies, for example, reveal that direct democracies generate higher levels of satisfaction with democracy given their capacity to "educate" citizens in understanding politics (Bowler and Donovan 2002) or that satisfaction with democracy is better explained by looking at political accountability (Aarts and Thomassen 2008). Some other studies reveal that the majoritarian/consensual distinction originally drawn by Lijphart (1984) also helps to understand how satisfaction with democracy varies among countries. Losers from more consensual democracies seems to be more highly satisfied with the way democracy works than losers from majoritarian democracies (Anderson and Guillory 1997).

This article follows this institutional approach and focuses not on winners and losers but on different ethnic groups living in new democracies. My argument proceeds as follows: if different political institutions explain variations in the levels of SWD among either winners or losers, then we could think that different political institutions also explain these variations in relation to the largest ethnic-minority group and the dominant ethnic group in new democracies. Why would it be so? As Lijphart (1977) and Horowitz (1985) have shown, the absence of violence in multi-ethnic new democracies is partly explained by the type of institutional design that they have. For this reason, the more inclusive the institutions, the lesser the popular clamor against the regime and therefore the greater the satisfaction with the way democracy works.

Using survey data from seven post-communist countries, I show how members of the largest minority-group are responsive to the institutional framework they live by. I show that having a political party defending the ethnic-minority interests generates greater satisfaction than not having it. Furthermore, if an ethnic-minority is represented by a political party in a parliamentary system then such satisfaction is boosted. The electoral system also matters. More proportional electoral systems feed the expectations of those ethnic minorities that already have political representation. The belief that in future elections the weight of their voices may increase thus enhancing in this way their potential influence in the political decision-making process turns out to have a positive effect on satisfaction with democracy.

## **The effects of institutions on satisfaction with democracy**

In this article it is argued that more inclusive political institutions generate higher levels of satisfaction with democracy among members of ethnic minority groups. It is suggested that the reason for this is that such ethnic minorities will feel that their capacity to intervene in the political life of the

country is higher than if those political institutions were more exclusionary.

Before I describe the explanatory mechanism which links political institutions with satisfaction with democracy, a conceptual clarification is required. Traditionally, satisfaction with democracy has been perceived as an operational concept of Easton's idea of diffuse support (Easton 1975). Or in other words, satisfaction with democracy is a proxy that measures the support for democratic principles. This view has been contested by Linde and Ekman (2003) who argue that SWD should be understood not as an indicator of support for the democratic principles but rather as an indicator of how democracy works in practice. The most radical critique against the use of SWD has come, however, from Canache, Mondak, and Seligson (2001). These authors reject the use of SWD as an indicator of political support for two reasons. First, satisfaction with democracy has different meanings not only among individuals but also across nations. Second, its meaning is so ambiguous that it cannot be used to make inferences. For simplicity, however, a more pragmatic approach will be taken in this paper. Given that at present moment there is no better indicator to measure the performance of democracy other than SWD, I will use this concept following Linde and Ekman's approach, i.e. as a proxy to test how democracy actually works in practice. In other words, satisfaction with democracy will refer here broadly to all the political outcomes generated by this regime in each country under study<sup>1</sup>.

To look at how a democracy works in practice therefore implies looking at the different political institutions that such regimes adopt. Although the effect of political institutions on policy, economic or political outcomes should be taken with caution (Przeworski 2004; Przeworski 2007), there have been interesting studies showing how political institutions affect ethnic conflict in heterogeneous societies. The electoral system, for example, has been one of these political institutions which has received considerable attention (Cohen 1997; Reynal-Querol 2002). A major conclusion of these studies is that proportional representation electoral systems generate greater political representation of ethnic minorities that in the end moderates tensions against the dominant ethnic group. The type of political systems also has an effect on mitigating tensions in multiethnic countries. Horowitz's classic study on ethnic groups shows how presidential systems moderate ethnic conflict because they provide a system of check-and-balances that prevents one

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<sup>1</sup>A note about the meaning of democracy may be useful at this point, though. Throughout the survey used in this paper, democracy mainly refers to a form of government. From there, we can infer that democracy is a procedure for the selection of political representatives. This procedure is based on the occurrence of periodic competitive elections where alternation in power is possible. Survey data supports this view: 85.17% of the respondents used in this study believe that democracy has a lot or something to do with multi-party systems and 86.44% think that democracy has a lot or something to do with the right to participation.

particular ethnic group from monopolizing all the political power (Horowitz 1985).

These views have been contested by Alonso and Ruiz-Rufino (2007) who argue that political institutions moderate ethnic conflict if and only if they incorporate the voice of ethnic minorities into the decision-making process. It is not enough to provide political representation if that voice in the parliament does not prove to be effective. Ethnic minorities become moderate if their political parties actively participate in elaborating the different policies of the country; in other words, the combination of political representation and a parliamentary system reduces the probability an ethnic minority will revolt against the state.

How are ethnic conflict and satisfaction with democracy related? I have calculated the correlation between these two variables using the protest indicator generated by the *Minority at Risk database*<sup>2</sup> and survey data in seven post-communist countries<sup>3</sup>. Briefly, satisfaction with democracy is negatively correlated with the levels of ethnic protests<sup>4</sup> without considering any other intervening variables; that is to say, as a glance at these two variables indicates, more satisfaction with democracy is associated with greater levels of cohabitation between different ethnic groups in multi-ethnic societies. Satisfaction with democracy, then, can be of some help to understand processes of democratization in heterogeneous societies. Societies that are more generally satisfied with the way democracy works will have fewer reasons to revolt against democracy than those where satisfaction with democracy is valued low.

Like ethnic conflict, SWD can be explained by using institutional variables. As Anderson and Guillory (1997) show, democracies generate winners, i.e. voters of winning parties, and losers, i.e. voters whose party loses the election. Losers tend to be less satisfied with democracy than winners, however if those individuals voting for the losing political alternative live in a consensual democracy, their satisfaction with democracy will be higher than if they live in a more majoritarian democracy. Following Lijphart (1984), Anderson and Guillory find that consensual political institutions like proportional representation electoral systems, federal systems or coalition governments allow democratic *losers* to participate more actively in day to day politics and that fact increases their satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country. Anderson and Guillory's paper was criticized

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<sup>2</sup>For data information see, <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/>

<sup>3</sup>The countries that I will focus on here are Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine. These cases are selected according to the availability of data provided by the survey used in this study. See below for further information on this survey.

<sup>4</sup>The index "protest" generated by the Minority at Risk database ranges from 0 ("No demonstrations") to 5 ("Large demonstrations"). The correlation between this index and the mean values of satisfaction with democracy in 0 ("unsatisfied"), 1 ("satisfied") dichotomist variable is about -0.1. The strength of the relationship is weak but the direction is what is expected.

precisely for using the *Lijphartian* distinction between consensual and majoritarian democracies. Reducing every country to a bipolar classification, it has been argued, could lead us to a rather simplified analysis of political regimes (Andeweg 2000). This critique does not necessarily invalidate Anderson and Guillory's main conclusions but it can be used as an invitation to focus on the outcomes produced by individual political institutions rather than looking at indexes like the one operationalized by Lijphart.

The analysis carried out by Anderson and Guillory focuses on eleven Western European democracies. Is the role of institutions equally important to understand SWD in young democracies like those from Central and Eastern Europe? Furthermore, can we shift the focus of the analysis from the winner/loser distinction generated by democracy to a scenario where different ethnic groups live in the same territory and may have opposing interests?

The emphasis on different ethnic groups could imply some sort of conflict. This conflict does not necessarily have to refer to bloodshed or civil turmoil but rather to a constant struggle to obtain higher portions of political power by the dominant ethnic group as against some minority ethnic group<sup>5</sup>. The explanatory mechanism has the following logic: during the transition to democracy, the relevant actors in a multi-ethnic country may adopt different strategies in designing their political institutions. These institutions will produce some political outcome that will partly condition the attitudes about democracy that members of ethnic minorities develop later.

Let us focus, for example, on how minorities are granted access to political activity. One strategy is to ban, for example, in the constitution the presence of ethnically based political parties so that minorities from a particular ethnic group are not allowed to have formal political representation in the parliament. Bulgaria exemplifies this scenario by expressly forbidding in the constitution the creation of political parties based "on a confessional or an ethnic principle"<sup>6</sup>. A second strategy is characterized by an intermediate approach between merely recognizing the existence of ethnic-minority

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<sup>5</sup>The concept of ethnic minority refers to: a) a group numerically smaller than the rest of a state's population and occupying a sub-dominant position; b) the members of this group, nationals of the state in question, have other as a whole, and differ from the majority for their language, culture, ethnic affiliation or religion (Benoit-Rohmer and Hardeman 1994).

<sup>6</sup>This legal disposition was a general attack against parliamentary representation of all the ethnic groups existing in Bulgaria and against the Turkish minority in particular. However, the Turkish minority managed to twist the law and succeeded in creating a political party that defends the interests of this minority: the Movement for Rights and Freedom (DPS). Although it is true that this political party can be considered an exception in the Bulgarian legislation the case is that the Turks have participated in the parliament since the first democratic elections and have even been part of the governing coalition. However, this does not invalidate the ban established by the Constitution against the creation of ethnic political parties.

groups and favoring their parliamentary representation. Poland<sup>7</sup>, Lithuania<sup>8</sup> and Slovakia<sup>9</sup> are countries that fit this distinction. Finally, a third strategy can be to ignore completely the existence of ethnic minorities as in the case of Russia or Ukraine where none of the major legal texts regulating the elections or political participation even mention the existence of ethnic minority groups.

Upon building up the new democratic institutions, the corresponding political actors in multi-ethnic countries face the question of what type of institutions to choose. They can choose either more exclusionary institutions with regard to ethnic minorities, or they can choose more inclusionary ones. In this context, it can be of interest to see precisely, whether members of ethnic minorities are more or less satisfied with the way democracy works depending on the type of political institutions that they have<sup>10</sup>.

## Hypotheses and Model

### Hypotheses

In this article I will test two hypotheses that combine different types of political institutions. The aim here is to observe whether institutions that facilitate the accommodation of ethnic groups in political life increase the level of satisfaction with democracy of these ethnic-minorities.

**Hypothesis 1** *Parliamentary systems that incorporate ethnic political representation in the legislative chamber will generate higher levels of satisfaction with democracy than other political systems like presidential or premier-presidential ones.*

In order to test this I will use the following equation:

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<sup>7</sup>Arts. 3, 4, 5, 109 and 110 of the law regulating the 1993 parliamentary elections established some mechanisms where the legal threshold to win parliamentary representation was lowered in the case of organizations of national minorities

<sup>8</sup>The Lithuanian approach towards political representation of ethnic minorities is ambiguous. Whereas the different laws regulating the 1996 or 2000 parliamentary elections say nothing about minorities, article 45 of the Constitutions expressly guarantees that the "state shall support ethnic communities."

<sup>9</sup>In the Slovak Republic, Art. 34.1 of the Constitution says that "the comprehensive development of citizens representing national minorities or ethnic groups in the Slovak Republic is guaranteed, particularly the right to develop their own culture, together with other members of the minority or ethnic group, the right to disseminate and receive information in their mother tongue, the right to associate in national minority associations, and the right to set up and maintain educational and cultural institutions."

<sup>10</sup>The focus of this article is, therefore, on the comparison between different ethnic-minorities in several countries. One could further ask about the relationship between ethnic-minorities and non-minorities in those countries. However, this would be a different research question and is beyond the scope of this article. I will leave this issue for future research.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Econ + \beta_2 Age + \beta_3 Income + \beta_4 Party * Polsys$$

where,

*Econ.* measures satisfaction with the way the economy works from a sociotropic point of view. It ranges from 0, completely unsatisfied, to 10, fully satisfied.

*Age*, measures the age of the respondent in years

*Income*, refers to the level of income of the respondent. It ranges from 0, the poorest, to 10, the richest.

*Party*, refers to whether the ethnic minority group is represented by a political party in the parliament

*Polsys*, refers to the type of political system. It has 3 categories: 1, refers to parliamentary; 2, premier-presidentialism and 3, presidentialism

The logic of this hypothesis is the following. Parliamentary systems are characterized by the important role played by the legislative chamber in the decision-making process. Parliaments play a key role in actively controlling the Government and most of the legislation is negotiated among all of its members. Under this scenario, having a voice in the chamber amounts to carrying relatively significant political weight in all major political decisions.

On the contrary, in presidential or semi-presidential systems, the role of the president can be, depending on the cases, more important than that of the parliament. Normally, presidents in presidential systems have the power to veto legislation coming from the parliament, appoint and dismiss members of the cabinet and even dissolve the parliament. Presidents are also normally elected directly by the citizens, which implies that parliaments in presidential systems play a lesser role in controlling the executive than they do in parliamentary systems.

**Hypothesis 2** *Those countries that have more proportional electoral systems and that allow political parties to represent the interest of the largest ethnic minority group will generate greater levels of satisfaction with democracy.*

The model used to test this hypothesis is the following:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Econ + \beta_2 Age + \beta_3 Income + \beta_4 Party + \beta_5 ATF + \beta_6 Party * ATF$$

where,

*ATF* refers to the minimum number of votes required to win half of the seats in parliament (Ruiz-Rufino 2007). In other words, if *ATF* has a value of 0.30, it means that in order to win 50% of seats under such electoral system a party must win at least 30% of the total vote. The higher the value of *ATF*, the more proportional the electoral system. The rest of the variables are defined as in the previous hypothesis.

Interesting here is the interaction term between electoral system and the existence of an ethnic political party. I am not interested in showing

the individual effects of these two variables; rather, the emphasis is located in the combined effect that both variables produced on satisfaction with democracy. The intuition behind this hypothesis is that more proportional electoral systems will raise the expectations of those having an ethnic political party to win further political power, i.e., seats, in future elections. Under this scenario, a political party may have more incentives to mobilize its followers if chances to win an extra seat are high (Duverger 1954).

## Model

The hypotheses have been contrasted using survey data collected from 1998 to 2001 in seven post-communist countries<sup>11</sup>. Satisfaction with democracy is measured using a 10-point scale where 1 expresses the lowest satisfaction with the way democracy works and 10 shows the highest satisfaction<sup>12</sup>. Table 1 shows the largest ethnic-minority in each country as well as descriptive information about satisfaction with democracy, the dependent variable. One attractive property of this scale is that given the different categories, the variable can be treated as continuous thus allowing for the use of OLS regressions.

Table 1: Variations of satisfaction with democracy

Country	Largest Ethnic-minority	Satisfaction with democracy			
		Mean	S.D	Min.	Max
Bulgaria	Turkish	2.88	1.57	1	7
Latvia	Russian	3.39	1.76	1	8
Lithuania	Russian	4.39	2.35	1	10
Poland	Belorussian	3	1.50	1	5
Russia	Tartars	3.52	1.94	1	8
Slovak Rep.	Hungarian	4.11	2.33	1	10
Ukraine	Russian	2.02	1.41	1	10

Table 1 demonstrates the variation in satisfaction with the way democracy varies among the different largest ethnic groups in the post-communist countries under study. There is a difference in how democracy is evaluated by the Russian minority in Lithuania, for example, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria or the Russian minority in Ukraine. The former are, on average, much more satisfied (4.39) than the latter (2.88 and 2.02 respectively). The question again is whether we can explain these differences by looking at the particular political institutions these countries have.

<sup>11</sup>The data comes from survey ZA4054 "Consolidation of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe 1990-2000" Zentral Archive für Sozialforschung - Universität zu Köln

<sup>12</sup>Question V173 of survey ZA 4054 proceeds as follows: "Are you completely satisfied or completely dissatisfied with the way in which democracy is working in your country today?"

As Table 1 also shows, the unit of analysis is the largest ethnic-minority group in the countries under study. The sample has been selected according to a linguistic criterion<sup>13</sup>. This approach can be controversial for the use of a particular language to communicate with an important member of your family does not necessarily imply that you identify with the distinguishing features of that culture. However, since I have focussed on the largest ethnic-minority groups in these countries one can also expect some sort of political activation to come from these minorities. As I will show later, the largest ethnic-minority groups in four countries (Bulgaria, Lithuania, Slovakia and Ukraine) have managed to create political parties that defend their interests and demands. In other cases, the largest ethnic minority enjoy considerable power at regional level. This is, for example, the case of the Tartars from Tatarstan in Russia. It seems then plausible to select the largest minority of each country as the unit of analysis since they can be seen as actors who seek to maximize their influence on the political decision-making process.

## Results

### The role of ethnic minorities in parliaments

As previously stated, the first hypothesis refers to the combined effect that the type of political system may have and the political activity of the largest minority group in the political decision-making process. Following the definitions proposed by Shugart and Carey (1992), the type of political system of a nation is understood to be either a parliamentary, a semi-presidential (premier-presidential), or a presidential system<sup>14</sup>. The political activity of the largest minority group in the political decision-making process is measured with a dichotomist variable where 1 indicates that the minority group has, at least, one ethnic political party in the parliament defending its interests and 0, otherwise.

In order to test the combined effect of these two variables in the different institutional contexts, I have created six dichotomist variables that show whether the minority has political representation or not in the three types of political systems. Using OLS regression with robust coefficients, the results of these variables together with the control variables are shown in Table 2.

As it can be seen in the table (reference!), the satisfaction with the economy from a sociotropic point of view is highly significant in all models. The coefficients are also large and positive which approximately means that if a respondent increases by two units her satisfaction with economy, her

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<sup>13</sup>Question V589 goes as follows: "In what language did/do you and your mother communicate with each other?"

<sup>14</sup>Here semi-presidential or premier-presidential systems broadly refer to those political systems where the head of the State and the head of the government are chosen in different elections. Also, the President's powers are limited and dependent on the Parliament.

Table 2: General effect of political systems and ethnic political parties on satisfaction with democracy

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>
Satisf. Econ	0.535** (0.035)	0.545** (0.038)	0.5341** (0.036)	0.547** (0.036)	0.48** (0.04)	0.544** (0.0367)
Age	-0.001 (0.003)	-.00006 (0.003)	-0.0002 (0.003)	-0.0002 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.0004 (0.003)
Income	0.079* (0.034)	0.112** (0.035)	0.133** (0.035)	0.114** (0.035)	0.078* (0.034)	0.115** (0.035)
Party_Parl	1.05** (0.203)					
NoParty_Parl		0.037 (0.12)				
Party_Semi			0.635** (0.172)			
NoParty_Semi				-0.32 (0.32)		
Party_Presi					-0.79** (0.106)	
NoParty_Presi						0.336 (0.265)
Intercept	1.040** (0.1955)	0.947** (0.202)	0.827** (0.204)	0.934** (0.201)	1.75** (0.219)	0.936** (0.201)
$R^2$	0.38	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.39	0.35
N	997	997	997	997	997	997

Standard errors in brackets

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

satisfaction with democracy will increase by one unit holding with all other variables being constant.

The other two socio-economic control variables, age and income, are either not statistically significant -age - or have a limited effect on the dependent variable - income.

The different combined effects of political systems and political representation are shown in each model. Only 3 of these institutional variables are statistically significant at the 1% level. These three variables, however, generate enough evidence that supports the hypothesis under evaluation. If an ethnic-minority has an ethnic political party in a parliamentary system, satisfaction with democracy increases by about 1 unit. If, that same ethnic minority lives in a presidential system, then, satisfaction with democracy decreases by 0.8 units notwithstanding political political representation in the parliament. As I mentioned before, political parties in presidential

systems can be a rather useless mechanism in the decision-making process. Finally, the effect of having a political party in a semi-presidential system also increases the satisfaction with democracy though not by as much as in parliamentary systems (0.6 units).

In order to ease the interpretation of the coefficients and to see the effect of the particular institutions on the different ethnic minority groups in relation with satisfaction with democracy, I have calculated and contrasted the expected values for each minority. These values have been calculated holding the socio-economic variables in their means<sup>15</sup> and just varying each dichotomic variable from 0 to 1 if the largest minority group fits only the characteristic of the variable. The results are provided in Table 3.

Table 3: Effects of political systems and ethnic parties on SWD for each minority

Country	Year	Minority	Ethnic Party	Political System	$E(\widehat{Y}^*)$	$E(\widehat{Y})$	Change (%)
Bulgaria	1997	Turkish	Yes	Semi-Pres	2.8	3.34	19.28
Latvia	1998	Russian	No	Parliament	3.35	4.28	27.76
Lithuania	2000	Russian	Yes	Semi-Pres	3.43	3.98	16.03
Poland	1997	Belorussian	No	Semi-Pres	3.25	2.94	-9.53
Russia	1999	Tartar	No	President	3.38	3.71	9.76
Slovakia	1998	Hungarian	Yes	Parliament	3.38	4.30	27.21
Ukraine	1998	Russian	Yes	President	2.38	2.05	-13.86

Table 3 shows the institutional design under which each ethnic minority was living at the moment when the survey took place. It also shows two interesting values: first, the expected value of satisfaction with democracy when only socio-economic variables are taken into account,  $E(\widehat{Y}^*)$ ; second, the expected value of satisfaction with democracy when the institutional variables are incorporated into the regression equation,  $E(\widehat{Y})$ . By doing so that, we can easily observe the effect produced by the combined effect of having a political representation by a political party and the type of political system. The last column of the table measures the size of such effect.

As predicted by the regressions coefficients, the most dramatic reduction in satisfaction with democracy is experienced by the Russian minority in Ukraine. Despite political representation in the parliament, satisfaction with democracy decreases given the limited utility of such political device in a presidential system. To be represented in a political institution that lacks real power in the decision-making process may simply generate more frustration than satisfaction because of its perceived ineffectiveness. Slovakia, however, is an example of a country where both the political system and parliamentary representation clearly contribute to an increase in SWD

<sup>15</sup>These values can be found in the Appendix.

(4.30). In this country, the Hungarian minority has a political party that is actively involved in the political decision-making process as is typical in parliamentary systems. The combination of a parliamentary system with the existence of a political party that is perceived as defending the interests of the minority maximizes the probability for such minority to have its voice heard in the political debate<sup>16</sup>.

Semi-presidential examples also move in this direction. In those political systems where parliaments are still strong, though not as strong as in parliamentary systems, having a minority represented generates an increase in the level of satisfaction with democracy. The case of the Russian minority in Lithuania illustrates this case as shown in table 3.

### **The effect of the electoral system**

Hypothesis 2 establishes the relationship between the combined effect of the electoral system and the presence of a political party representing the interests of the largest minority group on satisfaction with democracy and its impact on SWD. The proportionality of the electoral system is measured by using the aggregated threshold functions (ATF) as defined and tested by Ruiz-Rufino (2007). Briefly, the aggregated threshold functions generate the minimum value which is necessary to win half of the seats in parliament. If the electoral system used for the parliamentary elections in Bulgaria in 1997 produces an *ATF* value of 0.29, then for a party to win half of the seats in parliament at least 29% of the total vote must be won. In the case of Latvia in 1998, that value was 42% of the total vote. In other words, the smaller the *ATF* value, the less proportional the electoral system is and viceversa. The OLS robust regression results are shown in table 4

The socioeconomic variables behave in a similar fashion compared with the previous regression analysis. Satisfaction with the economy continues to generate a strong coefficient which is statistically highly significant. The coefficients of the institutional variables also have the expected direction and strength. Both the electoral system and the ethnic political party have a positive coefficient and are statistically significant at the 1% level. If an ethnic minority group has a political voice in the parliament and parliamentary

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<sup>16</sup>Despite the size of the Russian minority in Latvia (ca.34%) and the open electoral system, the Russian minority has not been successful in winning any seats in the Latvian parliament. The reason for this goes beyond the scope of this research. However, the results shown here are not inconsistent with the Latvian political situation in 1998. In the parliamentary election that took place in Latvia that year the party coalition PCTVL (For Human Rights in United Latvia) won 12.8% of the votes and 14 seats in the Parliament. This coalition, formed mainly by the Latvian Socialist Party, the People's Harmony Party and the minor party Equal Rights, received most of the support of the Russian minority. (See Davis and Ozolin, 2001. Visit also <http://extweb3.nsd.uib.no/civicaactivecms/opencms/civicaactive/en/Data/country/> for detailed information about Latvian political parties.)

Table 4: General effect of the electoral systems and ethnic political parties on satisfaction with democracy

Variables	Model 1
Satisf. Econ (sociotropic)	0.491** (0.037)
Age	-0.003 (0.003)
Income	0.060* (0.072)
Ethnic_Party	-2.09** (0.556)
ATF	-1.050 (1.291)
PartyXATF	7.051** (1.291)
Intercept	1.928** (1.509)
$R^2$	0.40
N	997

Standard errors in brackets

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

seats are distributed through a permissive electoral system, the satisfaction with democracy will be considerably higher than if a minority does not have such political party and the electoral system is restrictive<sup>17</sup>. Table 5 shows precisely the expected values of the dependent variable given the mean values of the socioeconomic control variables and the particular value for the institutional variables for each of the minorities under study.

Table 5 confirms that the combined effect of a permissive electoral system with a voice in the parliament produce higher values in the satisfaction with democracy. The best example of this is the Slovak Republic where not only does the Hungarian minority have a political party in the parliament but it also enjoys an electoral system which is quite close to perfect proportionality: 46% of the vote is the minimum share of the vote necessary to win 50% of the seats in parliament. In contrast, the Russian ethnic minority in Ukraine do have a political party in the parliament but the electoral system is so restrictive that the forecast of winning more seats is rather pessimistic.

<sup>17</sup>The actual value, holding all other variables constant, is  $6 * ATF$  approximately. So the more proportional the electoral system, i.e. the higher the value of ATF, the higher the satisfaction with democracy given that the ethnic minority group has a political party in the parliament.

Table 5: Effects of electoral systems and ethnic parties on SWD for each minority

Country	Year	Minority	Ethnic Party	ATF	$E(\widehat{Y}^*)$	$E(\widehat{Y})$	%Change
Bulgaria	1997	Turkish	Yes	0.29	2.8	3.04	8.45
Latvia	1998	Russian	No	0.42	3.35	3.38	0.80
Lithuania	2000	Russian	Yes	0.29	3.43	3.62	5.49
Poland	1997	Belorussian	No	0.35	3.25	3.35	2.89
Russia	1999	Tartars	No	0.20	3.38	3.65	7.99
Slovakia	1998	Hungarian	Yes	0.46	3.38	4.54	34.30
Ukraine	1998	Russian	Yes	0.20	2.38	2.13	-10.32

## Conclusion

Almost twenty years after the fall of the Berlin wall, it is interesting to see how the new democracies from Central and Eastern Europe have evolved. These regimes are appealing for political scientists for many aspects. One of these aspects is to look at the effects of the political instruments that have been implemented to reconcile the ethnic heterogeneity that characterizes most of these countries. One of such effects is how the functioning of the new democratic regime is perceived by the ethnic-minority groups. Ethnic minority groups in Central and Eastern Europe have received unequal political treatment in past and recent history. Focusing on satisfaction with democracy among these groups may provide some information and insight into understanding how quickly these democracies have settled.

A major conclusion of this article is that political institutions are important in understanding levels of satisfaction. Institutions that incorporate ethnic-minorities into the decision-making process generate more satisfaction with the way democracy works than institutions that exclude such groups. The reading of these results is, then, rather straightforward: ethnically divided societies are likely to generate more stability if all major ethnic groups are involved in the policy-making process. Policies affect day to day life of citizens and in ethnically heterogeneous societies the view of a given minority group may monopolize the creation of such policies. If this were the case, excluded minorities would have some reasons to be disappointed with the way democracy works and maybe find a reason to revolt against it.

Following this logic, I have shown in this paper that ethnic-minorities that have political representation in parliamentary systems are more satisfied than ethnic minorities that may or may not have such political representation in presidential or semi-presidential systems. The type of electoral system seems also to be important in combination with existing ethnic political parties. Those ethnic-minorities that are represented by a political party which defends their ethnic demands and that choose their representatives in

systems with higher levels of proportional representation have higher levels of satisfaction compared to those minorities that choose their representatives under more majoritarian electoral systems.

This institutional approach can be extended in future research. An interesting hypothesis that could be tested refers to the combined effect of territorial organization of the state and the geographical dispersion of the ethnic-minority group. The literature on ethnic conflict has shown that federalism acts in a balsamic way to calm ethnic clamor. If federalism can be understood as the reallocation of political and economical resources from the center to the periphery, then it can be expected that geographically concentrated ethnic groups will be more satisfied with democracy in federal countries. I leave this question open for future discussion.

## Appendix

The descriptive values for the socio-economic independent variables are provided in the following table.

Table 6: Descriptive information of socio-economic variables

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Obs.
<b>Bulgarian Turks</b>					
Satisf.Economy	2.95	1.74	1	10	95
Age	42.36	16.34	16	88	114
Income	2.36	1.19	1	5	103
<b>Latvian Russians</b>					
Satisf.Economy	3.68	1.8	1	10	294
Age	43.97	15.21	18	85	320
Income	3.69	1.62	1	10	311
<b>Lithuanian Russians</b>					
Satisf.Economy	3.92	2.14	1	9	64
Age	43.32	16.51	19	79	74
Income	3.26	1.68	1	7	71
<b>Polish Belorussians</b>					
Satisf.Economy	3.64	2.06	1	8	14
Age	61.06	17.36	27	81	16
Income	3.07	1.84	2	8	13
<b>Russian Tartars</b>					
Satisf.Economy	3.83	2.24	1	10	37
Age	44.21	16.16	18	75	41
Income	3.22	1.39	1	6	27
<b>Slovakian Hungarian</b>					
Satisf.Economy	3.66	2.15	1	10	98
Age	42.9	14.92	18	80	118
Income	4.01	1.61	1	7	112
<b>Ukrainian Russians</b>					
Satisf.Economy	2.1	1.59	1	10	491
Age	42.41	16.23	18	76	532
Income	2.75	1.45	1	7	528

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